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An explanatory account and examination of the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ in the scientific theology of T. F. Torrance

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ABSTRACT

The doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ in the scientific theology of T.F. Torrance rests on the fundamental scientific axiom, derived from the natural sciences, that knowledge is developed in accordance with the nature (*kata physin*) of the object as it is revealed in the course of scientific inquiry. As a theological realist, Torrance finds real and accurate knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. To know God through the incarnate Son, who is "of one nature with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*), is to know God in strict accordance with God's nature and hence in a theologically scientific way. Scientific theology will operate on a christological basis, for the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the "controlling centre" for the Christian doctrine of God.

Torrance's holistic theology investigates its object of inquiry within the nexus of "onto-relations," or "being-constituting" interrelations, that disclose its identity. Because the fundamental aspects of reality are relational rather than atomistic, a scientific theological approach to the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ requires that he be investigated within the nexuses of interrelations that disclose his identity as incarnate Saviour of the world. An examination of Torrance's doctrine of mediation reveals three specific nexuses of "onto-relations" that disclose the identity of Jesus Christ. These are his interrelations with 1) historical Israel, 2) God, and 3) humanity.

In the present thesis, the vast and scattered array of Torrance's thought on the mediation of Jesus Christ is reduced to a minimal number of basic concepts, or "elemental forms," that arise from the nexuses of interrelations that constitute the identity of the incarnate Son. These basic, constitutive concepts of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ are the Nicene *homoousion* and the Chalcedonian doctrine of the hypostatic union, as well as the doctrines of incarnational redemption and the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ. These elemental forms provide a basic, organising framework to examine and explain the mediation of revelation and reconciliation of Jesus Christ in the scientific theology of T.F. Torrance.

Key words: atonement, covenant, epistemology, *homoousion*, hypostatic union, incarnation, kataphysical, mediation, onto-relations, reconciliation, revelation, holism, vicarious humanity

TABLE of CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION 1

2.0 T. F. TORRANCE'S SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY 13

2.1 Introduction 13
2.2 Scientific Theology 16
2.2.1 Critical Realist Epistemology 20
2.2.2 Scientific Methodology 24
2.2.2.1 Kataphysical inquiry 26
2.2.2.2 The Idea of Compulsion 29
2.2.3 The Empirical Correlate of Revelation 30
2.2.4 Relationship between Epistemology and Ontology 33
2.2.4.1 An Epistemological Reserve 34
2.2.4.2 Fluid Dogmatics 36
2.2.5 Faith, Prayer, and Piety in Scientific Theology 38
2.2.5.1 Epistemological Inversion: Repentant Rethinking 38
2.2.5.2 Faith in Relation to Epistemology 40
2.2.5.3 Piety and Prayer in Relation to Epistemology 42
2.3 The Problem of Dualism 43
2.3.1 Cosmological Dualism 45
2.3.1.1 Greek dualism 45
2.3.1.2 Newtonian Deism 46
2.3.1.3 Theological Implications 47
2.3.2 Epistemological Dualism 50
2.3.2.1 René Descartes 50
2.3.2.2 Immanuel Kant 51
2.3.2.3 Theological Implications 53
2.4 A Unitary Vision: The Integration Form and of Being 56
2.4.1 Elemental Forms and Logical Simplicity 58
2.4.2 Theological Holism and Onto-Relationality 63

2.4.3 The Goal of Theology 67
2.5 Summary and Critique 69
2.5.1 Summary 69
2.5.2 Critique 71
2.5.2.1 A Marriage of Convenience? 71
2.5.2.2 Dualism: Ambiguity of Meaning 73
2.5.2.3 An Overly Rational Approach to Faith? 74
2.5.2.4 Theological Fideism? 75
2.5.2.5 Foundationalism and Overruling Presuppositions? 76

3.0 THE WOMB OF THE INCARNATION 83

3.1 Introduction 83
3.2 Old Testament Background 83
3.3 Prehistory of the Mediation of Revelation 86
3.3.1 A Community of Reciprocity 88
3.3.1.1 Double Adaptation of Revelation and Response 89
3.3.1.2 The People of the Voice of the Word of God 92
3.3.2 Intensification of Conflict 93
3.3.3 The Essential Furniture of the Knowledge of God 96
3.4 Prehistory of Mediation of Reconciliation 101
3.4.1 Divine Holiness and Communal Transformation 103
3.4.2 The Covenanted Way of Response 105
3.4.3 Intensification of the Covenant 109
3.4.3.1 The Servant of the Lord 111
3.4.3.2 The New Covenant 113
3.4.3.3 Penetrating the Ontological Depths of Israel 114
3.4.3.4 Israel Elected to Reject the Messiah 115
3.5 Summary and Critique 117
3.5.1 Summary 118
3.5.2 Critique 119
3.5.2.1 Integration of Form and Being in Israel 119

3.5.2.2 Divine Wrath in Israel 120
3.5.2.3 Preparation for the Light Coming into the World 122

4.0 THE NICENE *HOMOOUSION* 124

4.1 Introduction 124
4.2 New Testament Witness 124
4.3 Patristic Background 126
4.3.1 Encounter with Greek Dualism 126
4.3.2 Dualist Christologies 127
4.3.2.1 Ebionite and Docetic Christologies 127
4.3.2.2 The Arian Controversy 129
4.3.3 The Council of Nicaea 131
4.3.3.1 A Scrupulous Reinterpretation 133
4.3.3.2 The Key to Non-dualist Theology 134
4.3.4 The Christianising of Hellenism 136
4.4 Epistemology (Revelation) 140
4.4.1 Epistemological Significance of the *Homoousion* 141
4.4.2 Stratification of the Knowledge of God 145
4.4.2.1 The Evangelical and Doxological Level 146
4.4.2.2 The Theological Level 147
4.4.2.3 The Ontological Trinity 147
4.4.2.4 Perichoresis 148
4.4.2.5 Integration of Theoretical and Empirical Factors 149
4.4.2.6 Economic and Ontological Trinity 150
4.4.2.7 A Unitary, Perichoretic Vision 152
4.4.3 Dualism and Natural Theology 153
4.4.3.1 Analogy of Being: A Logical Bridge 154
4.4.3.2 Epistemological Relevance of *Sola Gratia* 156
4.4.3.3 Creation *ex nihilo* and the Contingent Universe 158
4.4.3.4 Methodological Problems of Natural Theology 160

4.4.3.5 A Proper Place for Natural Theology 162
4.4.3.6 Return to a Unitary Epistemology 166
4.5 Soteriology (Reconciliation) 168
4.5.1 Evangelical Significance of the *Homoousion* 169
4.5.2 Pastoral Implications 171
4.6 Summary and Critique 175

5.0 THE HYPOSTATIC UNION 181

5.1 Introduction 181
5.2 New Testament Witness 183
5.3 Patristic Background 185
5.3.1 Alexandrian Christology and Apollinarianism 188
5.3.2 Antiochene Christology and Nestorianism 190
5.3.3 The Chalcedonian Definition 193
5.3.4 A Unitary Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union 197
5.4 Epistemology (Revelation) 199
5.4.1 Jesus' Humanity and the Mediation of Revelation 200
5.4.2 The Incarnate Word and the Written Word 204
5.4.2.1 Influence of Barth 204
5.4.2.2 A New Community of Reciprocity 206
5.4.2.3 The "Real Text" Underlying Scripture 208
5.4.2.4 Realist Relation between Sign and Signified 210
5.4.3 Jesus' Deity and the Mediation of Revelation 212
5.4.4. Hypostatic Union and the Mediation of Revelation 214
5.5 Soteriology (Reconciliation) 215
5.5.1 Jesus' Humanity and the Mediation of Reconciliation 215
5.5.2 Jesus' Divinity and the Mediation of Reconciliation 220
5.5.3 Hypostatic Union and the Mediation of Reconciliation 221
5.6 Summary and Critique 224

6.0 INCARNATIONAL REDEMPTION 234

6.1 Introduction 234
6.2 The Atonement in Scripture 235
6.3 Major Theories of the Atonement 237
6.3.1 Origen's Ransom Theory 238
6.3.2 Anselm's Satisfaction Theory 238
6.3.3 Abelard's Moral Influence Theory 239
6.3.4 Luther's *Christus Victor* Theory 239
6.3.5 Calvin's Penal Substitution Theory 240
6.3.6 John Hick's Moral Example Theory 240
6.3.7 John McLeod Campbell: The Nature of the Atonement 241
6.3.8 The Mystery of Atoning Reconciliation 245
6.4 Incarnational Reconciliation 247
6.4.1 Assumption of Adamic Flesh 248
6.4.2 The Latin Heresy 253
6.4.3 Unity of Christ's Person and Work 257
6.4.4 The Wonderful Exchange 263
6.4.4.1 *Theopoiesis* 264
6.4.4.2 Range of Atoning Reconciliation 268
6.4.4.3 Atoning Reconciliation and Election 272
6.4.4.4 Universalism and Limited Atonement 277
6.4.4.5 Reprobation 282
6.5 Summary and Critique 284
6.5.1 Summary 284
6.5.2 Critique 291
6.5.2.1 A "Physical Theory" of Redemption? 291
6.5.2.2 The "Fallenness" Debate 292

7.0 THE VICARIOUS HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST 297

7.1 Introduction 297
7.2 Epistemology (Revelation) 298
7.2.1 Jesus Christ: God's Address to Humanity 299
7.2.2 Jesus Christ: Humanity's Perfect Response to God 300

7.3 Soteriology (Reconciliation) 303
7.3.1 The Fulfilment of the Covenanted Way of Response 304
7.3.2 The Whole Course of His Obedience 305
7.3.2.1 Active and Passive Obedience 307
7.3.2.2 Representation and Substitution 311
7.4 Vicarious Humanity and Human Response 314
7.4.1 Faith 314
7.4.1.1 Justification 319
7.4.1.2 Sanctification 322
7.4.1.3 Rejection of *Ordo Salutis* 324
7.4.1.4 *Sola Gratia* 325
7.4.2 Conversion 327
7.4.3 Worship and Prayer 329
7.4.4 Sacraments 333
7.4.4.1 Baptism 334
7.4.4.2 Eucharist 340
7.4.5 Evangelism 345
7.5 Logic of Grace 347
7.6 Summary and Critique 351
7.6.1 Summary 351
7.6.2 Critique 359
7.6.2.1 The Danger of Antinomianism? 360
7.6.2.2 *Pistis Christou*: The Ongoing Debate 361
7.6.2.3 The Subjective Response: A Call for Clarity 362

8.0 CONCLUSION 366

8.1 General Summary 366
8.2 The Order Underlying Torrance's Doctrine of Mediation 371
8.3 Completion of Objectives 374
8.4 Recommendations for Further Study 378

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY 380

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Thomas F. Torrance (1913-2007) is considered by many to be the most outstanding Reformed theologian in the English speaking world (Colyer, 2001a:16). Torrance's theology, including his doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ, is strongly influenced by the methodology of the natural sciences. For Torrance, the basic methodological principle of scientific theology, like that of the natural sciences, is that knowledge in any field of inquiry must be developed according to the nature (*kata physin*) of the reality under study. Thus, the fundamental axiom of Torrance's scientific theological method is that every aspect of its inquiry is governed by, and proceeds in accordance with, the nature of the "object" in question: "God in Jesus Christ as the Truth" (Torrance, 1969a:112, 113; *cf.* 1988a:51; Colyer, 2001a:322).

Because God has given himself to be known in Jesus Christ, for Torrance, "the central and pivotal point of all genuine theological knowledge" is found in christology. Therefore, according to Torrance, scientific theology will operate on a christological basis, for christology is critical to the understanding of the nature of God. Rather than go "behind the back" of Jesus to develop knowledge of God, Torrance argues, christology teaches us to know God in strict accordance with the steps he has taken to make himself known to us and, therefore, to test our knowledge of God in accordance with the steps in which knowledge of him has actually arisen in space and time (Torrance, 1990:71). Hence, for Torrance, the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the "actual source" and "controlling centre" for the Christian doctrine of God (Torrance, 1996a:18). To know God through the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, who is "of one substance with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*) is to know God in strict accordance with God's nature (*kata physin*) and, hence, in a theologically scientific way (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:110-113; 1988a:3, 51, 52).

In addition to the basic methodological principle that knowledge of God must be developed in strict accordance with the divine nature as revealed in Jesus Christ, an important aspect of Torrance's scientific approach to theology is his attempt to reduce a vast amount of theological information to a few "elemental forms," that is, basic concepts that have the effect of illuminating and simplifying an otherwise incomprehensible array of data (Torrance, 1969a:116-119). The elemental forms of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ arise from his kataphysical method,

where theological knowledge is developed "according to the nature" (*kata physin*) of the Object of theological inquiry. A grasp of these constitutive concepts is essential to an understanding of Torrance's overall vision of the mediation of Jesus Christ.

The primary elemental forms of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ are the Nicene *homoousion*, that is, the creedal assertion that Jesus Christ is "of one being (or "nature") with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*), and the doctrine of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ (*cf*. Torrance, 1990:123). For Torrance, the Nicene *homoousion* is the epistemological and ontological "linchpin" of revelation and reconciliation, and, therefore, of the entire enterprise of a Christian scientific theology (Torrance, 1980:160, 161; 1988a:110*ff*; 1996a:30; 1996b:128). In regard to the doctrine of the hypostatic union, because the incarnate Son is both fully divine and fully human, he encompasses both sides of the mediating relationship between God and humanity in his one incarnate person. Thus, for Torrance, the hypostatic union is the "mainstay" of atoning reconciliation between God and humanity and "lies embedded in the very heart of atonement" (Torrance, 1992:56-59; 2008:196).

Another elemental form that constitutes Torrance's vision of the mediation of Christ, and a direct correlate of his doctrine of the hypostatic union, is the all-important "Godward-humanward" movement of "incarnational redemption." In Torrance's unitary theology, the incarnation and the atonement are internally linked: the incarnation is inherently redemptive and redemption is inherently incarnational. Thus, for Torrance, the hypostatic union is not a "static" union of divine and human natures; rather, it is a "dynamic," "atoning" union. Atoning salvation is not an "external" transaction, as in a "forensic" concept of atonement; rather, atoning reconciliation is an "internal," "ontological" reality, occurring "within" the incarnate constitution of the person of Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1986b:476-478; 1988a:155, 159; 1992:62-67).

A final and particularly characteristic feature of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ, and an additional correlate of his doctrine of the hypostatic union, is his important doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ. Here Torrance stresses the "humanward-Godward" movement of atoning reconciliation, wherein the incarnate Son, throughout the whole course of his obedient life, from birth through death, resurrection, and ascension, "vicariously" offers the perfect filial response of faith and obedience to the Father on behalf of, and in the place of, all humanity, in such as way

as to undergird, rather than undermine, the integrity of our own human response to God in faith, repentance, and obedience (Torrance, 1988a:149-154; 1992:73*ff*; 1996b:132; Colyer, 2001a:28, 29).

The coherence of these basic elemental forms is related to another essential aspect of Torrance's thought: his theological "holism." For Torrance, realities, including the subject matter of theology, are not to be investigated in isolation but in the context of the relationships in which they are embedded (Torrance, 1984:215*ff*; 1992:2, 3, 47-50; Colyer, 2001a:55, 56). The holism of Torrance's thought is related to the elemental forms described above, for each basic concept in Torrance's thought is inherently relational. The Nicene *homoousion* describes the Son's eternal, ontological relationship with the Father. The doctrine of the hypostatic union articulates the nature of the relationship between the divine and human natures "in" the one incarnate person of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of "incarnational redemption" connects the incarnation and atonement in a holistic rather than dichotomous manner by asserting the "unity" of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ describes the incarnate Son's relationship with the Father "as man." Thus, an understanding of the constitutive concepts of Torrance's theological vision arises as they are investigated within the nexuses of interrelations that constitute them.

Because the fundamental aspects of reality are relational rather than atomistic, for Torrance, the goal of theology is to investigate and to coherently articulate the essential interrelations embodied in our knowledge of God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, to examine and explain the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ, we must locate him within the nexuses of interrelations that disclose his identity and mission: that is, his interrelations with historical Israel and also his consubstantial relationships with both God and humanity (Torrance, 1992:1-5, 47-50; *cf*. Colyer, 2001a:55-57, 345).

Despite its deeply Nicene and doxological character, Torrance's work has not been as well received as it deserves because of a number of factors. His vast output is not organized in any systematic way. Most of his books are published lectures and collections of essays which lack an overarching "architectonic" that structures his theological vision. In addition, his writings touch on a range of disciplines, including the history and philosophy of science, the history of doctrine, epistemology, and

mathematical logic, as well as the subject matter of both Christian doctrine and the natural sciences. Finally, his writing style is prohibitive. Muller (1985:137) notes "the typical Torrancian problem" of saying relatively simple things in complex and difficult language. Not only does Torrance attempt to convey his thought in lengthy sentences of intricate and complex structure but also his overly compressed prose is dense to the point of obscurity, difficult to follow, much less comprehend, and can leave us awash in a sea of overwhelming abstractions. Because of the difficulties encountered in reading his theology, Torrance is repeatedly misunderstood (Achtemeier, 2001:269; Colyer, 2001a:15, 16; *cf.* Kruger, 1990:371).

An additional factor that contributes to the difficulty and neglect of Torrance's work is the "holistic" vision of his theology. Torrance's integrative, unitary vision of theology does not lend itself to analytical, deductive, discursive and linear forms of thought, as these break up the "dynamic interrelationality" of reality, both created and divine, and are, therefore inadequate. In regard to his trinitarian-christocentric theology, Torrance (1996a:xi) writes:

> [E]xposition must proceed in a circular way, in which understanding of the whole is not built up from a prior grasp of its constituent parts, but in which the whole while understood out of itself is nevertheless understood with subsidiary attention to its parts, and the parts are properly understood in the light of the whole.

Thus, in order to understand Torrance's theological vision, one must reconstruct his thought in a "circular" way by studying his major works, for the "whole" of his thinking can only be grasped by simultaneous attention to the subsidiary parts, while the parts must be interpreted in terms of the whole (*cf.* Colyer, 2001a:17).

Notwithstanding the many difficulties encountered in reading the scientific theology of T. F. Torrance, a number of widely-available books have been published in recent years on Torrance's theology. These include, in order of publication, beginning with the most recent, *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Saviour*, edited by G.S. Dawson; *How to Read T.F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology,* by E.M Colyer; *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T.F. Torrance*, edited by E.M. Colyer, and *T.F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography,* by A.E. McGrath. Another recently published book not frequently referenced in the present thesis, is *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, by P.D Molnar.

Written for an academic audience, the most recent book on Torrance's theology is *Thomas Torrance's Mediations and Revelation*, by Titus Chung (2011). Perhaps the most helpful part of this excellent book is the Chapter on "dualism and the eclipse of divine revelation," wherein Chung facilitates an understanding of Torrance's critique of the pervasive dualisms of Western scientific and theological thought. Chung also offers a relatively brief but helpful discussion of Torrance's view of historic Israel as the "womb of the incarnation." Because Chung is concerned to address "multiple mediations" of revelation, however, including the communion of the Holy Spirit, scripture, Church, sacraments, and creation, he devotes only one Chapter to the mediation of Jesus Christ and, thereby, leaves room for new, more in-depth work on this important aspect of Torrance's theology.

In addition to the aforementioned books, a number of recent doctoral theses have made significant contributions to the ongoing study of Torrance's theology. Five recent theses have made important contributions to the completion of the present work and are frequently referenced herein. Cass (2008) explores the "received theological tradition" of T.F. Torrance, from John Knox and older Scots theology through the rise of federal theology and the consequent protest of the "Evangelical Calvinists," including John McLeod Campbell, who significantly influenced Torrance's doctrine of the atonement, particularly in regard to the intrinsic connection Torrance sees between the incarnation and the atonement. After exploring Torrance's doctrine of "ontological healing" and its relation to the biblical teaching that Christ condemned sin in the flesh, Cass explores the ecumenical significance of Torrance's doctrine of atonement through a "conversation" on soteriology between Torrance and Leon Morris, Vladimir Lossky, and Walter Kasper. Because he devotes only one Chapter to an examination and explanation of Torrance's doctrine of "ontological healing," Cass leaves room for further in depth discussion Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ, particularly in regard to Torrance's primary "christological tools," that is, the Nicene *homoousion* and the Chalcedonian hypostatic union. Cass also devotes relatively little attention to the doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ, a doctrine that constitutes a major dimension of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ.

Ho (2008) has written a "critical study" with the purpose of exploring and examining various themes of Torrance's "incarnational theology." In our view, this work is overly

critical, particularly in regard to what we regard as unjustified claims of foundationalism (Ho, 2008:24-28) and a lack of internal consistency in Torrance's writings (Ho, 2008:1). Ho supports the former claim by drawing on the earlier criticism of Thiemann (1985:40) and the latter by arguing that Torrance rejects then later accepts natural theology. Ho (2008:2) also asserts that Torrance's scientific theology is not about science but about faith. We regard these assertions as unfounded and will address them below. Like Chung, Ho provides an in depth discussion of revelation in relation to the incarnation, yet he does not integrate this discussion with the mediation of reconciliation. Moreover, given his other concerns (*i.e.*., hermeneutics, dialectics, natural theology, and natural science), Ho's discussion of the role of Israel, the *homoousion*, hypostatic union, and vicarious humanity are necessarily brief, so that he leaves room for further in-depth discussion of these important constitutive concepts of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ.

Gill (2007) has written an excellent exposition of Torrance's doctrine of revelation and the theological epistemology that emerges from it. Emphasising an "epistemology of grace," Gill notes that, for Torrance, personal knowledge of God is available only through Jesus Christ; yet, Gill argues, Torrance also finds a place for scripture and nature in revelation. Moreover, Gill examines Torrance's scientific method with regard to its preference for "ontology over epistemology." In addition to exploring the epistemological significance of justification by grace, Gill examines Torrance's non-dualist, critical realist epistemology. Given the nature of his subject matter, Gill discusses at length Barth's and Torrance's position on natural theology and its relation to the natural sciences, the relationship between scripture and revelation, and the problem of epistemological dualism. Like Chung and Ho, Gill focuses primarily on revelation, thereby leaving room for an examination and explanation of the mediation of revelation *and* reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Given the nature of his subject mattter, Gill does not offer an in-depth discussion of the role of Israel in mediation, the *homoousion*, hypostatic union, or the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ.

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Scandrett (2006) examines Torrance's theology in relation to the question of divine suffering, particularly in regard to the "methodological commitments" of Torrance's theology and his "affirmations" regarding divine suffering. In addition to an examination of Torrance's view of the person of Christ, Scandrett examines Torrance's view of Israel as the "social coefficient of knowledge." Scandrett also explores the role

of suffering in Israel, leading to Torrance's view of the suffering servant and its relationship to Christ. Finally, Scandrett reviews Torrance's critique of the tradition of divine impassibility in light of what Torrance regards as its flawed *a priori* assumptions. Given his emphasis on divine suffering in relation to Torrance's theology, Scandrett leaves ample room for further discussion of Torrance's view of the unitary movement of revelation and reconciliation in the mediation of Christ.

Beginning with the "modernist argument" that human persons are free to determine their own personal being, Bevan (2002) examines "what constitutes the being of the human person" in Torrance's theology. According to Bevan, Torrance maintains that the being of the human person is determined both in relation to others and in relation to God, who is the objective ground of our existence. Bevan identifies three important themes in Torrance's "post-modern realist" view of human personhood: critical realism, christology, and epistemology. Because he is concerned with the meaning of personhood in Torrance's theology, Bevan leaves room for further discussion of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Christ.

Several other doctoral theses on various aspects of Torrance's theology have also been helpful in the completion of the present thesis. Hanna (2004) addresses the problem of the use of science in theology and compares Torrance's "christocentric-dialogical" model with the "cosmocentric-dialectical" model of Langdon B. Gilkey. Luoma (2002), whose book is a published version of his doctoral thesis, examines Torrance's theology in relation to the natural sciences. Following an overview of Torrance's insights into the dialogue between theology and the natural sciences, Luoma presents a critical study of Torrance's "Christological model," evaluating its significance for the relationship between theology and natural science. Luoma also examines Torrance's interpretation of important scientists, including Newton and Einstein, and assesses the role religion played in their thought. Both Hanna and Luoma are concerned primarily with the relationship between theological science and the natural sciences, particularly physics. Morrison (1997), whose excellent and thorough book is the published version of his doctoral thesis, explores Torrance's theology in regard to revelation and the possibility of the knowledge of God. From the outset, Morrison notes Torrance's methodological axiom that scientific theology seeks knowledge of its object of inquiry in the way the object has given itself to be known "as it is in itself." For Torrance, as Morrison notes, God has made himself objectively known in Jesus Christ, who is "the given" which the

theologian must serve in order to facilitate further theological expression appropriate to the object of scientific theological inquiry. Morrison explores the "epistemologico-cosmologico-theological core" of Torrance's thought against the entrenched dualism of Western thought. Finally, Morrison asserts that true objectivity (versus objectivism), critical realist epistemology, the role of belief, assent to truth, and the crucial role of language that is appropriate to the object are important aspects of Torrance's epistemology. Stratton's (1997) work on the relation between theology and the natural sciences contains an excellent overview of Torrance's scientific theological method. Martin (1995) argues for an "incarnational theological" approach built upon the post-critical epistemology of Michael Polanyi and the scientific theology of T.F. Torrance in a quest for a rational framework which can serve as a theological and scientific basis for Christian education. Finally, Kruger's (1989) excellent work examines Torrance's claim that the nature of our knowledge of God is an actual participation on our part in the self-knowing of the Holy Trinity. Kruger also presents an excellent discussion of Torrance's view of Israel as the "womb of the incarnation." Of particular interest to Kruger is how Torrance envisages our knowledge of God to have been fulfilled in Christ's mediatorial work. Other doctoral theses on Torrance that have been consulted in the completion of the present work and cited herein include Habets (2009), Yeung (1993), Richardson (1991), Kettler (1986), Miller (1986), Stamps (1986), and Trook (1986).

Despite the scope and quality of the aforementioned works, a need remains for a systematic, coherent presentation of T.F. Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As Chung (2011:xv) rightly notes, Torrance's doctrine of revelation is not an unfamiliar theme to his readers; yet, it has attracted less attention than it deserves, largely because the wide diversity of Torrance's thought has led to studies with varied foci. Because Chung's recent book on Torrance, however, focuses primarily on revelation and epistemology (as does Morrison's older work), he leaves room for new work on the mediation of revelation *and* reconciliation, particularly in light of Torrance's assertion that revelation and reconciliation are intimately and inseparably intertwined in the "two-fold" (*i.e.* Godward-humanward and humanward-Godward) but "unitary" movement of mediation in Jesus Christ (*cf.* Torrance, 1986b:479; 1992:56, 57, 73). As Gill (2007:51) rightly notes, the unity of revelation and reconciliation which Torrance found in Barth's writing is central to Torrance's theology. Hence, there is a gap in the literature on Torrance's theology in

regard to a systematic, coherent presentation of Torrance's doctrine of revelation *and* reconciliation in the two-fold but unitary movement of the mediation of Jesus Christ. The present thesis is intended to fill that gap by addressing the themes of revelation and reconciliation in Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ in terms of the elemental forms or basic constitutive concepts central to his christology, while remaining faithful to the fundamental axiom of his scientific theology.

The central question of this work, therefore, is: "How may one address the themes of revelation and reconciliation in Torrance's vision of the mediation of Christ in terms of the elemental forms or basic concepts central to his christology, while remaining faithful to the fundamental axiom of his scientific theology?" The questions that naturally arise from this problem are:

- How does the epistemology and methodology of the natural sciences influence Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ?

- What is the role of ancient Israel in Torrance's understanding of revelation and reconciliation in the mediation of Christ?

- What is the epistemological (revelation) and evangelical (reconciliation) significance of the Nicene *homoousion* in Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ?

- What is the relationship of the hypostatic union of the two natures of Jesus Christ to revelation and reconciliation in Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ?

- What is the relationship between the incarnation and the atonement in Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ?

- What is Torrance's doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ and how does it relate to the mediation of Christ?

The aim of this thesis is to address the themes of revelation and reconciliation in Torrance's vision of the mediation of Jesus Christ in terms of the elemental forms or basic concepts central to his christology, such as the *homoousion* and the hypostatic union, while remaining faithful to the fundamental axiom of his scientific theology.

The objectives of this study must be seen in their relationship to the aim. Therefore, I intend to approach the subject from the following angles:

- To evaluate the epistemology and methodology of Torrance's scientific theology and its relation to the mediation of Jesus Christ.

- To evaluate Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ in the matrix of Israel and its relation to revelation and reconciliation.

- To evaluate Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ in regard to the inner nature of God, that is, in terms of the Nicene *homoousion* and its relation to the mediation of revelation and reconciliation.

- To evaluate Torrance's understanding of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures of the one incarnate person of Jesus Christ and its relation to the mediation of revelation and reconciliation.

- To evaluate the relationship between the incarnation and the atonement in regard to Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ.

- To evaluate Torrance's understanding of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ and its relation to the mediation of Christ.

The central theoretical argument of this study is that Torrance's vision of the mediation of Jesus Christ can be best approached in a scientifically theological way by addressing the elemental forms or basic concepts of his christology as they relate to the overarching themes of revelation and reconciliation.

The aim and objectives, as identified above, will be approached from a framework that may be described as ecumenical, non-denominational, trinitarian-incarnational theology. In an effort to ensure that the findings of this dissertation are not subject to unfounded accusations of prejudice, I propose to give due recognition to the works of those whose theological sympathies do not necessarily lie within its remit. In so doing, I intend to:

- Research the relevant primary and secondary literature relating to Torrance's scientific theological method;

- Research relevant Old and New Testament writings as well as the relevant primary and secondary literature related to Torrance's understanding of the place of Israel in the mediation of Christ;

- Research relevant New Testament writings, the patristic understanding of the Nicene *homoousion*, and the relevant primary and secondary literature related to Torrance's understanding of the epistemological and evangelical significance of the Nicene *homoousion*;

- Research the patristic understanding of the hypostatic union as well as the relevant primary and secondary literature related to Torrance's understanding of the epistemological and evangelical significance of the hypostatic union;

- Research relevant Old and New Testament writings related to the atonement, review major theories of the atonement in the history of theology, and research the relevant primary and secondary literature related to Torrance's view of incarnational redemption;

- Research the relevant primary and secondary literature related to Torrance's understanding of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ.

2.0 T. F. TORRANCE'S SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Thomas F. Torrance (1913-2007) is widely regarded, particularly outside Great Britain, as the most important British academic theologian of the twentieth century. As one of the leading theologians in the dialogue between theology and the philosophy of science, he is especially noted for his contribution to the study of the relationship between Christian theology and the natural sciences. He is one of few major theologians to have edited seminal, technical scientific writings. The most persistent theme in Torrance's work, and the one for which he is chiefly known, is the question of the proper interface of theology and science (Neidhardt, 1989:87*ff*; Colyer, 2001a:15; Grenz, 2004:201; McGrath, 1999:xi). As Stratton (1997:244) notes, Torrance's work is one of the more admirable attempts to bring theology and science together into a harmonious worldview.

In 1950, Torrance became Professor of Church History at New College, University of Edinburgh, and two years later moved to the chair of Christian Dogmatics, holding that position until his retirement in 1979. While at New College, Torrance began a serious study of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (1957a:1*ff*). Torrance was influenced by Barth's conception of dogmatics as a "critical science" in its own right, which, for Barth, entailed the critical scientific self-examination of the Church's dogma, or doctrinal formulations, in the light of the objective datum of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (Colyer, 2001b:ix). Torrance's interest in the relationship between theology and natural science was furthered by his personal interaction with Karl Barth, in whose theology Torrance has long been interested (Torrance, 1990:121*ff*). With Professor Geoffrey Bromiley of Fuller Theological Seminary (USA), Torrance co-edited all thirteen volumes of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, a twenty-year project completed in 1972 (D. Torrance, 2001:24). As Chung (2011:63, 68) notes, Torrance is indebted to Barth on "at least two scores" that eventually became hallmarks of his scientific theology: 1) the conviction that theology is a discipline of science in its own right, and 2) that a scientific theology is entirely a science of God's revelation and mediation in Jesus Christ. In Barth, Torrance found a Reformed theological structure that would allow him to relate theology to science in a profound way.

While Torrance appreciated the scientific rigor of Barth's approach in *Church Dogmatics*, however, he regarded it as little more than a formal science that fell short of what he was seeking (Torrance, 1990:123). As Colyer (2001a:23, n.25) notes, by "formal science" Torrance refers to Barth's approach, wherein theology is defined as a "formal process" of critically testing Christian doctrine in the light of Jesus Christ, the objective datum of God's revelation. In distinction to Barth, Torrance argues that theological science is primarily concerned to articulate the realities and inherent *relations* of God's self-revelation in the economy of salvation. These realties and their interconnections determine the character of theology as a particular science. As Gill (2007:63) notes, Torrance's placement of theology among the sciences derives from his understanding of God's revelation in Christ. Just as science proceeds by the examination of a given reality (*cf.* below), Torrance's scientific theology proceeds by an examination of God's self-revelation in Christ. Because God has given himself to be known in the material space-time universe in Jesus Christ, for Torrance, notes Gill (2007:65), a christological theology "is" a scientific theology. In response to the postmodern shift in science (*cf.* below), Torrance develops what Hanna (2004:9) accurately describes as a "Christocentric-dialogical model" for the use of science in theology. That is, in distinction from Barth's separation of theology from other sciences, Torrance develops a christological model of theology that engages in dialogue with knowledge of the cosmos in other sciences (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:249, 250).

While Torrance was influenced by Barth's theology, his reading of it was not uncritical. Torrance's academic career was flourishing in the 1960s, a time of cultural turmoil when many theologians sought to reinterpret Christian theology in the light of contemporary interests and convictions. Barth's contribution was to call the Church to root its theological understanding in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ rather than in an inevitably transient *Zeitgeist*. The merit of Barth's approach, as Torrance understood it, was to ground theology in its proper source in the self-revelation of God in the incarnate Son. Yet the problem that accompanied Barth's approach was a disturbing fissure between theology and the cultural milieu in which it was expressed. In this respect, Torrance's contribution was to bring theology into dialogue with the natural sciences and, thereby, establish a connection with a key element of contemporary culture (Clark, 2007-2008:6, 7).

In 1976-77, Torrance served as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In 1978, he was awarded the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion. In addition, Torrance co-founded the *Scottish Journal of Theology* with the Rev. Professor J.K.S. Reid, which Torrance edited for more than thirty years. As one of the most prolific theologians of our time, Torrance has written over thirty books and several hundred articles (Colyer, 2001a:15; McGrath, 1999:xi). (For a complete bibliography of Torrance's publications, *cf.* McGrath, 1999:249*ff.*)

While Torrance may be rightly regarded as a "theologian's theologian," he was a humble and godly disciple of Jesus Christ. He was involved in the ecumenical movement under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and, as a result of his ongoing dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Church, was made an honorary presbyter, both in the Greek Orthodox Church and in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Ever committed to the Church and its proclamation of the Gospel, in 1994, at the age of eighty, Torrance returned to his childhood home in the remote Minshan mountains of the Wenchuan area of China, carrying money to the indigenous Qiang people to be used to rebuild churches destroyed by the communists (Colyer, 2001a:1, 2, 47).

While Torrance was widely known throughout his career for his interest in the relation between theology and the natural sciences, a number of Torrance's works, arguably his greatest, were published relatively late in his long life, after the end of his formal academic career. These books are concerned primarily with the nature of God, particularly as revealed in the economy of salvation in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. Among his most compelling books (at least for the present writer) are: *The Mediation of Christ* (1983; *rev. ed.* 1992), which introduces readers to a number of important themes in Torrance's christocentric theology, including his understanding of Israel as "the womb of the incarnation" and his vision of the one simultaneous activity of revelation and reconciliation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ; *The Trinitarian Faith* (1988a), which, as its subtitle indicates, is a thoroughly evangelical exposition of the ancient catholic faith as expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, as well as an excellent introduction to the patristic roots of Torrance's theology, especially as found in Athanasius; *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (1990), which describes Torrance's relation to his great teacher and introduces Torrance's own theological vision; and his last book, one that has been regarded as his masterpiece, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (1996a). Published when Torrance was in his early eighties,

this book is a thorough articulation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity grounded in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, implicit in the New Testament and articulated in the doxology and theology of the early Church. This important work should serve as a classic treatise on the Holy Trinity well into the third millennium (and perhaps beyond). These late works, combining the intellectual rigor of the accomplished theologian with the compassionate heart of the son of Scottish missionary parents, reveal the doxological, evangelical, and thoroughly christocentric character of Torrance's theology.

2.2 Scientific Theology

T.F. Torrance brings a new dimension to theological method with his emphasis on the objective, scientific character of theology. The dialogue between the natural sciences and theology, and its bearing on theological method, has long been of crucial importance for Torrance. Among evangelical theologians, he is highly regarded by his peers for his integration of rigorous scientific theological method with the evangelical, trinitarian-christocentric content of Christian faith and theology. Beginning with his graduate studies and continuing throughout his career, the subject of scientific method has remained at the centre of his work (Colyer, 2001b:205, 206; Hanna, 2004:52-55).

The purpose of Torrance's theological science is to facilitate a convergence of the creative and redemptive activity of Jesus Christ. Because there is no true knowledge of God and the world apart from Jesus Christ, Torrance regards theology as the partner to the natural sciences (Ho, 2008:20). The partnership between theology and the natural sciences arises from what Trook (1986:182, 183) calls the "unconfused inseparability" of the God-world relation, wherein God is the source of all rational unity and, therefore, the *sine qua non* of scientific inquiry. According to Trook, this relation is hierarchical, with natural science "indefinitely open upward" to theological science, from whence comes its "rational coherence" and "ultimate meaning." Nevertheless, notes Trook, the "vectorial movements" of theology and natural science run in different directions: one inquiring into the transcendent source and ground of reality, the other inquiring into its contingent nature and pattern (*cf*. Torrance, 1976b:180; 1980a:144, 145). As Morrison (1997:61) notes, Torrance repeatedly emphasises that theological science, like the natural sciences, operates with the space-time creation, where science penetrates into the inherent rationality of what is objectively real and to be known out of itself.

Scientific theology pursues its task of clarification and explanation within the "world of concrete actualities," for it is not apart from them that God has made himself known (*cf*. Torrance, 1971:113; 1972:233).

As Martin (1995:201) argues, the bulk of Torrance's scholarship "is dedicated to the theological grounding of the epistemological correlation of natural science and theology in the exposition of the contents of Christian faith." According to Martin, Torrance has devoted his life to an explication of the "objective intelligibility" of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, the relation of human intelligence to that objective intelligibility, and its expression in Christian faith and tradition. As Chung (2011:62) rightly notes, the "core engagement" in Torrance's theological science is the independent reality of God and the authority of the givenness of God's self-revelation. As God is the object of theological knowledge, scientific theology is a "cognitive response" to God in obedience to the demands of his objective reality and gracious self-revelation. In short, notes Chung, Torrance's theological science is "the science of God's revelation and mediation in Christ."

Torrance was a member of both the International Academy of Religious Sciences, where he served as President for many years, and the International Academy of the Philosophy of Sciences, an organization consisting primarily of scientists, mathematicians, and physicists. His book, *Theological Science*, regarded by Chung (2011:62) as Torrance's magnum opus and by Stratton (1997:245) as the most sustained treatment of Torrance's theological method, received a Collins Award in Great Britain for the best work in theology, ethics, and sociology relevant to Christianity in 1967-1969 (Colyer, 2001a:15, 46). In this award-winning book, Torrance (1969a:v-viii), describes "scientific theology" as "active engagement in that cognitive relation to God in obedience to the demands of His reality and self-giving." For Torrance, scientific theology seeks to bring knowledge of God into clear focus, unobscured by the "opacity" of the human mind, in order to "allow God's own eloquent self-evidence to sound through to us in His Logos so that we may know and understand Him out of His own rationality and under the determination of His divine being." Later in the book, Torrance (1969a:281) describes theology as "a dogmatic, or positive and independent, science operating on its own ground and in accordance with the inner law of its own being, developing its distinctive modes of inquiry and its essential forms of thought under the determination of its given subject-matter."

For Torrance, notes Gill (2007:143), theology is a "dogmatic" science. In fact, all disciplines that can be rightly described as sciences are "dogmatic sciences." Although the popular use of the term "dogmatic" has negative connotations, notes Gill, and is regarded as an authoritative assertion without supporting evidence, for Torrance, "dogmatics" simply refers to the kind of "systematic knowledge" developed by thinkers who ask questions of the world as they find it (*cf.* Torrance, 1980a:50). According to Torrance (1964:154), "dogmatics" refers to "the positive science in which we bring to view the basic forms of theological thinking in accordance with which we are compelled to think." As Torrance notes elsewhere (1972:236), a "dogmatic science" is one in which knowledge "is forced upon us by the nature and structure of reality as it comes to light under our inquiries," and to which we give positive assent and ascribe universal validity. According to Torrance, it was the "positive" character of this knowledge and its formulation in "laws of nature" that the term "dogmatic" was intended to express. In regard to the mediation of Jesus Christ, "dogmatics" is "the actual knowledge of the living God as he is disclosed to us through his interaction with us in our world of space and time—knowledge of that God that is ultimately controlled by the nature of God as he is in himself" (Torrance, 1980a:15, 16).

For Torrance, theology is "the *unique* science devoted to knowledge of God, differing from other sciences by the uniqueness of its object which can be apprehended only on its own terms and from within the actual situation it has created in our existence in making itself known." Scientific theological thinking does not arise from a centre within ourselves or from axiomatic assumptions we make in regard to the nature of God. "*Theo*-logical" thinking arises, rather, from a centre in God and is possible only because it really is God who is the object of our inquiry and the "ground and possibility" of all our knowledge of him (Torrance, 1969a:281). For Torrance, as Gill (2007:58) notes, theological statements are the product of God's sovereign self-revelation and do not arise from ourselves. There is always an "essential inadequacy" in our expression of theological truths, for their Truth does not reside in themselves but in God.

Because God is the "object" of our inquiry, there is an "ultimate objectivity" and a "contingent objectivity" in theological science that corresponds respectively to the transcendence and immanence of God. The objectivity of theological science is

"ultimate" because it is the transcendent God who encounters us as "object." It is "contingent" because God makes himself known through the "structured objectivities" of the world, while distinguishing himself from them. For Torrance, this "bi-polarity" or "bi-focality" of its object of inquiry is the "baffling element" in theological knowledge and constitutes the uniqueness of theological science, for "it arises from the unique nature of the Object and the way He has taken in making Himself the object of our knowledge." In the natural sciences, both subject and object exist within the same space-time realm of creaturely or material reality. In theological science, however, subject and object exist in different realms. Thus, as Torrance insists, God can only be known "in His utter difference from us," and only "where He encounters us within the sphere of our contingent existence." In other words, as Chung notes, our knowledge of God hinges on the fact that God, in his ultimate objectivity, has condescended to enter our creaturely existence as the contingent objectivity of theological science. For Torrance, the essential difference between the kind of inquiry apposite to theological science and the kind of inquiry apposite to the natural sciences rests upon the unique way in which God, the Object of scientific inquiry, has given himself to be known. "This is the way of Grace," notes Torrance, "for we know God only through his sovereign and unconditionally free self-giving. … [I]t is only out of pure Grace that God gives Himself to be the object of our knowing and thinking." Thus, as Chung rightly notes, God cannot be the object of scientific (*i.e.*, "empirical") verification or demonstration (Torrance, 1969a:298, 299; Chung, 2011:81). In light of Torrance's emphasis on "grace" in God's self-revelation, we believe Gill (2007:58), rightly noting Torrance's emphasis on the "objectivity of revelation," overstates the case in asserting that Torrance "comes closes to giving the impression" that God is the "object" of scientific inquiry and, therein, "is in danger of giving God into our hands."

The reader who approaches the scientific theology of T.F. Torrance hoping to find "proofs" of the existence of God or new empirical evidence for the resurrection will be disappointed, for as Babcock (1971:117) notes, Torrance's use of the word, "science," may be misleading. In his review of *Theological Science* (Torrance, 1969a), Babcock rightly notes that Torrance does not attempt yet another reconciliation between the findings of natural science and the findings of theology. Rather, Torrance attempts quite the opposite in that he seeks to show what makes theology a science in its own right, that is, "a method of inquiry with its own appropriate procedures and processes of thought." Torrance's scientific theology does not seek to "establish" or "prove" its

object; rather, it seeks to show how theology is to be done under control of its object of inquiry.

According to Ho (2008:19), Torrance's use of the word "science" is reflected in the German word *wissenschaftlich*, which "carries a meaning of truthful undertaking of a rigorous and disciplined inquiry of the object according to its unique nature" (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:116, 117). For Torrance, "science" is "the knowledge we reach of things in any field under the compulsion of their independent reality, in controlled reference to their inherent nature, and formulated in the light of their internal relations." That is, "science" refers to "the kind of knowledge we get when we seek to know something strictly in accordance with its own nature and activity." Thus, "science" is not developed according to *a priori* assumptions and "imposed as law" upon the nature of the object of inquiry, for as Torrance argues, "nature must be courted, not imposed upon" (Torrance, 1972:234; 1980a:9, 16). In describing theology as a "science," argues Achtemeier (2001:271), Torrance uses the term in a broad sense to describe an investigative discipline whose goal is to faithfully and accurately expound the "intelligible structure" (*i.e.,* "nature") of the object of inquiry. Whereas the natural sciences focus their investigations on the features of the created order, the science of Christian theology focuses upon God's self-disclosure in the history of Israel, particularly as it culminates in the life, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ.

2.2.1 Critical Realist Epistemology

In regard to the knowledge of God in general, and the mediation of Christ in particular, Torrance adopts a "Christian realist epistemology," that is, a "biblical and scientific realism" that has been called his "greatest contribution to the theological life and mission of the Church for ages to come." For Torrance, we can have real and accurate knowledge of things outside ourselves, including real and accurate knowledge of Jesus Christ (Kelly, 2007:75). Like Barth, notes Gill (2007:51), Torrance adopts an "actualist" position toward divine revelation; that is, he does not begin with the "possibility" of revelation but with its "actuality." Torrance's position is grounded in "how" God has revealed himself, not on speculation as to how God "might" reveal himself (*cf.* Torrance, 1996a:199).

In his typically tortuous fashion, Torrance describes "realism" as "an epistemic orientation of the two-way relation between the subject and object poles of thought and speech, in which ontological primacy and control are naturally accorded to reality over all our conceiving and speaking of it" (Torrance, 1982:60). His conception of an "ontological primacy" appears to be a "realist" assertion that the object of inquiry has a reality that is independent of the human subjective pole and open to scientific investigation.

As McGrath (1999:217) argues, Torrance's view of the correspondence between reality and knowledge is perhaps best described as "critical realism," a position which is currently gaining increasing support in theological circles. Noting that critical realism is "realism *subject to* critique," New Testament scholar N.T. Wright (1992:35) describes critical realism as:

> [A] way of … "knowing" that acknowledges the *reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower* (hence "realism"), while also fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of *appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known* (hence "critical"). This path leads to critical reflection on the products of our enquiry into "reality," so that our assertions about "reality" acknowledge their own provisionality. Knowledge, in other words, although in principle concerning realities independent of the knower, is never itself independent of the knower.

Realism takes note of the role of human perception in the process of knowing, but not to the extent that belief in the independent reality of the object of knowledge is diminished (*cf*. Luoma, 2002:63).

Critical realism arose in the United States in the early twentieth century as a rejection of an "idealist" over-emphasis on human consciousness and experience. Realism makes the common sense claim that realities exist independently of human perception. At its core, realism rejects the idealist insistence that *esse est percipi* ("to exist is to be perceived"), asserting, instead, that an object may exist apart from being perceived. Critical realism concedes to idealism that whenever something is perceived, it is an object of the mind; however, it does not follow that a given reality has no existence except in being perceived. Critical realism takes note of the Kantian emphasis on human perception (*cf*. below), yet argues that, even though reality may be conceptually mediated, it does not follow that our concepts or apperceptions constitute reality. Theological realism, as embraced by Torrance, is committed to the view that the object of religious experience and inquiry (*i.e.,* God) exists independently of human

experience. In acknowledging an independent reality beyond our control, there is a basic humility associated with theological realism, wherein human experience is not the sole arbiter of what is real (Patterson, 1999:12-14; Padgett, 2002:186, 187; *cf.* Achtemeier, 1996:355). Einstein referred to this basic humility as "the religious disposition of science" (Martin, 1995:181).

For Torrance, notes McGrath (1999:211, 212), knowledge represents a genuine disclosure to the mind of that which is objectively real. In both scientific theology and the natural sciences, knowledge has its "ontological foundations in objective reality." Theological science and the natural sciences share a common commitment to a realist epistemology in responding in a manner appropriate to the nature of their respective objects of inquiry. According to Luoma (2002:61), Torrance's critical realist epistemology can be viewed as a counterreaction to those philosophical viewpoints that tend to "drop reality in its ontological depths out of bounds of scientific inquiry," particularly "observationalism" and "phenomenalism." Realism does not attempt to investigate observations or phenomena of reality, but reality itself, which is believed to be "approachable." For Torrance, notes Luoma, without this realist attitude, wherein knowledge conforms to the nature of the object of inquiry, there is no genuinely *scientific* thinking (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:37, 38).

For Torrance, science is not something to be set against our ordinary and natural experience but is, rather, "a development and refinement of it, a deeper and deeper penetration into the rational order with which we already operate in normal behaviour within the universe" (Torrance, 1972:234). Torrance's critical realism accords with "common sense." In everyday experience the human mind operates in such a way that we are able to distinguish between ourselves as knowing subjects and the objects of our knowledge. In common discourse, we employ ideas or words to represent the realities they signify, so that ordinary communication is possible. Our attention is not focused on the words we use; rather, it is focused on the realties to which they refer. Hence, for Torrance, the natural operations of the human mind appear to be "realist" (Torrance, 1982:58). Moreover, Torrance insists that knowledge is not centred in the rational human subject only, for there is a "universal rationality" or inherent intelligibility woven into the fabric of the cosmos by its Creator. Because the universe exists not only *in intellectu*, but also *in re*, our mental operations are coordinated with patterns and structures in the universe that are independent of us. Realities are not merely the

conceptual constructs of the human mind; rather, there is a noetic component or "immanent rationality" to things that makes their intrinsic intelligibility accessible to human knowing. As we engage these realities, we become recipients and channels of their "inherent rationality." Hence, our images and concepts are tools of discovery rather than tools of creation; that is, realities are discovered, not invented (Torrance, 1985:3; *cf*. Patterson, 1999:14, 17).

Martin (1995:201) neatly constructs the essential framework of a realist epistemology in both the natural sciences and scientific theology: 1) human knowledge rests upon a disposition of openness to reality; 2) an intrinsic correspondence exists between the human mind and the "structures" of the universe, and 3) the created order is open to and contingent upon a transcendent and more fundamental reality.

Like philosophy, theology operates within a dialectical tension between realism and idealism; that is, theology engages in a movement between the object of inquiry and thought about it. Classical realism holds that all knowledge arises out of actual experience with a given reality; yet, it also recognizes that there are both "inward" and "outward" aspects to our actual experience. The crucial problem for "realist" epistemology is to assert how we can distinguish independent objective reality from our experience of it. As Torrance asks, "How do we know that the God whom we know in our minds has existence apart from our mental knowledge of him, that 'God' is anything more than an empty 'idea' in our minds?" In answer, Torrance's "realist" theology takes as its fundamental proposition that God "is"; that is to say, God has a reality independent of our knowledge of him, a reality made known to us "concretely" in the historical encounter with Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Torrance, 1990: 52, 53). Torrance (1990:53, 54) writes:

> It is in that encounter that we learn that the objective act of God upon us in the freedom of his Spirit is to be distinguished from our inward subjective conditions, and that the God who meets us face to face in Jesus Christ is ... the living God who really comes to us from beyond us and acts upon us in the midst of all the other actualities and objectivities of our historical and natural existence.

In simpler terms, Torrance's theological realism insists that, in apprehending Jesus Christ, we do, in fact, apprehend God, not merely ideas about God (Purves, 2001:71).

Against all forms of idealism, wherein an encounter with God is reduced to mere subjective experience, Torrance argues that we must "let God be God"; that is, we must

let knowledge of God be grounded in God's objective self-revelation in Christ and the Spirit. Against any "Pelagian" claim on the part of human reason to be able to acquire knowledge of God on its own, we must allow all our ideas about God to be called into question by God's objective self-revelation in time and space. Proper theological questions must be shaped by "the nature of God who gives himself to us in sheer grace and remains sovereignly free in his transcendent Lordship over all thoughts of him and over all our formulations of the understanding he gives us of himself in his Word" (Torrance, 1990:57).

Torrance argues for a realist approach to knowledge of God, wherein the knower participates in Christ's own knowledge of God. God has given himself to be known through Jesus Christ and this knowledge is actualized in us by the Holy Spirit. Our knowledge of God arises as we share in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father in the Spirit; that is, we partake of God's own "self-knowledge" (Kruger, 1989:10; 1990:368). This sharing in the knowledge that God has of himself is made possible through the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his mediation of the Spirit of the Father and the Son (Torrance, 1988a:54). According to Torrance (1988a:55):

> In Jesus Christ God has embodied in our human existence the mutual knowledge which the Father and the Son have of one another and in the Holy Spirit he gives us communion in the mutual relation of the Father and the Son and thus makes us share in the knowledge which the Father and the Son have of one another. To express it the other way around, through Jesus Christ we are given access to the Father in one Spirit [*cf.* Eph 2:18].

As Purves (2001:71) notes, to participate in the knowledge which the Father and Son have of each other requires a sanctification of the mind and language as they are brought into closer conformity to the reality of God revealed in Christ. That is, we must transcend all cognitive distortions of the knowledge of God in order to apprehend the reality of God independently of received language and culture, so that our minds may be transformed by the trinitarian pattern of God's revelation of himself in Christ. This is the *sine qua non* for knowledge of God.

2.2.2 Scientific Methodology

Torrance's realist, scientific approach to theology reaches back to the theologians of ancient Alexandria, particularly Clement (*c.* 150 – *c.* 215), Athanasius (*c.* 296 – 373), and John Philoponos (490 – 570) (McGrath, 1999:209). In the Alexandrian tradition, according to Torrance, "[p]recise, scientific knowledge was held to result from inquiry

strictly in accordance with the nature (*kata physin*) of the reality being investigated, that is, knowledge of it being reached under the constraint of what it actually and essentially is in itself, and not according to arbitrary convention." This was a "positive" approach to theology, wherein answers to theological inquiry were governed by the nature of the reality under study. In accord with the Alexandrian fathers, Torrance asserts that to know things in strict accordance with their nature is "the only way to reach real, exact or scientific knowledge in any field of inquiry, through the faithful assent of the mind to the compelling ... claims of reality upon it" (Torrance, 1988a:51; *cf.* Torrance, 1994a:45, 46). The scientific theological approach of the patristic era, wherein theological knowledge was developed according to the nature of the object of inquiry, is succinctly captured in a statement often quoted by Torrance: "only through God can God be known" (Torrance, 1983:8*ff*; 1988a:54; 1994a:54; 1996a:77). As Martin (1995:167) argues, one of Torrance's many achievements is his illumination of the "unitary theological epistemology and world-view" that underlies the classical doctrines of the early Church.

In addition to the Alexandrian fathers, Torrance finds this approach to knowledge in the theology of the Genevan Reformer, John Calvin, who, according to Torrance, saw that knowledge was derived objectively and "actively" from God "through modes of knowing imposed on us from the nature of God and from his self-manifestation through his Word." For Calvin, argues Torrance, all knowledge of God must be referenced back to God himself, so that all our presuppositions may be unmasked and the idols of the mind dethroned in light of God's objective self-manifestation (Torrance, 1996b:90; Hardy, 1997:259; Calvin, 2008:I.6.1-4; 26-29). According to Torrance (1964:151, 153), the Reformers reacted against the Roman Catholic theological tenet that truth is located in the subject of the knower or interpreter, where the "interpreter" or "knower" is the collective theological mind of the Roman Church. As Torrance argues, Roman Catholicism located truth in "dogmatics," that is, the historical statements of the creeds, councils, and other authoritative pronouncements of the Church of Rome. It was "dogmatics" of this kind that gave rise to "dogmatism," that is, a way of thinking that locates truth in the authority of the Church, rather than on principles arising from scientific questioning. As Torrance (1972:235) argues, against Roman dogmatism, Calvin and the Reformers "were concerned to elucidate and order their understanding of God solely out of his own self-revelation, and therefore in accordance with the inner principles and connections found to operate in the field of God's interaction with man

and the world, and not in accordance with external authorities or preconceived principles." In other words, as Morrison (1997:51-53) notes, against the medieval proclivity to begin with "essence" or some *a priori* "possibility," the Reformers "reversed" the order of questioning by beginning with the actual nature, or "that-ness," of the object of inquiry. According to Torrance, (1964:152; 1996b:92), against arbitrary individualism on one hand and dogmatic authoritarianism on the other, the Reformers' struggle for a "principle of objectivity," wherein we detach ourselves from all presuppositions and prejudgments in favour of the givenness of reality, played a forceful role in scientific knowledge following the Reformation.

Following the thought of his Alexandrian and Genevan predecessors, Torrance's scientific theology is an attempt to think in accordance with the nature of things and in consonance with the "interior principles" that are disclosed in the process of inquiry (Torrance, 1984:269 270). This "way of acting and thinking" applies to every field of scientific endeavour and mirrors our ordinary way of thinking as we engage the environment in our daily lives. According to Torrance (1969a:106, 107):

> This is the way of acting and thinking that is no more and no less than the rigorous extension of our basic rationality, as we seek to act toward things in ways appropriate to their natures, to understand them through letting them shine in their own light, and to reduce our thinking of them into orderly forms on the presumption of their inherent intelligibility.

Scientific knowledge brings to light the "inherent rationality" of things, so that they disclose themselves to us in the process of investigation, while we, in turn, submit our minds to their "intrinsic connections and order" (Torrance, 1969a:vii).

2.2.2.1 Kataphysical inquiry

For Torrance, whether in theology or science, there is only one basic way of knowing that develops different "modes of rationality" in accordance with the "nature" of the object of inquiry. Torrance (1969a:viii) writes:

> It is always the nature of things that must prescribe for us the specific mode of rationality that we must adopt toward them, and prescribe also the form of verification apposite to them, and therefore it is a major part of all scientific activity to reach clear convictions as to the distinctive nature of what we are seeking to know in order that we may develop and operate with the distinctive categories demanded of us.

As Ho (2008:21) notes, Torrance's theological science shares with other sciences a general procedure which is based on the "principle of objectivity"; that is, scientific

inquiry is determined by the nature of its object of investigation. Successful theological inquiry operates in a "dialogical relation" with its object, so that rather than dictating the outcome, the inquirer allows the object to reveal its own intelligibility to the inquirer (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:10, 112, 133). As Babcock (1971:117) notes, because scientific discourse does not impose "form" [structure, intelligibility] on the world but derives "form" from it, to be "objective" means to derive one's statements from, and point them back toward, the reality to which they refer. Thus, the "fundamental axiom" (Colyer, 2001a:322), "quintessence" (Myers, 2008:2, 3), and "cardinal principle" (Chung, 2011:63) of Torrance's scientific theological method is that knowledge in any field of inquiry, including theology, must be developed according to the "nature" of the reality under study (Torrance, 1971:92; 1981b:27-29; 1992:25; Palma, 1984:7; McGrath, 1999:209, 234). Torrance describes this general methodological principle as "kataphysic inquiry," derived from the Greek *kata physin* ("according to nature") (Torrance, 1988a:51; 1994a:45, 46).

Moreover, the nature of the object of inquiry prescribes the method used to investigate it. According to Torrance (1990:67, 68; *cf.* 1969a:112, 113):

> All scientific activity is one in which the reason acts strictly and precisely in accordance with the nature of its object, and so lets the object prescribe for it both the limits within which it may be known and the mode of rationality that is to be adopted toward it. But for that reason it also lets the nature of the object determine the kind of verification or demonstration appropriate to it. It will not insult the object by trying to subject it to some kind of demonstration that has been developed elsewhere in accordance with the nature of a different kind of object, nor by employing for its investigation external criteria dragged in from some other realm of knowledge. The kind of verification it must scientifically employ is the kind that derives from and is in accord with the actual way in which knowledge has arisen.

Because we must allow the nature of what we seek to know to determine the form and content of our knowledge, our approach to knowing varies according to the nature of the object of inquiry. In seeking to understand what is knowable in its specific field of inquiry, science (including theological science) will develop investigative procedures, analytical tools, and structures of thought that are particularly suited to its object of inquiry. In simpler terms, in any field of scientific inquiry, the nature of the object of study controls how we know it, how we think about it, how we formulate knowledge of it, and how we verify that knowledge (Torrance, 1980a:8, 9; 1994a:45; Colyer, 2001b:271; *cf.* Hanna, 2004:75-77). For Torrance, notes McGrath (1999:209), there is no "generalised methodology" that can be applied uncritically to all sciences. Since

each science deals with a different object of inquiry, it is obliged to respond to that object according to its distinctive nature. Therefore, the method appropriate to one science cannot be uncritically applied to another, for each science must develop its investigative procedures in accordance with the nature of its own object of inquiry. As both Ho (2008:21) and Stratton (1997:259, 260) rightly argue, Torrance affirms the teaching of Aristotle that each branch of science needs its own distinctive method as demanded by its object of inquiry (*cf*. Torrance, 1969a:108).

Because scientific inquiry proceeds in strict accordance with the nature of the reality under investigation, it would be "unscientific" to transfer from one field of study to another the distinctive mode of knowing that develops within it. As Torrance (1964:151) notes, theological science deals with a different set of "facts" than does, for example, astrophysics, and these facts are as different as the nature of God is from the nature of a star. Hence, the way of knowing and the way of demonstrating knowledge are different in scientific theology and astrophysics. Torrance (1969a:111; *cf*. 1980a:9) cites the renowned scientist, Robert Oppenheimer, who argues that, while the ways of speaking in the various fields of science may be adequate to describe the physical world, at the same time, they stand in a "mutually exclusive relationship" to each other, so that what applies in one discipline may have no possibility of application in another. Each science has its own language and methods appropriate to the nature of its object of inquiry. For example, as Babcock (1971:117) notes, geology does not inquire into the "psychic life" of a rock formation, for the science of geology emerges only as it prunes itself of such questions and allows the actual character of its object to control its inquiry. In terms of methodology, for theological science to attempt to use the investigative procedures of other sciences would not only be unscientific, but would make as much sense as a microbiologist using a telescope to study an amoeba or an astronomer using a microscope to probe the heavens.

For Torrance, notes Colyer (2001b:206), there is no *scientia universalis* with presuppositions and procedures to which each special science (*scientiae speciales*) must adhere. Each special science is developed *kata physin*, that is, in strict conformity to the nature of its object of inquiry as revealed in the course of investigation. When it does so, it is "scientific." Like every other special science, theological science has its own particular requirements and methodology determined by the unique nature of its object of inquiry (*cf*. Torrance, 1969a:107*ff*; 281*ff*). As Munchin (2011:444) notes, Torrance is

sceptical of too "maximal" an account of *scientia universalis*, preferring instead to use "minimal" preconceptions with regard to scientific method. Hence, argues Colyer, 2001a:22; 2001b:206, 207), those who approach Torrance's theological science with a preconceived idea of science as a universally applicable method (*scientia universalis*) will completely misunderstand what Torrance has in mind. For Torrance, theology can be scientific "if" there is a knowable God and "when" theology proceeds in strict accordance with the nature of God; that is, "when it allows actual knowledge of God to determine the appropriate mode of knowing, to disclose the inherent relations in that knowledge, and to generate the conceptual structures and their interrelations ... appropriate to that knowledge." That is, a scientific theology is simply one governed from beginning to end by the nature of a knowable God. Similarly, as Martin (1995:168; *cf*. Torrance, 1985:xiv) argues, just as scientific inquiry takes its bearings from its object of investigation¸ to the extent that theological science is oriented to its Object, that is, God as revealed in Jesus Christ, theology is objective and thus scientific. In this regard, Langford (1972:167; *cf*. Martin, 1995:167, 168) notes that one of Torrance's lasting contributions is his illumination of the similarity between Christian theological epistemology and the formal principles of science. By explicating the fundamental issues of method, Torrance has legitimated the scientific status of theology.

2.2.2.2 The Idea of Compulsion

Because the inquirer is bound by the nature of the object under study and is committed to its "objective reality" and "intrinsic rationality," a rigorous scientific method does not allow for any "free thinking." Torrance (1990:126) explains:

> Hence far from thinking in some free detached or dispassionate way, we think as we are compelled to think by the evidential grounds, and develop explanatory theories or laws strictly in accordance with the nature of things and their inherent rational order as they are brought to light in the course of scientific inquiry.

For Torrance, controlled, scientific thinking precludes any "undisciplined, speculative thinking" that attempts to "run ahead" of the object of inquiry and prescribe how it shall be known before it actually is known (Torrance, 1969a:26).

As Luoma (2002:65, 66) rightly notes, in Torrance's realist epistemology, the object of scientific theological inquiry dictates the rules by which it may be interpreted. Hence,

Torrance's realism not only asserts belief in a reality independent of the observer but also insists that this independent reality can and must be allowed to determine what we can know about it. In Torrance's epistemological realism, notes Luoma, we humans are servants, not masters, having to obey the commands of reality (*cf*. Torrance, 1964:150; 1982:30, 31). Because a rigorous scientific method precludes free thinking, the human knower is compelled to ask only those questions that are considered appropriate to the nature of the reality under study (Torrance, 1964:150). Thus, as Luoma (2002:66) notes, reality itself is the first and last criterion for the adequacy of human inquiry. Luoma refers to Torrance's insistence that the human knower submits to the compelling claims of the reality under study as "the idea of compulsion," while considering this the most characteristic feature of Torrance's realism.

As Babcock (1971:117) notes, theology is an objective science only insofar as, in the questions it asks and the procedures it follows, it respects God as the one who retains the initiative in disclosing himself to humanity. Against any theological "free thinking," Torrance (1990:126) attempts to set Christian theology on a scientific basis by allowing the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ "to determine how and what we are to think and say of God in ways that are worthy of him and appropriate to his transcendent rationality and grace." As Luoma (2002:66) rightly notes, there is a close connection between realism and the Nicene *homoousion* in Torrance's thought. The *homoousion* originated under "the compelling power" of reality and must, therefore, be viewed as a product of realistic thinking. Rather than an arbitrary invention of human thought, the *homoousion* was pressed into the minds of the Nicene fathers under the compulsion of the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ (*cf*. Torrance, 1988a:26, 27; 1996b:49). Doubtless, the "idea of compulsion" in Torrance's theological realism finds it clearest expression in the Nicene *homoousion*.

2.2.3 The Empirical Correlate of Revelation

Because the subject matter of theology concerns the Word of God who has become flesh in space and time, there is an aspect of the nature of its object of investigation that is open to empirical and critical observation, as in the natural sciences. According to Torrance (1994a:48; *cf*. 1982:33, 34):

> [T]he theologian is concerned with God as he reveals himself to us within space and time through historical Israel and in the incarnation of his Word in Jesus Christ, so that we cannot divorce what God reveals to humankind from

> the medium of spatio-temporal structures which he uses in addressing his Word to human beings. Empirical correlates therefore have an ineradicable place in theology, as in natural science—hence theological truths and concepts may not be resolved away or "demythologized" without losing their essential content or import.

Because a scientific theology is rooted in the empirical correlates of God's self-revelation in historical time and space, argues Torrance, "[w]e do not therefore begin with ourselves or our questions, nor indeed can we choose where to begin; we can only begin with the facts prescribed for us by the actuality of the object positively known. Anything else would be unreal and unscientific, as well as untheological." Thus, theological thinking is "*theo*-logical" in that it does not arise from a centre within ourselves but from a centre in God. It is essentially "*theo*-nomous" thinking that revolves around the fact that God has made himself known and continues to do so; that is, God "objectifies" himself for us so that "our knowledge is a fulfilled meeting with objective reality" (Torrance, 1969a:9, 25-29).

The empirical correlates of theology mean that God has entered human space-time relationships; that is, the life of God has fallen within the life of humankind, so that God can really be known as God (Purves, 2001:70). In contradistinction to the "demythologizing" of Scripture (*e.g.,* Bultmann, *cf.* below), Torrance asserts that "Christian theology arises out of the actual knowledge of God given in and with concrete happening in space and time. It is knowledge of the God who actively meets us and gives Himself to be known in Jesus Christ—in Israel, in history, on earth." It is essentially "positive" knowledge, mediated in concrete experience with a content that can be articulated. Furthermore, it is concerned with empirical "fact": the fact of God's historical self-revelation in time and space (Torrance, 1969a:26). Thus, knowledge of God must be "determined from first to last" through the way in which God has made himself known in historical time and space (Torrance, 1969a:9).

In regard to knowledge of the divine, God has revealed himself to us in the theatre of space and time in "modes of rationality" that he has conferred upon creation and upon humanity; therefore, it is in and through the universe of space and time that theology seeks to make a disciplined response to God's historical self-revelation (Torrance, 1980a:1). In relation to its object of inquiry, a rigorous scientific approach to theology must be informed by actual knowledge of God as revealed to us in the economy (*oikonomia*) of salvation, that is, in God's historical dialogue with Israel and,

particularly, in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit. God's self-revelation in time and space calls into question "all alien presuppositions and antecedently reached conceptual frameworks" regarding knowledge of God. For Torrance, this necessitates the development of a rigorous, scientific epistemology that is governed from beginning to end by the nature of its object of inquiry: "God in his self-communication to us within the structures of our human and worldly existence" (Torrance, 1990:62, 63, 122). As Morrison (1997:64) rightly notes, for Torrance, theological knowledge hinges upon what is "given" from beyond human experience; it is never the product of discovery. Theological knowledge is concerned with that which has objective ontological reality, "the hard objective reality apart from which no such human knowledge could exist" (Morrison, 1997:64). Thus, for Torrance, the object of scientific theological inquiry is "God in his Revelation," that is, Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1969a:131; Myers, 2008:2). Holy Scripture is, of course, integral to this revelation. As Torrance (1969a:192) argues:

> [O]ur theological statements are related to the Truth as it is in Jesus in the way in which He relates Himself to us, comes to meet us, and addresses us, in and through the witness of the Holy Scriptures in the midst of the Church. He does not come to us apart from our modes of existence in space and time, or apart from the mode of being which he assumed in our space and time, and therefore He comes to us through the personal and historical communication of His Word deriving from ... the apostolic witness and Scriptures. Hence we are thrown back upon Holy Scripture as the source and norm of all our theological statements.

Because God has given himself to be known in the historical incarnation of Jesus Christ as attested in Scripture, "the central and pivotal point of all genuine theological knowledge," according to Torrance, is found in *christology*. In proceeding in reference to the nature of the object of inquiry, scientific theology will operate on a christological basis, for christology is critical to the understanding of the nature of God. Rather than go "behind the back" of Jesus to develop knowledge of God (as in natural theology, *cf.* Chapter Four), christology teaches us to know God in strict accordance with the steps he has taken to make himself known to us and, therefore, to test our knowledge of God in accordance with the steps in which knowledge of him has actually arisen in space and time (Torrance, 1990:71). For Torrance, notes Ho (2008:23), genuine theology is never speculative or the product of *a priori* thought. Rather, theology is developed *a posteriori* in encounter with the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who is the only reference we have for true knowledge of God. Thus, we cannot know God "behind his objectivity"; we can only know God in Christ.

As Hanna (2004:81) correctly argues, the study of Christ is a key element of Torrance's theology, for he expands his definition of theology to include Christology. For Torrance, theology is the science of the knowledge of God in Christ (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:281). As Martin (1995:170) notes, Torrance locates the integration of theoretical and empirical factors in our knowledge of God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The incarnation lies at the heart of Torrance's epistemology, as the "controlling ontological and conceptual reality" that grounds our knowledge of God in space-time history. For Torrance (1996a:18), the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the "actual source" and "controlling centre" for the Christian doctrine of God. To know God through the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, who is of "one substance with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*, *cf.* Chapter Four) is to know God in strict accordance with God's nature (*kata physin*) and, hence, in a theologically scientific way (Torrance, 1969a:112, 113; 1988a:3, 51, 52). Further consideration will be given to the epistemological significance of the incarnation in Chapters Four and Five.

2.2.4 Relationship between Epistemology and Ontology

Inspired by philosopher of science, Michael Polanyi (1891-1976), Torrance uses a "common sense" philosophy to suggest that knowledge arises through insight shaped by the internal structure of the reality under study. This insight develops from a "structural kinship" that arises between the knower and that which is known as we cognitively "indwell" the object of inquiry and gain access to its meaning through an "intuitive anticipation of a hitherto unknown pattern." Here Torrance does not refer to *a priori* concepts imposed upon the object or to a Platonic form of recollection; rather, Torrance understands the human mind to have a "tacit power" to bridge logical gaps in knowledge and discern *Gestalten* (*i.e.*, "coherent patterns") through creative leaps of the imagination from the parts to the whole (Torrance, 1984:113, 114, 116; *cf.* Hardy, 1997:257, 258; Gill, 2007:173-176).

For Torrance, notes Stratton (1997:247, 248), knowledge is "concrete." In league with the consensual opinion of current philosophers of science, Torrance does not begin with abstract epistemological questions (*e.g.*, "How can God be known?"), for, as Stratton notes, since both the nature of what is known and the nature of the knower determine how something can be known, the question of how God can be known must be determined by how God has actually made himself known. For Torrance, therefore,

theological activity must not be abstracted from its material content. Torrance presupposes the actuality, objectivity, and accessibility of the object of scientific theological inquiry, arguing that the way God can be known is completely determined by the way in which God is actually known (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:9). In regard to the knowledge of God, the "primary task" in epistemology, argues Torrance, is "to focus our attention on the area where God is actually known, and seek to understand that knowledge in its concrete happening, out of its own proper ground, and in its own proper reference to objective reality." In theological inquiry, we are concerned with the knowledge of the living God; we are engaged with a Reality that cannot be construed in terms of what is already known to us. Therefore, we must be prepared to conform our knowledge to what God reveals of himself, while remaining open to what is genuinely new (Torrance, 1969a:25, 26).

Thus, for Torrance, there is a close relationship between ontology (*i.e.*, the "nature" of the object of inquiry) and epistemology; that is, there is a close relationship between the "substance" to be understood and the means of understanding it, so that epistemology must always accord with ontology. Knowledge is possible because the nature of the reality under study prescribes the "mode of rationality" by which it may be known. That is, a "correspondence between reality and thought" is possible to the extent that the knower conforms to the "mode of rationality" inherent in the object of inquiry (Grenz, 2004:204). Nevertheless, there is no "necessary" correlation between knowing and being, for such a correlation exists only insofar as knowledge unfolds in accordance with the nature of the object of inquiry (Hardy, 1997:257; Myers, 2008:3, 4). The aim of theological inquiry, therefore, is to develop a "correlation of the intelligible and the intelligent" (Torrance, 1985:xiii) by allowing knowledge to be guided and governed by its object and by allowing that object to prescribe the thought-forms appropriate to it (Torrance, 1969a:198; Myers, 2008:4). Given this understanding, theology is not only an objective science but also "the positive science in which we think only in accordance with the nature given." That is, in theological inquiry, "we must allow the divine realties to declare themselves to us, and so allow the basic forms of theological truth to come to view and impose themselves on our understanding" (Torrance, 1996b:9).

2.2.4.1 An Epistemological Reserve

In describing theology as a "positive" science, Torrance rejects the "progressive ignorance" associated with the negative or "apophatic" approach to knowledge of God developed by Basileides of Alexander (2nd C.), who argued that we cannot say what God is, only what he is not. Following the *Orations* (24.4; 28.5, 9, 17; 30.17) of Gregory Nazianzus (329-389), Torrance sees the apophatic approach as self-contradictory in that we must have some positive knowledge of God in order to say what God is not. Torrance adopts a "kataleptic" approach which refers to the compelling claims of reality to which the human mind must assent. If we are to learn anything new, we must allow our minds to fall under "the compulsive self-evidence" and "intrinsic intelligibility" of the reality under study. Therefore, throughout the process of theological inquiry, he argues, we must operate with an "open" epistemology or "epistemological reserve," wherein we allow our knowledge to be clarified and modified "*pari passu*" (*i.e.*, "at equal rate") as we advance toward deeper and fuller knowledge of the object under study. Consequently, our way of knowing cannot be determined in advance but only as we look back from what has been established as knowledge (Torrance, 1969a:10; 1988b:159, 160; *cf.* 1989:108, 109). Torrance (1970:128) rejects the development of epistemologies in abstraction from actual knowledge developed by inquiry into the nature of the object of study. For Torrance, a truly scientific method of inquiry will develop epistemological structures according to the requirements imposed by the nature of the object, uncompromised by *a priori* assumptions of any kind.

As Myers (2008:4) argues, Torrance's scientific methodology, rooted in his critical realism, involves the "free decision" to allow the intrinsic structure of the reality under study to impose itself upon our minds. That is, objective thinking is grounded in empirical realities and is developed *a posteriori* from its empirical basis. According to Martin (1995:167, 168), Torrance's rejection of *a priori* epistemological constructions imposed upon the object of scientific inquiry reflects the influence of Einstein, who questioned the validity of the *a priori* framework of Euclidean geometry and every other conceptual system isolated from actual experience (*cf.* Chapter Four). The influence of Einstein is again evidenced in Torrance's rejection of *a priori* epistemologies, which, as Gill (2007:121) notes, create a dualism by separating the formal and empirical components of knowledge, while an *a posteriori* approach to knowledge holds these two elements together (*cf.* Torrance, 1984:1-59; 61-105). As McGrath (1999:212) argues, Torrance's commitment to a realist epistemology

characterised by an *a posteriori* response to the nature of the reality under study, is an implicit critique of the "universalising tendencies" of the Enlightenment.

2.2.4.2 Fluid Dogmatics

Because our knowing cannot be determined in advance, the epistemological process must be "fluid." As Torrance (1985:xiv) argues:

> [T]heology is a positive and progressive inquiry into the knowledge of God proceeding under the determination of his self-revelation … It is a human enterprise working with revisable formulations in a manner not unlike that of an axiomatic science operating with fluid axioms.

Torrance (1982:49, 50) uses the term "fluid dogmatics" to refer to a scientific theology that operates with "fluid axioms" that are "progressively modified in the light of the realities that are disclosed to us in God." As Chung (2011:66) notes, for Torrance, scientific theology can be "axiomatised" without compromise as long as its dogmatic concepts are open to revision and refinement in light of a deepening knowledge of God's revelation and mediation in Jesus Christ. The "fluid axioms" of Torrance's scientific theology stand in marked contrast to the "fixed principles" (*principia*) of Newtonian science (*cf*. Chung, 2011:54).

In theology, we encounter an objective Word, or *Logos*, from beyond our experience, which speaks for itself and guides us to an ever-deepening understanding of its objective reality. As Torrance argues, this Word is encountered as a word to be heard and an objective truth to be acknowledged, not merely a rationality to be interpreted. Thus, we must "learn to distinguish the given *in its own self-interpretation* from the interpretative processes in which we engage in receiving and understanding it." This means that theological thinking is more like "listening" than any other kind of knowledge. Yet, according to Torrance, if we fail to listen to the objective self-interpretation of the Reality given, we, like Schleiermacher, are thrown back on ourselves in an attempt to authenticate the objective reality of God "by putting our own words into his mouth and by clothing him with our own ideas." As Torrance observes, "That kind of God is only a dumb idol which we have fashioned in our own image and into whose mouth we have projected our own soliloquies, and which we are unable to distinguish from our own processed interpretation." In other words, instead of real knowledge of God, we are left with "our own thoughts and self-deceptions." For Torrance, this kind of "theology" is, in actuality, nothing more than "anthropology," for

its rests upon a "basic falsification," that is, an ultimate failure to distinguish objective reality from the subjective state of our own consciousness, or to distinguish "what is not ourselves from ourselves." Apart from the objective reality of God's Word to us, we cannot distinguish the objective reality of God from our subjective experience. "In a true theology God's Word is the condition and source of real knowledge," Torrance argues, "for it is in and through his speaking that I am not cast back upon my own resources to establish his existence or to devise a symbolism in order to make it meaningful." It is in and through his Word that God distinguishes himself from the subjective experience of our own consciousness, so that "he is not left to the mercy of our questions and answers, but we ourselves are questioned by a Word from beyond which draws us out of ourselves and declares to us what we are utterly incapable of learning and declaring to ourselves" (Torrance, 1969a:30-32).

In addition to the rejection of "subjective experience" as a path to knowledge of God, Chung (2011:70, 71; *cf.* Torrance, 1969a:121) rightly notes Torrance's rejection of the power of autonomous reason in the process of scientific theological inquiry, for if human reason is allowed to take control of the epistemological process, rather than submitting to the nature of the object of inquiry as revealed in the course of inquiry, then the temptation to replace revealed truth with abstract formulation is ever present. In order to probe into the "ontic basis" or "the inner basic forms" of its object of inquiry, agues Torrance (1990:71, 72, 146; *cf.* 1970:127, 128), scientific theology will employ no abstract criteria in the testing and establishing of its knowledge and will posit no epistemology in abstraction from the material content of its knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Rather, a scientific theology will allow a correct epistemology to emerge and a proper theological method to develop in the process of coming to understand its object of inquiry, all the while constructing its dogmatics in utter obedience to its object. Hence, epistemologies will properly arise toward the end, rather than the beginning, of scientific inquiry, as theological understanding gradually conforms to the nature of the object under study. As Torrance observes, "[I]t is only at the end of the work of dogmatics, therefore, that it will be possible to offer a proper account of an adequate epistemology," for, as (Colyer, 2001a:323) notes, ontology and epistemology should unfold together.

As McGrath (1999:208) rightly notes, in Torrance's kataphysical method, where scientific theological knowledge is determined by the nature of the object of inquiry,

that is, God as revealed in Jesus Christ, Torrance invokes the Nicene *homoousion* to assert that epistemology is "ontologically determined." Thus, as Kelly (2007:76) and many others (*cf*. Hardy, 1997:257; Morrison, 1997:149; Ho, 2008:23, 24; Gill, 2007:20; Myers, 2008:4) note, in Torrance's scientific theology, "knowing" follows "being" (*operari sequitur esse)*; that is, epistemology follows ontology.

2.2.5 Faith, Prayer, and Piety in Scientific Theology

Torrance's insistence that epistemology follows ontology derives not only from his fundamental axiom that scientific theological inquiry must proceed in accordance with the nature of its object of inquiry; it is also grounded in his personal faith in the God who addresses us in his Word. Throughout his long career as a respected academic theologian, Torrance remained a deeply devotional man of faith. In his introduction to *Theological Science* (1969a:v), he wrote:

> If I may be allowed to speak personally for a moment, I find the presence and being of God bearing upon my experience and thought so powerfully that I cannot but be convinced of His overwhelming reality and rationality. To doubt the existence of God would be an act of sheer irrationality, for it would mean that my reason had become unhinged from its bond with real being. Yet in knowing God I am deeply aware that my relation to him has been damaged, that disorder has resulted in my mind, and that it is I who obstruct knowledge of God by getting in between Him and myself as it were. But I am also aware that His presence presses unrelentingly upon me through the disorder of my mind, for He will not let Himself be thwarted by it, challenging and repairing it, and requiring of me on my part to yield my thoughts to His healing and controlling revelation.

In Torrance's assertion that the presence of God "presses" on him, requiring him to yield his thoughts to God's "healing," "controlling" revelation, Hanna (2004:81, 82) finds an answer to the question of whether the effect of sin makes science unfit for use in theology. In regard to the effect of sin on human scientific reasoning, Hanna neatly summarises Torrance's position by noting that scientific theology cooperates with God's self-revelation in Christ "to overcome distortion caused by sin."

2.2.5.1 Epistemological Inversion: Repentant Rethinking

In regard to theological knowledge, argues Torrance (1969a:131, 132; 1994a:47; 2002a:122; *cf*. 1985:26, 27), our human way of knowing undergoes a radical change, that is, a "repentant rethinking" or "epistemological inversion." Because God is "Lord of our knowing," the epistemological inversion in our way of knowing takes place in

strict accordance with the nature of God as he makes himself known to us. Unlike ordinary objects of scientific investigation, for example, a rock from the moon, God cannot be controlled and manipulated in the process of scientific inquiry. We can only know God in accordance with his gracious self-revelation and, thus, only in a mode of prayerful worship and devotion as we humbly and obediently respond to God's initiative in making himself known to us, personally and savingly, as our Creator, Lord, and Saviour. According to Torrance (1994a:47, 48):

> Here the modality of our reason undergoes radical adaptation in accordance with the compelling claims of God's transcendent nature—that is precisely what authentic theology involves. This is very important because it calls for a real [and often painful] change ... in our approach to God ... in which the self-centred structure of our minds is turned inside out and transformed. Apart from such a *metanoia* or deep-seated change in mind and heart, you cannot really be a theological student, far less a minister of the Gospel.

As Munchin (2011:444) rightly notes, in Torrance's scientific theology, our proper bearing toward the Object of inquiry shifts from "observer" to 'worshipper," for God can never be coerced into being an object for our observation, but rather remains at all times Lord over us. For Torrance, such an approach is not "unscientific"; rather, because of the nature of the object of theological scientific inquiry, our approach will be inherently "doxological."

In regard to the epistemological inversion required in theological scientific inquiry, notes Ho (2008:23), Torrance differentiates between "I-It" and "I-Thou" relationships. In the "I-It" relationship of natural science, the subject takes an active role in acquiring knowledge of a passive object. In the "I-Thou" relationship of theological science, however, the subject encounters an active Object and is transformed by the engagement with that objective Reality. Thus, when God enters the subject-object relationship, he "reverses" the relation of knowing (*cf*. Torrance, 1982:33), for as McGrath (1999:202, 203) notes, God cannot be treated as an "it," but must necessarily be recognised as a "Thou." In the epistemological inversion of the "I-Thou" encounter with God, notes Chung (2011:68, 69), the "pivotal point" gravitates from the inquiring subject to the object of inquiry, as we allow ourselves to be "ordered around" the object of inquiry and "told" by it in order to learn what is beyond what we already know or think. Thus, as Torrance (1971:vii) argues, if theological science is to be as "scientific" as natural science, we must not project ourselves into the centre of the picture but, rather, allow the rationality of God to cast its revealing light upon us.

For Torrance, there has long been an evangelistic thrust to his understanding of the epistemological inversion required of theological science. Early in his career, in his unpublished lectures on the relation between theology and science, delivered at Auburn Theological Seminary in the late 1930s, Torrance concluded with an appeal that McGrath (1999:204) describes as "remarkably like an altar call." According to McGrath, Torrance said:

> How glibly and dispassionately we can talk about God and discuss whether or not he is the creator and ground of the universe! But it is quite another thing to hear God challenging us all in Christ to the Great Decision. Our equanimity is disturbed and all the natural man in us bristles. Challenge comes forth to us all the same, and it is like the sound of many waters. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me." Jesus stands today as always in Pilate's judgment Hall, waiting for the verdict of the world: "What think ye of Christ? "What shall I do then with Jesus who is called the Christ?"

For Torrance, the radical adaptation of our reason to the compelling claims of God upon it is the epistemological equivalent of denying ourselves and taking up our crosses daily to follow Jesus (Torrance, 1985:149, 150; 1994a:48; *cf.* Mk 8:34). Thus, despite his intellectual rigor, Torrance insists that accurate knowledge of God cannot be developed in a detached, merely academic way. To know God intimately requires that we enter into a personal and saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Hence, epistemology, revelation, and reconciliation are inseparable in Torrance's theology, for we cannot know God in a detached, impersonal manner without regard for his redemptive purpose for our lives (Torrance, 1988a:3; 1996b:132).

2.2.5.2 Faith in Relation to Epistemology

As a deeply devotional theologian, Torrance argues that the human epistemological process, in both the natural sciences and theological science, is dependent on a fundamental stance he calls "faith." "[F]aith is the very mode of rationality adopted by the reason in its fidelity to what it seeks to understand, and as such faith constitutes the most basic form of knowledge upon which all subsequent rational inquiry proceeds" (Torrance, 1984:194). More simply, faith is "the orientation of the reason toward God's self-revelation, the rational response of man to the Word of God" (Torrance, 1969a:33). For Torrance, faith is crucial to scientific inquiry because it allows the epistemological process to unfold (Grenz, 2004:205).

Because God is the absolute subject who freely chooses to give himself to be known and determines the method by which he will be known, faith is an essential part of the epistemological inversion required in scientific theological thinking. According to Torrance (1969a:132):

> Faith entails the opening up of our subjectivity to the Subjectivity of God ... Faith is the relation of our minds to the Object who through his unconditional claims upon us establishes the centre of our knowing in Himself and not in us, so that the whole epistemological relation is turned around—we know in that we are known by Him. His Objectivity encounters our objectivity and our objectivity is subordinated to His and grounded in His.

In scientific theology, human reason allows itself to be guided by the nature of God in his revelation and adopts a mode of rationality that corresponds to God's "objectifying" of himself for humankind. For Torrance, faith is not an irrational leap; rather, it is "a sober commitment to the nature of the given reality, a determination of the reason in accordance with the nature of the object as it becomes disclosed, an orientation of the mind demanded of it in encounter with its unique and incomparable object that is and remains subject, the Lord God" (Torrance, 1990:68). Here, then, for Torrance (1990:69), is the epistemological meaning of faith: "faith" means that, to the self-giving of God, there corresponds in the human knower a receiving and appropriation of the truth in such a way that the rationale and necessity of faith lies not in itself but in the object of faith. Theological knowledge, therefore, is not a rational explication of the nature of faith; rather, it is, "in faith," an explication of the independent reality known. According to Torrance (1990:69), "Theological activity does not proceed in the light of the theologian's faith, but in the light of what comes from the side of that in which he has faith, the self-authenticating and self-revealing reality of God which according to its very nature can be known and understood and substantiated only out of itself." For Torrance, as Stratton (1997:250) succinctly notes, "faith is not the subject-matter of theology; the God in whom we have faith is."

Regarding the importance of faith in Torrance's theological epistemology, Martin (1995:168, 169) raises an important point. With his emphasis on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, Torrance may appear guilty of "certitude" regarding the knowledge of God. Yet, as Martin correctly notes, what may appear as "epistemological certitude" in Torrance's scientific theology is actually "faithful conviction" based upon the presence and experience of God in Torrance's life, combined with the biblical and theological truths he learned in and through the corporate life of the community of faith. Torrance's conviction of the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ does not rest on knowledge

alone but upon the objective Reality to which his knowledge points. As Martin rightly notes, Torrance's conviction is not in "knowledge," but in the God he "knows."

2.2.5.3 Piety and Prayer in Relation to Epistemology

In addition to the epistemological component of faith, there is in Torrance's scientific theology a vital connection between epistemology and piety. Torrance (1988a:38) notes:

> The more truly God is known in accordance with His nature, the more godliness is advanced, and the more godliness is advanced the more likely we are to know God in a godly way that is worthy of His nature as God. Generally speaking, then, the aim is to get as near the truth as possible and to shape our belief according to the rule of godliness. Thus *godliness* and *the rule of truth* become operational equivalents.

It is precisely because theological science is confronted with the Lord God, who has an absolute claim over us, that it must be carried out "in the strictest discipline, in stringent self-criticism and in utter obedience to the object" (Torrance, 1990:70). As Cass (2008:147) notes, Torrance adopts the theological method of the early Church, particularly Irenaeus and Athanasius, in asserting that worship and doxology are "directly related" to theological truth. For Torrance, notes Cass, the "logic of theology is the logic of worship or doxology, which is the logic of personal communion with the triune God of grace." In the spirit of the Nicene fathers, in whom Torrance finds godliness and theology, worship and faith inseparably joined, Torrance (1988a:17) argues that theology must be done in a holy way, reminiscent of the cherubim who reverently cover their faces before the throne of God. For Torrance (1988a:49), "[p]iety and truth, godliness and accuracy, belong inseparably together in authentic knowledge of God through Jesus Christ his Son."

Moreover, to know God in accordance with his nature, that is, in and through his Son, requires that we enter an intimate and saving relationship with Jesus Christ, for it is only through reconciliation by the blood of Christ that we may draw near to God and have access to him. For Torrance (1988a:3; *cf*. Jn 14:6), "The Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Son of God, is the Way, the Truth and the Life, apart from whom no one has access to the Father." Thus, intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ is an essential component of Torrance's scientific approach to theology, wherein the holy Object of theological inquiry is investigated in accordance with the divine nature (*kata physin*) as revealed in the incarnate Son.

In addition to faith and piety, prayer is an essential component of Torrance's scientific theology. Since real knowledge of God can be developed only to the extent that God sovereignly and freely gives himself to be known, the appropriate attitude for theological science is one of "prayer," so that we may humbly listen to what God tells us of himself and understand it under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. As Torrance argues, "It is because the object of theological knowledge confronts us always as subject, and indeed as absolute subject as the Lord God, that prayer is the scientifically correct mode of inquiry, for it is the mode of inquiry that corresponds to God's nature as man's creator and redeemer" (Torrance, 1990:67; *cf*. 1969a:38, 39).

2.3 The Problem of Dualism

Torrance's scientific approach to knowledge of God as mediated by Jesus Christ, as well as his theological "holism" (*cf*. below), draw him into sharp conflict with both ancient and modern forms of "dualism," that is, "the division of reality into two incompatible spheres of being" (Torrance, 1980b:136). One of the links Torrance posits between theology and the natural sciences is their common struggle against the dualisms endemic in Western thought (Gill, 2007:158). For Torrance, dualism has the undesirable outcome of distorting the revelation and mediation of God in Jesus Christ (Chung, 2011:32). In regard to the Church, Torrance argues that dualism arises when the Church attempts to develop knowledge of God independently of special revelation (Gill, 2007:147). Thus, one of the main aims of Torrance's scientific theology is to bring to light and correct the ramifications of dualism embedded in Western theology (Morrison, 1997:28-30).

Both cosmological and epistemological dualisms are of utmost importance to Torrance due to their implications for scientific thinking. "Cosmological" dualism is a division between "a sensible and an intelligible realm," neither of which can be "reduced" to the other. "Epistemological" dualism is a separation of the "empirical and theoretical aspects of reality" that results in the "extremes" of empiricism and rationalism (Torrance, 1980b:136; Luoma, 2002:87). An appreciation of Torrance's rejection of cosmological and epistemological dualism is vital to grasping his "realist" understanding of the mediation of Jesus Christ (Colyer, 2001a:57, 58; Molnar, 2009:39-43).

According to Torrance, theologies may be divided into two distinct types: 1) interactionist and 2) dualist. An "interactionist" theology, such as Torrance's, is one in which God is understood to interact closely with the world of nature and history, without being confused with it. As Morrison (1997:61) notes, Torrance regards his interactionist theology as "the commanded theological response" to the way God has actually revealed himself in space-time history as Creator and Redeemer. A "dualist" theology, however, denies God's interaction in human space-time history, asserting instead a "deistic distance" between God and creation. As an example of a dualist theology, Torrance cites Schleiermacher, who conceived of God as so transcendent and "other" that he cannot be the object of our knowledge; thus, knowledge of God arises from our immanent religious consciousness (Torrance, 1970:121; 1984:285; 1990:136). As Chung (2011:50) rightly observes, the main problem Torrance finds in dualism is its *a priori* approach, wherein God is irreconcilably separated from the world and deprived of any realist interaction with it. Dualism makes nonsense of the incarnation and renders the *homoousion* and hypostatic union theologically meaningless. By denying Christ his divinity, dualism disrupts the normative biblical pattern of revelation and reconciliation as revealed in scripture. As Torrance (1980a:76; 1984:204, 205; *cf.* Colyer, 2001a:57, 58; Hanna, 2004:66, 67) argues, the Christian Church has faced an ongoing struggle with dualism, particularly in the patristic and modern eras

Torrance (1971:29-31; 1985:1-31; 1996b:62-78) identifies three major periods of change or shifts in Western thought regarding the cosmos (*cf.* Hanna, 2004:56, 57; Chung, 2011:33). As McGrath (1999:213, 214) notes, these cosmological shifts must be set alongside theological transitions, such as the rise of Augustinianism or the advent of the Reformation. The first shift occurred in the second through fourth centuries when the dualism inherent in Greek philosophical thought mutated into Ptolemaic cosmology, with a new astronomical system characterized by a radical disjunction between the heavenly and earthly realms. As Chung (2011:33) rightly notes, the early Church faced critical decisions in this period regarding the inherent dualisms of Gnosticism and Arianism (*cf.* Torrance, 1976a:27, 28; 267, 268). The second mutation in cosmological thought occurred in the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries in the transition from Ptolemaic to Newtonian cosmology. Ushered in by Galileo, this era was given philosophical expression by Descartes and Locke and scientific expression by Newton. For Torrance, notes McGrath (1999:213), this cosmological shift is paralleled

by a concomitant theological shift from an "Augustinian-Aristotelian" dualism to an "Augustinian-Newtonian" dualism. The Newtonian dualism between "absolute" and "relative" time and space became paradigmatic for all science and cosmology until the twentieth century, when Newtonian cosmology gave way to the "Maxwellian-Einsteinian" revolution in cosmological thought, wherein the dualisms of the past have been repudiated in favour of a unitary approach to reality based on the idea of the "continuous field." In regard to theological science, Torrance finds this unitary approach to reality mirrored in the writings of Karl Barth. According to Torrance (1971:99; 1984:243, 244), we continue to experience this third shift in which "the frontiers of human thought are being pushed back." Torrance (1980a:17) criticizes modern theology, however, for failing to appreciate the theological implications of the current shift.

As McGrath (1999:215) notes, Torrance's assertion of the realist, unitary epistemology of the Maxwellian-Einsteinian shift is justified, for not only is contemporary science able to construct theories which explain the world, it is also able to transform it technologically in consequence to them.

2.3.1 Cosmological Dualism

In regard to theological science, cosmological dualism posits a separation between God and the world, whether in the metaphysics of the ancient Greeks or in the "deism" of the modern era (Torrance, 1980a:15*ff*). Torrance rejects cosmological dualism because it precludes a realist, interactionist view of the God-world relation and, thereby, reduces the incarnation to mere mythology.

2.3.1.1 Greek dualism

Torrance traces the dualism of Greek thought to Plato, claiming that it was hardened by the Aristotelian disjunction between idea and event, being and becoming, the spiritual and the material, the invisible and the visible, and the eternal and the temporal (Torrance, 1988a:47; Luoma, 2002:87; Ho, 2008:45). The cosmological dualism of the ancient Greeks is inherent in their assertion that what is "really real" is an eternal, unchanging realm of pure thought "forms," which stand in stark contrast to the imperfect, changeable realm of concrete appearances. In theological science,

cosmological dualism typically asserts itself in an assumed incompatibility between the eternal, divine realm and the finite realm of space and time. For Christian theology, this has historically taken the form of a denial of the empirical reality of the incarnation, so that a wedge has been driven between the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ and genuine knowledge of God (Achtemeier, 2001:273; *cf.* Torrance, 1984:205; 1988a:47; 1992:52, 53; 1994a:50). As Hanna (2004:66) rightly and simply notes, in the radical dualism of Greek science, the Christian message of a God who interacts with the world is construed in mythological terms.

2.3.1.2 Newtonian Deism

Cosmological dualism arose again at the beginning of the modern scientific revolution, particular in the thought of the great physicist, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). Newtonian dualism is the subject of much criticism in Torrance's writing (*cf.* Ho, 2008:51). Newton conceived of natural science as the inquiry into the causal relations between material realities expressed as "fixed principles" *deduced* from phenomena or derived by way of abstraction from observation. In Newton's scientific method, propositions are "inferred" from the observation of phenomena, then rendered as general "principles" by the process of induction (Torrance, 1984:14, 17, 273, 274; 1972:241, 242; Colyer, 2001a:327). Hence¸ while there is a strong empirical component to Newton's method, there is also a less apparent theoretical aspect expressed in terms of "principles" abstracted from observation.

According to Torrance, Newtonian cosmology is characterised by "a thorough-going dualism between absolute space and time and the contingent events that took place within their embrace" (Torrance, 1976a:268; *cf.* 1984:205). Newton described absolute space and time as a static backdrop against which the movement of bodies can be described and plotted. "Absolute space" is structured according to the uniform principles of Euclidean geometry; "absolute time" provides a universal frame of reference against which events anywhere in the universe can be described as occurring simultaneously, before, or after one another (Achtemeier, 2001:282). Absolute space and time form a vast envelope that contains all that goes on in the universe, "inertially conditioning" events and our knowledge of them, while remaining unaffected by them; that is, it is independent of all that it embraces and is, in that sense, "absolute." Thus, space and time, everywhere "homogeneous" and "isotropic" in character, constitute an

"inertial" system of absolute rest, against which all knowledge of the universe is derived and formulated (Torrance, 1972:239; 1984:270; *cf.* Ho, 2008:51-54; Chung, 2011:43-50).

The contents of universal space-time are understood in atomistic terms as discrete particles, or "point-masses," called "corpuscles," which move and interact with one another according to the influences of gravitational "forces." Newton's "particles in a box" paradigm readily lends itself to mechanistic, reductionist ways of thinking about the universe; that is, if the universe is composed of particles moving according to fixed laws of motion, then all phenomena could conceivably be explained in those terms. The determinism evident in Newton's "corpuscular" view of matter gave rise to the conception of the universe as an impersonal, self-perpetuating, clockwork-like machine operating according to perfect, immutable laws that could be analyzed mathematically. The Newtonian image of the creator was that of a divine architect or master clock maker, far removed from active involvement or intervention in nature (Tarnas, 1991:270, 271; Achtemeier, 2001:282, 283).

As Torrance (1976a:268, 269; *cf.* 1984:205) argues, Newton's appeal to absolute time and space as an *a priori* "philosophical backdrop" to his theory creates a rigid cosmological dualism between absolute space-time and the material contents of the universe, a dualism that closely mirrors the ancient Greek distinction between an eternal, divine world of rational "forms" and a material world of subjective appearances. Not only has the Newtonian cosmology "built a deep-seated dualism into the whole fabric of Western science, philosophy, and culture," argues Torrance, but also has encouraged a view of the universe as a "closed continuum of cause and effect," far removed from the ongoing providence of a loving God.

2.3.1.3 Theological Implications

There are significant theological implications associated with the Newtonian view of the cosmos. As Chung (2011:45, 46) points out, Torrance asserts that Newton has grounded the independent ontological status of absolute time and space in the eternal and infinite God. The outcome of such grounding is the "receptacle" notion of God as the "container" of the objects and events of phenomenal reality. This identification of absolute time and space with the "mind of God" creates a dualism that precludes any

realist interaction between God and the world, renders God impersonal and ineffable, and reduces scripture to the "esoterically incomprehensible." As Luoma (2002:99) notes, Torrance locates the roots of Newtonian dualism in the Greek philosophical distinction between the *kosmos noetos* and the *kosmos aisthetos*, as modified and introduced into Western Christianity by Augustine. For Torrance, the Augustinian dualism between the intelligible world (*mundus intelligibilis*) and sensible world (*mundus sensibilis*), together with Aristotelian physics, created in Western thought a gulf between God and the universe, or between the invisible and visible realms, that has remained deep and unbridged. As Ho (2008:50) notes, Augustinian dualism drove a wedge between the world of "inward spiritual experience" and the "outward sensible world" that must be bridged by an intermediary realm of grace (*cf.* Torrance, 1976a:122, 268; 1980a:22). Moreover, Torrance (1981a:10) argues that the dualism of Newtonian cosmology, as mediated by Augustine, led to "deism." Noting that Torrance's use of the term is unclear and ambiguous, Luoma (2002:99, 100) describes "deism" in Torrance's thought as "God's radical separation or detachment from the universe because of his immutability and impassibility," so that God remains unmoved by, and unconcerned with, mundane historical events and individual personal histories. The God of Newtonian-Augustinian deism is "related" to the world in only a distant, transcendental manner. He is Supreme, Absolute, and far removed from sympathetic and genuinely personal relations with his creation. Torrance (1972:239) notes that Protestantism developed, then perhaps, "lapsed back" into scholasticism in conjunction with this dualist view of the God-world relation.

To be sure, Newton's view of the material contents of the universe as "particles in a box" moving in strict accordance to fixed laws of motion leaves little room for God's involvement in the world, except as the "first cause" or creator of the universe. Moreover, Newton's dualistic outlook, coupled with a "Baconian" understanding of scientific method, wherein speculative hypotheses are shunned in favour of theories developed strictly by inductive means based on experimental data, drives a wedge between faith and reason, that is, between Christian belief and scientific ways of knowing. "Science" is viewed as empirical and "objective," deriving its understanding from experimental data, while Christian faith is viewed as "subjective," tenuously grounded in personal belief. The net result is a "powerful resonance" between the scientific view of Newtonian physics and deism, a theological view that understands the world to function in an autonomous "clockwork" fashion that requires no divine

involvement other than as a "first cause" (Torrance, 1981b:43, 44; Achtemeier, 2001:284).

The radical dualism of Newton's thought, between the philosophical backdrop of absolute, unchanging space and time and the dynamic, changeable world of empirical phenomena, is mirrored in an equally radical dualism between the creator God and the independent, ongoing processes of creation. In regard to the mediation of Jesus Christ, Newton's "container" view of absolute space and time as the philosophical backdrop of his thought renders the Christian doctrine of the incarnation extremely problematic, since it is not clear, in a Newtonian view, how the infinite God could be contained in the limited structures of time and space (Achtemeier, 2001:285, 286; *cf.* Torrance, 1984:205). As Torrance (1969b:39, 40; *cf.* 1980a:68) pointedly argues, "If God is the infinite Container of all things He can no more become incarnate than a box can become one of the several objects that it contains."

The theological implications of his theory were not lost on the great physicist, for as Torrance (1969b:39, 40; 1980a:68) notes, Newton was compelled to deny the incarnation and to support Arius against Athanasius. As Chung (2011:47, 49; *cf.* Luoma, 2002:99) rightly argues, the crux of the problem for Torrance lies precisely here, for he detects similar dualistic patterns between Newton and Arius. For Torrance, Newtonian dualism separates God from the world by creating an unbridgeable schism between the two and depriving God of any realist interaction with the creation. Both the Newtonian dualism between absolute time and space as the inertial system of reference against which the phenomenal events of relative time and space occur and the Arian dualism between the intelligible and sensible realms render null the incarnation, the *homoousion*, and most importantly, salvation.

Those who hold dualistic views tend to interpret the biblical accounts of God's agency in the world in terms of nonliteral symbolism, that is, "mythological" accounts subject to allegorical or demythological strategies of interpretation that attempt to extract the meaning embedded in the myth (Colyer, 2001a:58). Torrance (1994a:4, 5; *cf.* 1971:60; 1976b:4) cites Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) as a prime example of a theologian who is constrained by a modern dualist worldview. Bultmann held that *historie*, that is, history understood solely in terms of a closed system of cause and effect, ruled out of rational consideration anything that could not be interpreted in terms of natural physical

laws. Thus, Bultmann was compelled to rule out any thought of God's interaction in human history, including the incarnation, miracles, and the resurrection. According to Torrance, "[Bultmann's] acceptance of the idea of an unbroken continuity of cause and effect governed by natural law made him regard the central Christian beliefs embedded in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament as a mythological account of reported this-worldly events in other-worldly ways lacking objective truth and reality." Thus, Bultmann devised a method of "demythologizing" the New Testament, so that modern people could understand it within the framework of a Newtonian deistic dualism, wherein the world is considered a closed system of cause and effect not subject to intervention from the "outside." As Torrance (1980a:18, 19) argues, in offering an "existentialist" reinterpretation of the Gospel, Bultmann insulated the Christian message from the critical investigations of science, while at the same time rendering the Gospel completely irrelevant for modern science and technology.

2.3.2 Epistemological Dualism

In addition to cosmological dualism in its ancient and modern forms, Torrance rejects the epistemological dualism associated with René Descartes (1596-1650) and especially the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

2.3.2.1 René Descartes

Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* effects an epistemological separation of subject from object, locating truth in the subjective pole of the knowing relation (Morrison, 1997:48). Descartes created a deep gulf between subject and object, that is, between the "thinking thing" and the "extended thing" by conceiving the mind as entirely independent of bodily existence (Torrance, 1984:10). Descartes introduced a cosmological dualism into Western thought by creating an "epistemological disjunction" between mental images derived from sense perception and the external world of matter (Gill, 2007:170; *cf.* Torrance, 1984:10, 11). Descartes' "inward" turn to the depths of knowledge in his own soul, which had the effect of detaching self-consciousness and its knowledge from knowledge derived from experience in the world, introduced into Enlightenment thinking an incompatibility between reason and experience, and a resultant retreat from the truth of "being" into the mental processes of the human mind (Martin, 1995:183, 184). Moreover, Descartes laid the theoretical

foundations for Newton's mechanistic universe (Trook, 1986:205). Newton incorporated Cartesian dualism into his scientific system with his acceptance of the Cartesian doctrine of "subjective representations between the mind of the observer and the objective structure of nature, and its clear distinction of the independent realms of mind and matter" (Torrance, 1984:13, 14; *cf.* Yeung, 1993:41, 42; Gill, 2007:170).

2.3.2.2 Immanuel Kant

A major epistemological shift, or "transformation in the frame of knowledge," occurred from Newton to Kant (Torrance, 1984:1*ff*; Martin, 1995:181-192). With the former, knowledge is derived through discovery of the inherent intelligibility of the world; for the latter, intelligibility and the theoretical components of knowledge are shifted to the human mind, wherein the raw data of sensory experience is organized to make it intelligible. Constituting an "inversion of the knowing relation" away from the intrinsic intelligibility of nature or reality (as in Newton) to the cognitive processes of the human mind (as in Kant), this epistemological shift results in a "constructivist mentality" in which the mind imposes order and form upon experience (Torrance, 1984:37; Colyer, 2001a:330).

According to Kant, human knowing is always influenced by language, culture, and the structures of the human mind operative in the activity of knowing; therefore, we cannot know objective reality, that is, "the thing in itself" (*das Ding an sich*), but only how it "appears" to us through our cognitive grid, that is, as interpreted by the categories and mental structures of the mind (Colyer, 2001a:58, 329, 330). As Purves (2001:53) notes, Kant argued for an axiomatic disjunction (*i.e.*, dualism) between hypothetical realities, that is, "unknowable" things in themselves, and what is empirically verifiable, namely, things as they appear to us. Man can know only the phenomenal world, that is, the world of "appearances," for the mind requires empirical evidence before it can be capable of knowledge. According to Martin (1995:174, 186, 187), Kant rejected the idea that knowledge could be grounded in empirical reality, arguing instead that the human mind was incapable of penetrating into the *noumena*, that is, the inner relations and nature, of any object. For Kant, the "verity of knowledge"' rests upon subjective elements rather than upon the object of knowledge itself; that is, "knowing" becomes "a projection of human subjectivity upon objective realities." Here we note, in agreement with Gill (2007:170), that Torrance's critique of Kant is grounded in Torrance's

fundamental methodological axiom that "the object of scientific inquiry determines the method of inquiry."

Following the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) and his radical critique of the notion of causality, which had the effect of denying science any valid foundation in necessary connections between actual events and leaving it with nothing more than "habits of the mind" arising from mere associations, Kant argued that concepts such as space, time, causality, quantity, substance, and relation are not empirically verifiable realities; rather, they are *a priori* interpretive principles the mind imposes upon nature to bring an artificial order to the undifferentiated chaos of sensory experience. In other words, instead of reading the laws of nature from nature, we ultimately read them into nature; thus, "reality" is a construction of the human mind imposed upon the world. In relation to scientific theology, since objective knowledge can only be derived from empirical evidence, metaphysics, particularly knowledge of God, is beyond the powers of human reasoning (Torrance, 1972:240; Tarnas, 1991:341-347; Achtemeier, 2001b:273).

As Torrance (1972:239, 240; 1984:40) argues, what Kant did, in effect, was to transfer Newton's idea of absolute space and time to the human mind, where it constitutes once again an "inertial system" conditioning human perception without itself being affected by it. In this so-called "Copernican revolution," the human mind is thought to "construct knowledge" from phenomenal events, so that the laws of nature are not discovered from it but imposed upon it. This had the effect of banishing the notion of intelligibility from any independent basis in nature and limiting it solely to "the interconnections of appearances and observations." Cartesian-Kantian dualism "tore a gap" between epistemology and ontology, that is, between "knowing" and "being," so that far from being allowed to exert independent control over our "knowing" of the object of scientific inquiry, "being" was progressively alienated from it.

Consequent to the revolution in thought initiated by Kant, empirical science, which under Bacon had originally begun with the humble attitude of a servant in asking questions of nature, ended up putting its questions to nature in a "prescriptive" mode, much like a judge who demands the prisoner in the dock answer questions in strict accordance to a predetermined juridical procedure, so that the answer to a scientific question became largely determined by the way in which the question was put. In this

way, Kant contributed significantly not only to the equation of science with technology but also to the notion that human beings are, in fact, the creators of the "scientific world." Thus, from Newton to Kant epistemology shifted from the discovery of form to the imposition of form in everyday experience and scientific inquiry, that is, from the inherent intelligibility of the universe to the synthesizing and constructive power of the human mind, wherein rational structure is read into nature. With this major change in epistemology, the idea of the inherent intelligibility of the universe began to fade away in accordance with Kant's assertion that the human mind is the origin of the laws and perceived uniformity of nature (Torrance, 1972:240; 1984:271, 272; *cf*. Colyer, 2001a:330, 331).

2.3.2.3 Theological Implications

Epistemological dualism manifests itself in theological science in a tendency, especially pervasive since the Enlightenment, to reduce theology to anthropology or psychology. In the place of God's objective self-disclosure within the concrete structures of time and space, the subjective religious experience of the believer becomes the object of theological inquiry. This distortion in theological science manifests in a "constructivist" (*i.e.,* "subjective") approach to theology, which assumes that the task of the theologian, like that of the modern artist who attempts to portray his subjective experience on canvas, is to construct "symbol systems" which serve to project the idea of god onto the cosmos in order to serve the religious needs and aspirations of believers (Achtemeier, 2001:274).

Kant's synthesis of rationalism and empiricism disjoins the "knowable" phenomenal world from the "unknowable" realm of the noumenal, so that objective knowledge of God is precluded and God's personal interaction in space-time history is rendered impossible. With increasing scepticism about the possibility of the knowledge of God, Kantian dualism found theological expression in Neo-Protestantism, beginning with Schleiermacher and reaching its destructive end, according to Torrance, in Bultmann (Morrison, 1997:48). For Torrance, the constant danger of modern Protestantism is to shift our theological understanding from the centrality of God to humanity, wherein we arrogate to ourselves a creative role in the epistemological process by adapting the object of theological knowledge to our own subjectivity and obtruding ourselves into its material content. Allowing our own subjectivity to stand between us and the object of

theological inquiry results in the "the eclipse of God"; that is, "our own bloated subjectivity … shuts off the divine light from the world" (Torrance, 1969a:309; *cf.* 1971:29; Morrison, 1997:51; Chung, 2011:32). As Hanna (2004:68, 69) rightly notes, Torrance rejects a Neo-Protestant cosmology that begins with anthropology and confuses the object of theological inquiry (God) with subjective states of human experience. In regard to the "confinement of God to human subjectivity" (Torrance, 1969a:309), Chung (2011:84) makes two important observations. First, objective knowledge is "subjectively subjectivised," and second, the objective divine encounter is replaced with a human subjective self-encounter. Consequently, autonomous reason triumphs over divine revelation. Or as Morrison (1997:51) more simply notes, God cannot now be distinguished from the self.

Torrance (1976a:269) has long decried the adverse effects of Kantian dualism on Christian thought and speech. He writes:

> The damaging effect [of Newtonian-Kantian dualism] nowhere appears more sharply than in the wide gap that opens up between an inert God who cannot be known in himself and the world of phenomena conceived as a closed continuum of cause and effect ... [Dualism is] also the source of the wide-spread doubt and difficulties about providence, prayer and worship, for it means that even Christian forms of thought and speech about God are uprooted from any objective ground in the being of God himself and float loose in the vague mists of modern man's vaunted self-understanding.

According to Torrance (1980a:34-37), the Kantian restriction of knowledge to what is observable, or to what may be deduced from observation, creates a divide between objective, ontological realities and the human knower, thereby reducing human understanding to a form of existentialism such that knowledge is nothing more than an expression of one's attitude toward reality. Within a dualist framework, whether of the cosmological or epistemological kind, theological statements necessarily lose their connection to any objective, ontological reality. Consider the following biblical statements: "The Word was made flesh"; "God is love"; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." If the objective reality to which the biblical writers clearly refer is cut off by an epistemological disjunction between God and the world, biblical statements must be interpreted merely in terms of the subjective, anthropocentric consciousness of the writers; that is, theological statements are diverted from their reference in the objective reality of God to subjective statements about ourselves as dependent on God. Thus, the objective realities to which theological statements refer become merely a "mythological" way of expressing our human feeling of dependence on God and the understanding of himself in the world in which he lives.

Theological statements about Jesus, for example, are turned around toward us and reduced merely to the meaning he has for us in terms of how we order our lives. This reductionist way of handling theological statements shows what happens when we follow, for example, Bultmann, who rejects any conception of "the intelligibility of reality." Theological statements are stripped of any reference to an objective, transcendent reality so that they become nothing more than autobiographical statements about ourselves, with the result that theology is reduced to a poor form of anthropology.

As Torrance (1980a:28-43) argues, in positing a bifurcation between unknowable "things in themselves," which must be treated as nothing more than hypothetical entities, and what is scientifically knowable, Kant created a "damaging dualism" that has had profound effects upon theological inquiry, the faith of the believer, and biblical interpretation. By limiting scientific knowledge to what is empirically observable, Kant severed the connection between science and faith, thereby "depriving faith of any objective or ontological reference and emptying it of any real cognitive content." In practical terms, this means that it is impossible for us to have real knowledge of Jesus Christ as he is in himself, for our understanding of Jesus is limited to how he appeared to his followers and to the impression he made on the structures of their consciousness, by which they made him the object of their faith and knowledge. Thus, as Torrance argues, the biblical scholar, using the methods of historical criticism, is faced with the task of stripping away the theoretical (*i.e.*, theological) accretions that accrued over time to the Jesus narrative in order to bring into view, as far as possible, the actual impression he made as he appeared to his contemporaries. It was in this troubling context that Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and their followers struggled to find some meaningful place in human culture for the message of the Gospel. As nineteenth- and twentieth-century theology demonstrates, notes Torrance, as long as one operates with an epistemological disjunction between a "noumenal" realm of ideas and a "phenomenal" realm of events, nothing more than a moral, symbolic, or mythological meaning can be given to the biblical account of God's saving interaction with the world of space and time, particularly the Christian message of Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection.

For Torrance (1980a:27), it is the "anachronistic" persistence of the conception of the world as a closed continuum of cause and effect that perpetuates the "damaging dualisms" that give rise to the "pseudo-theologies" that remain common today. Against

the dualisms of embedded in Western theology, the purpose of Torrance's study of the history of epistemology is to undergird the unitary, non-dualist foundations of his post-Einsteinian scientific theology (*cf.* Gill, 2007:171). Morrison (1997:60) is correct to assert that Torrance has taken up the task of presenting a properly "interactionist" [*i.e.*, non-dualist] Christian theology, wherein God is seen as interacting closely with the world of nature and history without being confused with it. As Morrison rightly notes, in contradistinction to contemporary dualist theologies, "Torrance has given himself energetically and prolifically to the interactionist theological task as responsively arising out of the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ."

2.4 A Unitary Vision: The Integration of Form and Being

In rejecting the cosmological and epistemological dualisms of the past, Torrance is concerned to emancipate theological thinking from static concepts, mechanistic systems, and "logico-deductive argumentation from fixed *principia*" (as in Newton), so that it can embrace conceptual structures that encompass the "primordial unity" of "form" and "being" (Torrance, 1972:244; 1984:276). That is, Torrance is concerned to articulate a scientific theology that mirrors the "integration of form" (Torrance, 1984:61-105) developed in the natural sciences by Einstein and in the philosophy of science by Michael Polanyi (*cf.* Torrance, 1984:107-173; Colyer, 2001a:334-344; Gill, 2007:164-167). As Gill (2007:164, 165) notes, Einstein's Theory of Relativity undermined the dualism inherent in the Western philosophical conception of a "real" world abstracted from the world of empirical reality (*cf.* Torrance, 1980a:23, 30, 31), thus compelling the "unity of form and being," or the correlation of theoretical and empirical factors, in both theological and natural science.

While Torrance does not define his terms, ostensibly assuming, as he generally does, perhaps greater knowledge than many readers enjoy, by "form," he refers to the "inherent intelligibility," "rational structure," or pattern of "intrinsic interrelations" that constitute the reality in question; that is, what the reality "is." The "integration of form," therefore, refers to epistemology, that is, to how we arrive at, or generate, concepts and categories that describe that reality. More succinctly, as Colyer (2001a:322*ff*) notes, the "integration of form" refers to "the coordination of ideas and experience." The "integration of form and being" means that scientific knowledge must be developed according to the intrinsic nature (*i.e.,* "being") of the object of study as

revealed in the course of investigation and is, thus, simply another, if more ambiguous, way of stating Torrance's fundamental methodological axiom of kataphysical inquiry. Similarly, the "integration of form with knowing" means that "knowing" must arise in accordance with the intrinsic nature of the object of inquiry; that is, epistemology must follow ontology. This is simply a reassertion of Torrance's "critical realist epistemology."

With his concern for a unitary theological vision that integrates form and being, Torrance is reacting against Cartesian-Newtonian-Kantian dualisms that bifurcate form and being by separating the theoretical and empirical components of knowledge, positing a divide between the knower and the known and, consequently, developing *a priori* epistemologies *in abstractio* rather than *a posteriori* epistemologies *in concreto*. Torrance (1972:244; 1984:275, 276) writes:

> [Scientific theology is concerned with] the discovery of appropriate modes of rationality or cognitive instruments with which to enter into the heart of religious experience, and therefore with the development of axiomatic concepts with which to allow its interior principles to be disclosed, and in that light to understand, as far as we may, the rational structure of the whole field of God's interaction with man and the world he has made.

That is, against the cosmological and epistemological dualisms of the past, Torrance is concerned to develop concepts and axioms that accurately reflect, as far as possible, a non-dualist, unitary, interactionist vision of the nature of God's historical space-time relation with humankind.

Notwithstanding Kant's assertion that knowledge is conditioned by the act of knowing, Torrance, as a philosophical realist, rejects epistemological dualism, asserting, rather, that reality is, in some sense, capable of "rational apprehension and of semantic designation," an assumption that Torrance finds operative in everyday experience and in every field of scientific inquiry. If reality were not inherently rational, then human apprehension would not be possible; thus, it is because "things" are open to rational treatment that we can apprehend them at all (Torrance, 1969a:vi, vii).

In his rejection of epistemological dualism, Torrance draws upon the work of Albert Einstein (1879-1955). Einstein argued that belief in an external world independent of the perceiving subject is the basis of all science (Martin, 1995:175; *cf*. Torrance, 1985:2). In his General Theory of Relativity, Einstein established a new mode of rationality known as "mathematical invariance," a reference to the invariant structure of

nature which is irrespective of any and every observer. Thus, for Einstein, the universe is inherently rational and endowed with an intrinsic intelligibility that functions independently of the observer and is accessible to scientific inquiry. By breaking through the idealist structures of Kantian phenomenalism, Einstein established a "realist" ontology in which there is a correspondence between the scientific mind and the objective structures and inherent intelligibility of the universe. That is, Einstein showed that science is grappling with objective realities, not merely the constructs of the human mind. By showing, contra Kant, that the "thing in itself" can be scientifically known and subject to scientific method, Einstein restored both ontology and epistemology to a genuine scientific status. As Torrance notes, "This involved a radical change in outlook upon the universe, for it meant a rejection of dualism and a way of thinking of the universe in its inherent unity of form and being" (Torrance, 1972:240; 1984:273; 1985:20-22; *cf.* Tarnas, 1991:355-362). As Chung (2011:54) notes, for Torrance, relativity theory has facilitated scientific advance through the epistemic correlation between the inherent thought patterns of the human mind with the intelligible order of nature embodied in objective reality and, thereby, has revealed the weakness of the *a priori* approach of epistemological dualism as "nothing more than empty conceptual schemata" built upon a supposed dichotomy between knowledge and objective reality.

In terms of his theological science, Torrance seeks to create a unitary vision of the mediation of Jesus Christ that overcomes the dualisms in Western Christianity (*cf.* Chapters Four and Five). Western doctrines of Jesus Christ have started either with his humanity and tried to reach his divinity through a "bottom-up" approach, or have begun with his divinity and tried to reach his humanity through a "top-down" approach. Against dualist christologies that separate the divinity and humanity of the incarnate Son, Torrance seeks to formulate a unitary approach to the doctrine of Jesus Christ that recognises his wholeness and integrity as both God and man in one person, so that the acts of God in the person of Christ cannot be separated from the being of the Triune Godhead (Torrance, 1992:63; Ho, 2008:47). To be sure, a fundamental aspect of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ is his sustained attempt to overcome the dualist christologies of Western Christianity.

2.4.1 Elemental Forms and Logical Simplicity

According to Torrance, in proceeding in accordance with the demands of the nature of its object of inquiry, so that epistemology unfolds in accordance with ontology (*i.e.*, "knowing" develops in accord with the "nature" of the object of inquiry), scientific activity engages in a movement of thought from the many to the one, from the complex to the simple, in order to reduce the multiplicity of its knowledge to a basic order or "elemental form." These basic, minimal, elemental forms have the effect of illuminating a great variety of otherwise incomprehensible facts and, thereby, represent a vast simplification of a broad range of knowledge. This methodological principle, known as "Ockham's razor," was reiterated by Einstein, who asserted that the aim of science was to comprehend as completely as possible the reality under study while using a minimum of primary concepts and relations to describe it. For Torrance, it is the *sine qua non* of scientific advance that we penetrate through the multiplicity of knowledge to primary, elemental forms, so that through them, we may attain a more profound and clearer knowledge of reality. Einstein referred to this process as "logical simplicity" or "logical economy." According to Torrance, "The principle of logical economy implies that the simpler and poorer the basic forms we employ, the wider and the richer will be our knowledge" (Torrance, 1969a:116-119).

Torrance applies the principle of logical simplicity to theological science, for it, too, "requires penetration down to the basic 'forms' if extensive illumination and profound understanding are to be reached." In using only those concepts which can be coordinated as fully as possible with the reality they are intended to illuminate, Torrance seeks to reduce the entire body of theological knowledge to a few elemental forms that allow us "to isolate the core of basic and central theological concepts and relations, as few in number as possible ... in order to grasp something of its [theology's] inner coherence and unity, and then use it as an instrument with which to comb through the whole corpus of accumulated beliefs and doctrines in the service of clarification and simplification." In this kind of epistemological activity, Torrance strives for such a "penetrating grasp of the organic structure of our knowledge of God in its inner unifying core that we are able to discriminate what is relevant from what is irrelevant, what is central from what is merely peripheral, what is basic and constant from what is superficial and variable, and what is of permanent from what is only of transient significance" (Torrance, 1969a:119; 1985:152-157).

For Torrance, the principle of logical simplicity, whereby we penetrate to the basic, elemental forms of theological knowledge, has the effect of concentrating our theological attention on the essential, foundational doctrines of the Christian faith, particularly the doctrines of the consubstantial communion of the persons of the Trinity and the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. After studying Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (1957a:1*ff*), Torrance realized that concepts such as the Nicene *homoousion* and the hypostatic union provide a framework for embodying the "essential connections" of the material content of our knowledge of God, so that a "coherent and consistent account of Christian theology as an organic whole" might be developed in a rigorously scientific way in terms of its own "objective truth and inner logic" (Torrance, 1990:123; *cf.* 1985:156, 157).

For Torrance, basic theological concepts such as the *homoousion* and the hypostatic union, as well as the doctrine of the Trinity, enable us to apprehend and articulate the inner matrix of relations revealed to us in the economy (*oikonomia*) of God's self-revelation in the Old and New Testaments. Together, these concepts provide a "disclosure model," or conceptual "lens," through which we allow realities to reveal themselves to us in a progressive way, always subject to revision as realities unfold, that simplifies and clarifies our knowledge of God and enables us to integrate the complexity of Scripture in a way that illumines God's self-revelation in the economy of salvation, while strengthening our faith and experience (Torrance, 1980a:125, 126; Colyer, 2001b:225). In short, elemental forms such as the *homoousion* and hypostatic union are fundamental doctrines for understanding the Church's faith in Jesus Christ (Purves, 2001:58).

For Torrance, the issue of the oneness in being and agency between Jesus Christ and God is the "controlling centre" or "decisive hinge" upon which the "whole Christian outlook upon God" turns. It is the "supreme regulative principle" of conciliar theology from Nicaea to Chalcedon, when the classical foundation of Christian theology was laid (Torrance, 1985:156, 157). The Nicene *homoousion* (*cf.* Chapter Four), the assertion of the consubstantial Father-Son relation, is the epistemological and ontological "linchpin" of revelation and reconciliation, and, therefore, of the entire enterprise of a Christian scientific theology. In light of the orthodox creedal assertion that Jesus Christ is "of one being with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*), the *homoousion* crystallizes the Christian conviction that, while the incarnation falls within historical time and space, it

also falls within the eternal life and being of God. Thus, the *homoousion* is of the utmost evangelical significance, for it is essential to our salvation that Jesus is of one nature with God, for only God can save (Torrance, 1980a:160, 161; 1988a:110*ff*; 1996a:30; 1996b:128). A rigorous scientific theology must be developed in light of the nature of God as it comes into view in God's actual self-revelation. This is precisely what takes place when we develop our knowledge of God in accordance with the divine self-revelation in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, who is *homoousios to Patri* (Torrance, 1988a:52).

In addition to the Nicene *homoousion*, the hypostatic union (*cf.* Chapter Five) of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ is a constitutive elemental form in Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ. While it is essential to our salvation that Jesus Christ is of one nature with God, it is also essential that he is of the same being and nature as humanity. If Jesus is not human as we are, then the Gospel is emptied of soteriological content, for his actions have no connection to us and God has not bridged the gulf between himself and humanity created by sin (Torrance, 1988a:4, 8, 146, 147; 1992:56-59). The patristic doctrine of the hypostatic union asserts, however, that God has joined himself to human flesh in the incarnate person of Jesus Christ, in whom God reveals himself within the limits of our creaturely existence (*i.e.,* the mediation of revelation). The eternal *Logos* takes the form of a servant (Jn 1:1,14; Phil 2:5-11) and assumes our actual diseased, sinful humanity, not only atoning for it, but healing it and bending it back to the Father (Torrance, 1988a:153, 157, 161*ff*). Because the incarnate Son is both fully divine and fully human, he encompasses both sides of the mediating relationship between God and man in his one incarnate person. Thus, the hypostatic union itself is the "mainstay" of atoning reconciliation between God and humanity and "lies embedded in the very heart of atonement" (*i.e.*, the mediation of reconciliation) (Torrance, 1992:56-59; 2008:196).

In addition to the *homoousion* and the hypostatic union, another elemental form that constitutes Torrance's vision of the mediation of Christ is the important doctrine of "incarnational redemption." Representing the "Godward-humanward" movement of the mediation of Jesus Christ (*cf.* Chapter Six), Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption is a direct correlate of his doctrine of the hypostatic union. For Torrance, atoning reconciliation is a direct function of the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, while the hypostatic union is the immediate

ground of atoning reconciliation. In Torrance's unitary theology, the incarnation and the atonement are intimately connected: the incarnation is inherently redemptive and redemption is inherently incarnational. Atoning salvation is not an "external" transaction, as in a forensic concept of atonement; rather, atoning reconciliation occurs "within" the incarnate constitution of the person of Jesus Christ. In the incarnate life of the Mediator there occurs an "agonising union" between God the Judge and humanity under judgment in a continuous movement of atoning reconciliation running throughout the life of Jesus, from his virgin birth through his death, resurrection and ascension. Hence, Jesus does not mediate a reconciliation that is other than himself, as though he were merely an instrument of reconciliation; rather, Jesus embodies what he mediates, for what he is and what he mediates are the same. He *is* the reality and content of divine reconciliation. He does not merely propitiate, redeem, and justify; he *is* our propitiation, redemption, and justification. Thus, atoning reconciliation is not something added to the hypostatic union (or to Jesus' internal relation with the Father); rather, it is the hypostatic union at work in expiation and atonement. In the identity of the Mediator and mediation the heart of the Gospel is to be found (Torrance, 1986b:476-478; 1988a:155, 159; 1992:62-67; Colyer, 2001a:85; Purves, 2001:58).

A final and particularly characteristic feature of Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ, and an additional correlate of his doctrine of the hypostatic union, is his important doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ (*cf.* Chapter Seven). Here Torrance stresses the "humanward-Godward" movement of Christ. Throughout his entire incarnate life, from birth through death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus "vicariously" makes the perfect filial response of faith and obedience to the Father on behalf of, and in the place of, all humanity, in such a way as to undergird, rather than undermine, the integrity of our own human response to God in faith, repentance, and obedience (Torrance, 1988a:149-154; 1992:73*ff*; 1996b:132; Colyer, 2001a:28, 29).

In summary, the Nicene *homoousion*, the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures of Christ, the doctrine of incarnational redemption, and the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ constitute the elemental forms of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ. Torrance weaves these basic constitutive concepts together into an intricate, coherent whole, so that they are not easily separated. These concepts are closely related, interpenetrating one another, because they are all functions of the being

and life of Jesus Christ, who, in his one incarnate person, is the mediation of God to humanity and humanity to God.

2.4.2 Theological Holism and Onto-Relationality

The coherence of the basic elemental forms of Torrance's scientific theology is related to another essential aspect of his thought: his theological "holism." Inspired by his reading of the nineteenth-century natural scientists and devout Christians, Michael Faraday (1791-1867) and James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), as well as the early twentieth-century scientist, Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Torrance's theological holism is rooted in his basic convictions concerning the "dynamic interrelationality" of reality and the kind of inquiry needed to grasp this interrelatedness. Clerk Maxwell discovered that the behaviour of electricity, magnetism, and light could not be explained in terms of Newtonian mechanics; hence, he was compelled to articulate a different explanation "in terms of nonmechanical intelligible relations immanent in nature, which allowed him to unify electricity, magnetism, and light in a single theory." In distinction to the atomism of Newtonian dualist cosmology, Clerk Maxwell and Faraday discovered that the elemental aspects of reality do not exist as discrete particles in isolation from one another but rather as "particles-in-relation" to one another by virtue of the electromagnetic "force fields" in which they are embedded and through which they are connected or interrelated. Maxwell developed the concept of the "continuous dynamic field" as an independent reality, a discovery that Einstein called the most important change to have ever taken place in the logical structure of natural science. Torrance sees scientists like Clerk Maxwell searching for a way to understand the universe that is not linked to the classical, Newtonian dualism of causal necessity manifested by discrete, isolated particles interacting with one another in a mechanistic fashion. Clerk Maxwell articulated his "field theory" as a way of describing particles as inseparable from their interactions. The space-filling electromagnetic fields in which particles are embedded and through which they are related are a constitutive part of what the particles are (Torrance, 1984:215*ff*; 1988b:161; 2002a:12-16; Neidhardt, 1989:87*ff*). As Morrison (1997:106) rightly notes, Maxwell's work convinced Torrance that the relations between objects and events belong to what those things actually are. As Chung (2001:52, 53) notes, Torrance claims that Clerk Maxwell's work left an indelible impact on later scientists by opening up "a new frontier of relational understanding" of objective reality.

In the early twentieth century, Albert Einstein further developed the insights of Clerk Maxwell and contributed to a profound revolution in the understanding of nature with his General Theory of Relativity (Torrance, 1981b:28). For Torrance, the transition from mechanical thinking to relational or "field" thinking begun by Clerk Maxwell reached its culmination in Einstein (Chung, 2011:53). Rather than view reality in terms of the static uniformity of causal patterns characteristic of Newtonian cosmology, Einstein followed Maxwell in positing reality "as a continuous integrated manifold of fields of force in which relations between bodies are just as ontologically real as the bodies themselves," for it is in these interrelations that things are found to be what they actually are (Torrance, 1981b:28). Einstein thoroughly dismantled the radical dualism inherent in Newton's concept of absolute space and time and apparent relative space and time. Rather than constituting a "container" to hold the empirical phenomenon of the universe, as posited by Newton, Einstein discovered that space and time (*i.e.*, "space-time") are inseparably connected and constitute an inherent feature of the empirical phenomena of the universe and are inseparable from its dynamic processes and connections (Torrance, 1988b:162; 1989:111, 112; 2002a:17-34; *cf.* Tarnas, 1991:355, 356). As Luoma (2002:66, 67) notes, against Newtonian cosmology, Torrance prefers Einstein and his theories of relativity, for these allow Torrance to construct a view of the incarnation that is unencumbered by Newton's "receptacle" view of absolute space and time. As Chung (2011:52) notes, Torrance sees one of Einstein's greatest contributions in his going beyond Newtonian dualism by postulating the "realism" of scientific epistemology, thereby opening the way for theology to return from the entrenched dualism of the past to realist approach to revelation and mediation in Jesus Christ.

According to Torrance, the basic characteristic of the new cosmology that has resulted from the work of Clerk Maxwell, Faraday, Einstein, and others is a "thorough-going rejection of dualism ... grounded in the mutual interaction of the space-time metrical field and all matter/energy in the universe." The new, non-dualist cosmology involves the replacement of the idea of the universe as a mechanistic-clockwork or closed causal system with a new ontology of "field-structure" conceived in "onto-relational" rather than atomistic terms (Torrance, 1976a:270). These interrelations, or "onto-relations," as Torrance calls them, are relations so basic that they are inseparable from, and characteristic of, the realities they constitute. If we are to accurately understand the

nature of various realities, argues Torrance, they must be investigated within the nexuses of the interrelations of which they are a part. Realities must not be studied in isolation, for they are what they are by virtue of the relations wherein they are embedded. Inquiry into these "being-constituting" relationships, or "onto-relations," notes Torrance, allows realities "to disclose to us their inherent organisation or structure so that we can understand them in the light of their intrinsic significance or logos which controls our interpretation and description of them" (Torrance, 1992:46; *cf.* Colyer, 2001a:55, 56).

Torrance frequently draws upon the field of particle physics to illustrate his point. Classical science "chopped up" nature into an infinite number of particles, or atoms, that could not be further reduced and thus constituted the basic building blocks of nature. These particles lacked any intrinsic relations; rather, they were related in only an external way, that is, in terms of their "causally determined interconnections." Through this way of thinking, a "hard causalist pattern" was imposed on nature and led to the radically dualist ways of thinking that have infected Western culture, so that the universe has been viewed in terms of a closed system of cause and effect in no need of God. Instead of the atomistic approach of Newtonian science, however, contemporary science has come to regard particles as intrinsically connected through the "dynamic fields of force," or interrelations between particles, that are a constitutive part of what the particles are. Modern science now interprets particles not as discrete, isolated entities connected in a mere causal way, but as "knots of energy like tiny vortices in waves of electromagnetic radiation, or as spatio-temporal points of convergence in indivisible fields of force" wherein matter and energy are ultimately equated. In short, contemporary science has come to think of particles in terms of "onto-relational structures in the space-time configurations of the universe" (Torrance, 1992:47, 48; *cf.* 2, 3). More simply, as Morrison (1997:107, 108) notes, modern science has discovered that reality "as it is" compels the scientist to gain an increasing sense of "connection." In the wake of the Maxwellian-Einsteinian revolution, proper scientific thinking means to "connect things up with other things," to think in terms of their constitutive interrelations, and quite importantly, to determine the kind of relation that exist between the realties under study (*cf.* Torrance, 1972:234). As Morrison notes, post-Einsteinian questions have to do with the "actual web of relations" in which things exist.

In harmony with the findings of modern particle physics, a central element in Torrance's thought is his insistence that a scientific approach to theology requires us to think "onto-relationally" (Torrance, 1982:42, 43; Deddo, 2008:37, 38; Molnar, 2009:59-61). As Stratton (1997:293) notes, this means that theology is concerned with "the theological field of connections in and through Jesus Christ" or "the field of God's interaction" with humanity through Jesus Christ in historical space-time (*cf.* Torrance, 1969b:71, 72, 85). For Torrance, we must think of God, not in the non-relational terms of Western thought dating back to Aristotle, who regarded relationality as an "accidental" rather than "essential" characteristic of deity, but in terms of relationality, for God exists eternally in tripersonal relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To be sure, in the absence of relationship, Jesus Christ would neither mediate revelation nor reconciliation. If the essential (*i.e.,* being-constituting) element of relationship between Jesus and the Father is removed, our faith is emptied of the knowledge of God, and our salvation is divorced of divine validity, for the name "Jesus" would refer not to the eternally begotten Son of God but to a "creature" who is necessarily other than God (Deddo, 2008:39, 40).

Torrance argues that thinking in terms of "onto-relations" actually originated in the christology and trinitarianism of the early Church. The emergence of the concept of "person" arose from the Church's understanding of Jesus Christ and the distinctive relations in the Triune Godhead, wherein relations between persons belong to what persons really are in their own beings. That is, "[T]he relations which persons have with one another as persons are onto-relations, for they are person-constituting relations." This way of thinking developed through the understanding of the Holy Trinity as a communion of love, wherein Father, Son, and Holy Spirit "coinhere" in one another without any blurring of their hypostatic distinctions as Father, Son, and Spirit. It became clear to the Church fathers that the "ontic-relations" between the divine persons belong to what they are as persons; that is, no divine person is who he is apart from essential relation to the other two (Torrance, 1992:48, 49; *cf.* Torrance, 1980a:173-178; 1996a:156, 157).

This "onto-relational" way of thinking appealed to Clerk Maxwell, who, in view of his Christian beliefs in the incarnation and the concept of person, made use of "being-constituting relations" in his development of the theory of the electromagnetic "field," thereby breaking away from the classical Newtonian, causalist-mechanistic-

deterministic conception of nature. Einstein drew upon Clerk Maxwell to develop his theory of relativity and bring about the great revolution in modern physics. As Torrance notes, "[W]hen we find a relational way of thinking coming back at us from modern science, it must not be regarded as irrelevant or strange for it has long roots in the history of Christian theology to which, under God, it calls us back" (Torrance, 1992:49). According to Torrance (1984:279):

> [W]e stand today at the point of transition, where we need to carry through the same sort of advance in theology as we have seen at different stages in the movement of modern science from Newton to Einstein, from particle theory to field theory ... from a mechanistic system with its static concepts to the dynamic but objective structures or transformations that are now basic to scientific knowledge of the universe.

Modern dualistic modes of thought have been destroyed in the advance of scientific knowledge with its transition to a unitary view of the universe, wherein form and being, or structure and substance, are integrated. In every field of inquiry, wherever we have to do with the interrelation of empirical and theoretical factors, genuine knowledge is being established in terms of the internal relations and inherent intelligibility of the objects of inquiry, thereby refuting the Kantian insistence that phenomenal knowledge is limited to external relations or appearances. Thus, the epistemological, cosmological and religious dualisms of the past are shown to be "without any force" (Torrance, 1980a:42, 43).

2.4.3 The Goal of Theology

The holism of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ is grounded in "onto-relationality," for the elemental forms, or basic concepts of his thought, are inherently relational. The Nicene *homoousion* describes the Son's eternal, ontological relationship with the Father. The doctrine of the "hypostatic union" articulates the nature of the relationship between the divine and human natures "within" the one incarnate person of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of "incarnational redemption" posits an intrinsic, internal relation between the incarnation and the atonement. The doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Christ describes the incarnate Son's relationship with the Father "as man." Thus, an understanding of the elemental forms of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ arises as these basic concepts are investigated within the nexuses of interrelations that constitute them.

Torrance regards the new, non-dualist, unitary thinking opened up by "field theory," with its recognition of objective ontological relations (*i.e.*, onto-relations), as of great importance for theological science, particularly the realist knowledge of God's Word as revealed in Jesus Christ (Morrison, 1997:108). In contrast to the closed, rigidly mechanical universe of Newtonian cosmology, Maxwell's field theory posits a universe that is continuous and open to God's revelation in space-time history (Yeung, 1993:54, 55). Because the fundamental aspects of reality are relational rather than atomistic, the goal of theology, for Torrance, is to investigate and to articulate the essential interrelations embodied in our knowledge of God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. If being-constituting relations (*i.e.,* "onto-relations") are to be given their proper place in an inquiry into the mediation of revelation and reconciliation, then Jesus Christ must be considered within the "dynamic field" of God's interaction with Israel and in terms of his inner, eternal relation to the Father, as well as within the constitution of his incarnate Person as Mediator, who is both fully God and fully human. Therefore, to understand Jesus Christ and the mediation of revelation and reconciliation, argues Torrance, we must view him within the nexuses of interrelations that disclose his identity and mission. That is, we must adopt a threefold approach in which we examine Christ 1) within the "dynamic field" or matrix of his interrelations with the history and people of Israel in covenant with God; 2) in light of Christ's internal relations with God, and 3) in light of his interrelations with humanity. As theological science investigates and articulates the inner relations disclosed in God's self-communication to us in word and deed as reflected in the Gospel, it enables us to grasp the "organic structure" of our knowledge of God and of God's relation to us in creation and redemption. Torrance finds this kind of approach in the early Church, wherein the followers of Jesus sought to understand his significance within the dynamic field of God's covenant interaction with Israel and also in light of Christ's relationship to the one he called "Father." Within this complex of interrelations, the early Church found itself coming to grips with the essential message of the Gospel, a message of salvation for all mankind, embodied in Jesus himself, in continuity with the message of God that had been worked out in covenant partnership with historic Israel. "In that mediation of God's saving revelation," notes Torrance, "the startling events in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus fell into place within a divinely ordered pattern of grace and truth, and the bewildering enigma of Jesus himself became disclosed: he was incarnate Son of God and Saviour of the world" (Torrance, 1992:1-5, 47-50; *cf.* Colyer, 2001a:55-57, 345).

2.5 Summary and Critique

2.5.1 Summary

Thomas F. Torrance is one of the leading figures in the dialogue between theology and the natural sciences. As a "critical realist," Torrance asserts the fundamental proposition that God exists as an objective Reality independent of our knowledge of him and open to scientific investigation. His "interactionist" epistemology asserts that God has acted in the history of Israel and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ in a means amenable to human understanding and rational inquiry.

Torrance rejects the cosmological dualism of the ancient Greeks, as well as the Newtonian Deism enshrined in the theology of Bultmann, with its attempt to "demythologize" the biblical witness to God's self-revelation in time and space. Furthermore, Torrance rejects Kant's epistemological dualism in favour of the "common sense" that regards the human mind as capable of rational apprehension of the realities of an intelligible universe. Torrance's rejection of Kantian dualism enjoys the support of Einstein, who posited an inherently rational universe endowed with an intrinsic intelligibility that functions independently of the observer and is accessible to scientific inquiry.

In keeping with his fundamental scientific methodological principle that knowledge in any field of inquiry must be developed in accordance with the nature of the object under study, Torrance asserts that real and accurate knowledge of God arises in accordance with the divine nature (*kata physin*) as revealed in Jesus Christ, who is "of one nature with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*). Torrance's scientific theology precludes all *a priori* presuppositions and antecedently reached conceptual frameworks regarding the knowledge of God. Against the development of epistemologies in abstraction, Torrance's scientific theology correctly demands that knowledge of God be developed *a posteriori*; hence, epistemology must follow ontology if knowledge of God is to be developed in a scientific manner. Because God has revealed himself according to the divine nature in Jesus Christ, the incarnation is the actual source and controlling centre for the Christian doctrine of God. To know God through the incarnate Son, who

is "of one nature" (*homoousios*) with God, is to know God in a scientifically appropriate manner.

Torrance's kataphysical methodology is the greatest strength of his scientific theology, and the foundation of his entire theological enterprise. If one accepts, *by faith*, that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son, who is "of one nature" (*homoousios*) with God, then Torrance's scientific methodology rightly places Jesus Christ squarely in the centre of the entire theological enterprise and introduces a christological control to the traditional loci of systematic theology. Torrance's kataphysical method, wherein knowledge of God arises from the divine nature as disclosed in the incarnate Son, is truly "theological," for it allows epistemology to properly arise from a centre in God rather than from an "anthropological" projection of human consciousness onto the heavens.

For Torrance, the proper attitude for scientific theology is faith coupled with piety, wherein our human way of knowing undergoes a "repentant rethinking" or "epistemological inversion" in obedient response to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, who is "Lord of our knowing." Thus, Torrance locates faith, not in the believer's subjective "experience" or "feeling" of dependence, but in the rational apprehension of the self-revealing God who is the Object of faith and has revealed himself in a means amenable to human understanding. Torrance makes faith a rational response to an intelligible Reality that cannot otherwise be known, while, at the same time, freeing faith from the murky depths of mere religious emotionalism.

Torrance's method of kataphysical inquiry leads directly to an important strength of his scientific theology: his theological holism. Parallel to the holistic vision of modern science, Torrance seeks to develop a unitary theology that transcends the dualisms embedded in the history of Western thought. Torrance seeks to develop a rigorous scientific theology, wherein realities are investigated not in isolation but within the "onto-relations," or "being-constituting" nexuses of interrelations, in which they are embedded. Because the fundamental aspects of reality are relational rather than atomistic, the goal of Torrance's holistic theology is to investigate and articulate the essential interrelations embodied in our knowledge of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. In regard to the mediation of revelation and reconciliation, Torrance's scientific theological approach to the mediation of Jesus Christ demands inquiry into the matrix

of his internal relationships with historical Israel and his consubstantial relations with God and humanity.

Torrance's method of kataphysical inquiry facilitates a movement of thought from the complex to the simple. Following the scientific principle of "logical economy" or "logical simplicity," Torrance attempts to reduce a vast array of theological data to a few basic concepts or elemental forms. Among these are the Nicene *homoousion* and the hypostatic union, as well as the corollary concepts of incarnational redemption and the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. The inherent relationality of these concepts reflects the unitary vision of Torrance's theological holism. Together, these concepts constitute a conceptual lens through which we may see more clearly the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ.

2.5.2 Critique

Torrance has been charged with an "uncritical" embrace of contemporary science, as well as "ambiguity" in his repudiation of dualism. Moreover, because he seeks to establish theology as a "special science" in its own right, Torrance has been criticised for the formative role he assigns to faith in his realist epistemology. In addition, in regard to the relation between faith and reason, Torrance has been charged with the extremes of an overly rational approach to faith on the one hand and theological fideism on the other. The more serious critiques of Torrance's thought, however, regard charges of "foundationalism," evidenced by the unprovable "presuppositions" that are said to underlie his scientific theology.

2.5.2.1 A Marriage of Convenience?

While Torrance does not specifically identify his scientific theology as "postmodern," notes Hanna (2004:9 n. 1; 55), he identifies with historians, philosophers, and theologians who may be described as postmodern, or as forerunners of postmodernism, and presents his model of scientific theology against the historical background of the shift from modernism to postmodernism. As Hanna (2004:58-65) argues, Torrance is "responsive to the postmodern shift in science," evidenced by the shift from dualistic to unitary thinking, as well as new conceptions in the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, wherein the "detached objectivity" of modernism is repudiated. As Hanna

correctly observes, in contrast to the mechanistic science of the modern era, Torrance (1981b:144) finds in postmodern science a "spiritual authenticity," that is, a "new expression of Christian thought" that points to the "objective Rationality of God," an objectivity shared by both the natural sciences and theology.

While Hanna rightly notes Torrance's embrace of the post-modern shift in science in the wake of the Maxwellian-Einsteinian revolution, Munchin (2011:455) questions Torrance's "almost totally uncritical appraisal" of recent developments in the sciences, particularly modern physics, suggesting that Torrance has "married" his theological science to the current scientific paradigm, which, as Munchin rightly points out, is precisely the charge Torrance levels at earlier attempts to force a marriage between theology and the natural sciences. As Munchin argues, the lack of any perceived tension between Torrance's theological science and contemporary science suggests that theological science has conformed once again to the natural sciences without any attempt to show how the latter might benefit from the former. Munchin argues that Torrance's "all good news" appraisal of contemporary science may appear to some as a "marriage of convenience."

While Munchin is correct in noting Torrance's enthusiastic reception of the findings of modern science, particularly Clerk Maxwell's field theory and Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, a suggestion of a marriage of convenience is misplaced. Torrance's enthusiastic reception of the findings of modern science is the obverse of his persistent, determined rejection of the dualisms inherent in Western thought and their negative impact on Christian theology. In post-Maxwellian-Einsteinian science, Torrance finds a *unitary* epistemology that transcends the intrinsic dualisms of earlier cosmological-epistemological models that create an insurmountable God-world divide by, *a priori*, precluding any realist knowledge of God and, thereby, rendering the incarnation null. Furthermore, much of Torrance's enthusiasm for the findings of contemporary science is founded on its kataphysical method, wherein scientific knowledge is developed in obedience to the demands of the nature of the reality in question. Here Torrance finds a return to the epistemology of the patristic and Reformation eras. By rejecting *a priori* epistemologies in favour of the "integration of form with being" (*i.e.*, wherein epistemology follows ontology), modern science engages in an *a posteriori* epistemology that is in harmony, rather than conflict, with God's self-revelation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who is "of one nature with the

Father." As Martin (1995:199) rightly notes, in drawing attention to the convergence between the epistemologies of post-modern science and scientific theology, Torrance does not advocate that theology adopt an alien methodological and epistemological framework. Rather he is pointing out the convergence of two systems of thought that have been artificially divided by dualist epistemologies that, on the one hand, separate subject from object, and on the other, exclude God from the world.

2.5.2.2 Dualism: Ambiguity of Meaning

As Chung (2011:31) correctly notes, Torrance's persistent attacks on dualism are intended to safeguard the integrity of God's revelation and mediation in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Torrance's definition of "dualism" as an "incompatibility" between spheres of reality is not without its critics, a number of whom have noted its inadequacy (*e.g.*, Luoma, 2002:86; Ho, 2008:53; Chung, 2011:34,40). Rightly noting the central position dualism plays in Torrance's theology, Luoma (2002:81) argues that, although Torrance has paid inadequate attention to defining the term, this should have been one of his most crucial tasks, given the "ferocity" with which Torrance attacks dualism. Luoma (2002:192 n. 151) also notes that other writers who have attested the importance of dualism in Torrance's theology have failed to give an adequate account of the term (*e.g.*, Miller, 1986; Stamps, 1986; Richardson, 1991; Marley, 1992).

The ambiguity in Torrance's understanding of dualism can be seen in his criticism of Newtonian cosmology. According to Torrance, Newton grounds the rationality and stability of the universe on the rationality and stability of God. For Newton, as Chung (2011:44, 45) notes, the universe is ultimately dependent on God in spite of its deterministic and mechanical character. Therefore, there is no radical dualism between God and the universe; rather, there is a "contingent" relation. Ho (2008:51-53) also notes the "contingent" God-world relation in Torrance's view of Newtonian cosmology. While the Newtonian universe, as Torrance describes it, operates according to mechanical laws, the laws of nature do not apply to the creative processes by which they came into being, but only to those already in being. Ultimately, the universe relies upon God for its existence and intelligibility. Although there is a "contingent" God-world relation, however, God remains deistically detached from creation in his eternal impassibility and immutability, while the world operates according to deterministic mechanical principles (*cf.* Torrance, 1981a:8). For Torrance, argues Ho (2008:47),

dualism is not a total separation but a meeting at a tangential mathematical point, or even an overlap. Thus, as Ho rightly notes, the "dualist separation" Torrance sees in Newtonian cosmology "is indeed not at all separated," for Torrance both highlights the "disjunction" in Newtonian dualism while, at the same time, acknowledging a contingent connection between them.

The contingent God-world relation that both Chung and Ho find in Torrance's view of Newtonian cosmology facilitates insight into Torrance's use of the term "dualism" in his scientific theology. The existence of bipolarities standing in radical ontological distinction is not problematic for Torrance, for against any pantheistic confusion of the Creator-creation relation, he steadfastly maintains a radical ontological separation between God and the world (*cf.* Torrance, 1981a:22, 23). The troubling aspect of dualism for Torrance is not bipolarity but the preclusion of any realist interaction between the polarities. Notwithstanding the ambiguity of his thought, it is clear that Torrance's ultimate concern with Newtonian-Deistic dualism is the *a priori* exclusion of any realist, God-world interaction and the consequent reduction of the *homoousion* and the incarnation to the status of myth. As noted above, Torrance embraces post-Maxwellian-Einsteinian science because its unitary, *a posteriori* epistemology, wherein form is integrated with being, is conducive to a realist, interactionist theology of God's self-revelation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. (Further understanding of Torrance's critique of cosmological dualism will be developed in Chapter Four of the present thesis, particularly in regard to Arian dualism.)

2.5.2.3 An Overly Rational Approach to Faith?

Because of the central place he gives to reason as it relates to faith, Torrance has been criticized for an overly rational approach to faith. Chung (2011:86) cites Langford as a typical example of this particular criticism. Langford (1972:158) argues that Torrance's emphasis on the rational component of faith fails to provide for the affective, volitional, or active dimensions of the human response to God in Christ and may reduce the importance of non-cognitive liturgical and sacramental aspects of faith. Stratton (1997:304), however, describes Langford's criticism as "strange," for, against positivism and idealism, Torrance constantly emphasises that "knowing" is an *act* which involves the whole person, as "fiduciary frameworks" are indwelt at the "tacit" as well as the intellectual level. Moreover, Morrison (1997:272), in response to

Langford, rightly argues that, while Torrance may have over-emphasised the rational aspect of faith, he does not forego the crucial aspects of trust and obedience. Likewise, notes Chung (2011:87), despite Torrance's "propensity for rationality," he does not forego other qualities of faith.

To be sure, Langford's criticism is unfounded in light of Torrance's view that theology can never be more than a refinement and extension of the knowledge of God as it arises in the liturgy and doxology of the community of faith and in the believer's living, personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Colyer, 2001a:28; *cf.* Torrance, 1983:12). Moreover, the "holism" of Torrance's scientific theology precludes a "head-heart" dualism, wherein a rational approach to knowledge of God is set at odds with personal piety and devotion. For Torrance, personal piety and intimate relationship with God are essential aspects of his scientific approach to theology, an approach that is firmly grounded in the life, worship, and devotion of the community of faith. As Colyer (2001a:25) rightly notes, throughout his work, Torrance intertwines theology and worship, so that his theology is not only rigorously scientific and intellectually challenging but doxological and evangelical as well.

2.5.2.4 Theological Fideism?

In contrast to claims of an overly rational approach to faith, Purves (2002:72) clearly recognises the importance of faith, prayer, and piety in Torrance's scientific theology, even suggesting that Torrance may be guilty of theological "fideism" by insisting that we can only know God from within a relationship of faith and prayer, wherein epistemological inquiry is grounded in personal and communal piety.

Against possible claims of theological "fideism," however, Torrance argues that we cannot know God in a detached, impersonal manner, for God has sovereignly ordained that we "know" him through an intimate relationship with the eternal Word incarnate who has "declared" him to us (Jn 1:18; *cf.* 17:3). As Torrance argues, a scientific approach to knowledge of God requires a radical adaptation of our minds and understanding to the nature of the object of inquiry as it unfolds in investigation. Since God is "love" (Jn 4:8, 16) and reveals that love at the cross of Christ (Jn 3:16), our minds and hearts must be adapted to his nature in a movement of reciprocal love if we are to know God according to his self-revelation in Jesus Christ. To be sure, revelation

and reconciliation are inseparable in Torrance's theology, for Torrance asserts that to know God according to his nature requires that we enter into a personal and saving relationship with him through Jesus Christ, who is "of one nature" with the Father.

2.5.2.5 Foundationalism and Overruling Presuppositions?

The more problematic critiques of the relationship between faith and reason in Torrance's theological science concern the issue of "foundationalism." Thiemann (1985:158, 159, 165, 166; *cf.* Stratton, 1997:316, 317) describes "foundationalism" as a set of non-inferential, self-evident beliefs which serve as the "givens" or "foundations" of a linguistic system. He then applies this description to Torrance's theological science.

More recently, M.K. Ho (2008:24-28) has followed Thiemann in suggesting that Torrance's scientific theology is founded on a number of basic, fundamental presuppositions that cannot be validated by human reasoning or "scientific" proof. Ho (2008:2) even makes the overreaching claim that Torrance's scientific theology "is not really about science but about faith." As Ho correctly observes, Torrance appeals to the necessity of faith in order for us to know that the "centre of our knowing" is in God, rather than in us, and that God's revelation is reliable and faithful (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:131, 132, 264). While noting that belief in the reliability and faithfulness of God is paramount in Torrance's thought, Ho (2008:25) finds it "unfortunate" that this "presupposition" cannot be "scientifically proved." In addition, in light of Torrance's assertion that we must abandon all presuppositions in order to develop *a posteriori* knowledge according to the nature of the object of theological inquiry, Ho (2008:26-28) argues that Torrance contradicts himself by introducing the unprovable presupposition that ultimate reality cannot be validated outside itself. Since this presupposition cannot be questioned, Ho follows Thiemann (1985:40) in arguing that Torrance is under the influence of "foundationalism," even though Torrance (2001:331) clearly rejects Thiemann's "bizarre" claim.

In regard to Torrance's emphasis on the objectivity of divine revelation, wherein God is in control of the revelatory process, Ho (2008:24) claims that Torrance has failed to give adequate attention to the issue of the subjective aspects of the divine-human encounter (*cf.* Thiemann, 1985:32-46). Regarding Torrance's assertion that in the

subject-object relation knowledge of God is controlled not by the inquirer but by God, who is "Lord of our knowing," Ho asks, "How is one to determine whether the revelatory experience is genuine or merely an illusion?" Against Torrance's emphasis on divine objectivity in revelation, Ho argues that human subjectivity cannot be excluded in determining the truthfulness of the "revelation," for discernment of the revelatory experience depends on the "subjectivity of the subject rather than the objectivity of the object." In contrast to Torrance's appeal to faith in the reliability and faithfulness of God, Ho (2008:25) cites Macquarrie (1963:333-335), who argues that all "alleged revelation" must be tested in the light of "human wisdom," that is, human subjectivity, so that its validity may be discerned; otherwise, there is no way to discriminate among the many "revelations," whether of Mohammed, Kawate Bunjiro, Joseph Smith, or another. In addition, Ho (2008:25) argues that Torrance's strong cultural Christian background inevitably compels him to see ultimate reality as the Triune God of scripture, whereas Hindus or Buddhists using Torrance's method may possibly see ultimate reality in the guise of their own gods. Ho (2008:25 n. 119) footnotes Battagglia (1985:492), who argues that the modern physicist's view of the world is surprisingly like that of Chinese or Indian mysticism. Thus, argues Ho, "Every religious faith can employ Torrance's theological science to secure its own claim of reality."

Finally, by presupposing the existence of an ultimate reality that cannot be scientifically proven and, even more, by presupposing that this reality is the Christian God of the Holy Bible, argues Ho (2008:25-27), Torrance takes "an *a priori* presupposition in his *a posteriori* mode of thinking" by introducing a presupposition that "overrules all other presuppositions," while providing little apologetic support for his position. Without addressing the presupposed existence of its object of inquiry through apologetics as a "preamble" to his theological science, notes Ho, it is difficult to see how theology can be a part of science, since all religious faiths claim their own ultimate realities. For Ho, unless human reasoning (subjectivity) can be used to discern the validity of the presuppositions underlying his thought, then Torrance's theological science is "simply another fancy name for a personal belief which is totally independent of science." By introducing personal faith into his scientific theology, while detaching it from scientific validation, argues Ho, Torrance creates a paradox that is difficult to comprehend.

In response to Ho, we will begin with his assertion that every religious faith can use Torrance's theological science to support its own claim of reality. Ho's argument cannot be supported in the light of Torrance's critical realist, interactionist epistemology and the kataphysical method of inquiry that derives from it. As Ho (2008:20) rightly notes, for Torrance, there is no true knowledge of God and the world apart from Jesus Christ. Torrance's kataphysical method, wherein knowledge is developed "according to the nature" of the object of inquiry, demands that scientific theological knowledge be developed according to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, for only the incarnate Son is "of one nature with the Father." Mohammed, Kawate Bunjiro, or Joseph Smith, however, are not *homoousios to Patri*; therefore, they cannot reveal the nature of God and, hence, fail to meet the requirements of Torrance's kataphysical method. Moreover, Ho fails to appreciate the "idea of compulsion" (Luoma, 2002:66) in Torrance's epistemology, wherein the reality under investigation dictates the terms of inquiry and the rules by which it must be interpreted. In other words, by failing to fully appreciate the close connection between the Nicene *homoousion* and Torrance's realist, interactionist epistemology, Ho inadvertently undermines the patristic assertion that "only God can reveal God" (*cf.* Chapter Four). Thus, Ho is incorrect to argue that every religious faith can use Torrance's scientific method to support their claims.

Regarding Torrance's emphasis on the objective nature of revelation, Ho appears to follow Thiemann (1985:32-46), who also claims that Torrance fails to give adequate attention to the subjective aspects of the divine-human encounter in revelation. Contrary to Ho, however, there are important subjective aspects of the epistemological process in Torrance's scientific theology. For Torrance, the divine-human encounter in revelation is reciprocal, though unequal (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:308), for God is "Lord of our knowing," who reveals himself in an act of sheer grace. The subjective pole of the divine-human encounter is expressed in the human response of faith, piety, and devotion, each of which is an essential aspect of the "epistemological inversion" demanded by the unique Object of theological scientific inquiry. Thus, for Torrance there is a vital subjective component to revelation, that is, a relational aspect of epistemology that may be described as "knowing in relation" (*cf.* Morrison, 1997:275). To be sure, Torrance could hardly show more regard for the subjective aspects of the divine-human encounter in revelation that in his insistence that realist knowledge of

God according to his nature (*kata physin*) requires a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

More problematic is Ho's charge of an underlying "foundationalism" in Torrance's scientific theology. Ho (2008:24) criticises Torrance's theological science because it is founded on "presuppositions" that cannot be subjectively discerned by "human reasoning" or "scientific proof." Yet, while Ho (2008:20, 21) clearly recognises that Torrance considers theology a "special branch of science," sharing with others sciences a generally recognised procedure based on the "principle of objectivity," with a method of inquiry determined by the nature of its object, like Thiemann, who fails to take into consideration Torrance's distinction between a general and a special science (Stratton, 1997:315), Ho appears to confuse the "special science" of theology with an implicit, overarching "general science" with procedures and method rooted in rationalism and/or empiricism. He then criticises Torrance's theological science because its object of inquiry is not subject to rational (*i.e*, "human wisdom") or "scientific" validation. In regard to his assertion that Torrance's scientific theology is founded on a number of implicit and explicit presuppositions that cannot be rationally or scientifically validated, for example, the reliability and faithfulness of God, Ho fails to take into account the unique nature of theological science as a special science in its own right with its own particular procedures determined by the nature of its Object. Unlike the objects of inquiry in the natural sciences, the nature of the object of theological inquiry is unique, for the Object of theological inquiry is the Sovereign God, who dictates the terms and conditions by which he may be known. In regard to "scientific validation," Torrance argues that God cannot be known *in any other way* than the way in which he has freely and sovereignly made himself known in the history of Israel and in Jesus Christ. In fact, as will be shown below (*cf*. Chapter Four), Torrance rejects natural theology as an apologetic *praeambula fidei*. Thus, where Ho claims a need for an apologetic foundation, Torrance appears to have no interest in "proving" his object of inquiry; rather, he is interested in showing how theological science develops in obedience to the demands of its Object.

Ho is, of course, correct to note the importance of faith in Torrance's epistemology. Yet he appears to make the same mistake made by Thiemann (1985:32, 33), who (incorrectly) finds in Torrance a stark contrast between faith and reason and a "Kierkegaardian reveling" in the "non-rationality" of revelation (Morrison, 1997:275).

For Torrance, "faith" is the proper "epistemic stance" toward the Object of scientific theological inquiry, who sovereignly dictates the terms by which he may be known in an act of sheer grace. For Torrance, God's self-disclosure in Israel and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ is not a presupposition; it is a historical, empirical "fact" that is foundational to his scientific theology, a fact that must be engaged by that essential aspect of his realist epistemology he calls "faith." As Torrance cogently argues, because God is "Lord of our knowing," our knowing requires an "epistemological inversion." Rather than impose our presuppositions and *a priori* thought-forms upon God, we humbly engage in a "repentant rethinking," whereby we formulate our questions strictly in accordance with the way God has actually made himself known to us. Thus, faith is crucial to a scientific theology for it allows the epistemological process to unfold. For Torrance, faith is neither "unscientific" nor "non-rational." Rather, it is the appropriate "mode of rationality" adopted by the reason in obedience to what it seeks to understand. Because revelation is an act of grace, the Object of Torrance's theological science cannot be tested in the "light" of human wisdom or subjected to the ordinary methods of empirical validation. Therefore, charges of "foundationalism" or "overruling presuppositions" are misplaced.

Ho's criticism presents a critical dilemma, however, not only in regard to Torrance's scientific theology, but more importantly, in regard to the "crisis" that ultimately confronts every human being, for each of us must finally answer the question Jesus put to Peter at Caesarea Philippi: "Who do *you* say I am?" For Torrance, this question can only be answered by faith in the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament. Hence, faith is an essential, inescapable aspect of Torrance's realist epistemology, for without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). Unlike Thomas (Jn 20:24-29), we are unable to empirically validate our belief In Jesus Christ; we cannot touch the hands and side of the Risen Saviour in order to assuage our doubts. Instead, we are left to rely, by faith, on the eye-witness accounts of those who not only knew Jesus, but gave their lives in support of their testimony to him. The importance Torrance attaches to faith in his scientific theology, however, raises significant epistemological and methodological issues. By asserting the fundamental proposition that "God is," and that God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, Torrance assigns a formative epistemological role to personal and communal faith and, thereby, builds an epistemological edifice on what the sceptic may regard as shaky ground.

Because Torrance's theology is christologically controlled, particularly in terms of Jesus' consubstantial relation with God and humanity (*i.e.,* the *homoousion* and the hypostatic union), the question that must arise is: "How do we know that Jesus Christ is who the biblical writers and the Nicene fathers say he is?" This question raises the issue of the validity of the sources of our knowledge of God (*cf.* Ho, 2008:25). To be sure, Torrance's realist epistemology is grounded on faith in the validity of the apostolic-conciliar witness and its assertion that Jesus Christ is "the Way, the Life, and the Truth" (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:13-46). Without apology for taking divine revelation seriously (Torrance, 1976b:1, 5), Torrance appears to take for granted the accuracy and authenticity of the biblical and patristic witness to Jesus Christ and, no doubt, rightly so. Yet, in merely assuming this witness to be true, much of Torrance's "scientific" theology rests on no firmer foundation than the simple faith of the ordinary believer. For the committed Christian, this poses no epistemological problem, for, like Peter at Caesarea Philippi, the believer is content to say that Jesus "is the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). For the agnostic or atheist, however, it means the crumbling of much of the epistemological edifice of Torrance's scientific theology. For the unbeliever, Torrance has brought nothing new to the dialogue between natural science and theology, for both scientist and theologian are thrown back on personal and communal faith as the foundation for developing a "realist" doctrine of God.

Therefore, in fairness to Torrance, the question that must be addressed prior to an evaluation of the epistemological grounds of his theology is: "Who is Jesus Christ?" As we shall see below (*cf.* Chapter Five), this is the first question that arises in the Torrance theological tradition. This question must be answered before fair consideration can be given to Torrance's theological method. Eschewing apologetics as a preamble to faith, Torrance grounds his realist, interactive epistemology in faith that God has freely and sovereignly disclosed himself in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, as expounded in the apostolic tradition as recorded in the New Testament and given expression in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (*cf.* Chapter Four). In line with the Reformed emphasis on *sola gratia*, Torrance rejects any "Pelagian" claim to the possibility of the knowledge of God, whether rational ("human wisdom") or empirical, insisting that God cannot be known in any other way than that in which he has graciously made himself known in Jesus Christ. If Torrance is wrong, however, that is, if Jesus Christ is not "of one nature with the Father" and, hence, is not the definitive

revelation of God, then the real question becomes: "Is theological science even possible?" (*cf*. Babcock, 1971:118)

As Torrance compellingly argues, Jesus Christ stands in Pilate's judgement hall, awaiting our answer to the question he put to Peter: "Who do *you* say I am?" If Torrance is right, that is, if Jesus Christ *is homoousios to Patri* and, hence, the definitive self-disclosure of God in historical space-time, then Torrance's theology, with its critical realist, interactionist epistemology and its derivative method of kataphysical inquiry, is arguably the paradigmatic example of theological science at its finest.

3.0 THE WOMB OF THE INCARNATION

3.1 Introduction

As stated earlier, the goal of Torrance's scientific approach to theology is to investigate and to articulate the essential interrelations (*i.e.*, "onto-relations") embodied in our knowledge of God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. To that end, the mediation of Jesus Christ must be viewed, not in isolation, but within the dynamic field of interrelations that disclose his identity and mission, that is, within the context of his relationship to historical Israel and also within the context of the elemental forms that arise from his consubstantial relation with both God and humanity.

Axiomatic to Torrance's interactionist, critical realist epistemology is the foundational tenet, grounded in faith in the authenticity of scripture, that God has acted in time and space, not only in the incarnation and the sending of the Spirit, but also in historical dialogue with ancient Israel, as recorded in the Old Testament. God's historical interaction with Israel is the preparatory background for understanding the mediation of Jesus Christ. Torrance refers to the preparatory background of the mediation of Jesus Christ as the "womb" of the incarnation.

As Kruger (1989:50) notes, divine mediation in Israel is the "first stage" of the mediation of revelation, for there is a direct connection between the mediation of revelation in Israel and the mediation of revelation in Jesus Christ. In Israel, God is at work, preparing the way for the final and definitive revelation in the incarnation of his Son; hence, what is begun in Israel is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As Scandrett (2006:32, 33) notes, for Torrance, "no true or coherent understanding of Jesus Christ" is possible outside his relation with ancient Israel, for apart from Israel, Jesus would be unintelligible.

The present chapter will examine and explain the mediation of revelation and reconciliation of Jesus Christ in relation to historical Israel. Subsequent chapters will examine the mediation of Christ in terms of the basic, elemental forms that arise from the nexus of interrelations that constitute his being and activity.

3.2 Old Testament Background

The incarnation of Jesus Christ did not occur in a historical or cultural vacuum; rather, the incarnation of the Son of God has a "prehistory" or background, traceable to the early chapters of Scripture, which must be considered if we are to understand the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 2008:37; *cf.* 1982:84).

In order to give a theological account of the divine purpose of creation and redemption, as fully revealed in Jesus Christ, Torrance turns to the Book of Genesis in order to develop a "prelude" to *Heilsgeschichte* (*i.e.*, "salvation history"). God made human beings and placed them in an idyllic environment (Gen 2:7*ff*). As social creatures, male and female "in the unity of man," created in the image of God, they were made for communion with God and fellowship with one another. The bond of fellowship between them and God, however, was broken by sin, for it is the nature of sin to disrupt and destroy relationship. In lieu of fellowship and communion, they now stood before God in "guilty fear." Moreover, the man-woman relationship was implicated in the broken relationship with God. The fellowship between man and woman was impaired by guilt and shame, as symbolized in the mutual "hiddenness" of wearing clothes. With the bond of fellowship between them broken, argues Torrance, man and woman were "individualised," so that each turned inward upon himself or herself. In addition, the integrity of the human self was broken in the knowledge of good and evil, creating an intrapsychic rupture between what the person is and what he or she ought to be. Once the "constitutive bond" between God and humanity was broken, notes Torrance, all other relationships suffered irreparable damage. When Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, their relationship with the environment was impaired, and the way back to Eden was blocked by divine judgement. The man now existed in a state of tension with nature, earning his bread by the sweat of his brow among thorns and thistles, while the woman suffered in childbirth. In addition, broken fellowship with God extended into familial relationships, so that Cain slew his brother Abel (Torrance, 2008:38, 39).

According to Torrance, the theological narrative recorded in the Book of Genesis is not only a story of disrupted relationships and the "atomisation" of humanity, however; it is also the story of human attempts at "re-socialisation," that is, heroic attempts to mend broken relations and heal the internal rupture that has produced the individualisation of

humankind. The story of Babel (Gen 11:1*ff)* is the story of divided humanity's attempt to bind itself together again by its own strength and power. But since all human attempts at self-healing involve fallen human nature, they merely provide a new orientation of sin to the broken relationship with God and foster the further disintegration of the self. As Torrance notes, "Mankind is unable to re-socialise itself, unable to heal its internal rupture for that which really makes man man is the bond between man and God" (Torrance, 2008:39).

In addition, Torrance describes a second "prelude" to *Heilsgeschichte*: that is, the story of God's personal intervention in the plight of humanity. From the beginning the promise was made that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15), indicating that the solution to humanity's predicament is the destruction of the power of evil and the recreation of the bond between God and humankind. "But," as Torrance (2008:39, 40) argues,

> if the first creation was the creation of man in the image of God, the recreation is through an act in which God condescends to take on himself the image of man. The whole movement of redemption adumbrated from the start is a movement of God coming to man in order to restore man to God, of God taking man's place in order to give man God's place—the principle of substitution and the principle of incarnation.

As is made clear in the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1*ff*) and the story of Abraham's offering of Isaac (Gen 22:1*ff*), the movement of redemption is entirely the way of grace. As Torrance (2008:40) argues, there are two ways by which humanity can be reconciled to God. The first is the way of Cain, wherein *humanity* offers to God the fruits of its own labour. This is "the way of man from man to God": humanity provides its own offering, its own personal sacrifice. The second is the way of Abel, wherein God provides the offering, the sacrifice of another. In sacrificing an animal to cover or atone for sin, as God did when he clothed Adam and Eve, Abel offered that which God himself had provided. Such is the case with Abraham, who offered his very best to God: his only son. Yet Abraham's offering was displaced by God, who provided in place of Isaac a lamb for sacrifice. As Torrance notes, "Substitution and free grace are identical." Cain's way of approaching God ran counter to grace; his sacrifice was rejected even though it used the gifts provided by God. Abel's way was accepted because it used God's gracious provision. Torrance continues:

> That adumbration of God's way of redemption is worked out more fully with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the way in which God comes in pure grace to gather frail humanity into covenant and communion with himself, and even provides for man a covenanted way of response to God's grace. Man responds

> by faith, but in faith relies upon a divinely provided way of approach and response to God in the covenant.

The "covenanted way of response" (*cf.* below) was the sacrificial system of law and liturgy that God unilaterally provided to Israel, so that it could respond to him as covenant partner and come before him forgiven, sanctified, and consecrated in its priestly mission to the world as mediator of revelation and reconciliation. The Old Testament goes on to unfold the way in which God's reconciling purpose for all humanity began to be worked out in Israel, "in and through whom that purpose began to assume flesh and blood in history" (Torrance, 2008:40).

3.3 Prehistory of the Mediation of Revelation

Torrance's interactionist, critical-realist epistemology, as well as his theological holism, is foundational to his doctrine of the mediation of Christ. Torrance rejects Newtonian Deist cosmological dualism by asserting that God has interacted with humanity in history, within the creaturely conditions of the world of space and time by revealing himself in the history of Israel and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Similarly, Torrance's assertion that God has accommodated his self-revelation to the human mind within the medium of human thought and speech (*cf.* below) is a clear rejection of the epistemological disjunction of Kantian dualism, with its separation of the knower and the known. For Torrance, God can be known because God has made himself known, graciously enabling us to know him through the creative power of his Word. God's divine self-revelation in the history of Israel, as recorded in the Old Testament, provides the foundation of Torrance's "realist" epistemology (*cf.* Torrance, 1982:84). As Torrance (1982:85) notes:

> By revelation is meant, then, not some vague, inarticulate awareness of God, projected out of the human consciousness, but an intelligible, articulate revealing of God by God whom we are enabled to apprehend through the creative power of his Word addressed to us, yet a revealing of God by God which is actualized within the conditions of our creaturely existence and therefore within the medium of our human thought and speech.

For Torrance, revelation is an act of God, who graciously reveals himself to us in a means amenable to human apprehension and articulation.

Yet, if we are to know God and speak of him in appropriate ways, argues Torrance, we must have "fitting modes of thought and speech, adequate conceptual forms and structures, and indeed reverent and worthy habits of worship and behaviour governing

our approach to him." Just as a workman needs appropriate "tools" to complete his task, Torrance notes, we need "conceptual tools" to understand God; that is, we need basic categories, concepts, and beliefs to enable us to receive and assimilate divine revelation within the comparatively limited capacity of human understanding (Torrance, 1992:6; *cf*. 2008:41). As Chung (2011:4, 5) notes, Torrance's "tool" analogy not only emphasises God's gracious provision of the conceptual tools needed to articulate a radically new encounter with God, but also underscores the reality that our sin renders human thought unsuitable in itself for the purpose of mediating divine revelation. As Torrance (1992:12) notes, "Israel teaches us, then, that divine revelation cuts against the grain of our naturalistic existence and calls into question the naturalistic patterns of human thought."

According to Torrance, the conceptual tools for the mediation of revelation are moulded throughout God's historical dialogue with Israel, within the life and history of a particular people elected by God to be the instrument of divine revelation to all humanity (Torrance, 1992:6, 7; 2008:41). In order to gain a "foothold" in human history, so that we might learn to know and speak about God in appropriate ways, notes Torrance, God selected Israel, "one small race out of the whole mass of humanity," and subjected it to "intensive interaction and dialogue with himself" in order to mould and shape it for the purpose of divine revelation. Refusing to allow his purpose of love and redemption to be inhibited by human limitation and weakness, God, in great humility, condescended to find a way to enter our "beggarly weakness and poverty" in order to restore fallen humanity to complete fellowship with himself, both in knowing and being. For the sake of the entire world, Torrance argues, God took Israel in hand to provide "a whole set of spiritual tools" and "*appropriate* (emphasis added) forms of understanding, worship and expression," so that knowledge of God could be revealed in a means amenable to human understanding (Torrance, 1992:6, 7; 2008:40, 41; *cf*. 1952:164, 165). In regard to the development of conceptual tools for the mediation of revelation in Israel, Kruger (1989:47) rightly draws attention to Torrance's insistence on "appropriate" conceptual tools for the creation of a "medium" in human thought and understanding through which God communicates himself to humanity. It is not merely human speech or concepts *per se* that Torrance has in view, notes Kruger; rather, Torrance is concerned with ways of human thinking, knowing, and even worship which are "appropriate" to God. In addition, as Scandrett (2006:35) notes, the forms of thought and life that God gave to Israel are not "arbitrary." They are graciously given

so that humanity may rightly apprehend and respond to God's definitive self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

For Torrance, the development of appropriate conceptual tools for the mediation of revelation constitutes the "epistemological significance" of Israel (Kruger, 1989:47) or the "normative pattern" of divine revelation and mediation before its final fulfilment in the incarnation of Jesus Christ (Chung, 2011:4, 5). For Torrance, notes Chung, the selection of Israel underlines the "singular purpose" of the mediation of revelation to the world, so that the salvation of humanity is made possible through the subsequent coming of Jesus Christ. As Torrance (2008:41) argues, God selected Israel in order to prepare humanity for the incarnation of the Son of God. The story of Israel is the "prehistory" of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

There are three important aspects to the mediation of revelation in Israel: 1) the establishment of a community of reciprocity to facilitate a two-way movement or "double adaptation" of divine revelation and human response; 2) the intensification of the innate hostility of the human mind toward divine revelation as God drew ever nearer to Israel, and 3) the creation of the appropriate forms of thought and speech to enable humanity to receive the final self-revelation of God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

3.3.1 A Community of Reciprocity

For Torrance, notes Scandrett (2006:33), all human knowledge develops within a "social coefficient of knowledge," that is, a social matrix of forms of thought and life that shape our apprehension of reality (*cf.* Torrance, 1985:98-130). Since, for Torrance, there is no correlation between human knowing and the being of God (*cf.* Chapter Four), as Scandrett correctly notes, it was necessary to establish a "social coefficient of knowledge" in a human community, wherein forms of thought and life necessary for the apprehension of God in Jesus Christ could be developed. That community was Israel.

In order for divine revelation to enter history in a form amenable to human understanding, argues Torrance, it must arise within the context of "community."

Language is the "currency of social being," rooted in society and kept alive by the interchange of ideas within it; hence, "word" or language does not develop in isolation but within a community of persons bound by a common way of life and culture. For Torrance, therefore, if the Word of God is to become speech to humanity, it must be directed to us in the context of "community." Moreover, if divine revelation is to create a "reciprocity" between God and humanity, it must create a "community of reciprocity" within human society as "the appropriate medium of its continuing communication to man" (Torrance, 1971:146, 147). Torrance continues:

> That is what happened between God and Israel, for the Word of God spoken to man did not operate in a vacuum but penetrated human existence in the particular life and history of one people elected as the instrument for the actualization of God's revelation in humanity and separated as a holy nation in whose midst God dwelt in an intimate way through the presence of His Word.

In order to be divine Word that is both heard and understandable, Torrance argues, divine revelation penetrates human interpersonal speaker-hearer relationships and becomes speech to humanity by becoming speech "of" humanity "to" humanity, as heard and spoken through the intelligible medium of human language. In taking the form of human speech and writing, God's self-revelation to humanity becomes, at the same time, our obedient response to God, thus "anchoring" revelation both in divine reality and in the conditions of human reality. Torrance writes, "[T]he reciprocity created by the movement of divine revelation takes the form of a community of reciprocity between God and man established in human society, which then under the continuing impact of divine revelation becomes the appropriate medium of its continuing communication to man" (Torrance, 1982:85, 86). Noting that all God's relations with his people are reciprocal, Torrance regards the creation of a "community of reciprocity" as an essential aspect of the mediation of divine revelation (Torrance, 1992:12, 13). In creating a reciprocal movement of revelation from God to humanity and a responsive movement from humanity to God, he argues, God established "a special partnership of covenanted kinship with Israel … in such a way that it could become the instrument of his great purpose of revelation" (Torrance, 1992:6, 7; 2008:41).

3.3.1.1 Double Adaptation of Revelation and Response

For Torrance, the actualisation of revelation within the confines of our creaturely existence necessitates a "profound reciprocity" between God and humanity, wherein

divine revelation summons an "answering movement" from humanity toward God that is a "constitutive ingredient" in God's revelation of himself to us (Torrance, 1982:85; *cf.* 1971:138). Torrance (1971:138; *cf.* 1982:85) writes:

> Thus the Word of God communicated to man includes within itself meeting between man and God as well as meeting between God and man, for in assuming the form of human speech the Word of God spoken to man becomes at the same time word of man in answer to God.

The self-revelation of God in Israel, within the medium of human thought and speech, notes Torrance, requires a two-way movement: "an adaptation of divine revelation to the human mind and an adaptation of articulate forms of human understanding and language to divine revelation" (Torrance, 1992:7). As Kruger (1989:48) notes, this "double adaptation" of divine revelation and human response, wherein divine revelation is adapted to human understanding and language, while human understanding and language is adapted to divine revelation, is an important feature of Torrance's discussion of the mediation of revelation in Israel.

The two-way movement of divine revelation and human response is integral to Old Testament thought. According to Torrance (1996b:130), "In the Hebrew idiom, revelation is not only the uncovering of God but the uncovering of the ear and eye of man for God. It is revelation which achieves its end in man and does not return void to God" (*cf.* Isa 55:11). In establishing a covenant relationship with Israel, notes Torrance (1992:22), God graciously adopted a way to make himself known "in which the movement of his revelation fulfilled itself not only from the side of God toward man but from the side of man toward God." Divine revelation was "progressively mediated" to humanity through Israel in such a way as to make the appropriate human response a constitutive aspect of the mediation of revelation. In an essay on christology, Torrance (1996b:131) writes:

> Revelation involves … the freedom of God to be present to man and to open up man for God and to realize from the side of man his understanding of revelation and his obedient response to it, to effect in man real meeting with God in revelation and to give him capacity for revelation. This capacity for revelation is not to be judged in terms of the receiver, as if he could achieve it on his own, but in terms of the Giver, the Father in Heaven, who acts by his Spirit upon man, from beneath and from within man, but who effects from the side of man and issuing out of man's life a really human understanding of revelation and a really human obedience to it.

Torrance is careful to point out that he is not speaking merely of a divine revelation that "demands" a human response; rather, and most significantly, he is speaking of a divine revelation which "already includes a true and appropriate and fully human response as

part of its achievement for us and to us and in us." In clear contrast to Kantian epistemological dualism, Torrance (1969a:45) regards knowing as reciprocal in nature, consisting of a two-way dynamic between the knower and that which is known; hence, the mediation of divine revelation requires both a movement from God to humanity and a responsive (reciprocal) movement from humanity to God, both of which must be considered. As Torrance argues, these are not two separate movements but one "two-fold" movement, "for even the movement from the side of man toward God … is coordinated with the movement of God toward man, and is part of the divine movement of revelation and reconciliation." This is precisely what Torrance sees occurring in the two-fold movement of revelation in Israel.

For Torrance, notes Kruger (1989:54), revelation includes the "realisation and actualisation" of the knowledge of God in Israel (Torrance, 1992:10), "the fulfilling and actualizing of the knowledge of God in man" (Torrance, 1969a:45), the completion of "the circle of its own movement" (Torrance, 1982:86), and the achievement of "its end in man" (Torrance, 1996b:130). As Kruger (1989:53, 54) argues, in contrast to a divine monologue, Israel's "reception" of divine revelation is given a critical place in Torrance's thought, for Torrance envisions revelation as fulfilled and complete only when it is truly and faithfully received by humanity. For Torrance, notes Kruger, "revelation" and "reception" are the "obvious sides" of knowledge of God, and both are included in his discussion of the mediation of revelation in Israel. Likewise, Chung (2011:10) asserts that the mediation of revelation requires both divine initiation and human responsive participation through "the course of dialogical interaction in history" (*cf.* Kruger, 1989:54). Although the relationship between the divine and human aspects of mediation in Israel is asymmetrical, notes Chung, human participation, however insignificant in comparison to divine grace, constitutes an "indispensable place" in the mediation of revelation, for the revelation of God is "embodied" in Israel. In agreement with Kruger and Chung, we emphasise that the human participative response is a *constitutive* aspect of the mediation of revelation in Israel. Thus, we see that for Torrance, the two sides of the knowledge of God, divine revelation and human response, are aspects of the unitary, two-way movement of the mediation of revelation. Divine revelation and appropriate human response *taken together* constitute the mediation of revelation in Israel.

Torrance's discussion of the two-way movement of divine revelation and human participative response in historical Israel is highly relevant to his doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ. For Torrance, as will be shown below (*cf.* Chapters Five-Seven), Jesus Christ, in his incarnate constitution as God and man joined in reconciling union, *embodies* the two-way movement of divine revelation and human response that God established in Israel. As both the self-revelation of the divine God and the perfectly obedient human Son, Jesus not only reveals the Father but also offers "vicariously" the perfect human reception and response to divine revelation in place of and on behalf of all humanity,.

3.3.1.2 The People of the Voice of the Word of God

The covenant of grace God established at creation and which "assumed a particular form within history" with Abraham was re-enacted with Israel after its redemption from bondage in Egypt, taking on "more specific shape" (Torrance, 1960a:121) in the "once-and-for-all events at Mount Sinai in which God decisively revealed himself and enacted his revelation in the midst of Israel" (Torrance, 1956:309). At Mount Sinai, argues Torrance, God provided the Law as the "revelation of His Will"; God provided the commandments "to show the way of obedient conformity" to his will (Torrance, 1960a:121). At the heart of the covenant relation God established with Israel at Sinai are the Ten Commandments, or the "Ten Words." "Those Ten Words," argues Torrance (2000:2), "form the innermost secret of Israel's history."

At Mount Sinai, "Israel stood forth as the *Ecclesia* or Church of God" (Torrance, 1976a:194). Unlike any other nation, Old Testament Israel is not merely a people with a national identity, that is, an *ethnos*; rather, Torrance sees the people of Israel as a *laos*, "a kind of church, a community burdened with the knowledge of God, a community divinely adapted and constituted as the correlate of God's self-revelation." In order to understand the role of Israel in the mediation of revelation, notes Torrance, we must consider the nation as a whole, that is, as a corporate entity or a "coherent community of reciprocity" in relationship with God. Israel itself is the "prophet" sent by God. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets act within the one body which is brought into special relationship with God in order to be moulded and shaped into the earthen vessel of divine communication to mankind (Torrance, 1992:12-14).

According to Torrance, the Old Testament writers, particularly in the latter books, apply the word *qahal* to Israel, translated in the Septuagint as *ekklesia*, to refer to "the congregation regarded collectively as a people and as a whole, rather than to the actual assembly or meeting of the people." *Qahal* derives from the word for "voice"; hence, the Old Testament *qahal* was "the community summoned by the Divine Voice, by the Word of God." Old Testament Israel, "the people of the voice of the Word of God," was a nation "invaded by divine revelation" and progressively moulded under its impact in such a way that its responses, whether of obedience or disobedience, were the means by which God forged a deepening understanding of divine reality within the structures of human thought and speech. Throughout the history of Israel, argues Torrance, the Word of God kept "pressing for articulation within the corporate medium of covenant reciprocity," creating "formal and empirical correlates of its own self-utterance" that progressively took shape in spoken and written form through the corporate understanding and response that developed among the people. "Thus Israel became in a unique way the bearer of the oracles of God, a church as much as a people charged with priestly and prophetic significance for all mankind and divinely destined for the universalization of its revelatory mission in the advent of God himself in space and time." By choosing Israel from among the nations, God moulded Israel to its purpose by forming within it a "womb" for the incarnation of his Word, that is, "a matrix of appropriate forms of thought and speech" for the definitive and final reception of divine revelation (Torrance, 1956:305; 1971:149; 1982:87).

3.3.2 Intensification of Conflict

In addition to the creation of a community of reciprocity, another vital aspect of Torrance's view of the mediation of revelation in Israel is an intensification of the hostility between humanity and God inherent in what the Apostle Paul calls the "carnal mind" (*cf.* Rom 8:7). Entrusted with the oracles of God, argues Torrance (1992:8), Israel underwent a painful process as the Word of God penetrated into the "depths of Israel's being and soul." In the "ever-deepening, spiral movement" of divine revelation, Israel was subjected to "appalling suffering" and broken time and again on the wheel of divine Providence in order to become "pliable" in the service of God's self-communication to humankind. As Torrance (1992:8) argues, as the "chosen medium" of God's self-revelation to humanity, Israel "had to suffer above all from God,"

> for divine revelation was a fire in the mind and soul and memory of Israel burning away all that was in conflict with God's holiness, mercy and truth. By its very nature that revelation could not be faithfully appropriated and articulated apart from conflict with deeply ingrained habits of human thought and understanding and without the development of new patterns of thought and understanding and speech as worthy vehicles of its communication.

In agreement with Torrance (1992:7-9), this is how we must view God's long, historical dialogue with Israel as recorded in the Old Testament. In Israel, the intense fire of divine revelation steadily burned away false concepts of divinity ingrained in the fallen human mind, facilitating the development of patterns of thought and speech worthy of God. During its long and painful encounter with the living God, Israel became an "oddity" among the nations of the earth, as the Word of God was at work, "preparing the matrix for the mediation of divine revelation," so that humanity could receive the personal self-communication of God in the incarnate Son.

As Torrance notes, Israel was not chosen to be the mediator of revelation because of any special religious or moral qualities it possessed; rather, Israel was a recalcitrant and rebellious nation, perhaps the most stiff-necked people under the sun (*cf.* Ex 34:9). Yet, Israel was brought into an intense and intimate relationship with God unprecedented among the nations. As God drew near to Israel and Israel drew near to God, the innate resistance of the human mind resulting from humanity's alienation from God intensified, so that, time and again, Israel's rebellion appears to have been in "inverse proportion" to the grace of God bestowed upon the people. All through its history, notes Torrance, Israel fought against God: the prophets were stoned, God's messengers abused. As the holy, righteous, and loving character of God was brought to bear upon Israel's mind and thought in the moral and liturgical institutions of the covenant, Israel vacillated back and forth between committed worship of the true God and idolatrous worship of the local deities of sex and nature. Nevertheless, argues Torrance, God's love for the people remained unchanged. God refused to be thwarted in his redemptive purpose for mankind, and his very steadfastness of purpose was the reason Israel was broken time and again by the hand of divine providence. As Jesus said, had God chosen any other people, even those of Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in dust and ashes (Mt 11:21), yet, the Master Potter took the lumpiest, most retractable clay (*cf.* Jer 18:6) to mould on the wheel of his unflinching redemptive purpose, so that even with the most difficult material, he might show his grace and love for humanity (Torrance, 1992:10; 2008:41, 42).

The moulding and shaping of Israel into the medium of divine revelation was agonisingly painful, as the Word of God penetrated into the "depths of Israel's being and soul" (Torrance, 1992:8), "translating" itself "into the flesh of Israel" and reforming the nation's "life, thought and behaviour" (Torrance, 1996b:145). Intense conflict between God and his chosen people was unavoidable, because the struggle that arose from the adaptation of divine revelation to human thought forms and linguistic concepts demanded the reshaping of "the inner structure of the society" through which revelation would be mediated (*cf*. Torrance, 1971:147). As Israel encountered God in an unprecedented and intimate way, notes Torrance, "the innate resistance of the human soul and mind resulting from the alienation of man from God" inevitably intensified. If divine revelation was to penetrate and break through the inherent bias against it, the "soul and mind" of Israel had to be turned "inside out," so that the people became God-centred rather than self-centred. In this regard, Torrance sees an ongoing "love-hate" relationship between Israel and God. The more the Word of God penetrated the depths of Israel's existence, the more it seemed to burn like a fire, so that the prophets finally cried out in agony. As Torrance argues, "To be the bearer of divine revelation is to suffer, and not only to suffer but to be killed and made alive again, and not only to be made alive but to be continually renewed and refashioned under its creative impact." Torrance sees parallels between the suffering and revivification of Israel and the passion of Christ, calling Israel's ongoing, agonising process of dying, rising, and renewal "the pre-history of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in Israel" (Torrance, 1992:10, 11; 2008:50). As Scandrett (2006:46, 47) notes, the physical suffering of Israel and the psychic suffering of the prophets anticipate the suffering of Jesus Christ.

In regard to the "ever-deepening, spiral movement" (Torrance, 1992:8) of the mediation of revelation in Israel, Scandrett (2006:43, 44) makes two salient observations. He argues that the image of a "spiral" movement demonstrates Torrance's view of the "progressive" nature of the mediation of revelation in Israel; that is, revelation is moving in a particular direction toward a particular goal. The image appears to indicate that Torrance sees the movement of revelation deepening and narrowing to a particular point in the history of Israel: that is, the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In addition, argues Scandrett, the image reveals Torrance's regard for the importance of various stages of Israel's history *vis-a-vis* the incarnation, indicating that Torrance regards the latter periods of Israel's history, particularly the period of the

prophets, to contain more densely focused thematic material relevant to the incarnation. As Scandrett notes, for Torrance, this indicates that God had intended to communicate himself to humanity from the beginning, and that Israel was chosen as the vehicle by which God would achieve that goal in history. Thus, agreeing with Scandrett, we argue that the "appalling suffering" of Israel was not because God willed the suffering of his people, but their sinfulness and hostility toward divine revelation threatened to disrupt God's determined purpose that Israel should fulfil its role as the mediator of the knowledge of God on behalf of all humanity. As Scandrett (2006:45) notes, the people of Israel were trapped in an "intensifying cycle of suffering," caught between the "ever-deepening, spiral movement" of God's will to reveal himself and their own will to resist that revelation. For Torrance, this "agonized relationship" is "neither accidental nor incidental," argues Scandrett (2006:50), but establishes the "basic form" for understanding the reconciling work of God in human history.

The history of God's interaction with Israel teaches us that divine revelation calls into question "naturalistic" patterns of human thought. If we are to know God in the way he has chosen to reveal himself, argues Torrance, we must allow the sword of truth that pierced Israel to pierce our own hearts, "so that its secret contradiction of God may be laid bare." We must "go to school with Israel," sharing its painful transformation of mind and soul, where it was prepared for the final mediation of revelation in Jesus Christ, if we are to break free from our assimilation of worldly thought patterns and be transformed in the renewing of our minds in Christ (*cf.* Rom 12:2) (Torrance, 1992:12). In arguing that divine revelation in historical Israel calls into question "naturalistic" or pagan concepts of God, Torrance remains faithful to his realist epistemology. Without specifically saying so, in his discussion of the mediation of revelation in Israel, Torrance consistently maintains his fundamental theological assertion that knowledge is developed *a posteriori*; that is, epistemology follows ontology. In Israel, Torrance sees knowledge of God (epistemology) unfolding according to God's self-revelation (being), graciously disclosed to humanity within the conditions and limitations of human understanding.

3.3.3 The Essential Furniture of the Knowledge of God

Perhaps the most important aspect of the mediation of revelation in Israel is the formulation of permanent structures of thought and speech about God. Because the

New Testament Church is built upon the foundation of both the apostles and the prophets, the Hebrew scriptures provided the New Testament writers with the basic structures by which they articulated the Gospel. Thus, argues Torrance, we can only rightly view Jesus in light of the "permanent structures of thought" and "conceptual tools" articulated in the Old Testament, while allowing Jesus to fill out their content and reshape them in mediating his own self-revelation to us through them (Torrance, 1992:17, 18).

Among the permanent structures of thought bequeathed to us by the Old Testament writers, Torrance (1992:18) lists the following: the Word and Name of God, revelation, mercy, truth, holiness, Messiah, saviour, prophet, priest, king, covenant, sacrifice, reconciliation, redemption, and atonement, as well as the basic patterns of worship set forth in the Psalms. As Torrance (1992:18, 19) notes:

> It was indeed in the course of the Old Testament revelation that nearly all the basic concepts we Christians use were hammered out by the Word of God on the anvil of Israel. They constitute the essential furniture of our knowledge of God even in and through Jesus. If the Word of God had become incarnate among us apart from all that, it could not have been grasped—Jesus himself would have remained a bewildering enigma. It was just because Jesus, born from above as he was, was nevertheless produced through the womb of Israel, mediated to us through the matrix of those conceptual and linguistic patterns, that he could be recognised as Son of God and Saviour and his crucifixion could be interpreted as atoning sacrifice for sin. It was because Jesus mediated his revelation to mankind in that patient, informing way through the history of Israel and within the interpretive framework of its relation with God in salvation and worship, that people were able in that context to know God in Jesus and enter into communion with him, and to proclaim him to the world.

In "hammering out" his self-revelation on the "anvil of Israel," God has provided, through the matrix of "conceptual and linguistic" patterns of thought developed in the history of Israel, the "essential furniture" of our knowledge of God, so that we may know Jesus as Son of God and Saviour of the world. According to Torrance (2008:42; *cf*. 1952:165, 166):

> By elaborate religious ritual and carefully framed laws, by rivers of blood from millions of animal sacrifices, by the broken hearts of psalmists and the profoundest agony of the prophets ... God taught the Jews, through centuries and centuries of existence yoked to his word and covenant, until the truth was imprinted upon their conscience and there was burned into their souls the meaning of holiness and righteousness, of sin and uncleanness, of love and mercy and grace, of faithfulness and forgiveness, of justification, atonement, and salvation; the meaning of creation, the kingdom of God, of judgement, death, and at last resurrection; the concept of the Messiah, the suffering servant, and yet prophet, priest and king, and so to the very brink of the gospel.

In providing the appropriate conceptual and linguistic structures for the mediation of the knowledge of God, however, Kruger (1989:66) rightly calls attention to the important point that God does not merely provide Israel a list of statements about himself, for inevitably these would be interpreted in light of a prior "communal meaning" which was pagan in character (*cf.* Torrance, 1971:147). Rather than a "theology" of God, Israel would inevitably create what Torrance (1988a:73) refers to as "mythology," that is, "thinking of God from a centre in the human self and its fantasies." As Torrance (1971:147, 148) argues, rather than the projection of mythological ideas onto the heavens, the mediation of true knowledge of God requires the revision of old thoughts forms in favour of "new forms of worship, thought, and expression." He writes:

> Hence through the impact of the Word there were initiated in the tradition of Israel priestly and prophetic movements which entailed critical revision of previous ways of life, worship, and thought in order to break through the barriers of naturalistic and pagan convention that obstructed knowledge of the living God.

As Kruger (1989:66, 67) notes, here we see again the "two-way movement" of divine revelation and human response, as God breaks through naturalistic and pagan patterns of thought in order to revise the corporate life and worship of Israel. Kruger borrows Thomas Kuhn's (1970:99*ff*) words to describe the restructuring of the corporate life, thought, and worship of Israel as a "change of paradigm." As Kruger rightly argues, for Torrance, the transformation and restructuring of the knowledge of God in Israel "was not simply a matter of fine tuning a basically sufficient or adequate framework, but of a restructuring and transformation of Israel's mind and thought, worship and life, indeed its whole existence, in its constant encounter with the living God in His self-revelation as the human mediator of that revelation."

As Torrance (1992:22) argues, throughout the course of the progressive revelation that unfolded throughout God's ongoing dialogue with Israel, "the Word of God was pressing for fuller realization and obedient expression within the life and mind and literature of Israel." Through the embodiment of revelation in his historical partnership with Israel, God mediated appropriate structures of thought and speech for understanding the Word of God that were of more than transient value, "for under divine inspiration they were assimilated to the human form of the Word of God, essential to its communication and apprehension." As Chung (2011:9; *cf.* Torrance, 1971:148) notes, this continuous "divine pressing" was necessary in order for divine

revelation to be "habituated," or firmly ingrained, in the corporate mind and heart of Israel. Eventually, the mediation of divine revelation in Israel took not only verbal but also written form in the Old Testament texts. For Torrance (1971:148), the Old Testament texts are of crucial importance, because "in and through them men continued to hear God addressing them directly and backing up His Word by the living power and majesty of His divine Person." Clearly, as Chung (2011:10, 11) rightly notes, the role of scripture in the mediation of revelation in Israel is important for Torrance's doctrine of mediation and should not be taken lightly.

The revelation mediated by Israel as servant of the Lord (*e.g*. Is 41:8; 44:1; 45:4) inevitably pointed ahead of itself to the incarnation (*cf*. Lk 2:32). In the birth of Jesus, notes Torrance, "the whole prehistory of that mediation was gathered up and brought to its consummation in Christ in such a way that while transient, time-conditioned elements fell away, basic, permanent ingredients in God's revelation to Israel were critically and creatively taken up and built into the intelligible framework of God's full and final self-revelation to mankind." Within the matrix of his interrelations with Israel, Jesus Christ, the Jew from Nazareth, stands forth as the "controlling centre" of the personal self-revelation of God to humanity. Nevertheless, though it is Jesus Christ, not Israel, that constitutes the personal self-revelation of God, it is Jesus Christ *in* Israel, not apart from Israel, that constitutes the "reality" and "substance" of divine self-disclosure. Because Jesus Christ must always be viewed in the nexus of his interrelations with the people of God, Torrance argues, Israel, the servant of the Lord, is included forever within God's chosen way of mediating knowledge of himself to the world. Because Israel is given a permanent place in the mediation of revelation, the Old Testament must be understood in the light of its fulfilment in Christ, while Jesus, in turn, must be viewed in "the normative framework of basic preconceptions divinely prepared and provided in the Old Testament Scriptures" (Torrance, 1992:22, 23).

As Chung (2011:6) correctly notes, Torrance attaches great importance to the conceptual and linguistic tools God forged in Israel, for they are crucial to our understanding of the mediation of Jesus Christ. As Kruger (1989:51) notes, the conceptual tools for the mediation of revelation forged in Israel constitute a "hermeneutical" preparation for understanding Jesus Christ and his work. Torrance (2008:44) captures the essential aspects of the mediation of revelation in Israel as follows:

> Apart from this Old Testament prehistory and all the biblical revelation through Israel, we would not have the tools to grasp the knowledge of God; apart from the long history of the Jews we would not be able to recognize Jesus as the Son of God; apart from the suffering and agony of Israel we would not understand the cross of Calvary as God's instrument to atone for sin and to enact once and for all his word of love and pardon and grace. Apart from the covenant forged in sheer grace with undeserving and rebellious Israel, and the unswerving faithfulness of the divine love, we would not be able to understand the mystery of our restoration to union with God in Jesus Christ. Apart from the context of Israel we would not even begin to understand the bewildering enigma of Jesus. The supreme instrument of God for the salvation of the world is Israel, and out of the womb of Israel, Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth.

To substantiate his argument, Torrance (1992:19) draws attention to various attempts in modern theology to understand Jesus apart from the nexus of his interrelations with ancient Israel. Claiming that we have tried to "gentilise" Jesus by abstracting him from Israel and locating him "within the patterns of our own various cultures," Torrance argues that, as Albert Schweitzer discovered, "we inevitably lose him." As Chung (2011:6; 6 n. 16) rightly notes, Torrance's point is basic but important. When we try to make Jesus "relevant" to modern thought, we, in fact, obscure him, because the tools we are using are not of God's choosing. As Torrance (1992:19, 20) argues, in "plastering upon the face of Jesus a mask of different gentile features," we prevent ourselves from seeing and understanding him as who he really is as a Jew, while preventing the Jews from recognising their own Messiah.

For Torrance, the biblical modes of thought have a "sacrosanctity" because they represent the way God's revelation has taken shape within the human mind. Apart from the mediation of revelation in Israel, no one could have understood the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God. Hence, to detach Jesus Christ from the mediation of revelation in Old Testament Israel is a "fatal mistake," Torrance argues, for it is still necessary to be "schooled in Israel" and "disciplined through the Old Testament revelation" in order to apprehend the mediation of revelation of God in Christ (Torrance, 1956:319; 1992:23). As Torrance (2008:44) reminds us, all this is summed up in Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman at the well: "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews" (Jn 4:22). For Torrance, as Scandrett (2006:37) rightly argues, "Israel and Jesus stand in inextricable relationship to one another." As Colyer (2001a:66) succinctly and rightly notes, only as we appropriate the prehistory of the mediation of revelation in Israel are we able to understand Jesus Christ.

3.4 Prehistory of Mediation of Reconciliation

The prehistory of mediation in Israel involves reconciliation as well as revelation. According to Torrance (1996b:194), God chose Israel to be both the medium of revelation and "the special sphere of his redemptive acts leading throughout history to the fulfilment of his promise of salvation." In keeping with the unitary, holistic character of his theology, Torrance (1992:24) sees the mediation of revelation and the mediation of reconciliation "intertwined" in God's interaction with Israel; that is, "revelation and reconciliation belong together, so that we cannot think out the mediation of revelation apart from the mediation of reconciliation"

God's election of Israel to be the mediator of reconciliation must be viewed against the background of God's eternal purpose in creating the universe. According to Torrance, God created the universe in order to pour out his love upon humanity and to enjoy communion with us. Notwithstanding the fall of Adam, God's resolute purpose to commune with humanity is undeterred by human sin. Torrance (1957a:190) writes:

> Behind all that we hear in the Gospel lies the fact that in creating man God willed to share His glory with man and willed man to have communion with Himself; it is the fact of the overflowing love of God that refused, so to speak, to be pent up within God, but insisted in creating a fellowship into which it could pour itself out in unending grace. Far from being rebuffed by the disobedience and rebellion of man, the will of God's love to seek and create fellowship with man established the covenant of grace in which God promised to man in spite of his sin to be His God, and insisted on binding man to Himself as His child and partner in love. God remained true and faithful to His covenant. He established it in the midst of the people of Israel, and all through their history God was patiently at work, preparing a way for the Incarnation of His love at last in Jesus Christ, that in and through Him He might bring His covenant to complete fulfilment and gather man back into joyful communion with Himself.

In this statement, notes Kruger (1989:23), Torrance looks back to creation and eternity and then forward to Israel, and within Israel to the fulfilment of God's redemptive purpose for humanity in Jesus Christ. Embedded in this passage are three essential points that are constitutive of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of reconciliation (*cf.* Kruger, 1989:23, 24): 1) Creation is an act of "overflowing love," that is, an act of grace, whereby God freely wills to include humanity in communion with himself. 2) Redemption is not separate from God's gracious, loving act of creation. Despite human sin, God remains "true and faithful" to his purpose in creating humanity for fellowship with himself. God is not "rebuffed" by human sin; rather, after the fall of Adam, God's creative purpose for humanity becomes a redemptive purpose with an eschatological

goal; God establishes a covenant of grace whereby he binds himself to man as "his child and partner in love." In Kruger's pithy words, "God is committed." 3) Israel is chosen as the corporate medium of redemption, in the midst of whom, God is "patiently at work," preparing the way for the incarnation of Jesus Christ, "that in and through Him He might bring His covenant to complete fulfilment and gather man back into joyful communion with Himself." God's resolute purpose in creating humanity for communion with himself, unwavering even in the face of human sin, is always in the background of Torrance's discussion of Israel as the corporate medium of reconciliation.

As Kruger (1989:27) notes, grace, creation, and redemption are interrelated throughout Torrance's writings. For example, in an essay on baptism, Torrance (1960a:120, 121) writes:

> When God made His Covenant of grace with Abraham it was none other than the Covenant of grace which He established with [the] creation of the world, and which took on a redemptive purpose with the rebellion and fall of man. But with Abraham that Covenant assumed a particular form within history and with one race elected from among all the races of mankind in order that God might prepare a way within humanity for the fulfilment of His Covenant Will for all men.

In the light of human sin, God's creative plan to pour out his love on all humanity takes on a redemptive purpose with the calling of Abraham (Torrance, 1971:141). The covenant of grace God established with the creation of the world begins to take definitive shape in human history in Israel, where God prepares the way for the salvation of all humanity. Torrance follows Barth (1957d:22*ff*; 1957f:28-31; 42ff; 1959:52*ff*) in asserting a relationship between creation and the covenant. According to Torrance (1959:lii):

> As Karl Barth has interpreted it, the Covenant is the inner ground and form of creation and creation is the outer ground or form of the Covenant, and the very centre of the Covenant is the will of God to be our Father and to have us as His dear children. Creation is thus to be understood as the sphere in space and time in which God wills to share His divine life and love with man who is created for this very end.

For Torrance, the covenant of grace is intrinsically bound to creation. God established his covenant of grace at creation in his resolute purpose to create humanity in order to pour out his love in communion with us. Torrance (1959:li) refers to the covenant of grace established at creation as "the one all-embracing Covenant of the overflowing love of God." As Kruger (1989:28 n. 22; 29, 30) perceptively notes, in contrast to Westminster theology, with its [dualist] separation of creation and redemption,

Torrance seeks to allow the light of Jesus Christ to illuminate the mystery of creation and God's covenant relation with humanity (*cf.* Torrance, 1959:lvi). To be sure, as Kruger rightly argues, Torrance is aligned with the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel [and the Nicene creedal assertion] that all things were made through the eternal Word who became flesh "for us and our salvation" (*cf.* John 1:1-3, 14). Nevertheless, as Kruger rightly contends, it is a weakness in Torrance's writings that he fails to thoroughly develop his understanding of the relationship between creation and covenant, for redemption actually informs Torrance's understanding of creation; that is, Torrance interprets creation in the light of God's redemptive purpose in Israel and its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

In the remainder of the present chapter, we will consider four important aspects of the "prehistory" of the mediation of reconciliation in Israel: 1) Israel's communal transformation in relation to God's holiness; 2) the covenanted way of response provided for Israel by God; 3) Israel as the suffering servant, and 4) Israel's rejection of the Messiah.

3.4.1 Divine Holiness and Communal Transformation

In regard to his scientific theology, Torrance finds a basic epistemological principle in the "profound reciprocity" established in the intertwining of revelation and reconciliation in Israel that accords with his fundamental methodological axiom that realties must be known in accordance with their natures. All genuine knowledge, argues Torrance, requires a "cognitive union of the mind with its object," wherein estrangement and alienation are removed, so that we may know reality only in accordance with its nature. The nature of the object of inquiry determines the "mode of knowing" appropriate to it, as well as the behaviour required toward it. To know God in strict accordance with the divine nature as it is disclosed to us requires an adaptation of our personal relations toward him. "Knowing God requires cognitive union with him in which our whole being is affected by his love and holiness. It is the pure in heart who see God." For Torrance, we cannot know God without love (Torrance, 1992:25, 26).

Here again we find Torrance's theological holism. For Torrance there is no "head-heart" dualism; rather, theology must be engaged both rationally and devotionally if we are to truly apprehend the nature of the Object of inquiry. For Torrance, theology is not

merely an academic endeavour to be practiced in isolation from communal worship and personal piety; rather, theology and doxology, academics and personal devotion, form a single integrated whole, wherein knowledge of God is developed with the full engagement of both head and heart. As stated above (*cf*. Chapter Two), Torrance insists that true knowledge of God must be developed within the context of faith and godliness. Similarly, Torrance (1992:26) writes:

> To know God and to be holy, to know God and worship, to know God and to be cleansed in mind and soul from anything that may come between people and God, to know God and be committed to him in consecration, love and obedience, go inseparably together.

As we draw nearer to God, argues Torrance, the more "integrated" our spiritual and physical existence becomes, and the more integrated our spiritual and physical existence becomes, the more we are able to draw nearer to God. Torrance finds this principle at work in the ascetic theology of the patristic era, where stress was laid upon *askesis*, or "spiritual discipline in mind and life," to facilitate an understanding of God worthy of him. Torrance sees this principle at work in Israel, wherein "intensifying conflict" and "deepening conformity" with God were being worked out in time and space. The unconditional self-giving of God required an unconditional response on the part of Israel: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev 19:2). By entering "relations of holiness" with God, the foundation and character of Israel's existence as God's "peculiar people" were affected in distinctive and idiosyncratic ways (Torrance, 1992:26, 27). Torrance continues:

> Israel was the people which became so intimately involved with the holy presence of God that it was completely spoiled for any naturalistic existence as an ordinary nation, but became the means through which God worked out in the midst of the nations a way of reconciliation with himself in which the tensions embedded in man's alienated existence are resolved and the peace of God is built into the whole of creation. Israel thus became the people impregnated with the promise of *shalom* for all mankind.

As Colyer (2001a:62) notes, for Israel to know God, its communal worship, life, and thought had to be cleansed and transformed, so that Israel might be moulded into an appropriate medium of revelation and reconciliation for all humanity. Similarly, Kruger (1989:71, 72) notes that revelation and reconciliation go together as surely as God gives himself to *fallen* Israel and summons the nation into communion with himself. For Torrance, notes Kruger, the mediation of revelation achieves its end and completes the circle of its own movement in and through reconciliation between God and "carnal" Israel. Likewise, as Chung (2011:6) rightly notes, for Torrance revelation is not merely a business of cognition; it also involves and affects the entire corporate life of the

nation. As Chung (2011:8) argues, the "key" to understanding the agonising reciprocity between God and Israel is the realisation that, unless the corporate heart or being of Israel is changed, the people's innate weakness will "eclipse" the revelation of God and prevent the fulfilment of their role as the corporate medium of divine revelation. Hence, rather than engage Israel in a merely "tangential fashion, rippling the surface of its moral and religious consciousness" (Torrance, 1992:15), the searing light of divine revelation penetrates deep into the depths of Israel's existence in order to transform the corporate heart of the nation. Not only does the intense reciprocity between God and Israel transform the nation, but also brings forth what Chung (2011:8) describes as "appropriate forms of articulation and a renewed being," so that the nation may become the "ordained medium of God's self-revelation." "The participative response of Israel in her critical self-revision," notes Chung, "constitutes the movement of human understanding to divine revelation." Chung's observation is consistent with Torrance's scientific theological emphasis on faith, piety, and devotion as essential aspects of the epistemological process (*cf*. Chapter Two).

From the above, we see that the reshaping and restructuring of Israel's corporate existence, not only in terms of language and conceptual structures but also in terms of "mind," "heart," "soul," and "being," is a vital aspect of Torrance's view of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation. Torrance's emphasis on the transformation of Israel's corporate "being" as a result of the nation's encounter with God reflects not only the two-way movement of revelation and response in Israel but also the inseparability of "knowing and being" in Torrance's scientific theology (*cf*. Kruger, 1989:68). Thus, we can confidently assert that, for Torrance, the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Israel are two aspects of a single, unitary reality that is both epistemological and ontological in character. As will be shown in subsequent Chapters of the present thesis, as in Israel, the mediation of revelation and reconciliation of Jesus Christ is also both epistemological and ontological in character.

3.4.2 The Covenanted Way of Response

In electing Israel to be the mediator of revelation and reconciliation, Torrance argues, God knew the people would not be able to fulfil the provisions of the covenant by walking before God in perfect holiness. Nor would Israel be able to worship God in an appropriate way, for the covenant between God and Israel was not a covenant between

God and a holy people; it was a covenant of grace between God and a sinful, rebellious people. According to Torrance, the validity of the covenant did not depend on a "contractual" fulfilment of its terms on the part of Israel; rather, it was a "unilateral covenant," which depended solely for its fulfilment on "the unconditional grace of God and the unrelenting purpose of reconciliation which he had pledged to work out through Israel for all peoples [and therefore] it depended upon a vicarious way of response to the love of God which God himself provided within the covenant." No matter how rebellious and sinful Israel became, it could not escape the covenant love and faithfulness of God, an aspect of the covenant brought out so poignantly in Hosea. As Torrance notes, the covenant was conditioned only by the "unstinted outflowing love of God in the continuous act of grace, of grace for grace" (Torrance, 1992:27, 28, 74; 2008:46, 47).

The gracious nature of God's relationship with Israel becomes more apparent when the covenant is contrasted with a "contract," as helpfully noted by Kruger (1989:40, 41; *cf.* Torrance, J., 1970:51*ff*). Unlike a contract, that is, a "bilateral" agreement that requires fulfilment by both parties to be valid, the covenant God established with Israel was a "unilateral" agreement that depended solely upon the faithfulness of God for its fulfilment. In a unilateral movement of divine grace, God fulfilled the covenant "from both sides," not only by freely entering into relationship with sinful humanity but also by graciously providing the means whereby sinful humanity could respond to the divine initiative. As Kruger correctly notes, "God filled Israel's hands with His own provision so that Israel could draw near to God in worship and communion. [God] provides what He requires."

As Torrance (1992:73, 74) notes, in his love and mercy, God provided the means whereby weak and beggarly Israel could respond to the love of God, so that the liturgy of atonement might be incorporated into the ongoing life of the people. In an act of sheer grace, God provided Israel the all-important "middle term" between the "polarities of the covenant" (*i.e.,* God and humanity), that is, a "covenanted way of response," so that the people might respond in a *vicarious* way to God's grace. This divinely-prepared way of sacrifice replaced the very best humanity could offer, as in the paradigmatic case of the sacrifice God provided for himself in lieu of Abraham's offering of Isaac (Gen 22:1*ff*). As Torrance notes, God graciously and unilaterally provided for his people the means by which they could respond to him as covenant

partner, so that Israel could come before God forgiven and sanctified in their covenant partnership and consecrated in their priestly mission to the world as mediator of revelation and reconciliation. Torrance (1960a:16) describes the covenanted way of response as a way "of response to his Will, a way of obedient conformity to His Covenant which He is pleased to accept as from his people in the Covenant."

In regard to God's provision of the means of response to the divine initiative, we believe that Torrance's concept of the "covenanted way of response" facilitates greater appreciation for divine grace in God's relations with humanity, as revealed in Israel. As Torrance argues, God's sovereign commitment to be God for Israel was not dependent on any salutary quality that made Israel worthy of communal relationship with a holy and righteous God; rather, divine graciousness toward Israel was prior to any worthy response by the people. God willingly entered relationship with a stiff-necked, rebellious people, so that he might be their covenant partner. At Sinai, God declared, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex 20:2). Only after he had declared himself their God, did God stipulate the means by which the people were to respond to his covenant love (Ex 20:3*ff*). God's covenant commitment to his people was both prior to, and unconditioned by, any appropriate response on the part of Israel; that is, God's covenant commitment was an act of sheer grace. In the words of Torrance's younger brother, James, "[T]he indicatives of grace are always prior to the imperatives of law and human obligation" (Torrance, J., 1970:56).

The covenanted way of response God provided Israel, however, did not imply that Israel's liturgical sacrifices had any power to undo iniquity or expiate sin. Rather, argues Torrance, the function of the sacrificial system was to bear witness to the fact that, while the Holy One of Israel could not be approached apart from atoning reconciliation, God himself had promised to provide the propitiation for the sin of the people. Noting that the great sacrifice on the Day of Atonement occurred behind the veil in the Holy of Holies, Torrance argues that the hidden, mysterious nature of the ritual teaches us that atonement lies hidden in the mystery of God's own being, where we are not at liberty to intrude. Yet, the cultic liturgy of sacrifice and offering gave the minds and hearts of the people something to lay hold of, even as it pointed far beyond itself to that which God alone could and would do for his people (Torrance, 1992:36).

(Torrance's view of the "mystery" of the atonement will be further considered in Chapter Six.)

The pattern of the covenanted way of response becomes clear in the establishing of the covenant between God and Israel at Mount Sinai. According to Torrance, the covenant relationship between God and Israel "came to rest upon the twin foundation of the Sinaitic law and the Levitical liturgy, as represented supremely in Moses and Aaron, prophet and priest in essential complementarity and unity" (Torrance, 1956:307). Noting that even in its Sinaitic form, the covenant remains essentially a covenant of grace, Torrance (1996b:194) sees God as providing his people "a way of obedient response to his loving-kindness, a way of cleansing and restoration to fellowship with himself." He continues:

> In spite of their sin God did not give up his people but maintained with them a covenant of grace, in which he allied himself with his creatures as their God and Saviour, and committing himself to them in paternal kindness took them into communion with himself as his dear children.

The vicarious means by which Israel was to respond to God was elaborated in the ordinances of worship described in the Pentateuch. According to Torrance (1992:74):

> Not only the general pattern of the cult but the details of the liturgy were clearly designed to bring home to the people of Israel that they were not to appear before the Face of God with offerings embodying their own self-expression or representing their own naturalistic desires, or with kinds of sacrifices thought up by themselves as means of expiating guilt or propitiating God, for that was how the heathen engaged in worship, as ways of acting upon God and inducing his favour. Thus no unprescribed oblation, no uncovenanted offering, no strange fire, no incense of their own recipe, and no ritual of their own inventing, were to be intruded into their worship of God.

Here Torrance highlights the "judgement" of grace. God's gracious provision for Israel of the covenanted way of response carries with it a judgement and a verdict on human offerings to God. The completeness and sufficiency of God's provision of what he requires renders all human offerings redundant (Kruger, 1989:41). The cultic liturgy was designed to witness to the fact that only God can expiate guilt, forgive sin, and bring about propitiation between himself and his people. Thus, the sacrifices, offerings, and oblations, as well as the priesthood itself, constituted the "vicarious way of covenant response in faith, obedience and worship" which God graciously provided in his steadfast love for his people (Torrance, 1992:74, 75).

From the above, we argue that Torrance's discussion of the mediation of reconciliation emphasises the "gracious," "unilateral," and "vicarious" nature of the covenanted way

of response that God provided Israel, so that a sinful nation could approach a holy God in appropriate and reverent worship. These essential aspects of the mediation of reconciliation in Israel bear directly on Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Jesus Christ. For Torrance, as Scandrett (2006:33) correctly argues, the covenanted way of response that God provided Israel sets the stage for a true understanding of God's redemptive acts in history. While the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is "categorically unique," for Torrance, notes Scandrett, "the Old Testament progressively reveals a pattern of relationship between God and Israel that is ultimately recapitulated and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ." This "basic hermeneutical assumption," argues Scandrett, has profound implications for understanding Torrance's view of the mediation of Jesus Christ in the economy of salvation. In agreement with Scandrett, we note that the "vicarious way of covenant response" God provided Israel will finally be fully realised and faithfully enacted in the incarnate Son of God, who, as both Lamb of God and High Priest, vicariously *embodies* in his incarnate constitution as God and man joined in atoning reconciliation the covenanted way of response between God and humanity (*cf.* Chapters Five-Seven).

3.4.3 Intensification of the Covenant

According to Torrance (1992:75), the institution of the cultic liturgy, set out in the Torah and interpreted by the prophets, reinforced Israel's separation from other nations as "a people imprinted with a priestly character and invested with a vicarious mission" as mediator of divine revelation and reconciliation. This was not, however, a mere formal rite designed to guarantee propitiation between God and the people. Torrance writes:

> [T]he covenanted way of response had to be worked into the very flesh and blood of Israel's existence. It had to be impregnated into its understanding and sculptured into its very being. It had to be built into the reciprocity between God and Israel and be allowed to control the whole pattern of its life and mission in history.

For Torrance (1960a:121), the covenanted way of response had to be "translated from the realm of symbolic ritual into the actual existence of His people," for the covenanted way of response was never intended to be a dead liturgy or an empty ritual. He continues:

> The worst thing that could be done with such a covenant would be to turn the symbolic ritual into an end in itself, as a means of acting upon God and bending His will to serve the ends of men. That is precisely what Israel tried to

> do again and again, so that God sent the prophets to protest against their use of the Cult and to demand obedience rather than sacrifice.

As Purves (2001:63) notes, by its very nature, the covenanted way of response was intended to be written on the hearts of the people and incorporated into their existence in such a way that Israel was called to pattern its entire life after it. Similarly, notes Colyer (2001a:100), if Israel was to be a light to the nations as mediator of revelation and reconciliation, the vicarious way of response provided the people by God had to be embodied in Israel as a whole, that is, in the totality of Israel's existence as a people charged with a priestly and vicarious life and mission.

As God drew nearer to Israel in reconciling love, Israel's sin was not only revealed but also intensified. As Torrance notes, this was not an accidental feature of the covenant: "[God] used the suffering and judgement of Israel to reveal the terrible nature of sin as contradiction to God's love and grace, to uncover the deep enmity of humanity in its persistent self-will before God in his divine self-giving." The intensification of Israel's sin was incorporated into the "full design" of the covenant, Torrance argues, for "it was the will and the way of God's grace to effect reconciliation with man at his very worst," that is, in a state of stiff-necked rebellion against God. "In that ordeal," notes Torrance, "the word and the cult were not mere letter and liturgy, but were worked out into the very existence of Israel," as indicated in Deutero-Isaiah (Chapters 40-55) and Jeremiah (Torrance, 1992:28, 29; 2008:47). In this regard, argues Scandrett (2006:59), Torrance sees a connection between sin and human suffering, for Israel's condition of enmity and rebellion against God was always the occasion for its suffering. For Torrance, notes Scandrett, sin may be regarded as the "disease," with suffering the inevitable "symptom," from which Israel (and all humanity) needs to be healed.

As Torrance argues, in unswerving love for Israel, God worked out a way of reconciliation that did not depend on a worthy response from humanity, but made Israel's sin and rebellion the means by which he bound it to himself in "unsullied communion." God used the history and suffering of Israel to reveal his infinite love for humanity and to serve his unrelenting purpose of forgiveness and reconciliation, until his love achieved its ultimate purpose of final union and communion of humanity with God in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1992:28, 29; 2008:47). More succinctly, Torrance shows how a sovereign and gracious God can use even human sin as a means of further address to his people (*cf.* Kruger, 1989:60).

The great sign of the covenant was circumcision, notes Torrance, whereby the covenant was "cut into the flesh" of the people as the sign that the promises of God would be fulfilled in the life of Israel only as the word of God was "translated into its flesh," that is, into its very existence. Circumcision was the sign that the covenant had to be written into the heart, in the "'crucifixion' of self-will" and the "putting off of 'the enmity of the flesh.'" Astonishingly, however, the more God gave himself, Torrance argues, the more he forced Israel to be what, in its sin and self-will, it truly was: a "rebel." Because the self-giving of God intensified the enmity and contradiction between Israel and God, Torrance argues that Israel was, in fact, "the suffering servant." Israel suffered as it was broken, remade, and realigned into conformity with the covenant will of God. For Torrance, the whole concept of the "suffering servant" represents the activity of God, whereby he begins "to draw together the cords of the covenant" between himself and Israel (Torrance, 2008:47-52).

3.4.3.1 The Servant of the Lord

Israel's corporate role of suffering servant is gradually associated in the mind of the people with one individual who identifies himself with the nation's suffering. Torrance sees the vicarious embodiment and mediation of the covenant beginning to come to expression in the Isaianic "servant of the Lord," as particularly and poignantly illustrated in Isaiah 53. Here the mediatorial and priestly figures of Moses and Aaron respectively, and the notions of guilt-bearer and sacrifice for sin, are conflated to provide the "interpretive clue" for the intercessory and vicarious role of the servant in the redemption of Israel (Torrance, 1992:75, 76; 2008:51, 52). For Torrance, notes Scandrett (2006:55, 56), this is the "penultimate stage" of mediation in Israel and reflects Torrance's image of the "ever-deepening, spiral movement" of divine revelation (*cf.* Torrance, 1992:8). Torrance's treatment of the Isaianic material, argues Scandrett, demonstrates his understanding of the "unifying and narrowing thrust of the Old Testament toward the ultimate goal of the Incarnation."

Moreover, the "fundamental antinomy" (Scandrett, 2006:60) between Israel's sin and God's holiness will be gathered up and reconciled in this one individual, for, as Torrance (1992:75, 76; 2008:51, 52) argues, the servant of the Lord is the "hypostasised actualisation" of the divinely provided way of covenant response set

forth within the flesh and blood existence of Israel; that is, the entire covenanted way of response is gathered up in this one individual (*cf.* Scandrett, 2006:56). Moreover, Torrance sees a messianic role envisioned for the servant, wherein both mediator and sacrifice, as well as priest and victim, are combined in a form that is both representative and substitutionary, as well as corporate and individual in its fulfilment.

For Torrance, the Isaianic writer is struggling to articulate a vision wherein the servant of the Lord is identified with Israel as a whole, the divine Redeemer (*goel*) is identified with the Holy One of Israel, and the roles of Servant and Redeemer are combined and spoken of together. Torrance argues, "It is as though the prophet wanted to say that the real servant of the Lord is the Lord himself who as *goel*-Redeemer has bound himself up in such a tight bond of covenant kinship with Israel that he has taken upon himself Israel's afflicted existence and made it his own in order to redeem Israel." For Torrance, this implies an actual state of incarnation which finally takes place within the matrix of Israel in the birth of the Son of God to the Virgin Mary (Torrance, 1992:76; *cf.* Colyer, 2001a:100). Thus, while Israel itself is the suffering servant, assumed into oneness with the word of God, in the servant songs of Isaiah, it is evident that the word becomes one with Israel, becoming more and more "one Israelite," for that is the only way in which the word assumes human nature and existence into oneness with itself. For Torrance, therefore, the suffering servant is primarily to be understood as "the Word" identifying himself with Israel, and becoming "one particular Israelite, an individual person, the Messiah" (Torrance, 2008:51, 52).

As Scandrett (2006:61) notes, Torrance clearly identifies the suffering servant of Isaiah Fifty-Three with Jesus Christ. For Torrance, the suffering servant acts from *within* the ontological depths of Israel's troubled, sinful existence and, therefore, "vicariously" on behalf of Israel, that is, *"as* Israel in a participatory sense" (Scandrett, 2006:63). As Scandrett rightly emphasises, "*The Servant's suffering moves beyond the forms of Israel's covenanted way of response to penetrate the essential disjunction which exists between God and Israel because of sin*" (emphasis in original) and, thereby, "binds" himself to Israel in such a way as to reconstitute the nation's relation to him so that "their true end is fully and perfectly realised in unsullied communion with himself (Torrance, 1992:29). As will be shown below (*cf.* Chapter Six) the servant's participatory, ontological penetration into the depths of Israel's existence in order to

bind the nation to himself in communion is paradigmatic for Torrance's understanding of the atoning reconciliation of Jesus Christ.

For Torrance, argues Scandrett (2006:57, 58), the repeated juxtaposition of the Isaianic servant of the Lord and the Holy One of Israel is of new and critical importance in regard to divine revelation in Israel. "Most remarkably," notes Scandrett, it juxtaposes God and humanity in a single individual. Moreover, it brings together the legal and sacrificial dimensions of Israel's life [as represented by Moses and Aaron], which, together, form the "two complementary poles" of the people's entire existence, as encompassed in the covenanted way of response in Israel. "In emphasizing the juxtaposition of these entities as pointing beyond itself toward a single reality," argues Scandrett, "Torrance's basic commitment to the centrality of the Incarnation is once again made clear." In addition, the juxtaposition of the servant of the Lord and the Holy One of Israel brings together in an unprecedented way the liturgical concepts of Mediator and Sacrifice with the moral and legal concept of Redeemer. For Torrance, argues Scandrett, this marks a "stunning development in the mind of Israel regarding the character and role of the Messiah as a Mediator between God and humanity." This "new combination of forms" by which the Word of God revealed in Jesus Christ can be apprehended shows the "progressive, unifying, and narrowing character" of God's self-disclosure to Israel, wherein the Servant of the Lord and the Holy One of Israel are brought together, as the "ever deepening, spiral movement" (*cf.* Torrance, 1992:8) of revelation progressing toward its goal in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

3.4.3.2 The New Covenant

In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ is identified with the suffering servant. According to Torrance, the incarnation must be understood in this context, wherein the Son of God gathers up in himself the prehistory of the mediation of reconciliation in Israel and the concomitant intensification of Israel's conflict with God. The "prehistory of the crucifixion" in Israel (*cf.* above) prefigured the suffering of Christ, the one true Israelite, who recapitulated in himself the plight of the suffering servant in order to stand in the gap, in the midst of Israel, on behalf of all humanity. As Torrance notes, from the moment of Christ's birth, the road ran straight to the crucifixion (*cf.* Lk 2:34, 35). Beginning at Bethlehem, the contradiction between humanity and God was set for its fulfilment. The intense conflict between God and humankind, vicariously embodied

in Israel's historical dialogue with God, reached its climax in the incarnation of Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1992:29; 2008:50; Colyer, 2001a:67, 68). Torrance (1992:29, 30) continues:

> Hence, throughout the earthly life of Jesus the fearful tension he embodied ... and the reconciling love of God which he incarnated, advanced toward their climax in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah, when all things in Israel and in humanity as a whole, were set within the frame of the new covenant of forgiveness and reconciliation through the body and blood of Christ.

For Torrance, the Sinaitic covenant becomes "new" when it is finally cut deep into the heart of Israel's existence, that is, into the "inner man. This is precisely what occurs in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1956:309). Once the old covenant came to be enacted in the flesh of Israel in the person of Jesus, becoming a total "circumcision" that penetrated into the heart of the "inner man," the new covenant was inaugurated and a new and living way to God was opened up in the humanity of the Son of Man. For Torrance, the ultimate self-giving of God to Israel, narrowed down in "historical particularity" to one particular Jew, meant the "universalization and transcendence" of the Old Testament form of the covenant, so that redemption takes on the cosmic dimensions of a new creation (Torrance, 2008:48, 52). Nevertheless, as Kruger (1989:45) notes, Torrance does not regard the "new" covenant as an abrogation of the "old"; rather, the essential pattern God established at Sinai ("I will be your God, you will be my people") is fulfilled in the new covenant and raised to a higher level of intimacy and communion through the outpouring of the Spirit.

3.4.3.3 Penetrating the Ontological Depths of Israel

Torrance (1992:30, 31) notes that Jesus did not come as a "political" Messiah who would reshape the social, economic, and political structures of Israel. Rather than effect change at the surface level of Israel's life, Jesus, as Son of God incarnate as Son of man, penetrated into "the ontological depths of Israel's existence where man, and Israel representing all mankind, had become estranged from God, and there within those ontological depths of human being to forge a bond of union and communion between man and God in himself which can never be undone." Torrance continues:

> Jesus did not come, therefore, to reorganise the human, social and political structures on the surface level of Israel's life, which could not touch the forces of evil underlying them but only provide them with a new disposition of structures to use for their own ends, for he knew that those forces of evil are most deadly when they clothe themselves with the structures of what is right and good. He came, rather, to penetrate into the innermost existence of Israel in

> such a way as to gather up its religious and historical dialogue with God into himself, to make its partnership and its conflict with God his own, precisely as they moved to their climax with the Incarnation, and thus in and through Israel to strike at the very root of evil in the enmity of the human heart to God.

Rather than effect change merely at the surface level of human existence, argues Torrance, Jesus penetrated into the heart of Israel, gathered its conflicted existence to himself and, thereby, transformed it. At the cross, through the reconciliation between God and humanity wrought there, God encounters, suffers, and triumphs over the enmity entrenched in the human heart (Torrance, 1992:31). The incarnate Son's "ontological penetration" into the depths of human sinfulness will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

3.4.3.4 Israel Elected to Reject the Messiah

As God drew a "circle of reconciling love" around Israel, notes Torrance (1992:32), it was separated from all other nations and brought into a unique partnership of covenant love with God. Israel was called to be the "earthly medium" and "human counterpart" of both divine revelation and reconciliation. Israel, therefore, was given a "vicarious mission and function" for the purpose of the reconciliation of all mankind. Yet, just as the mediation of revelation triggered an ongoing, agonising struggle in the life of Israel, so also did the mediation of reconciliation. Torrance continues:

> [I]n the progressive embodiment of his self-revelation to Israel and in his patient remoulding of its existence and life in the service of divine revelation to all men, God became locked in a profound struggle with Israel. The Word of God pressed hard upon Israel throughout its history, informing its worship with the knowledge of the living God and impregnating its way of life with divine truth, thereby evoking obedience but also provoking disobedience, in order to lay hold upon both as the instrument of its ever-deepening penetration into the inner recesses of Israel's being and soul and understanding, thus preparing Israel as the matrix for the Incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ.

According to Torrance, God gave himself to Israel and assumed the nation into covenant partnership with himself, thus revealing, in the midst of the people, God's will to be humanity's God despite human sin. Even in the face of Israel's rejection, God bound himself to the people in covenant love, so that Israel was unable to escape its covenant partnership with God. As Torrance argues, Israel was called to be the "covenanted vis-à-vis" on earth in the movement of God's reconciling love for all humanity (Torrance, 1992:32).

Israel's persistent attempts to break free of its covenant partnership with God, however, merely intensified its recalcitrance and sharpened the tension between God and humanity. As Torrance (1992:32, 33; *cf.* 2008:49) observes:

> In that state of affairs the mediation of divine reconciliation to all mankind in and through the people of Israel could be worked out only in the heart of its conflict with God in such a way that its deep-seated human estrangement from God became the very means used by God in actualising his purpose of love to reconcile the whole world to himself.

According to Torrance, human resistance and estrangement were incorporated into God's gracious plan for the reconciliation of humankind. Noting that this is one of the ways of God that is difficult for us to appreciate, Torrance finds something quite similar after the Last Supper, when the disciples denied and abandoned Jesus when he was taken prisoner by the authorities. Out of fear for their lives, the disciples left Jesus utterly alone, separating themselves from him by an "unbridgeable chasm of shame and horror," for they had forsaken and betrayed the very love whereby he had bound them to himself. Yet, in enacting the new covenant for the remission of sins by giving them his body and blood in the bread and wine of the Holy Supper, Jesus meant the disciples to understand that even their denial of him (*e.g.,* Peter; Mt 26:34) was the very means by which he bound them to himself. The disciples finally realized, therefore, that Jesus' passion was not for the holy saint but, rather, was precisely for the sinner. As Torrance argues, "It was their sin, their betrayal, their shame, their unworthiness, which became in the inexplicable love of God the material he laid hold of and turned into the bond that bound them to the crucified Messiah, to the salvation and love of God forever" (Torrance, 1992:33, 34).

For Torrance, this is surely how we must understand God's election of Israel to be the bearer of divine revelation and reconciliation. Urging that we clap our hands over our mouths and speak with fear and trembling within the forgiving love of God, Torrance (1992:34) asserts that "Israel was elected also to reject the Messiah":

> If the covenant partnership of Israel with God meant not only that the conflict of Israel with God became intensified but was carried to its supreme point in the fulfilment of the Covenant, then Israel under God could do no other than refuse the Messiah.

In Jesus Christ, it is revealed that the election of one for all becomes salvation for all in the rejection of one for all. The events surrounding the cross of Christ reveal what was happening to Israel in its election by God. According to Torrance (2008:52):

> The election of Israel as an instrument of the divine reconciliation, an instrument which was to be used in its very refusal of grace so that in its midst

> the ultimate self-giving of God might take place, meant, then ... that Israel was elected to act in a representative capacity for all peoples in its rejection of Christ.

To be the sphere in which the Son of God freely allowed himself to be crucified meant that Israel could only fulfil God's gracious purpose by rejecting Christ and condemning him to death. This is not to suggest, Torrance argues, that God made the Jews guiltier than others; rather, through them, God exposed humanity's hatred of grace, drawing it out at the cross in all its intensity, so that Christ, as the Lamb of God, might take away the sin of the world in "holy and awful atonement." According to Torrance, Jesus bore the infinite guilt, not only of Israel, "but of all mankind revealed in the guilt of Israel," thereby acquitting and justifying the ungodly, Jew and Gentile alike, and even bearing away the guilt of those who, representing all humanity, actually carried out his terrible crucifixion (Torrance, 2008:53).

As Peter announced on the Day of Pentecost (*cf.* Acts 2:23), the rejection of the Messiah is exactly what God intended in his determination to deal with sinful humanity at its worst, even at the point of its ultimate denial of the saving will of God. At the cross, Jesus took upon himself all the sin and guilt of Israel, including Israel's scorn and rejection. According to Torrance, if Israel was blinded in its role as the servant of God (*cf.* Is 42:19), and, hence, could not help but react as it did, it was blinded for the sake of all humanity. "The Jew" vicariously represents our own rejection of God, so that reconciliation might also be ours. The ultimate refusal of God which took place in Israel was the very means by which the loving God achieved final victory over sin, for by the cross, humankind was reconciled to God (*cf.* 2Cor 5:19). As Torrance notes, "Our indebtedness to the Jew and our faith in Jesus Christ are inextricably woven together in the fulfilled mediation of reconciliation" (Torrance, 1992:34, 35; 2008:49, 50, 53). Therefore, Jesus must not be detached from ancient Israel or the incarnation from its "deep roots in the covenant partnership of God with Israel." To detach Jesus from ancient Israel, argues Torrance, is to obscure the nexus of relationships within which God's self-revelation in Christ becomes intelligible. If we are to know Jesus Christ, we must seek to understand him "within the actual matrix of interrelations from which he sprang as Son of David and Son of Mary, that is, in terms of his intimate bond with Israel in its covenant relationship with God throughout history" (Torrance, 1992:3, 23; *cf.* Colyer, 2001a:69).

3.5 Summary and Critique

3.5.1 Summary

The birth of the Son of God did not occur in a historical and cultural vacuum; rather, there is a "prehistory" of the incarnation in God's historical dialogue with Israel. To investigate the mediation of Jesus Christ within the context of historical Israel is in keeping with Torrance's scientific approach to theology, wherein the reality under study is investigated, not in isolation, but within the matrix of relations that constitute its being and identity. On the other hand, to view Jesus apart from ancient Israel is to obscure the interrelations within which the mediation of revelation and reconciliation becomes intelligible.

Torrance's view of Israel as the "womb of the incarnation" provides a number of useful insights into the mediation of revelation and reconciliation. Particularly helpful is his conception of Israel as a "community of reciprocity" elected by God to establish a two-way movement of divine revelation and human response, wherein knowledge of God might be revealed in basic concepts, categories, and beliefs amenable to human understanding. Within the law and liturgy of Israel, God introduced permanent structures of thought and speech by which God may be appropriately known. By developing these "conceptual tools" within the matrix of Israel, God prepared mankind to apprehend the full self-disclosure of divine revelation in the incarnation of the Son of God. Torrance's regard for these conceptual tools as the "essential furniture" of our knowledge of God is, perhaps, his greatest contribution to the understanding of Israel's role in the mediation of divine revelation.

In order for Israel to know God, its communal life and worship had to be transformed; therefore, God provided Israel a liturgical system of sacrifice and worship, so that a sinful people could come before God forgiven and sanctified in their covenant partnership and consecrated in their priestly mission to the world. Torrance's description of the cultic liturgy as the "covenanted way of response," that is, a divinely prepared "middle term" between the polarities of the covenant, highlights the gracious, loving condescension of God in providing Israel an appropriate means whereby even a sinful, rebellious nation might draw near to him in intimate, communal fellowship. As will be shown below (*cf.* Chapters 5-7), Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the middle term between the polarities of the covenant; that is, as both high priest and victim, he

embodies the cultic liturgy of Israel and constitutes in his incarnate union of divine and human natures the covenanted way of response between God and humanity foreshadowed in Israel.

The law and sacrificial liturgy embedded in the covenanted way of response was painfully written on the heart of Israel, and carved into the flesh of the people, as symbolised by circumcision, so that it might be incorporated into their daily life and thought. Torrance describes Israel's agonising ordeal as mediator of revelation and reconciliation as the "pre-history of the crucifixion" of Jesus Christ. In fulfilling its role as the suffering servant of God, Israel prefigured the suffering of Jesus Christ, the true Israelite, who recapitulated in himself the plight of the suffering servant for the benefit of all humanity. By penetrating the ontological depths of Israel's existence, where humanity was estranged from God, and meeting humanity at the nadir of human rebellion, the incarnate Son used human sin and unworthiness to bind humanity to himself forever in unconditional love. In accomplishing his reconciling purpose in the face of the sin and betrayal of the cross, God revealed that he elected Israel to reject the Messiah, so that through its rejection of Jesus Christ, all humanity might be saved.

3.5.2 Critique

Torrance's discussion of Israel as the "womb of the incarnation" is consistent with important tents of his scientific theology, including the integration of form and being or the proper relation between epistemology and ontology. Moreover, his discussion of the tumultuous relation between God and Israel sheds light on the troublesome topic of the wrath of God. Finally, his discussion of the covenanted way of response foreshadows his discussion of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ.

3.5.2.1 Integration of Form and Being

Taking a cue from Chung (2011:6, 7), we may note that the intertwining of revelation and reconciliation in Israel constitutes the "integration of form and being" that is a characteristic aspect of Torrance's scientific theology. As Chung suggests, if we regard the conceptual-linguistic tools of revelation as "form" and the corporate heart of Israel as "being," then we may regard form and being as intrinsically related in Torrance's view of divine mediation in Israel. For Torrance, the integration of form and being

constitutes the totality of the mediation of revelation ("form") and reconciliation ("heart" or "being") in historical Israel. Divine revelation ("form") in Israel transformed the inner "being" of the nation, as the cultic liturgy was carved into the flesh of the people, as symbolised by circumcision. Moreover, the covenanted way of response to divine revelation, as expressed in the law and cultic liturgy, affirms Torrance's assertion that faith, piety, and worship are integral to the epistemological process (*cf.* Chapter Two). As Torrance argues, we cannot know God apart from personal-communal faith, piety, and devotion.

In addition, the relation between form and being can be viewed from a different angle in Torrance's discussion of divine mediation in Israel. In Torrance's scientific theology, as argued earlier (*cf.* Chapter Two), epistemology follows ontology, that is, "knowing" follows "being." This principle is historically realised in ancient Israel as the knowledge of God penetrates deep into the communal heart of the people, radically transforming the nation at the depths of its corporate being. Torrance's discussion of the displacement of naturalistic and pagan concepts of God by the light of divine revelation in Israel affirms and complements his assertion that epistemology arises *a posteriori* in obedience to the demands of its object of inquiry. For Israel to know God, the alien concepts and antecedent conceptual frameworks of the nation's corporate mind had to be burned away by the searing light of divine revelation in order for it to be the bearer of the oracles of God.

As we will see below (*cf.* Chapters Four-Six), the inherent unitary relation Torrance sees between epistemology and ontology, revelation and reconciliation, and form and being will be fully realised and enacted in Jesus Christ, who, in his incarnate constitution as God and man eternally joined in reconciling union, "embodies" the unitary movement of revelation and reconciliation in historical Israel. Torrance's discussion of the covenanted way of response as a "middle term" between the polarities of the covenant, that is, as a "vicarious" means through which a sinful nation could respond appropriately to a holy God, foreshadows his discussion of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ, who, as God and man joined in reconciling union, "vicariously" embodies and enacts the covenanted way of response between God and humanity, in place of, and on behalf of, all.

3.5.2.2 Divine Wrath in Israel

God's provision of the means of response to the divine initiative facilitates greater appreciation for divine grace in God's relations with humanity, as revealed in Israel. As Torrance argues, God's unswerving commitment to Israel was not dependent on any salutary quality that made Israel worthy of communal relationship with a holy and righteous God; rather, divine graciousness toward Israel was prior to, and independent of, any worthy response by the people.

God's faithfulness toward stiff-necked, rebellious Israel, coupled with his divine love, unconditioned by the response of his covenant partner, may bring reassurance to believers, for God's love is not constrained by any particular unworthiness that would prevent our entering relationship with him. Such is in keeping with the New Testament teaching that God reconciled us to himself at the cross while we were still sinners (Rom 5:8). In light of God's unswerving faithfulness toward Israel, believers can be assured that God's commitment to us is steadfast, despite human sin, and is in no way conditioned by our response.

Moreover, Torrance's description of Israel as the "bearer of the oracles of God," broken time and again on the wheel of divine providence, sheds light on the troublesome topic of the "wrath" of God, seemingly poured out so frequently on Israel. Torrance shows us that divine wrath towards Israel was not merely punishment for idolatrous disobedience to God's commands. Rather, underlying the wrath of God was his determined plan for Israel, as mediator of revelation, to be not only a light to the nations but also the matrix of interrelations, or corporate "womb," for the incarnation of Jesus Christ; thus, *in order to safeguard the incarnation*, Israel's idolatry had to be thwarted. The wrath of God unleashed on Israel, therefore, served God's greater, loving purpose for *all* nations. Even the difficulties associated with perennially troublesome topics like the slaughter of the Canaanite children (Dt 7:1-2; 20:16-17) can be eased somewhat by Torrance's view of Israel as the mediator of divine revelation. In order for the fallen mind of Israel to be healed of its inherent tendency to idolatry, Israel needed to be safeguarded from the pagan practices of its neighbours, so that it would not learn their "abominations" (Dt 7:19) and threaten its role as mediator of the knowledge of the true God. Thus, the slaughter of the pagan inhabitants of Canaan was in the service of God's greater revelatory, salvific purpose for all humanity. Israel's failure to follow God's command

to destroy the pagan inhabitants of the land contributed to their recurring idolatry and repeatedly brought God's righteous anger and judgement upon the nation.

3.5.2.3 Preparation for the Light Coming into the World

Perhaps the most compelling feature of Torrance's view of Israel as the "womb" of the incarnation is his discussion of the divinely provided permanent structures of thought and speech necessary for the mediation of the knowledge of God. As Torrance rightly argues, without the crafting of "the essential furniture of our knowledge of God" in historical Israel, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ would have been incomprehensible. Israel's role as light to the nations is finally fulfilled in the coming into the world of the one true Israelite, Jesus Christ. The early Church arose first among the Jews, people who were intimately familiar with the words, concepts, and thought forms that arose in response to God's gracious self-revelation in Israel; thus, they were historically and culturally prepared for the incarnation of the Son of God. While the nation as a whole rejected him, the first followers of Jesus Christ recognised their Messiah, particularly after the resurrection. When he talked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, for example, the risen Jesus explained to them all that the scriptures (*i.e.*, the Old Testament) had said concerning him, thereby setting his mission squarely in the context of ancient Israel. Finally, in the breaking of bread, the Emmaus disciples recognized him (Lk 24:13-35). Such a revelation would not have been possible had not God prepared in Israel a conceptual matrix of thought and speech, both oral and written, by which they could apprehend the coming of the Son of God among them. In subsequent years, the disciples would declare that the scriptures that arose in ancient Israel, that is, the Old Testament, bear witness to Jesus Christ (*e.g.,* Acts 2:25*ff*).

Torrance helps us to see that all the trouble and travail of Israel was in the service of God's eternal plan to bring the True Light to the nations in the person of Jesus. As Torrance argues, Israel's puzzling vacillation between faithfulness and idolatry, with concomitant blessing and punishment, was the inevitable result of divine revelation pressing for understanding and articulation in the corporate mind of a sinful and rebellious people. The history of God's dialogue with ancient Israel, therefore, must be regarded as the tumultuous preparation for the reception of the incarnate Word of God in the midst of a recalcitrant nation. To be sure, the incarnate Son of God is the central

character of the Old Testament record of God's dealings with Israel, for these scriptures bear witness to Jesus Christ (Jn 5:39). Jesus is the pivot point of salvation history. The Old Testament points forward, in anticipation, to the Light that was coming into the world (*cf*. Jn 1:9), while the New Testament bears witness to that Light.

4.0 THE NICENE *HOMOOUSION*

4.1 Introduction

The scientific theology of T.F. Torrance is founded on the fundamental axiom that realities must be investigated in terms of the nexuses of interrelations in which they exist, for these interrelations are constitutive of the nature of the realities in question. To examine the mediation of Jesus Christ in a theologically scientific way, therefore, requires that he be investigated not only in terms of his nexus of interrelations with historical Israel but also in terms of his consubstantial relation with God.

The present chapter addresses the epistemological and evangelical significance of the unity of being and agency between the Father and the incarnate Son as articulated in the Nicene creedal assertion that Jesus Christ is *homoousios to Patri*. The Nicene *homoousion* is foremost among the basic, elemental forms that constitute the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ in Torrance's scientific theology.

4.2 New Testament Witness

What does the New Testament mean, asks Torrance, when it tells us that Jesus Christ was sent "by" God, was "from" God, and that he is "of" God the Father? What is the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son? In what sense, if any, is Jesus God? These are the kinds of questions that confronted the early Church as it struggled to make sense of the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:111).

The Nicene fathers sought to discover the "basic clue" to the Father-Son relationship through a careful exegesis of a host of biblical passages. One of the most important passages is found in Matthew 11:27 (*cf.* Lk 10:22), wherein Jesus says, "No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son" (Torrance, 1992:53, 54). As Torrance explains:

> What impressed the Church was the fact that in those words our Lord spoke of a mutual relation of knowing between the incarnate Son and God the Father, and in the Johannine parallels of a mutual relation of knowing and loving between Jesus Christ and the Father, which implied a mutual relation of being between the Son and the Father within which such an exclusive circle of knowing and loving between them was possible.

A number of passages in the Gospel of John describe the relation of mutual knowing between the Father and the incarnate Son. John's prologue describes an eternal face-to-face relationship between the Father and the "Word" (*Logos*) who was "with God" in the beginning, and who became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:1, 14). Jesus says that no one has seen the Father except he who is "from God" (Jn 6:46); he says also that "I know him [the Father], for I come from him, and he sent me (Jn 7:29). Jesus even claims that he would be a "liar" if he said he did not know the Father (Jn 8:55). The mutual knowing between the Father and Son is further indicated in John 10:15 and 17:25.

In addition, an identity of being between the Father and the incarnate Son appears to be indicated in certain passages in John, for example, Jesus' statement to Thomas, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also," and his subsequent words to Philip that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father (Jn 14:7, 9, 10). Jesus' words portray an intimate unity between the Father and the Son. In his high priestly prayer (Jn 17), Jesus claims to possess a shared glory with the Father (v 5) and even claims that eternal life is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent (v 3).

Other passages in John appear to portray a mutual relationship of activity or a unity of agency between the Father and the incarnate Son. According to Jesus, the Father is working and he is working (Jn 5:17); the Son can do nothing by himself but only what he sees the Father doing, for the Father shows the Son all that he himself is doing (Jn 5:19, 20). Jesus said that he came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of the one who sent him (Jn 6:38). Similar passages are found in John 4:34, 5:30, 8:29, 14:31, and 17:4. These passages clearly indicate the harmony of will and purpose that exists between the Father and the incarnate Son.

In other notable New Testament passages, the apostle Paul describes Jesus Christ as the "image of the invisible God" in whom the "fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col 1:15, 19), the one in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9), the one through whom, by the Spirit, we have access to the Father (Eph 2:18), and the one through whom "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [shines] in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Cor 4:6). Finally, the writer of Hebrews (1:3) describes the Son as "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature."

4.3 **Patristic Background**

The New Testament's description of the relationship between the Father and the Son, however, was subject to unorthodox interpretations. As Torrance argues, various heretical groups distorted the biblical witnesses to the unity of being and agency between the Father and the incarnate Son. Although the Nicene fathers subjected passage after passage to careful scrutiny, they were compelled, in the face of heretical interpretations of scripture, to have recourse to non-biblical terms in order to express precisely the meaning of biblical statements about the indivisible unity between Jesus Christ and the Father. Hence, the fathers adopted Greek terms such as *ousia* and *homoousios* to enable them to express succinctly the unity of nature and activity that eternally exists between the Father and the Son. While these terms were commonly used in Greek literature, notes Torrance, they were given "exegetical and clarificatory" meaning, shaped by the believing worship of the Church, and forged anew under the transforming impact of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1981c:xii; 1988a:127, 128).

4.3.1 Encounter with Greek Dualism

The patrisitc understanding of the nature of the relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son can best be understood against the background of the axiomatic dualism that pervaded the Hellenistic world (Seng, 1992:341; Molnar, 2009:39). According to Torrance, the Platonic separation of the intelligible world of the eternal Forms and the sensible world of materiality created a disjunction (*i.e.,* "dualism") between eternity and temporality, spirit and matter, soul and body, and being and becoming. The Greeks drew a line of demarcation between the intelligible realm and the sensible realm, that is, between a realm of eternal ideas and a realm of empirical events, or a realm of reality and a realm of appearances. For the Greeks, the events of the empirical or phenomenal realm were regarded as "evanescent" appearances lacking in reality and even as evil. The dualist basis of knowledge with which Greek thought operated created an axiomatic distinction between a divine realm of timeless ideas and an earthly realm of empirical events occurring in space and time. As Torrance argues, the effect of Greek dualism was to shut God out of the world of empirical space and time, thereby driving a "deep wedge" between the Old and New Testaments and, correspondingly, between

God's generative activity as Creator and his redemptive activity as Redeemer. Consequently, the pervasive dualism of Greek thought made "mythological nonsense" of the incarnation (Torrance, 1988a:47; 1992:52, 53; 1994a:50; *cf.* 1984:205).

4.3.2 Dualist Christologies

For Torrance, as is often noted, the root of the problem underlying aberrant christologies can be traced to the dualistic separation of God and the creation endemic to Greek philosophy. For Torrance, notes Bevan (2002:61), the problems in our understanding of the relation between God and our world of space-time reality begin with Greek philosophy. Similarly, as Scandrett (2006:67, 68) argues, for Torrance, the inclination to separate the divine and human (*i.e.,* "material") natures of Jesus Christ underlies all the christological controversies in the early Church and presumes an "unbiblical cosmology," wherein God is precluded from any realist interaction in the space-time world. Again, as Luoma (2002:89) argues, for Torrance, dualism is the "cause" of aberrant christologies, for at its heart is "an imprecise mixture of divine and human features coexisting in an unbalanced way in the person of Christ." According to Luoma (2002:81), dualism provided fertile soil in the era of the early Church for the development of several religious trends that were later regarded as heresies. Notable among these, for Torrance, are Ebionism, Docetism, and Arianism.

4.3.2.1 Ebionite and Docetic Christologies

When the Gospel was proclaimed in the context of Platonic dualism, Torrance argues, a conflict quickly emerged between Hellenistic "mythological" forms of thought centred in the human mind and Hebraic "theological" thought centred in God. The biblical description of God's providential care and saving activity in history, and particularly the Christian message of incarnation and redemption in space and time, ran contrary to the underlying assumptions of a dualist system of thought that excluded the possibility of divine activity in the world (Torrance, 1988a:47, 48). Consequent to the dualism of Greek thought, formulations of the doctrine of Christ started either at the "bottom" with his humanity and attempted to work their way up to his divinity, or they started at the "top" with his divinity and attempted to work down to his humanity.

In regard to the mystery of Jesus Christ, the sharp antithesis between God and the world fundamental to Greek thought manifested itself in "Ebionite" and "Docetic" types of christology, both of which, in differing ways, broke up the New Testament's unitary vision of Jesus as both God and man in one person by separating the divine Christ from the human Jesus (Torrance, 1988a:111; Molnar, 2009:107). As Torrance (1992:53) notes, "they inevitably cut Christ in two, into a divine aspect and into a human aspect." For Torrance, as Bevan (2002:57) notes, Ebionism creates a dualism between God and humanity by projecting mythological ideas about God onto the heavens, so that Christ is reduced to a mythic god-man or a messianic prophet. As Torrance (2988a:112) argues, the Ebionites regarded Jesus as merely a man, a prophet indwelt by God, who was elected to a position of divine sonship when the Holy Spirit descended upon him at baptism. They rejected any idea of an eternal, internal relationship of being between the Father and Son in favour of an external "moral" relationship by virtue of which Jesus fulfilled his vocation as Messiah. They placed Jesus on the creaturely side of the God-world relation, notes Torrance, where he could not be regarded as embodying in his own person the revealing and reconciling activity of God.

In contrast to the Ebionite "christology from below," Torrance argues, Docetism developed a "christology from above," which held that the body of Jesus Christ was not a human body, but merely appeared to be so. While the New Testament contains warnings against an incipient Docetism (*cf.* 1Jn 2:22, 4:2*ff*; 2Jn 7), the teaching spread widely among the Gnostics of the second and third centuries. The dualism of Hellenistic thought is apparent in the Docetists' attempt to give full weight to the divinity of Christ without compromising divine "immutability" and "impassibility" through union with materiality, that is, the flesh. The effect of this, notes Torrance, was to compromise the objective, historical humanity of Jesus Christ by treating his human nature, as well as his suffering, as "unreal" (Torrance, 1988a:112, 113). Because the Gnostics regarded the uncreated divine realm and the created material realm as utterly separate, argues Torrance, any thought of interaction between them, or any idea of the incursion of the heavenly realm into the material realm, had to be understood in a "mythological" rather than "realist" way. Thus, their radical dualism forced the Gnostics to regard the biblical accounts of God's acts in history, particularly the incarnation and resurrection, as mere myths (Torrance, 1980a:37, 38). As Ho (2008:46) rightly notes, Torrance asserts that Gnosticism separates Jesus from God and empties

his message of divine content. As Bevan (2002:56) notes, Docetism posits God incarnate "in" man, not "as" man. While this safeguards divine immutability and impassibility, it makes the suffering of Christ "unreal," for Docetism implies that God acts "upon' the created order but not "within" it. For Torrance, notes Bevan, this Docetic dualism creates a gap between God and humanity at the cost of our salvation.

4.3.2.2 The Arian Controversy

For Torrance, Arianism compounded the errors of Ebionism and Docetism (Bevan, 2002:57; *cf.* Torrance, 1988a:115, 116). Torrance argues that Arianism was influenced by the dualism of Greek thought (Luoma, 2002:88; Ho, 2008:45; Chung, 2011:36). For Arius, the *Logos* is a created intermediary between God and humanity, who is neither properly divine nor properly human. Though the first among created realities, like all things created out of nothing, he is altogether "alien" and "different" from the being of the Father. By drawing a line of demarcation between the eternal being of God and Jesus Christ, notes Torrance, the Arians posited a dualism between God and the world that ruled out any realist thought of God's redemptive interaction with human beings in historical space and time. By asserting that Jesus is only a created "intermediary" and is not in himself the unique Mediator who bridges divinity and humanity in his own person, Torrance contends, Arianism empties revelation of any divine content and reduces Jesus to nothing more than a "symbol" of God construed in purely moral terms, for, as a mere creature, his being is not grounded in, or objectively commensurate with, the intrinsic reality of God (Torrance, 1980a:38, 39; 1986a:296; 1988a:118; 1992:60, 61).

Noting that Arianism is built on the radical division between the *cosmos noetos* and the *cosmos aisthetos* that characterises Platonic dualism (Luoma, 2002:88; Chung, 2011:36), Chung (2011:37) rightly argues that Arianism has both epistemological and cosmological implications regarding how we understand the revelation of God in Christ. Epistemologically, Chung notes Torrance's insistence that the Arian separation of the intelligible and sensible worlds makes true knowledge of God inconceivable in two ways. First, if God is separate from his creation and has no personal interaction with it, as the Arians claim, then divine self-disclosure is precluded and "theology in the strict and proper sense is impossible," leaving us with "mythology" as the only possible outcome (*cf.* Torrance, 1976a:240). Rightly noting the importance of the

correspondence between *theologia* and *oikonomia* in Torrance's theology, Chung (2011:37 n. 22) argues that Arianism renders *theologia* impossible. As Torrance (1976a:240) argues, if the economy of God in the world is not the basis of our theological knowledge, "then our attempts to think of God are only *epinoetic* acts grounded in our own this worldly self-knowledge and projected into God across the great gulf between us." Second, as Chung (2011:38) argues, Arian dualism precludes the possibility of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. If God is not incarnate in Jesus Christ, notes Chung, then revelation and mediation is rendered "null." Thus, in agreement with Chung, we note that the Arian disjunction between *cosmos noetos* and *cosmos aisthetos* is both an epistemological and christological dualism that renders the "realist" knowledge of God impossible and reduces the incarnation to the status of myth.

Torrance's critique of Arianism provides helpful clues to his persistent attacks on "dualism" (Luoma, 2002:87-89, 92; Chung, 2011:40). For Torrance, Arian dualism regards the *cosmos noetos* and *cosmos aisthetos* as two poles of existence set in opposition, even contradiction, to one another. As Chung (2011:40, 41) argues, "The [Arian] irreconcilable relation between God and the creation is indicative of the opposing bipolar relation in dualism." For Torrance, notes Chung, the problem with Ebionite, Docetic, and Arian christologies lies precisely in their dualistic propensity to see the poles of God and humanity as irreconcilable. As Chung observes, however, Torrance does not regard the bipolarity of God and humanity in the hypostatic union (*cf.* Chapter Five) as a dualistic opposition but as "union." Thus, suggests Chung, the "key problem of dualism" for Torrance is not the existence of "bipolar poles," but the "irreconcilable, opposing and contradicting relation" between them. For Torrance, argues Chung, the radical dualism of Arianism involves an "entrenched pattern of thinking and mode of conceiving reality," wherein the cosmos is "distortedly perceived" in terms of opposition between the intelligible and sensible realms. This misperception of the cosmos, Chung rightly argues, begets a distortion of the God-world relation and, consequently, threatens Torrance's realist epistemology. Finally, Chung offers his own definition of "dualism" in the context of Torrance's theology as "an internalised mode of perceiving reality into two opposing poles of the Creator and the creation, negating any real relation between them and rendering God's revelation and mediation in Christ null." While Chung is to be credited for his attempt at clarification of Torrance's use of the term "dualism," his definition is encumbered, however, by the ponderousness that weighs down much of Torrance's prose. We define

"dualism," as Torrance uses the term, more simply as "an irreconcilable divide between God and the world that precludes the historical reality of the incarnation." This simpler definition addresses Torrance's primary theological concern that dualism distorts or precludes the realist mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ.

Luoma (2002:91-93) also notes that the existence of two natures in the one person of Christ does not constitute a dualism for Torrance and, like Chung, argues that the crucial issue is the nature of the relation between the poles. For Torrance, the dualism in Ebionism and Docetism results in the reduction of one nature of Christ to another, whether the divine to the human in the former or the human to the divine in the latter. For Torrance, argues Luoma, once dualism is accepted, it "distorts the balance between the poles," so that one is emphasised over the other or one is absorbed into the other. Thus, Christ is seen as more human than divine or more divine than human. As Luoma rightly notes, Torrance sees the danger of dualism in its tendency to divide reality into two blocks with no dynamic interaction between them; dualism negates the *homoousion* by dividing reality into two principles, God and the world, between which there is no dynamic interaction. Hence, dualism is not merely the existence of two poles, but a distortion in the relation between them, resulting in unbalance or total disruption. For Torrance, all forms of dualism, whether ontological, cosmological, or epistemological, culminate in the exclusion of God from the world, so that the relationship is only "static, deterministic, and, at the best, tangential." Thus, notes Luoma, alongside the *homoousion* and the incarnation, the overcoming of dualism lies at the heart of Torrance's theology.

Luoma (2002:88, 89) criticises Torrance, however, for what he regards as Torrance's "selective way of presenting details of the history of ideas." For example, Luoma contends that Torrance appears to disregard the influence of Platonic thought on Athanasius. Yet, Luoma argues that it has been "convincingly shown" that Platonism has influenced Athanasius and the other Greek fathers to the extent that "the sharp distinction Torrance draws between Platonic dualism and the thought of the Nicene Fathers can hardly be justified." While Luoma's critique is, perhaps, over-stated, the influence of dualism on Athanasius is evident in his assertion that the incarnate Word suffered in his human nature but not in his divine nature (*cf.* McGrath, 2001:275).

4.3.3 The Council of Nicaea

According to Torrance (1988a:119), the Nicene fathers considered Arianism the most dangerous of heresies, for it struck at the foundation of the Christian faith by calling into question the divine reality of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Thus, the early Church faced a fundamental question in its confrontation with Arianism and the concomitant dualism inherent in Greek thought. As Torrance argues elsewhere (1996a:77):

> This was the question as to how the self-revelation of God to man within the range of human comprehension in this visible, tangible world was related to the invisible, intangible and ultimately incomprehensible Reality of God in his own transcendent Being. Unless there was a substantial bridge between the visible and the invisible, the tangible and the intangible, the comprehensible and the incomprehensible, there could be no sure or firm ground for human knowledge of God as he really is in himself. In fact, if there were no such bridge, the Gospel would be finally empty of truth and validity and its account of the saving acts of God would be no more than a mythological projection of human fancy.

For Torrance, the controversial teaching of Arius made it clear that the decisive issue for saving faith was the exact nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son incarnate in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1988a:116; Morrison, 1997:208). In response to the Arian challenge, the Nicene fathers carefully examined the New Testament witness to the relationship between the incarnate Son and God the Father (Colyer, 2001a:70, 71). In so doing, notes Torrance, they refused to compromise their faith in Jesus Christ as both God and man in one person, for if he is not really God, there is no divine reality in anything he said or did; if he is not really man, then his life and work have no significance for human beings. As Torrance argues, "Faith in Jesus Christ as God become man for us and our salvation requires emphatic belief equally in his Deity, for it is God himself who has become man in him, and in his humanity, for in Jesus Christ it is our human nature that God has made his own" (Torrance, 1988a:115). The fathers cut away all ambiguity about the Father-Son relationship and, according to Torrance, removed any possibility of misunderstanding by inserting into the creed the crucial expression, *homoousios to Patri,* which "meant that the Son and the Father are equally God within the one being of God"; that is, the Son is the very being of God and is God in the same way that the Father is God (Torrance, 1988a:122, 123, 133). In the creedal assertion that Jesus is "of one being with the Father," the Nicene fathers articulated "what they felt they had to think and say under the constraint of the truth and in fidelity to the biblical witness to Christ and the basic interpretation of it already given in the apostolic foundation of the Church" (Torrance, 1996a:ix). The fathers understood that

if Jesus were not "of one being with the Father," he could not be God worthy of our worship nor could he be our Saviour; rather, he would be only a creature made by God, completely different from (*heteroousios*) or merely like (*homoiousios*) the Father (Deddo, 2008:40; Ho, 2008:123).

In addition to the consubstantial Father-Son relation asserted in the Nicene *homoousion*, Torrance (1988a:124, 125) notes another important aspect of the term. If the Son is eternally begotten of the Father "within" the being of God, then, for Torrance, the *homoousion* not only expresses the "oneness," or unity, of the Father-Son relation, it also expresses the "distinction" between the Father and the Son. Alluding to Basil (*Epistulae,* 52.3), Torrance (1988a:125 n. 57) notes that nothing can be *homoousios* with itself, but something must be *homoousios* with another. For Torrance, notes Ho (2008:127, 128), the *homoousion* embodies two distinct meanings, both of which were important to the Nicene Fathers: First, it carries the meaning of "sameness" in being with the Father. Second, it indicates "distinctiveness" between the Father and the Son, a meaning that Torrance regards as fundamental for the Nicene fathers. While the second meaning is less prominent in the creed, notes Ho, it is equally as important as the first meaning, for it avoids the possibility that the distinction or "otherness" of the Father and Son may be confused. Hence, for Torrance (1988a:125), the unity and distinction between the Father and Son implied in the *homoousion* is a "bulwark" not only against Arianism but also against Sabellianism and other various forms of unitarianism and polytheism.

4.3.3.1 A Scrupulous Reinterpretation

Because *homoousios* was a non-biblical term, it had to be interpreted with great care. As Hilary (*De Synodis* 70, 91; *De Trinitate* 4.4-7) tells us, the Christian use of the word *homoousios* demanded a "scrupulous reinterpretation" in terms of its origin and context in Greek philosophy (Torrance, 1981c.xii; 1988a:123; 1996a:80; *cf.* Cass, 2008:148 n. 60). According to Torrance (1996a:80), the term *homoousios* came to be used as a "theological instrument" to make "indubitably clear" the fundamental sense of the biblical portrayal of the relation between the incarnate Son and the Father. It steadily became clear to the Nicene fathers, notes Torrance (1988a:123, 124), that the term meant "of one and the same being and nature" and expressed equality between the Father and Son in asserting that the Son is identical in being with the Father and of one

nature with him. Properly understood, Torrance contends, the Nicene *homoousios to Patri* means that the incarnate Son is "of identically the same being as the Father."

4.3.3.2 The Key to a Non-dualist Theology

For Torrance, notes Chung (2011:17), the *homoousion* is "the appropriate tool of articulation" the Nicene fathers used to counter the dualism of fourth-century Arianism, a tool forged with what Ho (2008:126) calls the "primary intention" to guard against heresies and their "gross misinterpretations" of Jesus Christ. For Torrance, notes Cass (2008:148, 149), the *homoousion* settled fundamental trinitarian and christological issues, while strengthening the fourth-century Church against "hostile deviations and destructive misconstructions." As Torrance himself (1981c:xii) pointedly states, the Nicene *homoousion* "preserved the heart and substance of the Gospel" by safeguarding it against the "heretical rabble of the day."

As the word *homoousios* was debated, clarified, and refined throughout the fourth century, notes Colyer (2001a:72), the Church came to believe that the word was a technical theological term that embodied the essence of the Gospel. For Torrance, as Achtemeier (2001:54) notes, the *homoousion* is the "primary heuristic theological instrument" of a unitary, realist epistemology, whereby the Church rejected the pagan dualism between the divine and material. Similarly, as Ho (2008:47) notes, the *homoousion* is the "key" to creating a "unitary outlook" in Torrance's theology. As Cass (2008:148) observes, the bridge between God and the world represented by the word *homoousios* cannot be found in any other religion or philosophy.

While the term *homoousios* essentially means "consubstantiality" for Torrance, argues Chung (2011:15), it is the reality of the "undivided unity in the being of God" that is of vital importance to him. Because the Son is *homoousios* with the Father, the "I am" of Jesus "is" the "I am" of the Father; thus, in Jesus, argues Torrance (1996b:36), "we have a *Logos* that is not of man's devising but One who goes back into the eternal Being of God for he proceeded from the eternal Being of God." Partly because of the *homoousion*, argues Torrance (1980a:146-178; Cass, 2008:149), trinitarian thinking entered the "inner fabric" of Christian worship and knowledge of the One God and should be accepted by the Church as constituting the "basic grammar" (Torrance, 1980a:159) of Christian dogmatic theology.

As Gill (2007:17) argues, in what we regard as an understatement, the summary of the Christian faith articulated in the Nicene Creed is "important" in Torrance's theology. Throughout his writings, notes Gill, Torrance frequently references the creed and the fourth-century theologians associated with its development, describing the creed as the "fruit of Eastern Catholic theology" (Torrance, 1988a:2) and the decisive formulation of the Christian trinitarian doctrine of God upon which the whole Church rests (Torrance, 1994b:4). As representative of the Church of Scotland, and active for many years in ecumenical reconciliation between the Eastern and Western divisions of the Church (D. Torrance, 2001:22-24), Torrance also holds the creed in high regard, notes Gill (2007:18), because it is the most universally accepted creed (*cf.* Leith, 1963:32), finding a place in the liturgies of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Churches.

Torrance acknowledges that the Greek fathers of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan era provide him with the insights he finds most helpful in rethinking and reformulating Christian theology. Yet, for Torrance, the Nicene *homoousion* is neither sacrosanct nor beyond reconsideration, for all theological concepts fall short of the realities they intend to convey and are open to further modification in the light of those realities. Nevertheless, the *homoousion* is of immense "generative and heuristic power" and is laden with implications for the mediation of both revelation and reconciliation. In the formulation of the Nicene *homoousion*, argues Torrance, a "giant step was taken in grasping and giving expression to the internal relation of the incarnate Son to the Father, and thereby to the ontological substructure and coherence of the Gospel. It proved to be an inerasable and irreversible event in the history of Christian theology" (Torrance, 1996a:ix, x; *cf.* 1988a:144, 145; Colyer, 2001a:73).

For Torrance (1988a:276; 1996b:261), the answer to the "menace" of dualism, whether of the ancient Greeks or of the Enlightenment, is the *homoousion* of the Nicene Creed, the doctrine that Jesus Christ, who is "of one being with the Father," has entered the arena of human space-time reality to reveal the Father and to reconcile the world to God. By inserting the *homoousion* into the midst of the creed, the Nicene fathers not only secured the supreme truth of the deity of Christ, but also undermined dualist concepts of God by establishing a realist and unitary basis for the proclamation of the Gospel. Torrance argues that the Church is indebted to the Nicene fathers for the valuable service they rendered in revealing the "inner structure" of Christian faith in its

profound "logical simplicity" and, thereby, laying the basis for all subsequent theological advance. In this regard, Morrison (1997:109) succinctly captures the meaning and importance of the *homoousion* for Torrance by describing it as the "onto-relational disclosure model of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed."

4.3.4 The Christianising of Hellenism

The formulation of the Christian doctrine of God in the light of the incarnation of Jesus Christ could not have occurred without a reconstruction of the dualist foundations of Greco-Roman thought, argues Torrance. In recasting the dualism of ancient thought in the light of God's self-revelation in the incarnate Son, "the foundations of classical Christian theology were laid and given creedal formulation in the process of overcoming the dualist modes of thought that threatened to undermine the Gospel and to paganise the Church" (Torrance, 1980a:41).

Against those who claim that a radical "Hellenising" of Christianity occurred during the early centuries of the Church, Torrance (1988a:68-75) contends that the Christian theologians of the early Church radically transformed Greek thought-forms in making them vehicles of doctrinal statements quite foreign to Hellenistic thought. According to Torrance (1988a:132; *cf.* 1981c:xii):

> The primary intention of the Councils at Nicaea and Constantinople in formulating and reaffirming the *homoousion* ... was to be faithful to the Gospel with which the Church had been entrusted, and to provide an authoritative confession of faith that enshrines at its heart the supreme evangelical truth by which the Church stands or falls. Far from imposing an alien Hellenism on the Gospel, the terms *ousia* and *homoousios* were adapted to allow the evangelical witness and teaching of the New Testament to come across without distortion through an alien framework of thought. As such the *homoousion* proved to be a primary movement of thought from an incipiently conceptual to a fully conceptual act of understanding which the godly mind could not but take under the compelling claims of the truth as it is in Jesus.

When the early fathers sought to develop their knowledge of Christ in accordance with his internal relations with the Father, they had to reconstruct the foundations of their theological knowledge and remint the basic terms and concepts they used (Torrance, 1992:52). Thus, according to Torrance, one of the most significant features of Nicene theology was not the "Hellenising" of Christianity but the "Christianising" of Hellenism. While the Nicene theologians made considerable use of Greek terms and ideas in formulating the conceptual content of the Christian faith, they conceived nothing new; rather, "breathing the spirit of Scripture," Torrance argues, they confessed

"the divine and apostolic faith" that had been passed down to them, handing it on in a true and faithful way as they themselves had received it from the apostolic deposit in the New Testament. At the same time, the incarnation of the Son of God shook the foundations of philosophical thought in the ancient world, notes Torrance, for if God is in his own inner being (*ousia*) what God is in the person and activity of Jesus Christ (and the Holy Spirit), then God's being (*ousia*) had to be conceptualized in a different way. Thus, according to Torrance, the Nicene fathers reformulated and reshaped Greek philosophical concepts under the influence of Holy Scripture in order to make them worthy vehicles of the Gospel and to enable the Church to clarify and give consistent expression to the trinitarian structure inherent in the New Testament. Words like "being" (*ousia*), "word" (*logos*), and "act" (*energeia*) came to mean, in patrisitc theology, something very different from what they meant in the Greek philosophical *milieu*. To be sure, Torrance contends, the patrisitc use of many Greek terms is radically "un-Greek" (Torrance, 1988a:14, 15, 74, 131; 1996a:127, 128).

The Nicene *homoousion* demanded a "revolution" in classical thinking about the nature of God. No longer could the "being" (*ousia*) of God be construed in the static, inert, impersonal terms of classical theism; rather, the being of God had to be reconceived in the dynamic, personal terms of God's self-revealing, redemptive activity in Jesus Christ (*cf.* Seng, 1992:347, 348; Torrance, 1996a:3, 103, 104). Following Athanasius (*Contra Arianos*, *De Incarnatione*, *et al.*), Torrance lays great emphasis on the dynamic character of God's self-revelation in Christ and the Spirit. In contradistinction to the prevailing Greek thought of the day, Athanasius regarded word and activity as intrinsic to the being of God. Athanasius used the terms *enousios logos* and *enousios energeia* (*De synodis,* 34, 41; *Contra Arianos*, 2.2; 4.1; Torrance, 1976a:224-231; 1996a:128*ff*) to convey the reality that what God is in his saving Word (*logos*) and Act (*energeia*), he is inherently in his own internal being (*ousia*). "That is to say," notes Torrance, "the Word which God communicates to us in Jesus Christ is Word that belongs to the inner Being of God [*enousios logos*], and the Activity by which God saves us in Jesus is Activity that also belongs to the inner Being of God [*enousios energeia*]" (Torrance, 1986a:299; *cf.* 1980a:151-153).

As Torrance argues, Athanasius recast the term *Logos*, understood by the Greeks as an impersonal cosmological principle, in terms of the Old Testament "Word of the Lord" and the New Testament conception of the Word who was with God from the beginning

and became flesh in Jesus Christ (Jn 1:1, 14). The Word eternally inheres in the being of God (*enousios logos*) and is identical with the person of Jesus Christ; thus, God is never without his Word, for the Word and being of God are one. This ontological concept of the *Logos* characterised the Christian understanding of divine revelation as embodying "the objective self-communication of God in his Word," so that "*theologia*, thinking of God from a controlling centre in his Word, was sharply differentiated from *mythologia*, thinking of God from a centre in the human self and its fantasies" (Torrance, 1988a:72, 73; *cf.* 1976a:226, 227).

The Greek notion of *energeia* (activity) was also "Christianised" in light of God's redemptive activity in time and space. In contrast to the Aristotelian view of a static, immobile God, notes Torrance, the Athanasian view of God was one in which activity and movement are intrinsic to the being of God (*enousios energeia*). "God is never without his activity (*energeia*), for his activity and his being are essentially and eternally one. The act of God is not one thing, and his being another, for they coinhere mutually and indivisibly in one another." Therefore, in contrast to the immobile divinity of classical theism, movement and activity belong to the essential, eternal being of God (Torrance, 1988a:73, 74). Torrance continues:

> It was this dynamic conception of God that marked so distinctively the Christian understanding of the incarnation as the personal embodiment in space and time of God's providential and redemptive interaction with mankind. Thus the Nicene theologians thought of Jesus Christ as one with God the Father in *act* as well as *being*, for he incarnated the *active presence* of God himself in human history, and constituted in all he was and did the free outgoing movement of the divine being in condescension and love toward mankind.

According to Torrance, the Athanasian concepts *enousios logos* and *enousios energeia* express the idea that "the being of God is not intrinsically empty of word or activity, not mute or static, but is essentially eloquent and dynamic." God's being is to be understood as "speaking" being, for his Word and being inhere in one another. "His very being is his Word, and his very Word is his being." God's being, therefore, is essentially dynamic rather than static, for his being and activity inhere in one another. "His being is his act-in-his-being and his act is his being-in-his act" (Torrance, 1988a:131). In simpler terms, because the incarnate Son is *homoousios to Patri*, the Word that God communicates to us in Jesus Christ is Word that belongs to the inner being of God; likewise, the activity by which God saves us in Jesus is activity that belongs to the inner being of God. Thus, there is a "consubstantiality" of Word and Act

of God, Torrance argues, for "[i]t is by and through himself in his very Being as God that God reveals himself to us and saves us" (Torrance, 1986a:299).

From Torrance's perspective, therefore, we cannot think of God in the abstract, static terms of Greek philosophy, wherein God is viewed as immutable, impassible, impersonal, remote, silent, and finally unknowable. Rather, for Torrance, in the *parousia* of Jesus Christ, who is "of one being with the Father," God has revealed himself as a dynamic, active, speaking being who is intensely personal. God's activity in Jesus and God's inner, eternal being are not separate; rather, they are "essentially and eternally coinherent." Together the terms *enousios logos* and *enousios energeia* lead to a "dynamic and active" concept of the being (*ousia*) of God that is radically different from the Greek philosophical understanding of God, as in the case of Aristotle's impersonal, unmoved Mover, that is unaffected by the world (Colyer, 2001a:76, 149, 150).

Chung (2008:16) astutely compares the early Church's reinterpretation of philosophical terms in the service of the Gospel to the forging of the appropriate conceptual tools for the mediation of the knowledge of God in Israel. In agreement with Chung, we note that in both ancient Israel and in the early Church, human words, concepts, and thought forms were reshaped under the impact of divine revelation in order to serve as appropriate instruments for the mediation of the knowledge of the True God to a fallen world. As Torrance (1981c:xii) argues:

> That is how we are to regard the term *homoousion* in the Creed, which has been reforged or reminted through the believing and doxological commitment of the Church to God's *self*-revelation in Jesus Christ and harnessed by the Gospel to convey the all-important relation between the Son and the Father in a precise sense.

Though he is writing in the context of the *homoousion*, Torrance's argument can logically be applied to philosophical concepts such as *Logos*, *ousia*, and *energeia*. In the revolution in classical thinking that arose as the early Church proclaimed the Gospel to the Hellenistic world, Greek philosophical terms were reminted, recast, and reforged in the fiery light of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. As in ancient Israel, where human thoughts, concepts, and language were reshaped in the course of God's dialogue with Israel in anticipation of the incarnation, we note that the definitive self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ demanded the reshaping of human thoughts, concepts, and language as the early Church reflected on the meaning of the incarnation. The early

Church appropriated, "converted," and "baptised" Hellenistic philosophical concepts in the service of the Gospel, so that the message of salvation for all humanity might be proclaimed to a world lost in darkness.

4.4 Epistemology (Revelation)

As Torrance (1986a:295; 1992:54, 55) rightly argues, the Nicene assertion that Jesus is "of one being with the Father" is the "central point" upon which the whole creed turns and perhaps the most important theological statement since apostolic times:

> [The Nicene Creed] hinges upon the fact that he who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, he who mediates divine revelation and reconciliation to mankind in and through himself, is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God—that is to say, Jesus Christ is to be acknowledged as God in the same sense as the Father is acknowledged as God, for it is in virtue of his Deity that his saving work as man has its validity.

Because Jesus Christ is God in the same sense as the Father is God, both his revealing and reconciling activity issue from the eternal heart of the Triune Godhead. Therefore, as Seng (1992:342) notes, two observations are needed prior to a consideration of the epistemological significance of the Nicene *homoousion* in Torrance's scientific theology:

- The epistemological significance of the *homoousion* must be understood in the wider sense of the incarnation, for it is equivalent to the epistemological centrality of the incarnation; that is, the doctrine of the *homoousion* and the doctrine of the incarnation are twin doctrines in Torrance's theology and determine the epistemic ground of the knowledge of God (*cf*. Torrance, 1976a:222).

- The epistemological significance of the *homoousion* cannot be separated from the evangelical significance of the *homoousion*. As Gill (2007:51) argues, the unity of revelation and reconciliation that Torrance found in Barth's (1957a:409) writing is "central" to Torrance's theology. As Kruger (1990:366, 374; *cf*. Molnar, 2009:101) notes, the "outstanding characteristic" of Torrance's theology is that it does not divide revelation and reconciliation, so that epistemology and soteriology are inseparable. As Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3).

For Torrance, notes Kruger (1990:370), the incarnation is not merely one orthodox doctrine among others; it is the heart of his theology and has profound implications for revelation and reconciliation. Because the self-revealing Word and the self-giving Act of God towards us in Jesus Christ are undivided and inherent in the being of God, there can be no disjunction between the revealing and reconciling acts of God in Jesus Christ. Like Athanasius and the Nicene fathers, argues Jackson (2007:45), we must consistently hold together the doctrine of Jesus as "Son of God" with Jesus as "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

4.4.1 Epistemological Significance of the *Homoousion*

As Gill (2007:19, 20) rightly argues, God's decision to make himself known in Jesus Christ lies at the heart of Torrance's epistemology, an "epistemology of grace" rooted in the Reformed tradition (*cf.* Torrance, 1969a:299). For Torrance, like Barth (1957b:257*ff*) and Torrance's teacher H.R. Mackintosh (1929:65), notes Gill, it is impossible for human beings to know God without his willing to be known (*cf.* Torrance, 1996a:13). The gracious nature of God's self-disclosure in the homoousial Father-Son relation supports Torrance's methodological assertion, learned from Mackintosh (1929:65*ff*; *cf.* Gill, 2007:20), that "epistemology follows ontology" (*cf.* Chapter Two). For Torrance (1969b:17), we can only know God because God has graciously and freely revealed his very being to us in Jesus Christ. Torrance regards the consubstantial Father-Son relation as the "epistemological basis for all theological concepts." As Cass (2008:143) notes, the doctrine of the Father-Son relation is the "unifying doctrine" that shapes Torrance's understanding of other core doctrines. As Gill (2007:18; *cf.* Colyer, 2001a:72) notes, the consubstantial Father-Son relation is the "essence of the Gospel" for Torrance.

According to Torrance, the Nicene *homoousion* has tremendous implications for the mediation of revelation, for it concisely expresses the fact that what God is in our midst in Jesus Christ, God really is in himself (Torrance, 1988a:130, 131; 1996a:129). In terms of the mediation of revelation, notes Torrance, the *homoousion* asserts that in the Word made flesh, it is not just something of himself, or mere information about himself, that God has revealed but, rather, in the incarnate Son, God has revealed his

very own self to us (Torrance, 1992:23). Reminiscent of Barth (1957a:296), who argued that God is identical with his revelation, Torrance (1992:23) argues:

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

Torrance (1980a:39, 40) cogently and coherently articulates the epistemological significance of the *homoousion* as follows:

> [Classical theology] was committed to the Gospel of the incarnation of the Son of God, the Word made flesh, and was concerned with a way of believing and thinking imposed upon it by the sheer fact of Christ, in accordance with which it was held that this world of ours in space and time is actually intersected and overlapped, so to speak, by the divine world in the *parousia*, or advent and presence, of Jesus Christ. He was acknowledged and adored, therefore, as one who is God of God and yet man of man, who in his own being belongs both to the eternal world of divine reality and to the historical world of contingent realities. The linchpin of this theology, the essential bond of connection that held it together in its foundations, as it was formulated in the great ecumenical creed of all Christendom at Nicaea and Constantinople, is the *homoousion*, the confession that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son is of one being or of one substance with God the Father. Because Jesus Christ is God of God and man of man in himself, in Christ we who are creatures of this world may know God in such a way that our knowledge of him rests upon the reality of God himself. It is not something that is thought up and devised out of ourselves and mythologically projected into God, but it is grounded and controlled by what God is in himself.

For Torrance, the Nicene *homoousion* is of staggering significance, for it crystallizes the Christian conviction that while the incarnation falls within the spatiotemporal events of human history, it falls within the eternal being of God. Thus, Jesus Christ is not a mere symbolic representation of God, ontologically detached from divinity, but rather is God in God's own "being and act" come among us, "expressing in our human form the Word which he is eternally in himself, so that in our relations with Jesus Christ we have to do directly with the ultimate Reality of God." As the "epitomized expression" of Jesus' oneness in being with the Father, notes Torrance, the Nicene *homoousion* is the "ontological and epistemological linchpin" of Christian theology: "With it, everything hangs together; without it, everything ultimately falls apart" (Torrance, 1980a:160, 161; *cf.* 1996a:95). As Chung (2011:14, 15) notes, for Torrance, Jesus Christ is the "normative centre," wherein all knowledge of God is controlled. As Torrance notes elsewhere (1982:23):

> Everything hinges on the reality of God's *self*-communication to us in Jesus Christ, in whom there has become incarnate, not some created intermediary between God and the world [as in Arianism], but the very Word who eternally

> inheres in the Being of God and is God, so that for us to know God in Jesus Christ is really to know him as he is in himself.

The "epistemological significance" of the incarnation, argues Torrance, is that we can know God only "in accordance with the way in which he has actually objectified himself for us in our human existence, in Jesus Christ" (Torrance, 1969a:310). For Torrance, the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the "actual source" and "controlling centre" of the Christian doctrine of God, for Jesus Christ is one in both being and agency with the Father he came to reveal (Torrance, 1996a:18). As Myers (2008:4, 5) argues, the incarnation is "epistemologically essential" to Torrance's realist, scientific theology, wherein knowledge of the divine reality under investigation is developed in accordance with the objective nature of that reality. In agreement with Myers, we note that the epistemological significance Torrance attaches to the unity of being between Jesus and God is a reaffirmation of the fundamental axiom of his scientific theological method; that is, scientific knowledge is developed "according to the being" (*kata physin*) of the object of inquiry (*cf.* Chapter Two).

As Torrance (1980a:165) argues, in the incarnation, an "epistemic bridge" is established in Christ between God and humanity that is grounded in both the being of God and our own creaturely being. In one of his more straightforward descriptions of the epistemological significance of the incarnation, Torrance continues:

> [T]he incarnation of the Son or Word constitutes the epistemological centre in all our knowledge of God, with a centre in our world of space and time and a centre in God himself at the same time. It is in and through that Word that we have cognitive access to God and to knowledge of him in himself.

For Torrance, this means that the incarnation spans the Hellenistic epistemological divide between God and the world. As Morrison (1997:175) correctly argues, Torrance follows the Nicene fathers in establishing the "absolute primacy" of the consubstantial Father-Son relation as the basis for realist knowledge of God. For Torrance, notes Morrison, only christocentricity fosters "genuine knowledge of God." In Torrance's scientific theology, true and precise knowledge of God arises as we allow God's own nature as revealed in the world to determine how God is to be known and how he is to be described. For Torrance, this happens when our knowledge of God arises through Jesus Christ his Son, for the Son is of the same nature and being as the Father. Moreover, notes Morrison, in terms of critical realist knowledge of God as the proper Object of scientific theological inquiry, Torrance emphasises that "humans *qua* human" must be given a point of access to God that is both within the eternal being of God and

within the limitations of our creaturely existence in space-time. This happens in the incarnation (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:52). As Morrison (1997:176) notes, Torrance refers to this two-fold aspect of divine knowledge as the "bi-polarity" of revelation (*cf.* Torrance, 1996b:130); that is, in Jesus Christ, knowledge of God unfolds both from the side of God and from the side of humanity. Just as God established a "community of reciprocity" in Israel for the mediation of divine revelation, so in Jesus Christ, the son of Israel, a "reciprocity" is established between the transcendent God and the space-time world, whereby God conveys himself to humanity in a movement of love which penetrates human structures of language and thought, so that we may participate in Jesus' knowing of the Father (*cf.* Morrison, 1997:207).

For Torrance, the *homoousion* means "the self-communication of, and, hence, the realist knowledge of, God in Christ as he inherently and eternally is in his own Being" (Morrison, 1997:209). In view of the principle formulated in the second century by Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses,* 4.8.1; 11.3; Torrance, 1996a:13, 77; *cf.* Cass, 2008:144 n. 54), that is, "without God, God cannot be known," Torrance (1996a:1) argues that a Christian doctrine of God must be developed from the "unique, definitive, and final self-revelation of God" in Jesus Christ, for, in the incarnate Son, God defines and identifies himself for us as he really is. Jesus Christ is the complete revelation of God to humanity, for in him, God's historical self-manifestation to us in the Gospel as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is wholly commensurate with who God is "inherently and eternally in himself." For Torrance (1980a:40), therefore, the *homoousion* occupies a place of "unique and controlling finality" in our knowledge of God. If Jesus Christ were not wholly God (Torrance, 1996b:34, 35; Achtemeier, 2001:55), that is, "of one being with the Father," but remained "external" to God, as Arius argued, then God would remain utterly unknowable, for there would be no access to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit (Torrance, 1996b:34, 35; Achtemeier, 2001:55). If the ontological bridge between Jesus Christ and God is severed, Torrance (1994a:54; *cf.* 1992:58) contends, revelation is emptied of ultimate truth and reality, and we are left with a merely symbolic or mythological way of speaking about God. In short, if we say that Jesus Christ is God when in fact he is not God, then there is no fidelity between what he reveals and what God is. As Torrance notes, this is why the Nicene fathers fought so hard for the preservation of the creedal assertion that Jesus Christ is *homoousios to Patri*. Without the unbroken homoousial relation between Jesus and God, the foundation of the Gospel crumbles. For Torrance (1996a:98), the Nicene

homoousion and its bearing upon the nexus of onto-relations between Jesus Christ and the Father has proven to be "one of the most fertile interpretive and elucidatory instruments serving the Gospel in its continuing disclosure of ever deepening truth that Christian theology has seen in the whole of its history."

4.4.2 Stratification of the Knowledge of God

The application of the Nicene *homoousion* to the incarnate Son (and later to the Spirit), provided the Church the "theological key" to unlock the doctrine of the Trinity implicit in the New Testament and given formal articulation at Nicaea-Constantinople (Torrance, 1996a:80, 81). Torrance continues:

> What the *homoousion* did was to give decisive expression to the truth that God's self-revelation of himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the incarnate economy of salvation was grounded in and derived from God as he is in his own eternal Being and Nature. It was thus at once *evangelical and ontological* in its purpose and import in asserting firmly that Jesus Christ the incarnate Lord and Saviour who constitutes the very heart of the Gospel is of one and the same Being as God the Father.

For Torrance, as Morrison (1997:207) rightly notes, there is an "absolutely critical 'organic' connection" to be found in the consubstantial Father-Son relation. The *homoousion* is the link which ties together Torrance's christocentric-trinitarian theology. As Gill (2007:148) notes, the "epistemological importance" of the *homoousion* is that it "forges a link between God in the economy of salvation and God in his essential nature" (*cf.* Torrance, 1990:170-174). As Chung (2008:18) explains, through the *homoousion*, our understanding of God moves from the economic Trinity to the ontological ("immanent") Trinity in the realisation that they are "one and the same." For Torrance, notes Cass (2008:148), the *homoousion* did what no other biblical concept could do by giving "decisive expression" to the truth that the nature of God as revealed in the economy of salvation is "grounded in and derived from" God as he is in his eternal being. According to Cass, Torrance has developed a "multilevel organic structure" that characterises his understanding of God, as well as his approach to theology. As Cass rightly notes, this means that our thinking and knowing about God begins with what God is "toward us" and "for us" in the Gospel, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, argues Cass, Torrance's stratification model "must include the truth that our knowing [of God] is utterly dependent upon God's self-revelation in creation and redemption" (Cass, 2008:150). As Morrison (1997:208) argues, for Torrance, the Nicene *homoousion* penetrates "into the inner substance of the Gospel" and brings to

expression by "disclosure model" the "ontological substructure" upon which the Gospel proclamation of Jesus Christ rests. For Torrance, argues Morrison, the *homoousion* is revolutionary and decisive because it clearly expresses the reality that in Jesus Christ what the Triune God is "toward us" and "in the midst of us" in the incarnate Word is who God really and actually is from all eternity. Said another way, notes Morrison, the "penetrating insight" of the *homoousion* is that God in the transcendent relations of his own eternal being is the same Father, Son (and Holy Spirit) that has entered our space-time reality.

Myers (2008:1, 12) describes Torrance's "stratification of the knowledge of God" as "one of his most striking and original contributions to theological method." Torrance's "stratification model" demonstrates the importance of the *homoousion* for the knowledge of the eternal trinitarian relations of God (Torrance, 1980a:156-164; 1996a:88-107; *cf.* Myers, 2008:1-15; Morrison, 1997:210-212). As Ho (2008:124) correctly argues, the *homoousion* is the "central organising truth" that holds together the various levels of the knowledge of God. Rather than divide God's economic relations in history from his eternal Triune being, the *homoousion* binds them together in a "double reference" (*cf.* Torrance, 1996a:97, 98). As Morrison (1997:213) notes, in Torrance's stratification model, the *homoousion* "conjoins" Christ's "human historicity" and "divine eternality" and, thereby, overthrows "obsolete dualisms" in the light of God's unitary movement of mediation in the world.

4.4.2.1 The Evangelical and Doxological Level

Torrance sees human apprehension of the divine arising through three interrelated levels of knowledge. For Torrance, notes Ho, an understanding of the Trinity can be achieved through "a progression of various levels of investigation," with the ontological level forming the "basic order" of revealed knowledge of God. According to Ho, Torrance's tri-level model of the knowledge of God is closely related to three logical levels of knowledge he finds operating in the natural sciences. The first level in the natural sciences is knowledge of things as they are; the second level is the formulation of this knowledge in terms of "coherent calculations," and the third level is the interpretation of these formulations and the determination of their "connection and consistency" (Ho, 2008:19, 20). Similarly, in regard to the knowledge of God, the first level of Torrance's stratification model is the "evangelical and doxological" level; that

is, the knowledge of God that arises from the personal and communal experience of God in the day-to-day life and worship of the community of faith. This is the "tacit level" of implied theology, wherein knowledge of God in his trinitarian relations is inchoate and precedes conceptual analysis. Quite importantly, this intuitive first-level knowledge forms the basis of all further theological thought and remains the touchstone upon which a more refined conceptualization of the knowledge of God rests (Torrance, 1980a:156, 157; 1996a:88-91; Myers, 2008:7). This ground level of evangelical experience and apprehension is the *sine qua non* of the other levels of doctrinal formulation developed from it (Torrance, 1996a:90).

4.4.2.2 The Theological Level

Second is "the domain of the theologians of the Church" (Cass, 2008:155). This is the "theological" level, a level of theoretical organization that seeks to uncover and give order to the inner connections in reality that form the experiential basis of our knowledge of God in personal and communal encounter with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This second level is the "economic" level, wherein the trinitarian relations in the economy (*oikonomia*) of salvation form the object of theological thought. At this level, the inchoate form of the doctrine of the Trinity, latent and implied in the doxological experience of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is given explicit formulation as doctrinal knowledge of the Holy Trinity. The second level, therefore, involves a movement of thought beyond experience to the intelligible relations that undergird experience without themselves being experienced. While this level may appear to employ concepts that are unrelated to ordinary experience, these concepts arise, like theories in natural science, from the experiential level and remain epistemically correlated with it as refinements and extensions of the basic cognitions of the experiential level (Torrance, 1980a:157, 169, 170; 1996a:91, 92; Myers, 2008:7, 8). It is essential to note, therefore, that in moving from one level to another, we have not moved away from the level of ordinary concrete experience; rather, we have penetrated into a deeper conceptual level that gave rise to our experience in the first place (Myers, 2008:9).

4.4.2.3 The Ontological Trinity

The third level in Torrance's stratification of the knowledge of God is the "higher theological" and "scientific" level, wherein we are concerned to give a theoretical

account of the deepest epistemological and ontological structure of the knowledge of God. Concepts formulated at this level constitute the "basic grammar" of theological thought, for here we have to do with the ultimate relations intrinsic to the eternal being of God, which must, therefore, govern and control all true knowledge of God from first to last. The movement from the second to the third level involves a conceptual transition from the economic relations of the Godhead to the relations immanent in God himself (Torrance, 1980a:157-159; 1996a:98, 99; Myers, 2008:9). In other words, this is a transition in theological thought from the "economic Trinity" to the "immanent Trinity" (*cf.* Rahner, 1997:22; Cass 2008:149).

As we move from the economic level (the Trinity *ad extra*) to the ontological level (the Trinity *ad intra*), we are "compelled" to acknowledge, under pressure from God's self-communication, that what God is toward us in Jesus Christ, he is inherently and eternally in his own divine being; that is, the eternal being of God (*theologia*) is not different from what he manifests of himself toward us in the incarnate Son (*oikonomia*). This epistemic movement of thought from one level to another is grounded in the prior movement of God himself, who condescends in love to be one with us in the incarnation of his Son. Thus, the stratification of the knowledge of God is an *a posteriori* reconstruction of the way in which our knowledge of God arises in redemptive history, particularly in the incarnation (Torrance, 1980a:158; 1996a:83).

4.4.2.4 Perichoresis

Reflection on the *homoousion* of Jesus Christ lifts our thoughts from the level of the economy of salvation to the level of the immanent relations in the eternal being of God, where we reach "the supreme point in the knowledge of God in his internal intelligible personal relations" (Torrance, 1996a:102; *cf.* Ho, 2008:19,20; Myers, 2008:10), that is, the "basic grammar" or "ground structure" of all truly Christian theology (Morrison, 1997:62). This level of conceptualisation requires the use of the term *perichoresis*, a refined concept that expresses the complete "mutual indwelling," "mutual containing," or "interpenetration" of the three divine Persons in their immanent coinherent relations as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Perichoresis*, or "coinherence," refers to the way in which the divine Persons "mutually dwell in one another and coinhere or inexist in one another while nevertheless remaining other than one another and distinct from one another." Applied to the Trinity, the concept of *perichoresis*

enables us to realize that the coinherent trinitarian relations revealed in the economy of salvation are not temporary manifestations of the being of God, as in modalism, but, rather, are grounded in the intrinsic and "completely reciprocal" relations of the ontological Trinity. As Torrance notes, "In this way, the concept of *perichoresis* serves to hold powerfully together in the doctrine of the Trinity the identity of the divine Being and the intrinsic unity of the three divine persons" (Torrance, 1996a:102; *cf.* 1988:305*ff*; Deddo, 2008:42, 43).

4.4.2.5 Integration of Theoretical and Empirical Factors

Perhaps most important in Torrance's stratification of the knowledge of God is its emphasis on the continuing, vital correlation between the different levels of theological knowledge, so that theological thought at one level never becomes detached from the overall structure. In the transition to the highest level of theological thought, the *homoousion* remains decisive, for it signifies the unity in the economic trinitarian relations and the relations immanent in the eternal being of God. Even at the highest level of theological conceptualisation, Jesus Christ remains the focal point of the complex process of theological thought. There is no movement of thought away from God's self-revelation in the incarnate Son into abstract speculation but only a deeper understanding of the divine reality already apprehended experientially and empirically. Experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ at the evangelical-doxological level may easily lapse into pure subjectivism if it is disconnected from the ontological structures underlying it. On the other hand, the refined concepts of the higher-theological level may devolve into mere abstractions if they are severed from the empirical realities that give rise to them. There must remain, therefore, a cross-level coordination of the levels of stratification, so that empirical knowledge of God arising from the economy of salvation remains correlated with the immanent trinitarian relations of God, while a higher, theoretical understanding of these relations remains grounded in empirical experience. In short, theological concepts and empirical correlates must be integrated into a coherent system, so that higher levels of formal conceptuality remain grounded in, and coordinated with, the concrete level of evangelical and doxological experience (Myers, 2008:10, 13-15; *cf.* Torrance, 1996a:82, 83).

Following Cass (2008:151, 152; *cf.* Torrance, 1996:87), we can simplify Torrance's position by noting that his stratification model must finally be understood not from the

"bottom" upward but from the "top" downward in accordance with God's self-revelation to the Church. While Torrance's stratification model is "empirically derived" from God's self-revelation in salvation history, it is nevertheless "ontologically constituted." According to Torrance, notes Cass, the Church is in peril if, in its basic experience of worship and doxology [level one], it forgets the transcendent origin of the true knowledge of God [level three]. As Cass (2008:152 n. 71) argues, historically the Church has lost its bearings when it forgets that the beginning point for the knowledge of God is God's free and sovereign self-disclosure in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.

4.4.2.6 Economic and Ontological Trinity

In regard to the relation between God's self-revelation in time and space and the eternal intradivine relations of the immanent Trinity, Torrance appears to echo Karl Rahner (1997:22) in asserting that the economic Trinity and the ontological (immanent) Trinity are "identical." For Torrance, there is only one divine reality of God, both in his eternal intradivine being and in his saving and revealing activity in historical time and space (Torrance, 1980a:158; 1988a:135; Molnar, 1997:292). Torrance (1996a:130) describes the relation between the *homoousion* and the economic and immanent Trinity as follows:

> The doctrine of the *homoousion* was as decisive as it was revolutionary: it expressed the evangelical truth that what God is toward us and has freely done for us in his love and grace ... he really is *in himself*, and that he really is *in the internal relations and personal properties* of his transcendent Being as the Holy Trinity the very same Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that he is in his revealing and saving activity in time and space toward mankind, and ever will be.

For Torrance, notes Morrison (1997:210), the Holy Trinity is not different or detached from what God discloses himself to be in salvation history.

As the ontological, epistemological, and evangelical link between the economic and the ontological Trinity, the *homoousion* stands for the basic insight that there is an absolutely faithful relationship between what God is toward us in the Gospel and what he is in himself; that is, what God is toward us in his redemptive activity in the incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit, he is antecedently and eternally in himself (Torrance, 1980a:161; 1986a:299; 1996a:83; *cf.* 1982:37). Through Jesus Christ, God reveals himself as he is, "for God is not one thing in Jesus Christ and another thing behind the

back of Jesus Christ." The *homoousion* tells us that the nature, content, and event of revelation exist indivisibly in a unitary whole, for God himself *is* the reality and content of his revelation (Torrance, 1986a:298, 299). Therefore, inherent in the Nicene *homoousion* is a two-way movement of epistemic understanding, wherein God condescends to reveal himself in Jesus Christ, who is "of one being with the Father"; in turn, the incarnate Son, through the Holy Spirit, guides our thoughts upward to actual knowledge of God in his eternal, intradivine relations. As Torrance (1980a:161) notes, "That is what the *homoousion* expresses so succinctly and decisively."

To know God in Jesus Christ is to know God himself, for Jesus Christ not only mediates the revelation of God, he *is* the revelation of God; that is, in his own personal being he is identical with the revelation which he mediates (Torrance, 1988a:138; 1992:9). This does not imply, however, that we can fully comprehend God, for God "as God" reveals himself as infinitely greater than we can conceive (Torrance, 1988a:214). Thus, Torrance's stratification model is no mere reductionist attempt to neatly restrict knowledge of God to three levels (Myers, 2008:12). In regard to the formulation of statements about God in the immanent relations of his eternal being, Torrance (1980a:166, 167) wisely and humbly notes:

> To speak like this of God's inner Being we cannot but feel to be a sacrilegious intrusion into the inner holy of holies of God's Being, before which we ought rather to cover our faces and clap our hands on our mouths, for God is ineffable in the transcendence and majesty of his eternal Being.

In regard to the "relation" Torrance sees between the economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity, Ho (2008:124) asks: "How is the economic Trinity differentiated from the immanent [ontological] Trinity?" In answer, Ho cites Torrance (1996a:97), who admits, "[T]here is much here that we cannot and will never, understand." Thus, while there are not "two Trinities," notes Torrance (1994b:79), the "double reference" of the *homoousion* remains a "mystery."

Because the God we have come to know in Jesus Christ is infinitely greater than we can ever conceive, all theological concepts ultimately fall short of the glory of the God to whom they refer. Notwithstanding the inadequacy of our concepts, however, knowledge of God at the higher theological level does not simply regress into some form of pre-conceptual apophatic or negative contemplation (*i.e.,* "God is not this"), for the inherent rationality of God's self-revelation will not allow it; rather, we are

summoned to higher levels of theological thought and speech that are "worthy" of God (*cf*. Torrance, 1971:170).

Although we cannot fully comprehend God in the transcendence and majesty of his eternal being, we can apprehend God in our knowing and speaking of him, for he is not "closed" to us, but grants us true and accurate knowledge of himself in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (Torrance, 1976a:237). The *homoousion* allows our thought to move beyond the economic Trinity to the immanent or ontological Trinity. Our knowledge of God is, thus, not limited to what God is toward us (God *pro nobis*) but leaps across the "Kantian gulf" between the knower and the known in order to penetrate into the intrinsic, eternal reality of God in himself. Our knowledge of God is grounded in the inner reality of the unbroken homoousial relation of the Father and the incarnate Son (Seng, 1992:347). Given the *homoousion*, we can affirm that God himself is the "content of his revelation" in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1988a:305).

4.4.2.7 A Unitary, Perichoretic Vision

Torrance's model of the stratification of the knowledge of God allows us to move beyond dualist patterns of thought to a unitary, perichoretic vision of the triune Godhead held together by the assertion of the unbroken homoousial relation between the Father and the Son (and the Spirit) (*cf*. Myers. 2008:12). By epistemologically and ontologically uniting the immanent and the economic Trinity, the *homoousion* breaches the centuries-old gap between reason (*De Deo Uno*) and faith (*De Deo Trino*) by transcending medieval dualist epistemology to facilitate a realist, unitary doctrine of God (*cf*. Torrance, 1994b:4; Molnar, 1997:288*ff*), wherein Christian apprehension of God moves "from" the evangelical level of our ordinary day-to-day experience with God, "through" what God is and has done for us in his redemptive activity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, "to" what God is antecedently and eternally in his own being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Colyer, 2001a:292, 293).

In addition, an approach to trinitarian theology that begins with God's self-revelation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ affords a rapprochement between systematic and biblical theology (Molnar, 1997:288). As Gill (2007:21) notes, Torrance's emphasis on the incarnation as the point in creation where we have access to the reality of God brings together the disciplines of biblical theology and systematics. As Gill argues, not only

does Torrance insist on the centrality of Christ for the mediation of the knowledge of God, but Torrance also insists that the historical facts of Jesus' life be kept in their theological context (*cf.* Gill, 2007:59*ff*).

4.4.3 Dualism and Natural Theology

We gain a greater appreciation of the epistemological significance of the *homoousion* in Torrance's scientific theology by an examination of his rejection of natural theology as an 'independent' means to knowledge of God. While natural theology is hardly considered in Torrance's two major works on the Trinity (Torrance, 1988a; 1996a), the issue does arise in his attempt to foster a dialogue between Christian theology and the natural sciences (Molnar, 2009:93).

According to Torrance (1985:38), natural theology "attempts to reach and teach knowledge of God, apart altogether from any interaction between God and the world, and proceeds by way of abstraction from sense experience and inferential and deductive trains of reasoning from observed or empirical facts." In simpler terms, natural theology attempts to "prove" God's existence or to describe God's essential attributes on the basis of an independent movement of thought from the created order to God the Creator. Natural theology operates on the assumption that knowledge of God may be developed by a process of logical deduction from sensory experience and empirical observation; that is to say, a cause (Creator) may be known by its effects (creation) (Colyer, 2001a:194-196). In the history of theological method, notes Morrison (2001:60; *cf.* Gill, 2007:109), particularly in medieval Scholasticism, natural theology has served as a *praeambula fidei*, that is, as an "introduction" or "preparation" for Christian theology. As Gill (2007:109) notes, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catechism, 1994:16) asserts that God can be known "with certainty" from the created order "by the natural light of human reason."

As one of the leading British interpreters of Karl Barth (McGrath, 2009:73), Torrance is sympathetic to his Swiss mentor's rejection of an independent natural theology as a "preamble to faith" and the dualism in the knowledge of God that results from it (Torrance, 1970:121-135; 1976b:ix, x; 1980a:75-109; 1982:31-34; 1984:287-301; 1985:32-63; 1990:136-159; *cf.* Barth, 1957b.63*ff*). Torrance (1970:125; 1990:142) offers this caustic criticism of natural theology:

> [N]atural theology as such arises out of man's natural existence and is part of the whole movement in which he develops his own autonomy and seeks an explanation for himself within the universe ... That is to say, the claim to a natural knowledge of God ... cannot be separated out from a whole movement of man in which he seeks to justify himself over against the grace of God, and which can only develop into a natural theology that is antithetical to knowledge of God as he really is in his acts of revelation and grace.

Torrance affirms Barth's assertion that natural theology, articulated independently of revealed theology, is an attempt to establish theology on an anthropocentric foundation and, thereby, to assert human autonomy (McGrath, 1999:184; 2009:75). As Gill (2007:116, 117) notes, commenting on Barth's position, natural theology puts God in our own hands by taking away from God control of the conditions by which God may be known. Knowledge of God that begins with subjective *a priori* reasoning fails to pay attention to God's actual revelation in space-time history. As Gill argues, this is equivalent to a science which rejects empirical methods and, instead, attempts to derive knowledge of the world from first (*i.e.*, "fixed") principles. In harmony with Gill, we note that the *a priori*, speculative method of natural theology is, of course, diametrically opposed to the *a posteriori*, kataphysical method of Torrance's theological science (*cf.* Chapter Two). Like Barth (1957b:63-178), with his famous *No!* to Brunner (Brunner & Barth, 1946; Gill, 2007:110-115), Torrance (1980a:93) strongly advocates a rejection of natural theology as an *independent* conceptual system developed prior to and independent of revealed theology. As Gill (2007:108, 127) notes, however, Torrance does not simply repeat Barth's rejection of natural theology; rather, Torrance regards his own theology, especially his engagement with the natural sciences, as an "extensive development" of Barth's rejection of the speculative nature of natural theology and its independence from revealed theology.

An examination of Torrance's rejection of natural theology as an independent means to knowledge of God will illuminate the understanding of his repudiation of the dualism embedded in Western theological thought, while facilitating further explanation of his scientific approach to knowledge of God with its fundamental axiom that knowledge in any field of inquiry must be developed according to the nature (*kata physin*) of the reality under study.

4.4.3.1 Analogy of Being: A Logical Bridge

Arising from a perceived dualism, or deistic disjunction, between God and the world, natural theology seeks to close the "gap" between God and creation and provide rational support for faith through a "logical bridge" from the world to God which operates on the basis of a logical connection between concepts and experience. The idea of a logical bridge between concepts and observed facts, or an "inherent isomorphism" between God and humanity, provides the epistemological foundation for natural theology. By establishing a logical bridge in order to reach out inferentially to God, natural theology attempts to create a rational, logical formulisation of empirical and theoretical concepts in the knowledge of God and, thereby, bridge the gap between faith and reason. Torrance notes that a great deal of modern apologetics, both liberal and fundamentalist, is based on the assumption of a logical bridge between the Creator and the creation (Torrance, 1982:32; 1985:38; 1994a:44; Colyer, 2001a:134, 195, 196; M^c^Grath, 2001:216).

During the medieval era, Thomas Aquinas sought to span a perceived gap between God and the cosmos via the "Five Ways," a series of logical "proofs" which were claimed to demonstrate natural knowledge of God (Aquinas, 1989:12*ff*; *cf*. Torrance, 1980a:80; 1981a:86, 87). Aquinas asserted there is an "analogy of being" (*analogia entis*) between God and the world; that is, there is a logical bridge or inherent isomorphism between God and creation, wherein the world mirrors God in the same way a work of art tells us something about the artist. Aquinas asserted that analogical speech about God is possible, not because God is similar to creatures, but because creatures are similar to God; that is, every effect in some way reflects its cause. Thus, we can speak of God in analogical terms because there is an "analogy of being" which is prior to our discovery of it. This "fundamental likeness" (*similitudo*) between God and the world is a consequence of a relationship of causal dependence between the Creator and the creation. Because God is both the first cause and the designer of the world, what we observe in the world points us toward the Creator (Aquinas, 1989:11, 12; Gonzales, 1987:271; McGrath, 2001: 208, 245). This "assumption of likeness" (*analogia entis*) between infinite being and finite being is the rational ground of the "proofs" of God's existence as well as the discussion of divine attributes in Thomist thought (Morrison, 2001:63).

In contrast to Aquinas' attempt to span the perceived gap between God and creation via a logical bridge, Torrance follows Barth in rejecting the medieval idea of *analogia*

entis. Torrance, however, is not as vehement as his mentor, Barth, who described the doctrine as "the invention of the Antichrist," because it posits an "essential" union between God and humanity, existing outside Jesus Christ, whereby we can begin with ourselves in order to establish knowledge of God; that is, we can know God apart from grace (Barth, 1957a:x; 1957b:82, 83; Busch, 2004:71). There are both epistemological and methodological reasons for Torrance's rejection of natural theology as an independent means of arriving at knowledge of God by means of the creation. In terms of epistemology, Torrance rejects natural theology on the ground of the doctrines of justification by grace (*sola gratia*) and creation *ex nihilo*. In terms of methodology, Torrance rejects natural theology because it is only externally related to its object of inquiry and violates the fundamental axiom of scientific theology that realities must be investigated in accordance with their natures.

4.4.3.2 Epistemological Relevance of *Sola Gratia*

As a Reformed theologian, the "Reformation '*solas*'" are central to Torrance (Gill, 2007:117). In his rejection of the medieval *analogia entis*, Torrance follows Barth in arguing that the idea of a logical bridge between God and the world undermines the uniqueness and exclusiveness of the divine self-revelation in Jesus Christ, thus epistemologically undercutting the hallmark Reformation principle, *sola gratia* (Torrance, 1970:126; 1990:143-145; *cf*. Seng, 1992:362-365; Gill, 2007:119; McMaken, 2010:329). The *analogia entis* leads to an interpretation of the Gospel in terms of "an independent conceptual system reached before and apart from the actual knowledge of God given to us through his incarnate self-revelation in Jesus Christ" (Torrance, 1990:169). More simply, the *analogia entis* circumvents Jesus as the revelation of God. Because it is exclusively through Jesus Christ, the incarnate self-revelation of God, that true and accurate knowledge of God is mediated, the epistemological implications of "justification by faith" force upon us "a relentless questioning of all our presuppositions, prejudgments and *a priori* authorities, philosophical or ecclesiastical, in such a way that in the last resort we are thrown back wholly upon the nature and activity of God himself for the justification or verification of our concepts and statements about him." Apart from Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6), there is no way to the Father; thus, we cannot rely on our own innate capacities of reason to achieve the cognitive union with God which true knowledge of him requires (Torrance, 1970:126, 128; 1990:143, 146). In terms of its

epistemological significance, *sola gratia* means that we are unable to attain accurate knowledge of God through our own natural powers. As Torrance argues elsewhere (1996b:26), "[N]o work of ours ... can establish a bridge between our understanding and the Truth of God. Knowledge of God is in accordance with his nature, that is, in accordance with grace, and therefore takes its rise from God's action in revealing himself and reconciling us to himself in Jesus Christ." We cannot forge a relationship between our own statements about God and God himself in his own truth. We can only "allow" revelation to "happen to us" as we obediently and gratefully submit to the revealing and reconciling actions of God (*cf*. Seng, 1992:363).

For Torrance, revelation is not general and universal; it is particular and historical (Gill, 2007:43; *cf*. Torrance, 1982:85). Revelation is an act of grace. Like Barth, Torrance posits an "epistemology of grace" which includes an "implicit anthropology" that makes natural human knowledge of God impossible, notes Gill (2007:24, 35). For Torrance, one of the consequences of our fallen nature is "mental alienation" (Torrance, 1996a:41), an "epistemological consequence" of the fall, notes Gill (2007:33-35), that reflects Torrance's "Calvinist anthropology" and its concomitant insistence on the necessity of an "epistemology of grace." Only after we have we come to know God through his self-revelation in Israel and in Jesus Christ, argues Torrance (1952:168), can we recognise him in creation. If we are really to know God as God is, Torrance (1970:126; 1990:143, 144) asserts, we must be redeemed from our mental alienation and reconciled in our minds (*cf*. Rom 12:2), so that they may be adapted by grace to God's divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. Torrance continues:

> The fact that God himself had to become man in order to break a way through our estrangement and darkness, and work out a way of bringing us back to himself through the saving life and death and resurrection of Christ, not only precludes us from entertaining other possibilities of a way from man to God but actually invalidates them all ... [A]ll natural theology perishes at the point where the knowledge of the one and only God is gained in the face of Jesus Christ and by the renewing of human beings in the Holy Spirit.

For Torrance, as Gill (2007:23, 24) succinctly states, "[an independent] natural theology is the attempt to know God in theory while bypassing him in practice." For Torrance, a "legitimate" natural theology does not try to circumvent God or to know God against his will. As Gill (2007:36) argues, this is the basis of Torrance's disagreement with Schleiermacher. For Torrance, notes Gill (2007:132), God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ renders natural theology "unnecessary, irrelevant, and something that distracts from actual revelation." According to Torrance (Seng,

1992:364; *cf*. Torrance, 1990:57; 1996b:162, 163), just as we are justified by grace through faith in Jesus, so that all our works of righteousness are set aside, the "epistemological relevance" of justification by grace sets aside natural knowledge of God, for we know him only by his gracious self-revelation as mediated in Christ and not through the efforts of human reason. Just as there is no "co-redeemer" in Christ's saving work, there is no "co-revealer" in the mediation of revelation. Justification by faith rules out all forms of Pelagianism, whether ethical or epistemological.

Furthermore, justification by faith supplants the Kantian claim that the criterion of truth is found in the "knower"; rather, it insists that the truth of a statement is to be found only in the reality to which it refers and may be verified only by the grace of that reality. *Sola gratia*, therefore, calls into question "all our preconceptions or vaunted authorities" and forces us to "transfer the centre of authority from man or the Church to the objectivity of the Truth itself." That is why justification by faith remains "the most powerful statement of objectivity in theology," for it throws us back on the reality of what God has done for us in Christ and will never allow us to rest on our own efforts (Torrance, 1964:153; 1971:67, 68: *cf*. Seng, 1992:365).

If God is the content of his revelation, as indicated by the Nicene *homoousion*, our knowledge of God does not arise through human rational attempts to construct a logical bridge between creation and the Creator. It is not by our created light that we see God but only in and by God's light do we see God; that is, only by God can God be known. All human knowing taking the path from humanity to God instead of following the incarnational revelation of God to humanity is finally anthropology, that is, we human beings speaking of ourselves in loud voices in an eminent extension of our own beings to infinity or a mythological projection from the depths of our own creative spirituality and zealous piety. Genuine theology (*theologia*) refuses to start with humanity in an attempt to construct a mythological path to God. Rather, it follows the actual way of the incarnation of the Word of God to humanity. It does not possess truth in itself but finds its truth in Jesus Christ (Seng, 1992:351, 352, 354; *cf*. Torrance, 1971:181*ff*).

4.4.3.3 Creation *ex nihilo* and the Contingent Universe

In addition to affirming the epistemological significance of *sola gratia*, Torrance asserts that a logical bridge between the creation and the Creator is precluded by the

Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, that is, creation "out of nothing." For Torrance, a fundamental aspect of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is the "contingent" nature of the creation; that is, the universe is wholly dependent upon God for its origin, existence, and order. Because the existence of the universe is solely the product of the will of God, it is neither logically necessary nor self-sustaining; in fact, it might not have come into existence at all, or it might have been other than it is. The contingent nature of the universe means that it is not self-explaining; it contains no self-explanatory logic as to why it came into existence or why it should continue to exist (Torrance, 1981a:vii, viii; *cf.* 1980a:53-57; 1981a:26-61; 1988a:95-102).

As Bevan (2002:29) argues, Torrance sees creation as a new and totally free act "not necessary" to God, and, although he is transcendent, God freely chooses to relate to himself that which he has created, thus imparting rationality to the created order and sustaining its existence. For Torrance, notes Bevan (2002:52), if nature is "necessary," then its laws could be discovered through the truths of reason *a priori.* If nature is "contingent," however, the order we discover in reality must ultimately be grounded in and sustained by the transcendent Creator. Hence, there is no "logical necessity" that would allow us to uncover the truths of nature through the power of our own reason. For Torrance, therefore, as Bevan rightly notes, theology deals with revelation, not discovery.

According to Torrance, creation is called into existence by the free sovereign act of God rather than through an eternal generation from the divine being; thus, it is "external" to and transcendentally "other" than God. Similarly, as creation does not arise through some form of Neo-platonic emanationism, Torrance argues, there is no intrinsic, ontologistic connection between God and creation. While the world is constantly sustained by God and imbued with a rationality and intelligibility given it by its Creator, God is not immanently and materially bound to it. Thus, the contingent relation between God and the world he created *ex nihilo* is "irreversible." As Torrance argues, "there is no statically continuous and logically compelling relation between the being of the creature and the being of the self-existent Creator. Since there is no logical bridge between God and the world, there is no logical reversibility between them." Furthermore, because the universe is only one of all possible universes God could have created, it could have been made differently, so that water ran uphill rather than down. Therefore, as Torrance notes, we must think of God's relationship to the present

cosmos in terms of an "infinite variability" associated with his unlimited freedom and rationality (Torrance, 1981a:21, 22, 34). The contingent nature of the universe, including the logical irreversibility between the Creator and the creation, precludes the possibility of a direct movement of thought from knowledge of the creation to knowledge of the Creator, based on an "analogy of being" (*analogia entis*) or a "fundamental likeness" (*similitudo*) between God and the world (*cf.* McMaken, 2010:327, 328). Thus, against Aquinas, there is no "causal" connection between God and the world, wherein a cause (God) may be known by its effects; rather, there is a "contingent" relationship between God and the world he creates *ex nihilo* in an act of sovereign freedom. As Colyer (2001a:130, 196 n. 194) correctly argues, an independent natural theology, based on a supposed logical bridge between the world and God, is a form of "mythology," for it lacks a realist foundation in any kind of intrinsic ontological and epistemological relation to God on which knowledge of God can be based.

4.4.3.4 Methodological Problems of Natural Theology

For Torrance, as McMaken (2010:326) rightly argues, any attempt to develop knowledge of God apart from God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ fails to know its object of inquiry in accordance with its nature; thus, for Torrance "it is not scientific." As argued above (*cf.* Chapter Two), for Torrance, scientific theological inquiry must proceed in accordance with the nature of the object of inquiry. This is especially important in regard to the knowledge of God. Natural theology, however, does not begin its inquiry with the nature of God; rather, it begins with that which is "externally" related to God. As Torrance (1988a:50; *cf.* 1986b:461) argues:

> When we think and speak of God from the perspective of the Creator/creature relation ... we can only think and speak of him in vague, general and negative terms, at the infinite distance of the creature from the Creator where we cannot know God as he is in himself or in accordance with his divine nature, but only in his absolute separation from us, as the eternal, unconditioned and indescribable. In such an approach we can do no more than attempt to speak of God from his works which have come into being at his will through his Word, that is, from what is externally related to God, and which as such do not really tell us anything about who God is or what he is like in his own nature.

Since there is no intrinsic "likeness" or ontological continuity between the being of God and the being of the created order, but only an "external" relationship, God cannot be known in a godly and accurate way through independent natural theology arising from the Creator-creation relationship (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:52).

To support his criticism of the autonomous nature of natural theology and, hence, its consequent lack of validity in developing accurate knowledge of God, Torrance frequently points to Euclidian geometry as an example of a deductive science developed as an abstract, idealised conceptual system independently of the empirical realities it was purported to describe. Einstein questioned the validity of trying to force physics into the rigid framework of a conceptual system developed independently and antecedently to the science of physics and detached from actual experience. He showed that the idealized framework of Euclidian geometry did not conform to the actual character of nature as disclosed by modern physics (*e.g.*, electromagnetic fields and the behaviour of light and radiation); rather, it falsified the understanding of the real world it was intended to describe. Einstein argued that what had happened, and had to happen, was that geometry was transformed by actual knowledge of physical reality, so that its theoretical and empirical components were brought together. Similarly, with Barth's approval of the analogy, Torrance argues that rigorous scientific methodology in theology cannot allow itself to be controlled by an independent epistemology or antecedent conceptual system, as in an independent natural theology, but must be developed in light of God's self-revelation and self-communication in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1970:129; 1976b:ix, x; 1980a:91, 92; 1984:281; 1985:39; 1990:148, 149; Colyer, 2001a:133, n. 26; *cf.* Tarnas, 1991:356). As Torrance (1990:130) argues:

> What was at stake in both instances [*i.e.,* Einstein's rejection of Euclidean geometry and Barth's rejection of natural theology] was the demand of faithful scientific method, in accordance with which we must allow all unwarranted presuppositions and every preconceived framework to be called in question by what is actually disclosed in the course of on-going inquiry, and the need to develop an epistemological structure that is indissolubly bound up with the essential substance or positive content of knowledge.

In drawing upon Einstein's rejection of Euclidean geometry as an *a priori* conceptual system, Torrance instilled a formidable scientific character to his rejection of natural theology on methodological grounds, insisting that no genuinely scientific theology can allow itself to be controlled by a logical structure that is independent of the object of inquiry (Torrance, 1970:129, 130; 1990:148, 149).

As Torrance frequently argues, like any science, theology develops its epistemology and methodology not independent of, or antecedent to, its subject matter, but in conformity to the understanding of its subject matter gained in the process of investigation. A rigorous scientific theological method, therefore, will not allow a

bifurcation between an *a priori* epistemological structure and empirical content. As Torrance argues, following Barth, when natural theology is employed as an independent conceptual system detached from the material content of our actual knowledge of God and is offered as a *praeambula fidei*, it opens the way for revealed theology to be interpreted within the prescriptive framework of its presuppositions, so that God's triune self-revelation is "domesticated," "distorted," and "misinterpreted" by the antecedent conceptual system imposed upon it (Torrance, 1982:32, 33; 1984:281; 1988a:52; 1990:130, 146, 154). This allows the possibility for the being of God to be construed in "abstract" terms different from God's trinitarian nature revealed in the economy of salvation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thereby constituting a dualism in the Christian doctrine of God (*cf.* Torrance, 1980a:89; Gill, 2007:148, 149). As Torrance argues, this is precisely what occurred with the medieval habit of developing first a treatise on the one God (*De Deo Uno*) derived from natural theology followed by a relatively minor treatise on the Trinity (*De Deo Trino*) derived from revealed theology. In medieval Scholasticism, this led to the relegation of the doctrine of the Trinity to nothing more than an "appendix" to a more thoroughly developed doctrine of the one God, thereby splitting the fundamental concept of God and creating the "schizoid state of affairs," that is, the epistemological dualism between faith and reason, characteristic of Western theism (Torrance, 1980a:147, 148; 1992:100; 1996a:8-10; *cf*. Rahner, 1997:16-18; Gill, 2007:117-119).

In this regard, we argue that the bifurcation of the doctrine of the One God and the doctrine of the Trinity into separate treatises is epistemologically and methodologically akin to the pre-Einsteinian Kantian dualism between the noumenal and the phenomenal realms of knowledge. Like the Kantian imposition of form onto reality, the medieval proclivity to conceive the being of God in abstract terms divorced from God's self-revelation in salvation history separates the theoretical and empirical components of knowledge and opens a dualistic chasm between a speculative *a priori* epistemology and the being of God revealed in the historical incarnation of Jesus Christ.

4.4.3.5 A Proper Place for Natural Theology

Despite his criticism of natural theology as a "preamble to faith," Torrance does not reject it outright, for he finds it "absurd" to think God does not feely act within the framework of space and time, or within the "intelligible structures" of what he has

created, in order to make himself known to those he created for communion with himself. For Torrance, "Divine revelation and intelligible content belong inseparably together" (Torrance, 1976b:1, 2). Like Barth, the problem he sees in natural theology is its *independent* character and the epistemological dualism that results from it. Torrance (1980a:90, 91; *cf*. 1970:128; 1976b:ix, x; 1990:147) writes:

> Epistemologically, then, what Barth objects to in traditional natural theology is not any invalidity in its argumentation, nor even its rational structure, as such, but its *independent* character—i.e., the autonomous rational structure that natural theology develops on the ground of "nature alone," in abstraction from the active self-disclosure of the living and Triune God—for that can only split the knowledge of God into two parts, natural knowledge of the One God and revealed knowledge of the Triune God, which is scientifically as well as theologically intolerable.

In rejecting natural theology as an independent means to the knowledge of God, however, Torrance does not deny the need for a proper rational structure in knowledge of God, such as that which natural theology attempts to achieve. Rather, he rejects the "autonomous" rational structure that natural theology attempts to construct, insisting that the rational structure of natural theology be bound up with the actual content of the knowledge of God as graciously given us in God's self-revelation. Otherwise, like Euclidean geometry, it becomes a "distorting abstraction." Torrance (1980a:91) continues:

> [Natural theology must be] included *within* revealed theology, where we have to do with actual knowledge of God as it is grounded in the intelligible relations in God himself, for it is there under the compulsion of God's self-disclosure in Being and Act that the rational structure appropriate to him arises in our understanding of him. But in the nature of the case it is not a rational structure that can be abstracted from the actual knowledge of God with which it is integrated, and made to stand on its own as an independent or autonomous system of thought, for then it would be meaningless, like something that is complete in itself but without any ontological reference beyond itself: it becomes merely a game to be enjoyed like chess.

For Torrance, as Gill (2007:120, 121) rightly argues, the concept of God which emerges from an independent natural theology is an "abstraction" which falls short of the reality of God as revealed in the incarnation, for it separates God's being from his actions and removes the doctrine of God from the history of salvation, thereby creating a dualism between the "theoretical' and "empirical" components of the knowledge of God. As Torrance (970:131; 1990:151) asks, if God really is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, what are we to make of an independent natural theology that bifurcates God's being and act by abstracting God's existence from his activity in the world and terminates, not upon God as he really is, but upon some being of God in general? If to know God is to know him as triune, the knowledge of God generated by an

independent natural theology is an abstraction that falls far short and misses the mark of God's triune reality as revealed in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. When natural theology is considered alone, that is, independently of revealed theology, Torrance (1985:60) argues, it is incomplete, "for it makes use of concepts and theorems which lack meaning and cogency in themselves but which may become meaningful and cogent when they are sublimated and interpreted from the level of divine revelation." Therefore, the rational structure that natural theology seeks to erect must be developed within the understanding of faith, as we inquire into the objective reality of God's self-disclosure. As Torrance (1970:129; 1990:148) argues:

> [W]ith the rejection of an independently thought-out epistemology [as in natural theology], on the ground that method and subject-matter are inherently connected, natural theology can no longer be pursued in its old abstractive form, as a prior conceptual system on its own, but must be brought within the body of positive theology and be pursued in indissoluble unity with it.

For Torrance, natural theology must be included in, and subsumed under, revealed theology, for the reality of God's self-revelation includes the truth of divine creation. That is, "[A] closer relation must be established between natural theology and revealed theology" if theological science is to account for the relation between creation and the incarnation in the mediation of Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1984:281; *cf.* Chung, 2011:67). According to Bevan (2002:52), Torrance proposes that when we allow our rational minds to be shaped by God's gracious self-revelation, then we can relate rationally to the various strata of truth embedded in the structure of reality. This proposal would maintain that, while there is no *analogia entis* or likeness of being between God and nature, there is a "correspondence" that God freely gives through an *analogia gratiae.* For Torrance, as Bevan argues, there would then be the possibility of a natural theology, not on independent grounds, but consistent with revelation and from within the conditions of faith inherent in justification by grace. As Bevan (2002:53) and McGrath (1999:187) note, Torrance discussed this possibility with Barth before the latter's death, and Barth agreed with Torrance's view that natural theology could be properly subsumed under revealed theology (*cf.* Torrance, 1976b:ix, x).

According to Torrance, when natural theology is brought within the body of positive theology and pursued in indissoluble unity with it, that is, when natural theology is subsumed under the revelation of the redemptive Word made flesh, its entire character changes, for its empirical statements are then correlated with theological statements

(Torrance, 1970:128, 12.9; 1990:147, 148; *cf.* 1984:282). As Torrance (1990:149; *cf.* 1970:129; 1980a:92, 93) argues:

> [P]ursued within the limits of our actual knowledge of the living God where we must think rigorously in accordance with the nature of the divine object, it will be made *natural* to the fundamental subject-matter or material content of Christian theology, and will fall under the determination of its inherent intelligibility. No longer extrinsic but intrinsic to actual knowledge of God, it will function as the essential sub-structure within theological science, in which we are concerned to develop the inner material logic that arises in our inquiry and understanding of God.

When no longer pursued as an independent *a priori* conceptual system considered apart from the gracious revelation of the reality it intends to investigate, argues Torrance, the character of natural theology changes. Subsumed under revealed theology, the empirical statements of natural theology can be correlated with the actual knowledge of God given us in redemptive history; that is, natural theology becomes "the pliant conceptual instrument which Christian theology uses in unfolding and expressing the content of real knowledge of God through modes of human thought and speech that are made rigorously appropriate" to revealed theology (Torrance, 1985:39).

As Gill (2007:143) notes, when Torrance places natural theology within revealed theology, there are two important consequences for his scientific theology. First, by correlating it with God's self-revelation, natural theology can be regarded as part of a scientific [*i.e.,* "kataphysical"] discipline. Second, when integrated with revealed theology, natural theology correlates revealed theology with creation and brings theological science into relation with the natural sciences. Morrison (2001:74) rightly commends Torrance's "useful Christological interactionist incorporation of natural theology within and under the unique, specific Word of God in Jesus Christ."

For Torrance, a faithful natural theology cannot be extrinsic from, antecedent to, or independent of the actual redemptive knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Only as an intrinsic component, included in and subsumed under revealed theology, can natural theology function as a proper substructure within theological science. Otherwise, as Morrison (2001:71) rightly notes, natural theology has no proper place in the Church's proclamation of the knowledge of God.

One of Torrance's greatest theological achievements is his relocation of natural theology within the scope of revealed theology, thereby restoring it to its traditional

place in Reformed theology, while taking seriously the objections that Barth raised against it (*i.e.*, its "independent" status). In much the same way that Einstein moved geometry into the formal content of physics, Torrance has moved natural theology into the domain of systematic theology, so that the proper locus for the discussion of natural theology is not debate about the possibility of a natural knowledge of God but its proper place within the scope of the revealed knowledge of the creator God (McGrath, 2001:217; 1999:147; 2009:73, 74). Torrance grants natural theology a "new lease of intellectual life" by relocating it within the scope of Christian revelation, so that it is no longer pursued as an autonomous field of inquiry. By subordinating it to revealed theology, natural theology is legitimised, not by its own intrinsic structures, but by divine revelation itself (McGrath, 2009:71, 75). As natural theology is made the servant of revealed theology, it will facilitate a greater integration of theological science and natural science (McKenna, 1997:99), for natural theology finds it proper place in the overlap between theological and natural science, both of which operate within the same rational structures of space and time and have in common the inherent rationality of the universe (Torrance, 1980a:94; Molnar, 1997:291). Rather than attempt to deduce the existence of God from nature, Torrance's renewed natural theology may play an epistemically decisive role in the dialogue between theological and natural science. By providing a trinitarian interpretive framework for understanding and appreciating nature, natural theology, as a sub-structure of revealed theology, may become the means for seeing and understanding nature from an authentically Christian perspective, with its distinct notions of God, nature, and human agency (McGrath, 2009:76, 77).

4.4.3.6 Return to a Unitary Epistemology

In contradistinction to the dualist approach to the knowledge of God that results from an independent natural theology, Torrance calls us to return to the unitary thinking of the Alexandrian fathers in which "theology is committed to one coherent framework of thought that arises within the unitary interaction of God with our world in creation and incarnation, and in which we are unable to make any separation between a natural and a supernatural knowledge of God" (Torrance, 1980a:93). If we wish to gain accurate knowledge of God, developed according to the demands of a rigorous scientific theology, wherein realities are investigated in accordance with their intrinsic natures (*kata physin*), Torrance insists we should "take our cue from Athanasius" (*Contra Arianos* 1.34; *cf.* Torrance, 1988a:49 n. 3), who argued that "it would be more godly

and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father, than to name God from his works alone and call him Unoriginate." As Torrance explains, "[T]o approach God as Father through the Son is a more devout and accurate way than to approach him through his works by tracing them back to him as their uncreated Source." In contradistinction to the external approach to methodology found in natural theology, Athanasius begins his thinking about God with reflection on God's incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, the one who is the exact representation of God (Heb 1:3). Athanasius' approach reflects the Nicene emphasis on the primacy of the Father-Son relation over the Creator-creation relation in developing knowledge of God, wherein the latter is to be understood in terms of the former. Athanasius' approach is in keeping with the general patristic assertion (*e.g.,* Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses,* 4.8.1; 11.3) that only through God can God be known (Torrance, 1988a:49; *cf.* 1986b:461, 462; 1996a:117*ff*).

Following Athanasius (*Contra Arianos*, 1.20; Torrance, 1988a:52 n. 13), Torrance (1988a:52) argues that, if we are to have true and accurate knowledge of God,

> we must allow his own nature, as he becomes revealed to us, to determine how we are to know him, how we are to think of him, and what we are to say about him. That is what happens when we approach God as Father through Jesus Christ his Son, for the Son is of one and the same nature and being ... as the Father.

Since in the incarnate Son, who is *homoousios to Patri*, we are encountered not only by the act of God but by the very being of God, we cannot think of going "behind the back of Jesus Christ" in order to know God, "for that would be equivalent to trying to think beyond and above God himself, and to making ourselves as God" (Torrance, 1990:71). Any attempt to bypass Jesus in order to get to some form of "general revelation" is to abandon the truth of God for no more than what Feuerbach called "a hypostasized image of man," that is, a projection of the highest human image that inevitably obscures God (Morrison, 2001:62). If the incarnation is to be taken seriously, Torrance argues, we cannot avoid the implication that, regardless of what happened before, now that the incarnation has taken place in time and space, God cannot be known apart from Jesus Christ. God's self-revelation in time and space unavoidably calls into question any notion that true knowledge of God arises in human self-consciousness or any idea that God as he really is can be comprehended through "detached, timeless reasoning, independent of God's self-revelation in history, after the fashion of the traditional proofs for his existence." Since we have come to know God as he is in Jesus Christ, notes Torrance, we cannot maintain the validity of a natural knowledge of God reached

independently of revelation without driving a "deep wedge between the God whom we claim to know by nature and God's own living Reality in the Incarnation" (Torrance, 1970:124; 1990:140, 141).

To be sure, natural theology is "undermined, relativised and set aside by the actual knowledge of God mediated by Jesus Christ" (Torrance, 1970:126; 1990:144). Real and accurate knowledge of God does not come through negation, or by way of a logical bridge, inherent isomorphism, or analogy of being (*analogia entis*) between God and creation, but through the positive self-revelation of God, wherein we know God through his definitive self-disclosure in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, a revelation that compels us to acknowledge that all natural theology falls short of the glory of God and misses the mark (Torrance, 1970:127; 1988a:50, 51; 1990:145). As Gill (2007:149) rightly notes, traditional approaches to natural theology are a return to a "pre-Christian" understanding of God, an assertion that is not surprising in light of Torrance's insistence that natural theology arises when the Church attempts to ground the existence of God, not in Christian revelation, but in abstract, non-Christian philosophy (*cf.* Torrance, 1985:37-39).

In the face of the mediation of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, we must assert that, while there is no logical bridge between God and humanity, there is, to be sure, an "ontological bridge" in both the Nicene assertion that Jesus Christ is *homoousios to Patri* and in the patristic doctrine of the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ, who is both God and man in his one incarnate person (*cf.* Chapter Five). Because a rigorous scientific methodology demands that we seek to understand the object of inquiry in terms of its own nature as it unfolds in the process of investigation, a truly scientific theology will begin its inquiry with Jesus Christ, for to know God through the incarnate Son, who is of the same being as the Father, is to know God in strict accordance with his nature (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:3). As (Achtemeier, 2001:51) notes, knowledge of God arises in the context of a "realist" and "unitary" relationship, wherein Jesus Christ is "of one being with the Father."

4.5 Soteriology (Reconciliation)

The Nicene *homoousion* did not arise from detached, abstract metaphysical arguments about the nature of a distant and impersonal deity. Rather, the fourth-century fathers

understood that the theological debates of their time concerned the foundational message of the Gospel: "for us and for our salvation." In their debates with the Arians, nothing less than the evangelical message of human salvation was at stake. Thus, not only is the Nicene *homoousion* epistemologically vital to our understanding of the nature of God; there are also important soteriological considerations to the consubstantial Father-Son relation.

4.5.1 Evangelical Significance of the *Homoousion*

For Torrance, argues Gill (2007:44; *cf.* Torrance, 1996b:132), the aim of revelation is not to increase knowledge of God but to effect reconciliation. As Cass (2008:158) rightly notes, it is of central importance for Torrance that the Nicene confession of the deity of Jesus Christ is set in a soteriological context ("for us and for our salvation") (*cf.* Torrance, 1996a:94; Ho, 2008:126). In this way, argues Cass, the *homoousion* is bound to the Gospel of salvation proclaimed in the New Testament and grounded in the creedal assertion of "One God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible."

According to Torrance (1988a:132-134), the soteriological implications of the consubstantial Father-Son relation, that is, the "evangelical significance of the *homoousion*," can be better understood by posing a vitally important question: "What would be implied if there were no oneness of being between Jesus Christ and God the Father?" As Torrance rightly argues, if Jesus Christ were not *homoousios to Patri,* but, rather, created out of nothing, as Arius declared, then Jesus would remain "external" to God and altogether different from him. Thus, God would remain utterly unknowable, for no "creature," however exalted, can mediate authentic knowledge of God. "If what God is in himself and what he is in the Lord Jesus Christ were not the same, there would be no identity between God and the content of his revelation and no access for mankind to the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. Hence we would be left completely in the dark about God." Consequently, the Church would be left to pass off as "revelation" not something received from beyond itself, but merely a "mythological" fantasy projected from a centre in human consciousness.

Torrance (1988a:134) asks, "What kind of God would we have, then, if Jesus Christ were not the *self*-revelation or *self*-communication of God, if God were not inherently

and eternally in his own being what the Gospel tells us he is in Jesus Christ?" He poignantly answers:

> Would "God" then not be someone who does not care to reveal himself to us? Would it not mean that God has not condescended to impart himself to us in Jesus Christ, and that his love has stopped short of becoming one with us? It would surely mean that there is no ontological, and therefore no epistemological, connection between the love of Jesus and the love of God—in fact there would be no revelation of the love of God but, on the contrary, something that rather mocks us, for while God is said to manifest his love to us in Jesus, he is not actually that love in himself.

If the Nicene *homoousion* were not true, the Gospel would lack any "realist" foundation in the self-revelation and self-communication of God in Jesus Christ. The integrity of the Gospel, therefore, depends on the unity of being and act between Jesus Christ and the Father. The *homoousion* asserts the unity of the "I am" of the Father (Ex 3:14) and the "I am" of Jesus Christ (Jn 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5), for the incarnate Son of God is the "place" where we may know the Father as he is in himself, in accordance with his divine nature, so that we may draw near to him through his reconciling and saving activity toward us. As Torrance argues, "The *homoousion* asserts that God *is* eternally in himself what he *is* in Jesus Christ, and, therefore, that there is no dark unknown God behind the back of Jesus Christ, but only he who is made known to us in Jesus Christ" (Torrance, 1988a:135; *cf.* 1996a:17, 18, 124, 125).

While the unity of being between the Father and Son is epistemologically and soteriologically essential to the mediation of Jesus Christ, another vital aspect of the evangelical significance of the *homoousion* is the all-important issue of the unity of agency. Again, Torrance asks: "What would be implied if there were no oneness in act between the incarnate Son and God the Father?" Torrance asserts that the Nicene *homoousios to Patri* implies not only a oneness in being between the Father and Son, but also a oneness in act, as evidenced by Jesus' words, "My Father works hitherto and I work" (Jn 5:17). Because the Father and Son are one in agency as well as being, the work of the Father cannot be divided or separated from the work of the Son. Because there is an unbroken *homoousial* relationship between the Father and the Son, the acts of Jesus are the acts of God. If the actions of Jesus are not inherently the acts of God, then the "bottom falls out" of the Gospel. If what Jesus Christ has done for us is not the work of God, but merely the work of a godly man, then he does not embody in his incarnate constitution the saving grace of God and, thus, is incapable of truly divine activity (Torrance, 1988a:137, 138). As Ho (2008:123) more simply notes, without the

"ontic unity" between Jesus and God, there is no Mediator between God and man, for Jesus has no part in the forgiveness of the eternal God. "On the other hand," argues Torrance (1988a:138), "if Jesus Christ cannot be divided in being and act from God the Father, then he constitutes in being and act in his incarnate presence or saving economy the creative self-giving of God to mankind." For Torrance, as Gill (2007:18) accurately argues, the "essence of the Gospel" is the ontological relation of being and agency between the Father and the incarnate Son. In this regard, notes Gill, Torrance follows Barth (1957b:260), who argues that "God is who He is in His works."

The evangelical significance of the *homoousion* becomes clear as it bears upon the saving acts of Jesus in healing, forgiving, and redeeming. All the redemptive activity of Jesus arises from his oneness in being and agency with the Father. The saving acts of Jesus described in the Gospel are imbued with a divine finality and validity, for they are nothing less than the acts of God "for us and for our salvation." As Torrance argues, "What God is toward us in his revealing and saving acts in the Gospel he is in himself in his own eternal Being as God." If this is not so, as the Nicene fathers understood, the Gospel is devoid of redemptive content, for what would be the value of a word of forgiveness from Jesus to a sinner if he, in fact, were merely a creature related to the Father in only an external way? If the words and acts of Jesus are not backed up by the being and reality of God, they amount to nothing more than the words and activity of a moral teacher of note and leave the Gospel empty of any divine reality or validity. In short, if Jesus Christ is detached from God, then his word of forgiveness lacks divine authority and becomes merely the empty word of one creature to another (Torrance, 1988a:141, 142; 1992:57, 58; 1994a:53, 54; 1996a:21).

4.5.2 Pastoral Implications

The Nicene *homoousion* asserts an identity between the saving acts of Jesus and the reality of God; thus, God is not different in himself from what he is in the activity of his saving and redeeming love as expressed in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1996a:5). As Torrance (1996a:18) rightly argues:

> [T]o know God in Jesus Christ, and to know him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, is really to know God as he is in himself in his eternal Being as God and in the transcendent Love that God is. He is in himself not other than what he is toward us in his loving, revealing and saving presence in Christ.

For Torrance, the *homoousion* means that the suffering love and grace of Jesus Christ revealed in the New Testament is the revelation of God as God is eternally and antecedently in his own being. God is not different from his self-revelation in the self-abnegating love shown to sinners by the incarnate Son of God (*cf.* Torrance, 1996a:99).

In regard to the transcendent love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, Torrance (1996a:5) expresses his pastor's heart:

> It is in the Cross of Christ that the utterly astonishing nature of the love that God is has been fully disclosed, for in refusing to spare his own Son whom he delivered up for us all, God has revealed that he loves us more than he loves himself [*cf.* Rom 8:31*ff*].

As Torrance frequently notes, there is no dark, inscrutable deity behind the cross of Christ, for whoever has seen Christ has seen the Father (Jn 14:9). There is no other God than the God who has shown himself in the face of Jesus Christ, the very same God who has loved us to the uttermost in the incarnate Son and the gift of the Spirit (Torrance, 1986:303, 304; 1988a:8; 1990:176).

There are important pastoral considerations in connection to the evangelical significance of the *homoousion*. Torrance describes his experience as a chaplain on the battlefield when he held in his arms a young, dying soldier who asked, "Is God really like Jesus?" Such troubling questions, usually arising in moments of crisis and distress, reflect the insidious damage done to the faith of believers by the "dualist habits of thought" that drive a wedge between the transcendent Father and the incarnate Son (Torrance, 1992:59, 60; *cf.* 1994a:55, 56). Torrance traces the "theological schizophrenia" arising from the perceived split between the loving Son and the "unknown" Father to the medieval habit (*cf.* above) of developing first a doctrine of the one God (*De Deo Uno*) derived by reason (*i.e.*, natural theology) followed by a comparatively unimportant doctrine of the Triune God (*De Deo Trino*) based on faith (*i.e.*, revealed theology) (Torrance, 1985:166, 167; 1994a:56; *cf.* 1980a:147, 148; 1996a:9, 10). The dualist split between faith and reason resulting from the bifurcation in the Western doctrine of God has serious pastoral implications. This is particularly true in regard to the love of God. As Torrance (1992:59) asks, "Where would we be if the bond between the love of Jesus and the love of God were cut, which would be the case if there were no oneness of being between them, for God *is* love?" If Jesus Christ is not God become man, then God has not loved us to the uttermost; rather, his love has

stopped short of becoming one of us for our salvation. As Torrance (1992:59, 60) observes:

> Fearful anxiety arises in the human heart when people cannot connect Jesus ... with the ultimate Being of God, for then the ultimate Being of God can be to them only a dark, inscrutable, arbitrary Deity whom they inevitably think of with terror for their guilty conscience makes them paint harsh angry streaks upon his face.

Any disjunction between the being of Jesus and the being of God disrupts the message of grace contained in the Gospel and introduces anxiety into the hearts of many Christians, who fear there may be a dark, inscrutable, arbitrary deity hidden behind the back of Jesus, "before whom in our guilty conscience as sinners we cannot but quake and shiver in our souls" (Torrance, *et al*, 1999:16). On the other hand, great comfort and assurance arise "when the face of Jesus is identical with the face of God ... when the perfect love of God embodied in him casts out all fear" (Torrance, 1992:60). In the preaching and ministry of the Gospel, therefore, the most important consideration is to bring believers face-to-face with God in Jesus Christ, for it is the incarnate Son alone, who is one in being and agency with the Father, who defines God for us and does so in a way that calls into question all alien presuppositions about God arising from the "insidious effect of dualism" on both our theology and our pastoral care (Torrance, 1994a:56).

Torrance (1988a:8, 142, 143) also rightly notes the evangelical significance of the *homoousion* in terms of judgment. He asks, "And what about the ultimate destiny of mankind, the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead?" If Jesus Christ were merely a created intermediary between God and humanity, he could not "go bail for our future," leaving us to face at the end an unknown deity who bears no relationship to our Saviour, for the final judgement would be a judgment "apart from and without respect to Jesus Christ and his forgiving love and atoning sacrifice." As Torrance argues:

> Quite clearly the *homoousion* makes an immense difference to our understanding of the divine judgment, for it asserts that there is no interval or gap of any kind between Jesus Christ and God the judge of all the earth. The judgment of Jesus and the judgment of God are one and the same. Even in the final judgment God the Father and the incarnate Son are perfectly one in being and agency.

The believer may find assurance in Torrance's connection between Jesus, the compassionate Saviour, and Jesus the Judge into whose hands all judgment has been given (Jn 5:22), for the hands of Jesus and the hands of God are the same (Torrance, *et*

al, 1999:17). There is great comfort in knowing that our final destiny lies in the hands of the one who cried from the cross on behalf of his tormentors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34), for, in Torrance's trenchant, compelling words, "the voice of divine forgiveness and the voice of divine judgment are one and the same" (Torrance, *et al*, 1999:15).

In summary, Torrance (1990:191, 192) succinctly captures both the epistemological and the evangelical significance of the *homoousion* as follows:

> Any disjunction between God and his self-revelation through Christ and in the Spirit could only mean that in the last analysis revelation is empty of divine reality, and any disjunction between God and his saving activity through Christ and in the Spirit could only mean that in the last analysis salvation is without divine validity.

In regard to the lack of "divine reality" or salvific "validity" that results from a perceived dualism between Jesus and God, Scandrett (2006:69) notes that Torrance's principal critique of liberal theology is that, in denying that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God, theological liberalism reduces Jesus to the status of a prophet or moral teacher, thereby emptying the Gospel of any real revelatory content or salvific power and reducing Christianity to a set of moral principles that effects little change in the basic human condition. Similarly, Cass (2008:157, 158) notes that many "mainstream" churches in the West have lost sight of the ontological reality of the Father-Son relation by disrobing Jesus of his divinity in order to view him as a noble human being, a moral example, a radical political or social leader, or a teacher and prophet, rather than the fully divine Saviour of the world. On the other hand, as Cass (2008:162) argues, in contradistinction to much liberal theology, the truth and reality of the homoousial Father-Son relation is, for Torrance, the ground of our confidence in salvation, worship, service, and the proclamation of the Gospel to the entire world, for our evangelical experience is not disconnected from the true and living God.

To be sure, the Gospel account of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation would not be true if there is no oneness in being and agency between Jesus and God. Yet, the epistemological significance of the *homoousion* is that, in Jesus Christ, God has revealed himself as he is, while the evangelical significance of the *homoousion* is the assuring good news that the loving, saving acts of Jesus are, in fact, the acts of very God for us and for our salvation. There is great comfort and peace in realising that the compassionate heart of Jesus is a window into the innermost heart of God, for the heart

of the Father is not different from the heart of the incarnate Son. We may rest in the assurance that "God does not and will not act toward any one in life or death in any other way than he has done, does do, and will do in Jesus" (Torrance, *et al*, 1999:16), for, in loving us in the gift of his dear Son, who is "of one being with the Father," God loves us with the very Love which he is (Torrance (1996a:5).

For Torrance, the epistemological significance of the homoousion can be succinctly stated thus: "Jesus Christ is the self-revelation of God." The evangelical significance of the *homoousion*, for Torrance, can be captured in the oft-repeated mantra: "Jesus saves." Yet, we argue that, for Torrance, the epistemological and soteriological significance of the *homoousion* can finally be reduced to one word overflowing with epistemological and soteriological content: "Immanuel" (*cf*. Mt 1:23).

4.6 Summary and Critique

In response to the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ, the Nicene fathers adopted the phrase *homoousios to Patri* to describe the consubstantial unity of being and agency in the Father-Son relation. The Nicene *homoousion* is foremost among the elemental forms of Torrance's scientific theology and the key to his unitary epistemology. Because Torrance's scientific theology is grounded in the fundamental methodological axiom that the object of scientific inquiry is investigated "according to its nature" (*kata physin*), the Nicene assertion that Jesus Christ is "of one being with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*) is the ontological and epistemological linchpin of Torrance's kataphysical scientific theology, as well as the central organising truth and normative pattern of revelation in Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ.

The Nicene *homoousion* and the doctrine of the incarnation are twin doctrines in Torrance's discussion of the mediation of Christ, and they determine the epistemic ground of the knowledge of God. Because the incarnation falls both within the spatiotemporal events of human history and within the eternal being of God, the Nicene *homoousion* is the ontological bridge that spans the dualist God-world divide that underlies aberrant christologies, whether Ebionite, Docetic, or Arian.

Against those who claim a radical "Hellenising" of Christian thought, Torrance asserts a "Christianising of Hellenistic thought," as the Nicene fathers reconstructed the dualist

foundations of Greek thought by asserting that God has bridged the gulf between Creator and creation in the historical space-time incarnation of Jesus Christ. Torrance's argument for the Nicene reconstruction of Hellenistic thought is a welcome alternative to the claim that Jesus, a mere moral teacher of note, was transformed by conciliar theology into the cosmic Christ of medieval Christendom. Moreover, Torrance's assertion of the personal, dynamic activity of God as conceived in the Athanasian *enousios logos* and *enousios energeia* is a much needed corrective to the "unmoved mover" of classical theism rooted in Hellenistic thought and incorporated into the biblical-classical synthesis of the Western doctrine of God (*cf.* Bloesch, 1995:205, 206).

Torrance uses the Nicene *homoousion* to link together the "levels" in his stratification model of the knowledge of God. Torrance's stratification model helpfully "fills out" Rahner's assertion of the identity between the economic and immanent Trinity. Whereas Rahner posits two levels in our knowledge of God, that is, economic and immanent, Torrance adds the all-important "doxological" level, so that knowledge of God's immanent, eternal relations are logically tied to the worship and devotion of the community of faith. Torrance's model allows our thought to move from the level of personal and communal encounter with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to the conceptual understanding that, in the incarnate Son and Spirit, we have to do with the eternal, triune relations of the Godhead. By ontologically and epistemologically uniting the doxological, economic, and immanent Trinity, the *homoousion* binds together the levels of the knowledge of God by providing the epistemological key to facilitate apprehension of the mystery of the triune nature of God for the ordinary believer.

Further understanding of the epistemological significance of the *homoousion* arises through an examination of Torrance's rejection of natural theology as an independent means to knowledge of God. As Torrance argues, natural theology's attempt to develop knowledge of God in terms of an analogy of being (*analogia entis*), or logical bridge, between the creation and the Creator is precluded by the epistemological significance of *sola gratia*, as well as the contingent nature of creation *ex nihilo*. In terms of methodology, natural theology, with its *a priori* assumptions developed in abstraction from the material content of its object of inquiry, is undermined and relativised by the actual knowledge of God revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the *a priori* methodology of natural theology stands in direct contradiction to the *a posteriori*

kataphysical method of Torrance's scientific theology. Unlike Torrance's unitary, holistic theology, natural theology divides epistemology and ontology. Reminiscent of the Kantian dualism between the noumenal and the phenomenal, natural theology separates the theoretical (*theologia*) and empirical (*oikonomia*) components of knowledge by developing its doctrine of God apart from the historical space-time incarnation of Jesus Christ. The result of this bifurcation in the knowledge of God is evident in the medieval proclivity to develop a doctrine of the One God (*De Deo* Uno) from natural theology, prior to and independently of a doctrine of the Triune God (*De Deo Trino)* developed from revealed theology.

In contradistinction to the "schizoid state of affairs" in the Western doctrine of God, Torrance returns to the unitary thinking of the Alexandrian fathers, wherein knowledge of God is developed in a rigorously scientific manner, that is, in accordance with the nature (*kata physin*) of God as revealed in the consubstantial Father-Son relation. Since in Jesus Christ we encounter God in both his being and his act, we cannot think of going behind the back of Jesus in order to know God, as Torrance frequently argues, for that would drive a deep wedge between the God we claim to know from nature and the triune God revealed in redemptive history. Accurate knowledge of God does not come through negation or by way of a logical bridge (*analogia entis*) between God and creation, but through the ontological and epistemological bridge established in the consubstantial Father-Son relation.

Torrance's emphasis on the Nicene *homoousion* as the epistemological link to knowledge of God, coupled with his rejection of natural theology as an independent *praeambula fidei*, is a vitally needed corrective to the Latin Western doctrine of God that developed in post-Thomist Scholasticism, wherein the attributes of God were conceived according to human reason and the observation of the cosmos, then prescriptively applied to the biblical revelation of the triune nature of God. Like Euclidean geometry, a conceptual system developed apart from the reality it failed to accurately describe, natural theology fails to accurately describe God as he has revealed himself in his redemptive acts in history as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To know God is to know him in his acts, and to know him in his acts is to know him as triune. When God's being is abstracted from his act, as in an independent natural theology, the result is a description of an immutable, impassible god very different from the God incarnate in Jesus Christ. A doctrine of God developed according to the biblical witness to the

nature of God, however, necessitates a recasting of the divine attributes of classical theism, not in terms of what is proper for God (*dignum Deo*) to be according to human reason, but in terms of the self-abnegating, self-emptying God of the manger and the cross. In recasting the divine attributes in light of the biblical description of the God who stoops to humble himself on behalf of his creation (*cf.* Phil 2:5*ff*), God's power is made servant of his divine love for all humanity, while divine immutability is construed not in rigid terms of "changelessness," but as God's steadfast faithfulness and unbending determination to redeem all creation through Jesus Christ. In his rejection of natural theology as an independent means to knowledge of God, Torrance follows Barth in breaching the medieval dualist gap between *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* by developing a unitary approach to theology, thereby making a major contribution toward a much-needed return to a thoroughly biblical understanding of the triune nature of God revealed in salvation history in the redemptive acts of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In his rejection of an independent natural theology as a *praeambula fidei* and his insistence that a scientific theology proceed in accordance with the nature of its object of inquiry, however, Torrance invests a significant amount of theological capital in the creedal assertion that Jesus Christ is *homoousios to Patri*. In constituting the Nicene *homoousion* as a primary elemental form in his doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ, however, is Torrance too creedally bound? Critics from evangelical, free-church traditions, with their healthy concern to guard the Reformation principle, *sola scriptura*, may question Torrance's reliance on the "extracanonical authority" of conciliar theology, arguing that creedal concepts such as the *homoousion* were developed centuries after the events recorded in the New Testament (*cf.* Williams, 1999:11,14,18,19). This, however, is not a criticism of Torrance; rather, it belies a misunderstanding of the creeds themselves. As Torrance argues, the Nicene fathers were careful to articulate nothing new in regard to the biblical witness to Jesus Christ; rather, in the face of heretical distortions of the Gospel, they were compelled to articulate carefully the apostolic tradition they had received, recasting the content of the Gospel in the precise terms of the philosophical *milieu* of their day, while remaining true to the biblical witness to Jesus Christ. With the *homoousion*, the Nicene fathers not only secured the supreme truth of the deity of Christ, but also undermined dualist concepts of God by establishing a realist, unitary basis for the proclamation of the Gospel.

Torrance's insistence that realist knowledge of God arises solely in the context of the homoousial Father-Son relation interactive in human history, however, is not without its critics. As Purves (2001:72) notes, the singularity of Jesus Christ in regard to the knowledge of God is still a hotly contested issue. For example, Muller (1990:690), in light of the central importance Barth assigns to the incarnation for the knowledge of God, charged the Swiss theologian with "christological reductionism" or "christo-monism," that is, the attempt to reduce all knowledge of God to what is revealed in Christ (*cf.* Gill, 2007:137). Since Torrance insists that Jesus Christ is the one in whom knowledge of God is actual, rather than merely speculative or mythological, does this mean, asks Purves (2001:72), that knowledge of God is confined to an "epistemological ghetto," wherein there can be no independent appeal to truth claims regarding divine knowledge? Here Purves finds operating a "kind of scientific theological fideism" that is the result of the nature of God's self-revealing act in Jesus Christ. We can only know God because we have faith in Jesus Christ and, thereby, participate in his knowledge of the Father.

In defence of Torrance's methodology and the central importance he gives to the Nicene *homoousion* as the epistemological key to the knowledge of God, Torrance rightly follows the Nicene fathers in asserting that knowledge of God must be developed in accordance with the nature of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. In regard to the criticism that Torrance has confined theology to an "epistemological ghetto," where there is no recourse to independent truth claims regarding the knowledge of God, we may ask, "To what independent court of appeal may we go for authentic knowledge of God?" As argued above, natural theology is undermined as an independent source of the knowledge of God on both epistemological and methodological grounds. To be sure, only in the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ can we inquire into the nature of God, for he alone, as the eternal Son of the Father, is *homoousios to Patri*. All else in creation is related to God only in an external way and, thus, can provide no information regarding the eternal nature of God. Failure to develop our knowledge of God in a theologically scientific way, that is, according to the nature (*kata physin*) of the object of inquiry, leaves us with nothing more than the alien presuppositions and antecedent conceptualities that arise from rational speculation on what is "proper" for God to be (*dignum Deo*). In short, if we abandon Jesus as the source of authentic knowledge of God, we are cast back either upon ourselves, where we reduce theology to

anthropology, or upon the creation, where we reduce theology to mythology. In either case, our thought no longer arises from a centre in God.

In regard to the mediation of reconciliation, the Nicene assertion of the unity of being and agency between God and the incarnate Son means that the redemptive word and activity of Jesus Christ is nothing less than the word and act of God "for us and for our salvation." As Torrance cogently argues, if Jesus Christ is not "of one being" with God, but only an intermediary created out of nothing, there is no ontological connection between the love of Jesus and the love of God. If the incarnate Son is not *homoousios to Patri*, the Gospel is empty of divine content, for the redemptive word and activity of Jesus Christ lacks any divine finality and validity. Revealing his pastor's heart, Torrance helpfully invokes the pastoral implications of the *homoousion* by assuring us that God really is like Jesus. Contrary to the fearful anxiety and theological schizophrenia that arise from the medieval dualist split between faith and reason, the unity of being and agency between the Father and the incarnate Son assures the believer there is no dark, inscrutable deity hidden behind the cross of Christ, into whose awful hands we must fall in divine judgement. We may take comfort in knowing that our final destiny is in the hands of the one who has loved us to the uttermost at the cross, for the hands of Jesus and the hands of God are the same.

5.0 THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

5.1 Introduction

In order to understand the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ in the scientific theology of T.F. Torrance, the incarnate Son must be viewed not only in terms of his consubstantial union with God, but also in terms of his consubstantial union with humanity. The *homoousion* constitutes the ontological and epistemic bridge between Jesus and God; the hypostatic union constitutes the ontological and epistemic bridge between Jesus and humanity. The Nicene *homoousion* and the doctrine of the hypostatic union constitute the primary "christological tools" (Purves, 2001:73) or elemental forms for examining and explaining Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ.

According to Torrance (1992:56), Jesus Christ mediates revelation and reconciliation in such a way that in his incarnate person as both God and man, he embraces both sides of the mediating relationship between God and humanity. "He is God of the nature of God, and man of the nature of man, in one and the same Person." He is not two realities joined together, but one reality who confronts us as both God and man. We are not to think of Jesus Christ as God "in" man, for that can be said of the prophets and saints; rather, we are to think of Jesus Christ as God coming to us "as" man. Torrance continues:

> The Incarnation means that in Jesus Christ we have to do with One who is wholly God and with one who is wholly man; yet, very God of very God though he is, the Son of God comes to us *as man*. That is an utterly staggering truth, that God the Creator has come himself to us as a creature in the world he has made, and yet remains the Creator; that God the creative and sustaining Source of all human being has come himself to us as a particular human being, yet without ceasing to be the divine Being he eternally is.

For Torrance, the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ must be understood in terms of his personal identity as one who is both fully God and fully human. Unlike a human prophet or priest, Jesus Christ does not mediate revelation and reconciliation in an "instrumental" way, as though he were merely an "agent" of mediation; rather, Jesus *embodies* what he mediates, for what he mediates and what he "is" are one and the same thing. As Torrance notes, "He constitutes in his own incarnate Person the content and reality of what he mediates in both revelation and reconciliation." As scripture attests, Jesus Christ *is* the Word of God, not merely a

messenger bearing the word of God. For Torrance, it is the "identity" of Mediator and mediation in the one indivisible person of Jesus Christ that is crucial, for apart from the "inner constitutive identity" between Jesus and God, or between his person and work, the Gospel collapses altogether (Torrance, 1992:56, 57). In this regard, Chung (2011:29) rightly notes that "any attempt to disturb the cornerstone, that inner constitutive divine and human action," would cause Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ "to disintegrate and collapse."

Despite the rigour of his scientific theology, Torrance does not hesitate to assert that the doctrine of the hypostatic union is a mystery that can be known only by faith. Those who have come to know Christ by faith as true God and true man realise they cannot comprehend the mystery of the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ by their own human capacities. As Torrance (2008:87, 88) notes:

> Both the sinner who is forgiven by Christ and the man or woman who has come to see the face of God in the face of Christ, know that they can never master or dominate the mystery of Christ in their hearts, but can only acknowledge it gladly with wonder and thankfulness, and seek to understand the mystery of Christ out of itself, that is, seek to let it declare itself to them, seek to let themselves be told by the mystery what it is. They will acknowledge that this is a mystery that is not conceivable in ordinary human thought—it is a miracle. And if they know something of this miracle they will know that even their knowing of it is a very wonderful thing, that it is an act of God. They know the mystery by faith, in the power of the Spirit, but not by themselves alone. It is a gift of God.

The present chapter examines and explains the epistemological and evangelical significance of the hypostatic union as defined at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) and articulated in the scientific theology of T.F. Torrance. After considering the New Testament witness and the patristic background of the doctrine of the hypostatic union, the union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ will be examined in regard to the mediation of revelation and reconciliation.

As we examine Torrance's view of the doctrine of the hypostatic union in relation to the mediation of Jesus Christ, it is essential to remember that revelation and reconciliation are aspects of the two-fold but *unitary* movement of mediation in Jesus Christ. As Gill (2007:51) notes, the unity of revelation and reconciliation which Torrance found in Barth's writing is central to Torrance's theology. As we inquire into the incarnate constitution of Jesus Christ, we must bear in mind the unitary, non-dualist character of Torrance's scientific theology. Because Jesus Christ's saving "work" in atoning reconciliation cannot be separated from his incarnate reality as God and man in

one person, Chapters Five and Six must be considered together as two aspects of a single, unified whole.

5.2 New Testament Witness

The early Church declared, "Jesus is Lord" (*e.g.*, Rom 10:9; Phil 2:11), attributing to Jesus Christ a two-fold order of being: "according to the flesh" (*kata sarka*), that is, as a man, and "according to the Spirit" (*kata pneuma*), that is, as God (*e.g.*, Rom 1:3ff; 8:9; 2Cor 3:17; Heb 9:14; 1Pet 1:11; 3:18) (Kelly, 1978:138). Jesus Christ is both "Son of man" and Son of God. This two-fold order of being is, perhaps, no more clearly articulated than in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel (Jn 1:1-18). In proclaiming "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," John succinctly articulates the mystery that underlies what would later become the doctrine of the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. As Torrance (2008:60, 61) notes, John uses Old Testament images and language to expound the incarnation of the Word of God. The eternal Word, who cast his shadow across the history of Israel in the offices of prophet, priest, and king and, above all, in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (*cf.* Chapter Three), has become flesh and tabernacled among us. According to Torrance, John proclaims that Jesus Christ is the tabernacle of God: the one in whom the glory of God is to be seen has come to dwell among us as one of us. Moreover, the same Word who became flesh is the creator, the one by whom all things are made. Without ceasing to be the eternal Word of God, he has entered creaturely existence in such a way as to dwell in it in personal presence, as "the personal Word" who becomes flesh and effects "personal meeting and faith" with those who receive him. Torrance continues:

> In all this the Word is the Lord God, the subject of the incarnation. He becomes creature in all his sovereign freedom as creator; and without ceasing to be that creator Word he becomes flesh, without any diminishment of his freedom or of his eternal nature. But as the very Word of God and as remaining God's Word in all the fullness of his grace and truth he comes personally to man, light into darkness, declaring and manifesting God in the flesh in a fullness from which we can all receive.

In stating that the "Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14), John means that "the Word fully participates in human nature and existence, for he became man in becoming flesh, true man and real man" (Torrance, 2008:61). Torrance goes to great length to argue that the incarnation is to be understood "as God really become man." Jesus Christ is not merely a man "participating" in God but is himself "essential Deity." God did not merely descend on Jesus Christ as on one of the prophets; rather, "in Jesus Christ God came to

dwell among us *as himself man*" (Torrance, 1988a:149, 150). Torrance's understanding of the incarnation is in distinct contrast to adoptionist, Ebionite, Docetic, Nestorian, and Apollinarian christologies, and any other christologies that compromise the integrity of the union of divinity and full humanity in the person of Jesus Christ.

Notwithstanding John's assertion that the eternal Word assumed human flesh, however, the doctrine of the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ is not explicitly articulated in the New Testament. The doctrine is implied, however, in the narratives of the virgin birth. As Torrance (2008:88, 89) notes, Matthew (1:18) and Luke (1:26-38) describe the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, who is both the divine Son of God and the human son of Mary. While Mark does not speak specifically of the birth of Jesus, unlike Matthew and Luke, he never refers to Jesus as the son of Joseph, but, rather, as the "son of Mary" (Mk 6:3). In the incident at Nazareth recorded in Matthew, the people describe Jesus as "the carpenter's son," while in the same incident recorded in Luke, they describe him as "Joseph's son" (*cf.* Mt 13:55; Lk 4:22). Torrance argues that Mark's description of Jesus as "Mary's son" is most "un-Jewish," since calling a man by his mother's name is extremely strange in Jewish speech. Thus, Mark appears deliberately to avoid referring to Jesus as "Joseph's son."

Torrance (2008:89) also notes another passage in Mark (12:35-37), where Jesus says of the Messiah, "David calls him Lord; so how is he his son?" In other words, "How can a divine Christ be born of human stock?" Mark's language fits well with the virgin birth, argues Torrance. While Mark does not explicitly mention the virgin birth, neither do Matthew nor Luke after that point in their narratives from which Mark begins. Thus, far from providing evidence against the virgin birth by his silence about it, Mark's language leans strongly in that direction. As Torrance notes, "In Mark, there are ... distinct allusions to the supernatural birth of Jesus of Mary."

Returning to the prologue of John's Gospel, Torrance (2008:90, 91) finds a reference to the virgin birth in John 1:12, 13: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (NKJV). Torrance's argument for a reference to the virgin birth concerns the translation of the phrase, "who were born." He argues that the phrase is singular and, thus, should be

translated, "who was born," in which case the reference is to Jesus. He argues further that the word translated "man" (*andros*) should more accurately be translated "husband," which would then properly indicate that Jesus was not born of a human father. Torrance claims that, while the "main manuscripts" (with some exceptions) translate the passage in the plural, "all the available patristic evidence" has it translated in the singular. Torrance also notes that Tertullian, in his *De Carne Christi*, charges the Valentinian Gnostics with corrupting the text, changing it from singular to plural, because they were averse to the doctrine of the virgin birth. In addition, Torrance argues that the singular translation is increasingly followed by modern scholars. Finally, Torrance finds an additional Johannine reference to the virgin birth in the first epistle (1Jn 5:18): "he who was born of God."

Regarding the Pauline corpus, Torrance (2008:92, 93) states that Paul never applies the New Testament word for human birth (*gennan*) to Adam or Jesus, since neither the first nor the second Adam were "generated" in the usual way; rather, both "came into existence": one from the "earth," the other from "heaven" (*cf.* 1Cor 15:47). To say that Jesus came "from heaven" is, for Torrance, an "explicit" reference to the virgin birth. Furthermore, Torrance notes that in Galatians 4, Paul uses the usual verb for human birth (*gennan*) three times but uses a different verb (*ginesthai*) when speaking of Jesus. As Torrance argues, "[I]n reference to Jesus' birth [Paul] refuses to use the only word the New Testament uses of human generation. Every time Paul speaks of human birth he uses *gennan*, but not once when he speaks of Jesus. Every time Paul wants to refer to the earthly origin of Jesus he uses the word *ginesthai*." Torrance finds here "the strongest disavowal" of ordinary human birth in regard to Jesus.

Therefore, while the doctrine of the hypostatic union is not explicitly articulated in the New Testament, it is clearly supported by scripture. The eternal Word of God was conceived by the Holy Spirit, assumed human flesh from a young virgin and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God and the human son of Mary.

5.3 Patristic Background

While the New Testament assertion of a two-fold order of being in Jesus Christ as both Son of God and "son of man" is the "foundation datum" of all subsequent

christological development, it also contains all the elements of the "christological problem" that would later emerge, particularly in the fourth century: that is, how to define the relation of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ (Kelly, 1978:138). Despite aberrant forms of christology that had existed as far back as the second century (*e.g.*, Ebionism and Docetism), during the fourth century, especially in the early years of the Arian controversy, issues related to the doctrine of the Trinity outweighed the importance of questions related to christology. Once the question of the divinity of Jesus Christ was considered settled, however, theologians inevitably turned their attention to the relationship between divinity and humanity in the incarnate Son of God (Gonzales, 1987:335, 336).

According to Torrance, the Nicene fathers were not content to assert only the consubstantial unity between Jesus and God; they also understood the vital importance of asserting the consubstantial union between Jesus Christ and humanity (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:3, 4). In asserting the consubstantial relation between the Father and the incarnate Son, the Nicene Fathers sought to secure "both ends" of the *homoousion*, that is, the divine and the human. As Torrance notes, "Everything would be emptied of evangelical and saving import if Jesus Christ were not fully, completely, entirely *man*, as well as *God*" (Torrance, 1988a:146). Clauses related to the humanity of the Son were added as vital components of the creed, for example: "He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit, He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried." As Torrance notes, the creedal statements that refer to the humanity of Jesus Christ are dominated by a soteriological concern: "for us and for our salvation." The Nicene fathers sought to secure the truth that Jesus Christ is both God and Saviour. The mediation of Christ in reconciliation involved a "two-fold movement," from God to humanity and from humanity to God, so that both the divine and human activity of Jesus Christ must be regarded as issuing from one person. In regard to the significance of "both ends" of the Nicene *homoousion*, Torrance argues, "If Jesus Christ the incarnate Son is not true God from true God, then we are not saved, for it is only God who can save; but if Jesus Christ is not truly man, then salvation does not touch our human existence and condition" (Torrance, 1988a:146-149). We note that the two-fold movement of revelation in Jesus Christ recapitulates the two-way movement, or "double adaptation," of revelation and response in ancient Israel, where the mediation of divine revelation summoned, as a constitutive ingredient of divine revelation, an

"answering movement" from the community to which it came. Thus, in Israel and in Jesus Christ, we see that revelation and appropriate human response are constitutive ingredients of Torrance's discussion of the mediation of revelation (*cf.* Chapter Three).

For Torrance, the message of the Gospel is articulated in the basic Nicene principle that the human acts of Jesus Christ are the very acts of God. As Torrance (1988a:149) asserts:

> In him God has really become man, become what we are, and so lives and acts, God though he is, "as man for us" ... *Only God can save, but he saves precisely as man*—Jesus Christ is God's act, God acting personally and immediately as man in and through him, and thus at once in a divine and in a human manner.

Notwithstanding the Nicene creedal assertion of the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ, however, the question remained as to exactly "how" the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ are related. Inevitably, the question arose as to exactly "what kind" of human nature was assumed in the incarnation and to "what degree" was it assumed? In regard to this "constant problem of theology," Torrance (2008:182) asks: "How can we be faithful in our theological statements to the nature of the eternal being of the Son who became man and who yet remains God, and at the same time be faithful to the nature and person of the historical Jesus Christ?"

The christological debates of the early Church concerned the relation of divinity and humanity in the incarnate Son. These often heated debates took place primarily in the eastern Mediterranean world and were conducted in the Greek language under the ubiquitous influence of the metaphysical presuppositions of Greek philosophy (McGrath, 1998:32). The distorted understanding of the relation of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ can be traced to the dualist separation of God and creation in Greek thought (*cf.* Chapter Four). For Torrance, as Scandrett (2006:68) notes, this dualist distortion of the God-world relation typically takes two forms: 1) a denial that the words and acts of Jesus are the words and acts of God or 2) a denial that the eternal Word is truly subject to the experiences of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The first distortion, Scandrett argues, denies the ontological unity between Jesus and God, strips his word and act of divine validity and authority, and reduces Jesus' relation to God to one of "moral conformity" (*cf.* Torrance, 1992:61, 62). As already noted, this is the source of much of Torrance's criticism of theological liberalism. The second distortion, notes Scandrett (2006:69), compromises the ontological union between Jesus and humanity by denying that the incarnate Word is

subject to the experiences of Jesus' life, and, thereby, leaves us unredeemed and in a state of corruption and alienation from God (*cf.* Torrance, 1992:61, 62). This is the source of Torrance's critique of any form of Christian theism which attempts to safeguard divine transcendence by a denial of the full humanity of Jesus Christ.

For Torrance, as Scandrett (2006:70) rightly argues, any distortion between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ "spells the dissolution of the Gospel in its ontological, epistemological, and soteriological dimensions, all of which are integrally related" in Torrance's unitary, holistic theology. Ontologically, the denial of either the divine or human natures of Christ means there is no ontic union between God and humanity. Epistemologically, a disjunction, distortion, or dualism between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ means there can be no realist knowledge of God, for only in Jesus Christ is our knowledge of God anchored in the eternal being of God (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:32). Soteriologically, the denial of the divine nature of Jesus Christ denies the participation of the Triune Godhead in the word and act of Jesus, so that his redemptive work lacks divine validity. At the same time, the denial of his human nature negates our participation in the life of God through the Spirit and the vicarious humanity of Jesus (*cf.* Chapter Seven), thereby leaving us unhealed and unredeemed.

The problem of the relation between the two natures of Christ can be better understood by a comparison of the rival christologies of ancient Alexandria (Egypt), with its Docetic tendencies, and that of Antioch (Syria), with its Ebionite tendencies (Torrance, 2008:198*ff*).

5.3.1 Alexandrian Christology and Apollinarianism

The christology of the Alexandrian school was strongly soteriological in character. Redemption was equated with "divinization" or "deification," that is, "being taken up into the life of God." For divinization to occur, human nature must be united with the divine nature; that is, God must be united with human nature in such a way that the latter is enabled to share in the divine life of God. This is precisely what happened in the incarnation: the divine *Logos* assumed human nature, thereby assuring its divinization. In short, God became human, so that humanity may become divine. In regard to the relation between divinity and humanity in the incarnation, the Alexandrians emphasised the unity of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. In

addition, they argued there is only one "nature" in the incarnation, in that the *Logos* united human nature to itself. The emphasis on one nature in the incarnation distinguishes the Alexandrian school from the Antiochene school, with its emphasis on the two natures of the incarnate Word (McGrath, 1998:51, 52).

Hinting of Docetism, the Alexandrians regarded the humanity of Christ as a passive, impersonal vehicle for use by the divine *Logos*, asserting the humanity did not have a mind and will distinct from that of the eternal Word. By the fourth century, they had developed a "Logos-flesh" christology, that is, an assertion that human flesh, not humanity in its entirety, was assumed in the incarnation. The assertion of only one nature in the incarnation allowed the Alexandrians to stress the important doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*; that is, what is attributed to Christ's humanity may also be predicated of the divine *Logos*. Unfortunately, they applied this principle in such a way that the human nature of Jesus Christ was severely compromised (Gonzales, 1987:340, 343, 344; McGrath, 1998:52; Olson, 1999:204-206).

Alexandrian christology reached its climax and natural conclusion with Apollinaris of Laodicea (*c*. 310-*c*. 390). Because he regarded the human mind as the source of sin, Apollinaris was concerned that the assumption of a complete human nature would compromise the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Thus, he argued that the *Logos* did not assume a rational human mind in the incarnation; rather, the human mind was replaced by the divine mind of the *Logos*. Basing his argument on the trichotomist position that humans are composed of body, soul, and spirit (*cf*. 1Thes 5:23), Apollinaris argued that the soul is the impersonal, unconscious, but vital principle that gives life to the body; the spirit is the seat of personality, that is, the centre of the rational faculties or reason. In the incarnation, the *Logos* occupies the place of the spirit, so that in Jesus Christ, a human body and soul are joined to a divine reason or mind. In this way, Apollinaris preserved the immutability of the *Logos*, while solving the problem of how divine and human natures could unite without creating a new nature. Christ is human because he possesses a human body and soul; he is divine because his mind or reason is that of the eternal *Logos*. Moreover, in harmony with the "Logos-flesh" christology of Alexandria, Apollinaris argued that if a complete human being with its own personality and reason had been united to the *Logos*, then the incarnation would result in "two persons," one divine and one human. Since the existence of two centres of consciousness, each with an independent mind and will, would undermine the union of divinity and humanity in

the incarnation, Apollinaris preserved the unity of the Saviour by asserting the "one nature" of the incarnate Word. Yet, in so doing, he mutilated the human nature of Jesus Christ by taking away its rational faculties and substituting the divine *Logos* in their place (Gonzales, 1987:346-348; McGrath, 1998:52; Olson, 1999:207, 208).

Opponents of Apollinaris' position, represented by Gregory Nazianzus (329-389), stressed the redemptive importance of the assumption of human nature in its entirety in the incarnation. Because God has assumed human flesh, we are enabled to obtain deification. Accordingly, Nazianzus argued that "what has not been assumed has not been healed"; that is, only those aspects of human nature that are united to the *Logos* in the incarnation have been redeemed. According to Nazianzus, if we are to be saved in the totality of our humanity, then humanity in its totality must be brought into union with the divine (Gonzales, 1987:349-352; McGrath, 1998:53-55; Olson, 1999:208).

Apollinarianism was officially condemned at the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381), not because it asserted the one nature of the God-man in the incarnation, but because it denied the full, complete humanity of Jesus Christ. Against Apollinaris, the council asserted that Jesus Christ is "fully human" (Gonzales, 1987:352; Olson, 1999:208; Torrance, 2008:196, 197).

5.3.2 Antiochene Christology and Nestorianism

Against the more metaphysical soteriology of the Alexandrians, the Antiochene theologians viewed salvation as a wonderful moral-ethical accomplishment wrought by a human being on behalf of all by uniting his will to that of the divine *Logos*. Given its moral concerns, Antiochene christology emphasized the humanity of Christ, producing a "Logos-man" christology, in which the human nature of Christ was not regarded in a passive, instrumental way, but as actively able to obey God. In their concern to preserve the genuineness of the humanity of the incarnate Son, while guarding the transcendent divinity of the *Logos* against the creaturely contamination of human nature, the Antiochenes emphasized the "distinction" of the two natures of Jesus Christ. In contrast to the "one nature" christology of Alexandria, the Antiochenes defended the "two natures" of the incarnate Son by arguing that Jesus Christ is both God and a human being, possessing both a perfect divine nature and a perfect human nature in "perfect conjunction." Against the Alexandrian insistence on the assumption of a

"general" human nature, the Antiochenes argued that the *Logos* united to a specific human being in the incarnation; that is, the human nature of Christ is a whole and complete person, having an active mind and will. Convinced that the Alexandrian position led to the "mingling" or "confusion" of the divine and human natures, the Antiochenes emphasized their distinct identities, viewing the two natures of Jesus Christ much like water-tight compartments: neither interacting nor mingling with one another, yet held together by the good pleasure of God. Antiochene christology reached a crisis point in the thought of Nestorius (died *c*.451), who, his critics argued, expressed a doctrine of "two sons," that is, that Jesus Christ was not a single individual but "two persons," one human and the other divine (McGrath, 1998:55-57; Olson, 1999: 205, 206).

Controversy erupted when Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, forbade the use of the popular term, *Theotokos* ("God-bearer"), to refer to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Against the Alexandrians, who favoured the term as a logical outcome of their doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*, Nestorius, who regarded the nature of divinity in the Greek philosophical terms of immutability and impassibility, argued that divine nature could neither be born nor die. Because he believed so strongly in the divinity of the Son, Nestorius resisted any attribution of creatureliness to the incarnate Word, believing that it would confuse the divine and human natures; thus, he argued, the humanity is merely the "vehicle" or "instrument" for the use of the divinity and is not the divinity itself. Moreover, Nestorius viewed *Theotokos* as "crypto-Apollinarian," regarding the title, "God-bearer," as an implication that Jesus Christ was not fully human. In common with Antiochene christology, Nestorius regarded divinity and humanity as mutually exclusive categories; that is, one cannot be both fully human and fully divine. For Nestorius, to say that Mary gave birth to God is to deny the full humanity of Jesus Christ; therefore, he denied the Alexandrian doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* as the basis of his rejection of *Theotokos* (Gonzales, 1987:354, 363, 364; Olson, 1999:211-214).

Nestorius' thinking on the relation between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ can be viewed as the logical conclusion of Antiochene christology, which emphasized the humanity of Jesus, while trying to do justice to his divinity. Nestorius tried to explain the humanity and divinity of the incarnate Son in such a way as to preserve the integrity of both natures. For Nestorius, real humanity cannot exist apart

from a specific individual who is the conscious centre of that nature; thus, *prosopon* ("person") and *physis* ("nature") go together in both divinity and humanity. In an attempt to avoid the assertion of adoptionism, Nestorius posited a special kind of union between the divine and human natures of Christ, one he referred to as *synapheia* (L., *conjunctio*): Jesus Christ is a "conjunction" or "union" of "divine nature-person" and "human nature-person," the eternal *Logos* and the human Jesus in intimate union. Arguing that each nature retains its own predicates, which may not be confused, Nestorius denied the Alexandrian doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Thus, he was compelled to assert that the incarnation results in two persons: the Son of God and the son of Mary. To this union of two persons, we assign the name Jesus Christ (Gonzales, 1987:363; Olson, 1999:215, 216).

Nestorius was opposed by Cyril, bishop of Alexandria (died 444), who considered the former's christology a sophisticated form of the "adoptionism" associated with the Antiochene heretic, Paul of Samosata. The similarity between adoptionism and Nestorianism lay in the fact that, in both, the Son of God never truly enters human existence; rather, the person of the divine *Logos* remains both distinct and different from, the human person of Jesus. Cyril dismissed the "non-interactive" Antiochene model as a mere "conjunction" of natures rather than a genuine union, arguing that it was ineffective in safeguarding the vital soteriological principles at stake in the doctrine of the incarnation (*i.e.*, divinization) (Gonzales, 1987:366, 367; Olson, 1999:216, 217; *cf*. McGrath, 1998:57-61).

Nestorianism was officially condemned at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431). Against Nestorius, the council affirmed the unity of the divine and human natures in affirming that Jesus Christ is "one person," not two. Perhaps unfairly, Nestorius is regarded as one of the great heresiarchs of Church history, while Cyril is regarded as one of the great defenders of orthodox christology (Gonzales, 1987:367; Olson, 1999:217, 218, 220; Torrance, 2008:197, 200).

Cyril, the staunch opponent of Nestorius, is credited with articulating the basic outlines of the doctrine of the "hypostatic union," the doctrine that became foundational to the orthodox articulation of the mystery of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. In brief, the doctrine asserts that the subject of the life of Jesus Christ is the divine *Logos*, the eternal Son of God, who assumed a human nature while remaining fully divine. Cyril

rejected a Nestorian "conjunction" of natures and replaced it with "hypostatic" union: the union of two realities in the one *hypostasis*, or "personal subject," of the divine *Logos*. According to Cyril, there is no human personal subject in the incarnation. While the human nature of Jesus Christ includes every aspect of humanity, that is, body, soul, spirit, mind, and will, it lacks an "independent" or "autonomous" personal being over against the *Logos*. The humanity appears *anhypostasia*, that is, "impersonal." The *hypostasis*, or "personal subsistence," of Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who condescended to take on human flesh through Mary. As Cyril argued, Mary gave birth to God in the flesh. Hence, the doctrine of the hypostatic union is the foundation of the *communicatio idiomatum*. For Cyril, the one personal subject of the eternal Son is both divine and human; thus, because they are one and the same person in two modes of being, it is correct to say that the Son of God was born, suffered, and died, and it is also correct to say that the human Jesus worked miracles and forgave sin (Olson, 1999:218, 219; *cf*. Gonzales, 1987:366, 367, 378).

5.3.3 The Chalcedonian Definition

Notwithstanding the condemnation of Apollinarianism at Constantinople and Nestorianism at Ephesus, the christological disputes between Alexandria and Antioch continued, with both schools convinced that the christology of the other compromised the doctrine of the incarnation in ways that undermined or destroyed Jesus Christ's ability to save. Antiochene christology continued to emphasize the two natures in such a way as to functionally separate the human from the divine, so that Jesus Christ accomplished salvation as a godly man who fully cooperated with the divine *Logos* that assumed him. Alexandrian christology, on the other hand, emphasized the role of the divine *Logos*, who assumes humanity unto himself and, thereby, heals the wounds of sin and death for all who participate in him by faith. Alexandrian christology, with its emphasis on the divine nature of the *Logos*, reached an extreme point in the *monophysite* ("one nature") christology of Eutyches. A staunch opponent of Nestorius, Eutyches rejected any assertion of "two natures" after the incarnation and subsequently undermined the humanity of Jesus Christ to such a degree that it seemed to vanish like a drop of wine in the ocean of his divinity. Eutyches' main error consisted in denying the consubstantiality of the Saviour with humanity. In asserting that the humanity of Jesus made no difference to the divine *Logos*, Eutychianism was hardly more than a new form of Docetism (Olson, 1999:222, 223; *cf*. Gonzales, 1987:370-372).

The differences between Alexandrian and Antiochene christology were finally resolved at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). Seeking to preserve the truth of both positions, while avoiding the extremes of either, particularly Eutychianism and Nestorianism respectively, the Council reached what is essentially a compromise between the rival positions by affirming that Jesus Christ is "one person" in "two natures." In harmony with the Antiochene position, the council affirmed the real humanity of Jesus Christ and his two natures; in harmony with Alexandrian christology, it asserted that the two natures cannot be separated or divided, but must be held together in one person. Antioch was declared right in its affirmation of two natures, but wrong in its Nestorian denial of the unity of those natures. Alexandria was declared right in its affirmation of "one person" of Jesus Christ, but wrong in the Eutychian denial of the completeness and integrity of the distinct natures of humanity and divinity in their union in Jesus Christ (Olson, 1999:231-233; *cf.* Gonzales, 1987:380).

At the heart of the "Chalcedonian Definition" (*cf.* Kelly, 1978:339, 340; Gonzales, 1987:379; Olson, 1999:231, 232) is the "four fences" of Chalcedon: "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." These phrases serve as boundaries surrounding the mystery of the hypostatic union. "Without confusion, without change" guards the mystery against the monophysite attempt to preserve the one person of Jesus Christ by creating a mixed or hybrid nature from divinity and humanity. "Without division, without separation" protects the mystery from a Nestorian over-emphasis on the distinction of natures, with its tendency to separate them and make two persons of the incarnate Son. In addition, the "Definition" asserts that Jesus Christ is "*homoousios* with the Father as to his Godhead" and "*homoousios* with us as to his manhood." Thus, Jesus Christ is both fully divine and fully human. The Definition further asserts that the two natures of Jesus Christ concur "in" one person (*prosopon*) and one *hypostasis*, with the properties of each nature preserved. Moreover, despite the omission of Cyril's phrase, "hypostatic union," it is clear that the divine *Logos* is regarded as the unique subject of the incarnation, as evidenced by the sanction given to the controversial term, *Theotokos*. Thus, orthodox, catholic belief is that Jesus Christ is God with a human nature, not merely a man elevated into a special relationship with God (Kelly, 1978:341; Olson, 1999:233, 234).

Torrance (2008:83-86) makes three important points regarding the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ as articulated at Chalcedon:

- First, the doctrine of Jesus Christ is the "mystery of true divine nature and true human nature in one person." This is the "heart" of the Christian faith. This mystery cannot be categorised in terms of what we already know; rather, it can be known only out of itself and can only be acknowledged with wonder and thanksgiving; hence, doxology is the "first step" in the doctrine of Christ. In acknowledging that the mystery can be known only out of itself, Torrance remains true to his kataphysical methodology, wherein a reality is known only in accordance with its nature (*kata physin*) and not in terms of antecedent presuppositions or *a priori* conceptual categories. In assigning primacy to doxology, Torrance maintains his assertion that faith and worship are integral to the epistemological process.

- Second, the mystery of Jesus Christ is that true God and true man are united in one person; that is the doctrine of the hypostatic union. Yet, the mystery of Christ can only be stated in negative terms; that is, we can only say what it is "not." The Chalcedonian doctrine of Christ states that divinity and humanity are united in Jesus Christ in such a way that there is no impairing or diminishing of either the divinity or the humanity, and there is neither separation of the natures or confusion between them. This is expressed in the four great negative terms *inconfuse* ("without confusion"), *immutabiliter* ("without change"), *indivise* ("without division"), and *inseparabiliter* ("without separation"). In noting that the mystery of the hypostatic union can only be stated in negative terms, however, Torrance is not retreating to a form of apophatic mysticism, wherein descriptions of God can only be stated negatively (*i.e.*, God is "not this"). Rather, notwithstanding the definitive self-disclosure of God in Jesus Christ, wherein God may be known positively according to his nature, we are not given to understand, let alone articulate, exactly "how" divinity and humanity are united in one person; we are given only to know, by faith, that such mystery has occurred in Jesus Christ.

- Third, the union of divine and human natures in the incarnation is entirely the result of the transcendent act of the eternal Son in assuming human flesh. As a

> result of that act, the eternal Son of God, without ceasing to be God, now exists as the man Jesus, who is fully and truly human with his own individual life. On the other hand, apart from the act of God in the incarnation, there would have been no Jesus of Nazareth, so that the humanity of Jesus is grounded in the act of the eternal Word becoming flesh. According to Bevan (2002:75, 76), Torrance embraces the *anhypostatic-enhypostatic* couplet used by Cyril of Alexandria (*Apologia contra Theodoretum*; Torrance, 1996a:160 n. 73), and later formulated at Chalcedon, to illuminate the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ (*cf.* Bevan, 2002: 74-77; Ho, 2008:91-98; Chung, 2011:18-21). The doctrine of *anhypostasia* asserts that the human nature of Jesus exists only in union with God. It has no independent existence; hence, *an-hypostasis* ("not person", *i.e.*, no separate person). The human nature of Jesus is given existence in the existence of God. It co-exists in the divine mode of being; hence, *en-hypostasis* ("person in," *i.e.*, real human person *in* the person of the eternal Son). This means that Jesus has a fully human mind, will, and body, and is in complete possession of all human faculties. Torrance's assertion of the doctrine of *anhypostasia*, that is, that there would be no such person as Jesus of Nazareth apart from the incarnation of the eternal Word, rules out adoptionist christologies. Jesus is not merely a man upon whom came the Holy Spirit at his baptism; rather, apart from the incarnation of the Word, he would never have existed. At the same time, Torrance's assertion of the doctrine of the *enhypostasia* means that Jesus was fully human and, therefore, rules out Docetic, Apollinarian, and monothelist christologies.

According to Ho (2008:91, 92), *anyhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* are two different ideas developed by the Church fathers to conceptualise the role of the human nature in the person of the historical Jesus Christ. Noting Torrance's assertion that *anhypostasia* means that the human nature of Jesus Christ has no independent "subsistence" apart from the incarnation, that is, apart from the hypostatic union, Ho notes that the "purpose" of this concept is " to avoid any impression or possibility that a fourth person was created in the incarnation." Citing Schaff (1995:757, 758), Ho (2008:91) asserts that it was the *Logos* who assumed humanity in the incarnation with no "interruption" of the divine nature before or after the incarnation. On the other hand, notes Ho, the human nature of Christ had no existence prior to the incarnation, for it cannot exist "independently" of the *Logos.* Thus, the human nature assumed in the incarnation does

not have its own "personality" but is incorporated with the "personality" of the pre-existent *Logos*. For Ho (2008:96), the central issue in this regard is not whether Christ has only one nature or two unique natures, but rather, which of the two natures is primary and in what way does the created human nature fit with the eternal *Logos*. Logically, notes Ho, the eternal has primacy over the temporal, which is the Alexandrian position. Nevertheless, since Jesus of Nazareth is a historical person, his humanness is undeniable, as in the Antiochene position. Like Torrance, Ho regards the Chalcedonian position as a compromise between the rival christological factions of Egypt and Syria by stressing the Antiochene "two unique natures" and the Alexandrian "one Christ."

Similarly, as Chung (2011:18, 19) notes, for Torrance, the humanity of Jesus Christ cannot be understood apart from the hypostatic union. According to Chung, Torrance appropriates the conceptual tools *anhypostasia-enhypostasia* to explicate the full human nature of Jesus Christ, for these concepts are inseparable if we are to truly understand the humanity assumed in the incarnation. The human person of Jesus is not a separate person from the incarnate *Logos*, but God and man in the one person of the incarnate Son of God; thus, as Chung notes, what the Word of God has achieved as a human being, from birth through death and resurrection, cannot be severed from the hypostatic union. In this regard, Chung notes three important points that are related to Torrance's discussion of the humanity of Jesus Christ: first, adhering to the patristic assertion, "the unassumed is the unhealed," Torrance asserts that the eternal Word assumes "fallen" humanity in the incarnation; second, for Torrance, the humanity of Jesus Christ is "dynamically related" to the divinity of Jesus Christ, and third, the humanity of Christ is marked by the incarnate Son's perfect filial obedience to the Father. We will discuss all three points in detail below, particularly in Chapters Six and Seven.

5.3.4 A Unitary Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union

Contrary to the aberrant, dualist christologies that plagued the early Church, Torrance insists on a "unitary" view of the relation of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. Arguing that the Church must continually relearn the christological lessons of the past, Torrance (1992:63) writes:

> [I]t became clear to the great patristic theologians that a very different, unitary approach to the doctrine of Christ was needed, one in which they understood him right from the start in his wholeness and integrity as one Person who is both God and man. It was only as they allowed Jesus Christ in his whole undivided reality to disclose himself to them as the Mediator, that they were able to formulate a doctrine of Christ which did justice to the whole frame of the Gospel within which and from which he confronted them as Lord and Saviour.

As Scandrett (2006:67), notes, in keeping with his emphasis on the centrality of the incarnation, as well as his insistence on the "unitary" nature of reality and the correlative rejection of cosmological and epistemological dualisms, Torrance places great emphasis on the unity of divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ. In this respect, notes Scandrett, Torrance is "thoroughly Athanasian and Chalcedonian, and lauds the theology of Cyril of Alexandria for its stalwart rejection of any kind of christological dualism" (*cf.* Torrance, 1996a:247). For Torrance, it is the unity of divine and human natures, that is, Jesus Christ "in his wholeness and integrity as one Person," on which the content of Christian theology depends and in which we find the coherence of the ontological, epistemological, and soteriological dimensions of the mediation of Jesus Christ. According to Scandrett (2006:71), the significance of the unity of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ cannot be overemphasized in Torrance's unitary theology, for, in Torrance's view, it is the "Rosetta Stone" of a truly Christian theology.

In agreement with Scandrett, as will be shown below, Torrance's understanding of the hypostatic union is clearly in line with the Definition of Chalcedon. He adds nothing new to the orthodox understanding of the relation of divinity and humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ; rather, he goes to great length to articulate the epistemological and evangelical significance of the doctrine.

In addition, we note that in Torrance's holistic, unitary doctrine of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation, the "work" of Jesus Christ is never separated from the "person" of Jesus Christ. For Torrance, "how" Jesus Christ provides atoning reconciliation is a direct function of "who" he is as the incarnate Saviour, who is at once both God and man. As Purves (2007:25) notes, christology is not soteriology: we do not know Christ from his works. To be sure, the christological question is prior to the soteriological question. When we know "who" Jesus Christ is as God and man, then we may begin to understand what he does and what it means. As Scandrett (2006:71)

rightly notes, the unity of the "person" and "work" of Jesus Christ is an important corollary of Torrance's discussion of the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. For Torrance, atoning reconciliation takes place "within" the incarnate constitution of Jesus Christ; that is, Jesus Christ "is" the Gospel, for he "embodies" reconciliation between God and humanity. This important corollary of Torrance's discussion of the hypostatic union will be discussed in detail in the following Chapter.

Therefore, prior to our explanation and examination of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in the hypostatic union, we re-emphasise the holistic, non-dualist character of Torrance's theology. While the mediation of revelation and reconciliation may be conceptually distinguished, for Torrance, they are undivided aspects of the two-fold, yet *unitary* movement of mediation incarnate in Jesus Christ, who, as "of one being with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*) "embodies" the mediation of the revelation of God, and who, as God and man joined in hypostatic union, "embodies" atoning reconciliation between God and humanity.

5.4 Epistemology (Revelation)

The hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, as articulated at the Council of Chalcedon, has vital implications for the knowledge of God. Prior to a detailed inquiry into the mediation of reconciliation in the person of Jesus Christ, we must first examine the epistemological significance of the hypostatic union. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you say I am?" (Mt 16:15). In the Torrance theological tradition, the "Who?" question takes priority over the "how?" question. Before we can fully consider the work of atoning reconciliation, we must first understand "Who" Jesus Christ is, for if we ask the wrong question at the beginning, we will never grasp the heart of the Gospel (Purves, 2007:24; *cf.* Cass, 2008:172).

As Purves (2007:24, 25, 29) argues, an examination of the person of Jesus Christ must begin with a non-foundationalist christology. In other words, we do not begin with pre-determined, independently derived epistemological assumptions about the subject of inquiry. For example, we do not allow the epistemological assumptions of the Enlightenment to set the boundaries of our inquiry into the nature of Jesus Christ. We do not begin christological inquiry with questions about the possibility of God entering space-time history; rather, we begin with the fact that he did. Neither do we seek to

answer the "Who?" question by reflection on our human experience, but only in terms of God's actual self-revelation in Jesus. Purves' argument fully accords with Torrance's realist, interactionist epistemology and stands in stark contrast to the charges of foundationalism, already noted (*cf.* Chapter Two), associated with Thiemann (1985:158, 159, 165, 166; *cf.* Stratton, 1997:316, 317) and taken up by Ho (2008:24-28).

In agreement with Purves, we note that Torrance begins with the fact of God's intervention in human history, for the historical-empirical, space-time incarnation is the *sine qua non* of Torrance's "realist" epistemology. In Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ, "actuality" is always epistemologically and methodologically prior. Knowledge unfolds in accordance with the nature (*kata physin*) of the object of inquiry as it is revealed in the course of investigation. Christological inquiry, therefore, is conducted on the terms of the divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ, who is "of one nature" with the Father. In harmony with the patristic assertion that only God can reveal God, the Torrance tradition asserts there is no other ground for knowing Jesus outside of Jesus himself; Jesus is self-attesting. The "Who?" question, therefore, is an ontological question, not a phenomenological question. The intent of the question is to discover the Lord who has already revealed himself and claimed us for his own. Thus, theology pursues its questions *a posteriori*, not *a priori*. Christological inquiry is pursued after the fact of God's self-revelation in the incarnate Son, not according to a previously determined epistemological necessity established independently of Christ (*cf.* Purves, 2007:24-26).

In order to examine who Jesus Christ is and how he mediates revelation in his incarnate constitution, we must strive to understand, as much as humanly possible, the relation of humanity and divinity in his one person. To be sure, both the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ are essential for the mediation of revelation. In his humanity, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, assimilates to himself human hearing and speaking, so that he might address us within the limitations of human life in a way we can understand. In his deity, Jesus Christ assures us his Word of revelation has divine validity, authority, and significance, for it is the very Word of God.

5.4.1 Jesus' Humanity and the Mediation of Revelation

As Ho (2008:122) argues, there is an "inseparable bond" between the *homoousion* and the hypostatic union in Torrance's theology, for the incarnation constitutes the epistemological and ontological centre of revelation, from both a centre in the eternal being of God (*homoousion*) and in the temporal world of human beings (hypostatic union). For Torrance, when the *homoousion* is applied to the Son, notes Ho (2008:128), Jesus acts as an "epistemic bridge" between God and humanity in that he is both the being of God and the being of man. According to Torrance (1988a:135):

> [T]he *homoousion* applies to the relation between the *incarnate* Son and God the Father. That is to say, it grounds the reality of our Lord's *humanity*, and of all that was revealed and done for our sakes by Jesus, in an indivisible union with the eternal being of God.

Thus, as Ho (2008:126) contends, the *homoousion* "sets" the relation between the Father and the incarnate Son while the hypostatic union "sets" the relation between Jesus and humanity.

As Chung (2011:21) argues, while the divinity of Jesus Christ is critical to the mediation of revelation, the theological understanding of the humanity of Jesus Christ must be safeguarded, or the doctrine of the hypostatic union will be "suffer misapprehension." As Chung rightly asserts, there is no Mediator apart from the one who is both fully God and fully human. Although Torrance puts great emphasis on the divinity of Christ by constituting the Nicene *homoousion* as the epistemological and ontological linchpin of his doctrine of mediation, he does not diminish the importance of the humanity of Christ in his doctrine of mediation.

For Torrance (2008:185, 186), the humanity of Jesus Christ in its "stark actuality" is essential for the mediation of revelation. In Jesus Christ, the eternal Word by whom all things were created (John 1:3; Col 1:16: Heb 1:2) became a creature, a human being, without ceasing to be the eternal Word of God. Therefore, the very "creatureliness" of Jesus constitutes the act of divine revelation in a means accessible to humankind. Because the eternal Word has become temporal, human beings can know eternal truth in creaturely form within the limitations of time. For Torrance, "The historical humanity of Jesus is the guarantee that within the relativities and contingencies of our historical human existence, revelation is reality, and is [actually] accessible to us at our level." As Torrance states elsewhere (1982:84):

> Christian theology arises within and is bounded by a triadic relation in which God, man, and world are involved together in a movement of God's personal

> and creative interaction with man whereby he makes himself known to him within the objectivities and intelligibilities of the empirical world.

In God's self-revelation in his ongoing historical dialogue with Israel and, especially, in Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, we come to apprehend divine revelation and the appropriate human response. According to Torrance, the self-revelation of God comes directly from the revealing activity of the incarnate Word of God, who "has penetrated the barriers of estrangement, opened it out to the light and understanding of God, and established a two-way connection between God and man in the incarnation" (Torrance, 1982:85, 86; *cf.* 1971:138). Torrance (1982:88) continues:

> In Jesus, God's eternal Word graciously humbled himself to participate in finite being, submitting to its limitations and operating within its struggles and structures, thus fulfilling God's revealing and redeeming purpose for his incarnate life as Man on earth and in history ... Thus, in effecting his self-communication to man, the Word of God assimilated the hearing and speaking of man to himself as constitutive ingredients of divine revelation. In him God's articulate self-utterance became speech to man, through the medium of human words, and speaks as man to man, for in him God assumed human speech into union with his own, effecting it as the human expression of the divine Word.

Torrance's argument that in the Word made flesh, "God's articulate self-utterance became speech to man," is succinctly expressed by Barth: "God himself speaks when this man [the incarnate Word] speaks in human speech" (Barth, 1957e:51).

In keeping with his critical realist epistemology, wherein the human mind is capable of apprehending reality, Torrance (1982:89, 90) argues that the reciprocity between divine speaking and human hearing embodied in the incarnate Word of God arises from the "correlation of the uncreated Word and Rationality of God and the created word and rationality of man." The Word who became incarnate in Jesus Christ is the very Word of God through whom all things were created and in whom they are unceasingly sustained (*cf.* Col 1:16, 17). While the eternal Word is independent of what he has created, notes Torrance, he is "the free creative source and ground of all finite being." He created the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) and gave it a contingent reality and order of its own which he preserves and protects, while remaining sovereignly transcendent over it. According to Torrance:

> It was into this created rationality (or *logos*) that the Word (or *Logos*) of God entered, assimilating it to himself in the incarnation, in order to become Word of God to man through the medium of human word and rationality and in order to provide from the side of man for an appropriate response in truth and goodness toward God.

Torrance (1982:91) continues:

> In Jesus Christ, then, the eternal Word of God became man within this world of contingent existence and contingent rationality, sharing to the full the conditions, distinctions, and connections of space and time that characterize the thought and speech of all men, in order to be understandable and communicable as intelligible word to all men.

Without ceasing to be the eternal Word of God, Jesus took within himself earthly life, action, and speech in such a way "as to constitute it not merely the earthen vessel of the Word of God, but his actual speaking of it to mankind." Torrance continues:

> That is to say, within the hypostatic union of divine and human nature that took place in Jesus Christ, there is included a union between uncreated and created rationality and between uncreated and created word, so that it is in the rational form of creaturely human word that Jesus Christ mediates God's word to all mankind.

In regard to Jesus' statement, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by me" (Jn 14:6), Torrance notes that the Nicene Fathers saw Jesus Christ as the *arche* or "controlling principle" by which all knowledge of God is tested. The "downright humanity" of Jesus Christ became the "touchstone" of authentic knowledge of God and the understanding of the Christian message. By the humanity of Jesus, notes Torrance, we have access to the Father, for as a "corporal visible reality," he is the way that leads us back to the Father (Torrance, 1988a:62, 63). Torrance continues:

> It is only as our knowledge of God conforms to Jesus Christ that it can be accurate and precise knowledge of God, for Jesus Christ the incarnate Son is the perfect and proportionate image of God, the one Form or *Eidos* of Godhead, the 'exact seal' ... in whom the Father imparts to us knowledge of himself as he really is and as he has actually manifested himself.

Torrance (1988a:63) follows Athanasius (*Contra Arianos,* 3.1) and the Cappadocians (Gregory Nazianzus/Basil, *Ep*., 38.8) in asserting that the incarnate Son of God is not only the image, but also the "very reality of God in his self-communication to us," the "Form and Face" of knowledge of the Father, so that to know Jesus Christ is to know the Father, for "the Person (*hypostasis*) of the Father is known in the Form of the Son."

For Torrance, the incarnation of the Word of God means that God assumes human form and reveals himself to us within the actual forms of human life in the only way that we can understand. God's ways are not our ways; thus, God does not reveal himself to us in his total otherness; rather, he reveals himself within the conditions of our human and creaturely nature. Because God has become human in the incarnate Word, notes Torrance, it is possible for us to know him, not as a result of any innate capacity we possess to know God, but solely on the ground that God is free and able to meet us

within the limitations of our creaturely existence (Torrance, 2008:192). Torrance continues:

> There, within human nature, God reveals himself as God in terms of what is not God, in terms of what is man. He speaks to us in a human voice, in human language, and in human thought forms. He assumes the humble form of a servant within the condition of our human nature. He did not assume a form unknown to us, but our actual human form under law, the form of servitude, and so speaks our creaturely and earthly language under all its limitations and imperfections.

Torrance's assertion of the mediation of revelation in the familiar form of "creaturely and earthly language" is in keeping with his critical realist epistemology, with its insistence that the subject matter of scientific theology can actually be known. Against the Kantian bifurcation between the knower and the known, the hypostatic union is the embodiment of a "union" between divine and created word, so that Jesus Christ reveals divine word in human form and, thus, enables divine revelation to be comprehended within the limitations of human thought and speech.

5.4.2 The Incarnate Word and the Written Word

Given Torrance's insistence that Jesus Christ is the definitive self-disclosure of God, mediating divine revelation through the very humanity he assumed in the incarnation, the question may arise as to his understanding of the role of Holy Scripture in the mediation of revelation.

5.4.2.1 Influence of Barth

As Gill (2007:75; *cf.* McGrath, 1999:42-46) notes, from early in his academic career, Torrance was influenced by Barth in his understanding of scripture as revelation. For Barth (Torrance, 1962:109, 119; Gill, 2007:76, 77), scripture is *Holy* Scripture. It is not only witness to revelation; it is the "original and legitimate witness," mediating revelation unlike any other text. For Barth, the Bible bears witness to a divine act in human history; yet, the biblical texts themselves are a human witness to a divine act. They are not in themselves the revelation of God; rather, their role is to point to God and his self-revelation in Christ (*cf.* Torrance, 1962:81).

As Gill (2007:76) notes, Torrance finds in Barth's view of scripture "a dialectic of revelation and hiddeness." The Bible is not revelation; however, it is the graciously

provided witness to revelation. In the Bible, Torrance (1962:119) argues, the Church finds the "primary datum," that is, the Word of God, which is not to be separated from the Bible or confused with it. Yet, this "primary datum" is both veiled and unveiled in and through scripture, both hidden and revealed. The reason for this "dialectic," notes Gill, is the "dual origin" of the Bible; that is, it is the product of fallible, sinful people, yet God speaks through it. God speaks to us in the scriptures, as Torrance (1962:120) argues, but not directly. Instead, God communicates to us through a "transient and imperfect human medium." To be sure, for Torrance, the Bible is the divinely-appointed means of God's revelation, as Gill (2007:76, 77; *cf.* Torrance, 1962:121) notes, but by its very nature it presents a "barrier" to revelation, and this barrier is the nature of the Bible itself.

In addition, notes Gill (2007:77; *cf.* Torrance, 1962:104), in his exposition of Barth, Torrance emphasises the "gracious" nature of revelation. When God speaks to us through scripture, it is not because we have "wrestled" with the text; rather, we hear God's word by the miracle of grace. As Gill notes, when God communicates to us, he is Lord, both of the witness of scripture and the "hearing" of it. This point is important in Torrance's dialogue with North American evangelicalism, notes Gill, for Torrance takes great care to keep the focus on God rather than on the text of scripture. In contrast to liberal theology, on the other hand, both Barth and Torrance regard the Bible as both a historical text and as God's word to the Church. Both men resist treating the Bible as one sacred text among many, holding, instead, to its uniqueness and particularity, without circumventing the sovereignty and grace of God in his self-revelation.

For Torrance, as Gill (2007:79, 80) notes, divine truth is communicated through contingent historical and personal means through the words and writings of human beings. Here Torrance reflects Barth's concern to treat scripture as a historical text, while at the same time maintaining its position as God's word to the Church. Hence, as Gill argues, Torrance, like Barth, attempts to do justice to two ways of reading the Bible that are often set in opposition to one another. Gill sees here a parallel between the mediation of revelation in the hypostatic union and the mediation of revelation in scripture. Just as the "fallen" human nature of Jesus (*cf.* Chapter Six) is the revelation of God in history, so the "fallible human words of Scripture" are the means of God's witness to that self-revelation.

As Gill (2007:77) notes, Torrance is clearly dependent on Barth for his understanding of the nature and place of the Bible, yet Torrance develops Barth's work in new and creative ways. The influence of Barth's view of scripture on Torrance will become more evident below.

5.4.2.2 A New Community of Reciprocity

In order to achieve its end in the mediation of revelation, Torrance argues, the Word of God "had to penetrate, domicile itself, and take form within the interpersonal reciprocities of human society and thereby within the address of man to man." The eternal Word of God from above had to operate within the horizontal dimensions of human life in order to continue the speaking and acting that had developed in the community of reciprocity in Old Testament Israel (*cf.* Chapter Three). According to Torrance, the ongoing mediation of divine revelation involved the creation of a "nucleus" within the "speaker-hearer" relations around Jesus Christ that would provide the controlling basis wherein the self-witness "of" Christ could become the communal witness "to" Christ, "informed, empowered, and used by Christ's self-witness so that it could take the field as the communicable form of his self-witness in history, *i.e.*, as the specific form intended by Christ for the proclamation of God's word to all men." This took place in a "new" community of reciprocity, that is, the apostolic foundation of the Church and the *kerygma* which grew out of it, so that the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ reached out into history through the New Testament scriptures that were born within the apostolic community (Torrance, 1982:91, 92).

In regard to the "new" community of reciprocity that grew up around Jesus, we note Torrance's reaffirmation of the "social coefficient of knowledge" (Torrance, 1985:98-130), that is, his assertion that all human knowledge develops within a social matrix of forms of thought and life that shape our apprehension of reality (*cf.* Chapter Three). For Torrance, the Word of God operates within, and "accommodates" itself to, the dimensions of human life, as in the mediation of revelation in Old Testament Israel. In this regard, argues Webster (2009:11), Torrance posits a "theology of accommodation." Against the scepticism or agnosticism that results from an emphasis on the "the ineffable majesty of God," notes Webster, divine revelation accommodates itself to the limitations of creaturely existence, while remaining "uninhibited by creaturely media." In terms of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, Webster argues, this means that, although

we do not receive the word of God directly, but, rather, through the limitations of fallen human thought and speech, nevertheless, we do receive the divine Word. As Webster (2009:14) notes, Torrance draws upon the concepts of "apostolicity" and the "apostolic mind" to bridge the gap between the divine Word of God and the community to which it is accommodated and revealed. The apostolic community is the "set of social forms" [*i.e.,* the social coefficient of knowledge], wherein "Christ clothed with his Gospel" is received and communicated under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Torrance argues that the New Testament community of reciprocity that grew up around the incarnate Jesus differs from the community of reciprocity that God created in Old Testament Israel. In the apostolic community, the forms of thought and speech that developed in God's dialogue with ancient Israel were not only fulfilled but "transcended and relativised" by the "final and permanent" forms of the Word of God incarnate in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. In the incarnate Son, there is a profound integration of the Word of God and the human word which can be neither disrupted nor "discarded like outworn clothing that has served its purpose in the past," for, in Jesus Christ, the "actual form and reality" of God's word are indissolubly bound together (Torrance, 1982:92, 93). This bears directly on Torrance's understanding of the relation between the written word of God and the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. Torrance (1971:137) writes:

> By the Word of God is meant not man's word about God but quite definitely God's own Word as God Himself lives and speaks it—Word as personal mode and activity of God's Being ... We do not begin, then, with God alone or with man alone, nor even with God speaking on the one hand and man hearing on the other hand, but with God and man as they are posited together in a movement of creative self-communication by the Word of God.

The hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ is, of course, God and man "posited together" in the Godward-humanward movement of God's creative self-communication in space-time reality. In the hypostatic union, God communicates himself to us without any diminishment in his divine reality as God and without any "cancellation" of his human mode of being (Torrance, 1971:137, 138). In one particularly eloquent passage regarding the Word made flesh, Torrance continues:

> This is Jesus Christ, the Interpreter and Mediator between man and God, who, as God of God in unqualified deity and Man as man in unqualified humanity, constitutes in the unity of his incarnate Person the divine-human Word, spoken to man from the highest and heard by him in the depths, and spoken to God out of the depths and heard by Him in the highest.

In "the form of sheer humanity in all its lowliness, weakness, and darkness," God's Word has reached us, so that we may make an adequate response to his summoning word. Yet, the humanity of Jesus Christ is not a "dispensable medium" that may be discarded once it has achieved its purpose; rather, the humanity of the Word of God remains the proof that God in his eternal being is "not closed to us," but is the "manifestation of His freedom to unveil Himself to man and share with him His own divine Life" (Torrance, 1971:138, 139).

5.4.2.3 The "Real Text" Underlying Scripture

According to Torrance, the actual incarnation of the eternal Word of God within the contingencies of human existence in the person of Jesus Christ excludes every other way to the Father (Torrance, 1982:88, 89). Torrance writes:

> Jesus Christ is the one place on earth and in history where full reciprocity between God and man and man and God has been established in such a way that God's Word and Truth come to us within the undiminished realities of our spatiotemporal existence and we human beings may really hear his Word and meet him face to face.

While the scriptures constitute "the divinely provided and inspired linguistic medium which remains of authoritative and critical significance for the whole history of the church of Jesus Christ," argues Torrance, it is, in fact, the "humanity" of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, that is the "real text" underlying the New Testament scriptures, and "it is his humanity to which they refer and in terms of which they are to be interpreted" (Torrance, 1982:89, 92, 93; *cf*. 1992:78, 79).

Because the humanity of Jesus Christ is the "real text" underlying them, Torrance argues that the Holy Scriptures cannot be abstracted from the Son of God incarnate in history and made, in themselves, the object of independent investigation, as occurred in post-Reformation Protestant Scholasticism when the words of scripture were elevated to the status of "the truth" and detached from Jesus Christ, who is himself the embodiment of "the Truth." While God continues to make himself known to us through scripture, argues Torrance, there is an "asymmetrical" relation between God's self-revelation and the written word through which it is mediated. In Jesus Christ, there is a hypostatic union of divine and human word in his one person; that is, there is an ontological or "first-order" relationship between divine and human word, so that the human word of Jesus Christ *is* the Word of God. In the hypostatic union, there is a

relation of ontological "identity" between divine and human factors, so that the divine and human aspects of the incarnate Word of God may not be divided or confused. On the other hand, there is an ontological "difference," or "second-order" relation in the relationship between divine revelation and the language of scripture that grew out of the apostolic community, in which the human words of scripture are not ontologically identical with the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ; rather, they are contingent upon and controlled by the first-order relation of the hypostatic union in Christ himself. As Torrance notes, "The Holy Scripture is not Jesus Christ incarnate." Just as John the Baptist was not the light that was coming into the world, but, rather, bore witness to that Light (Jn 1:8, 9), the Holy Scripture is not the light, but, rather, bears witness to the Light (Torrance, 1982:93-95; 1986b:470-472). Torrance (1982:95) continues:

> [T[he Holy Scriptures are not themselves the real Light that Christ is, but are what they are only as enlightened by him and as they therefore bear witness to him beyond themselves. In no way can the light of the Scriptures substitute for the Light of Christ, for they are entirely subordinate to his Light and are themselves light only as they are lit by his Light. Indeed it may be said that if the Scriptures are treated as having a light inherent in themselves, they are deprived of their true light which they have by reflecting the Light of Christ beyond themselves—and then the light that is in them is turned into a kind of darkness.

As the moon reflects the light of the sun and is not itself the source of that light, so also the scriptures reflect the light of the Son, who is himself the Light that has come into the world (Jn 1:9).

For Torrance, there can be no simple "identification" of the Word and Truth of God with the written word of scripture, for that would bypass Jesus Christ as mediator of revelation and disregard the incarnation. In the incarnation, God makes known himself, not merely propositional truths about himself; the Word and Truth of God are identical with God and remain eternally identical in the incarnate person of the Risen Christ. Thus, the Word and Truth of God cannot be separated from Jesus Christ in such a way as to regard scripture as "truth" in itself considered apart from the incarnate Word (*cf.* Walker, 2009:lxxxii).

According to Gill (2007:78, 79), the Reformed view of the relationship between Christ and scripture informs Torrance's theology. For Torrance, Christian truth is unique in nature because Jesus Christ "is" the Truth. Torrance (1959:xxxii) writes:

> As Kierkegaard put it, this is Truth in the form of personal being, Truth which is identical with the Person of the Teacher. But we must go further than that. It

> is Christ clothed with His Gospel who is the Truth, for this is unique Truth in which Christ's Person and His Message are inseparably one.

In the incarnation, Torrance (1959:xxxiii) argues, "the Absolute fact has become a historical Fact" (*cf.* Kierkegaard). For Torrance, truth is "personal," not propositional. Jesus Christ is the Truth, not statements about him detached from God's self-revelation in Jesus and elevated to an independent status. Torrance takes the phrase, "Christ clothed with his Gospel," from Calvin, which, according to Gill (2007:79), is a succinct way of stating the Reformed doctrine that the Word of God refers primarily to Jesus Christ and only secondarily to the scriptures. Torrance (1959:lxxxiii) argues that the "clothing" in which we meet Christ is not only the humanity he assumed in the incarnation but also the Gospel which he proclaimed in his words and life. "The only Christ we know," he argues, "is Christ clothed with His Gospel, and that is Christ with all His human life and historical acts and His self-communication to us through them." While arguing that the "ontic" and "noetic" aspects of this "clothing" cannot be separated, Torrance contends that the failure of Reformed theology to remain faithful to this teaching contributed to subsequent christological problems that may have been avoided.

In addition, Torrance warns against an "obsession" with scripture. Because the divine reality to which the scriptures point must be "experienced and cognized in the reality it is apart from the words and statements of the Bible," argues Torrance, it is wrong to become "too obsessed with the Bible, as so often happens in the stress that is laid upon its inspiration when our attention is directed to the Bible itself instead of to what it is intended to bear witness." For Torrance, the Bible is used properly "when we attend jointly to the text and the divine realties to which it directs us, yet only in such a way that our attention to the text is subordinated to the realties beyond it" (Torrance, 1982:95, 96). While he argues against an obsession with the Bible, however, Torrance's commitment to the authority of scripture is evident in his personal life, for he read through the Bible two or three times a year in his daily devotions. To be sure, his theology is steeped in the language and thought of scripture, particularly as recorded in the King James Version (Walker, 2009:lxxxiii).

5.4.2.4 Realist Relation between Sign and Signified

Torrance follows Barth in regarding the Bible as a "witness to revelation," which may *become* the word of God (McGrath, 1999:135, 136; Gill, 2007:85). Torrance compares the Bible to a "sign" that points to a reality beyond itself. Torrance's view of the relation between scripture and divine revelation is in keeping with a "realist" relation between "sign" or word and that which is "signified" or indicated. Just as signs or words fulfil their semantic function when they focus attention, not on themselves, but on the reality they signify, or to which they point, so the scripture is a "sign" that directs our understanding toward the Word of God which sounds through it or to the Light which shines through it. In the fulfilment of its semantic service, notes Torrance, "the Bible effaces itself before the immediacy and compulsion of God's self-revelation, which we experience, certainly through the Bible, but in its own divine reality which is independent of the Bible" (Torrance, 1982:96, 97). Torrance continues:

> There is indeed, then, a two-way relation between divine revelation and the Bible, but it is an asymmetrical relation in which ontological priority and authoritative primacy must be given to divine revelation and not to the Bible. It is the subordination of the Bible to that revelation and the semantic service it fulfils in mediating that revelation to us that give the Bible its singular status in our respect and its decisive authority in our knowledge of God.

Note that Torrance distinguishes between "divine revelation" and the Bible and assigns ontological and authoritative primacy to the former. Because the Word of God is mediated through the Bible, however, Torrance assigns scripture a "singular" status of authoritative respect in the knowledge of God.

For Torrance, as Webster (2009:12, 13) rightly notes, "Scripture *refers*"; that is, scripture is a "sign" that directs us to a Reality beyond itself. According to Webster, one of the outstanding features of Torrance's thought is his confidence that the relation between divine Word and human word is "secure," not endangered by the difference between uncreated and created word or by the "fragility" of fallen creaturely acts in producing meaning through texts. For Torrance, notes Webster, the gap between divine revelation and human speech is filled by the gracious condescension of God in Jesus Christ.

In asserting a "realist" relation between sign and that signified, that is, between scripture and the divine reality to which it points, Torrance's position stands in contrast to fundamentalism. For Torrance, when the Bible "intrudes" and becomes the object of immediate attention, as in fundamentalism, it loses its proper semantic function as a "sign," for it points to itself, not to the transcendent Reality beyond (Gill, 2007:86).

Torrance's realist assertion of "sign" and that "signified" also stands in contrast to positions constrained by the presuppositions of cosmological or epistemological dualism (*e.g.*, Bultmann and Kant respectively). As a theological realist who takes seriously the biblical description of God's interaction with humanity in historical space-time, Torrance argues that, even if the biblical description of divine interaction is rejected, we are not entitled "to approach the Bible as if it did not mean to speak of such a God, or therefore to interpret its language and statements ... as if they were not intentionally directed to the activity of such a living, speaking God." The result of such a view, argues Torrance, is a "disinterested" approach to interpretation, wherein the biblical forms of thought and speech are detached from and uncontrolled by the divine reality underlying them, thus allowing the attribution of the particular meaning to scripture that makes them understandable and more palatable in a given cultural situation. If we reject this approach, however, Torrance argues, we have to reckon with a living God who creatively interacts with humanity and makes himself known in a "controlling, articulate, and informing way; that is, we have to reckon with the reality of God's self-revelation to mankind in and through the Holy Scriptures." To commit ourselves to the truth of the biblical message, or, more accurately, "to the truth of God's self-revelation mediated through the Bible," is to submit, in trust, to the objective ground of scripture (Torrance, 1982:97-99). According to Torrance (1982:99,100):

> It is the freely evoked, empirical submission of our minds to the self-evidencing Reality of God, which bears upon us as we listen to the message of the Bible, and which lays upon us as an obligation to recognize, reverence, and assent to it that we may not rationally or in good conscience resist. This external or objective anchoring of our commitment saves that commitment from being subjective or arbitrary, for it binds our faith and understanding to what exists independently of our knowing of it and is universally real and true, and it thereby stakes out the ground for a rigorously scientific approach to interpretation.

Here Torrance implicitly reasserts his commitment to a realist, unitary understanding of the mediation of Christ, wherein knowledge is developed according to the nature of the reality under study. Against Kant's epistemological dualism, Torrance asserts that the word of God mediated to us through Holy Scripture is grounded in an objective reality, one that exists independently of our knowing of it, and whose "truth" is universal and real rather than merely subjective or arbitrary.

5.4.3 Jesus' Deity and the Mediation of Revelation

In becoming fully human as the son of Mary, speaking within the limitations and constraints of human thought and speech, the incarnate Word did not cease to be the eternal Son of God. The incarnation was not the bringing into being of a mere "intermediary" between God and humanity, as in Arianism, or the mere "adoption" of a mortal man to act as son of God, as in adoptionism, but the enfleshment of God in such a way that Jesus Christ is both God and man in the fullest sense (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:150). Torrance is concerned to assert that in all his earthly activity, Jesus Christ embodies the word and acts of God. Yet, though they are the acts of God, they are, at the same time, the acts of the fully human Jesus, who is one with us in nature and activity. Thus, the words and acts of Jesus Christ are at one and the same time both divine and human (*cf.* Colyer, 2001a:83).

As Torrance argues, the full deity of Jesus Christ is essential for the mediation of divine revelation. Not only must divine revelation come to us in a form amenable to human understanding, but also its reality as the revelation of God must be "grounded on the reality of God's presence in it, the reality of God's act of self-communication in and through it"; that is, it must be grounded on the "identity" between revelation and the Revealer. To mediate revelation to us, therefore, Jesus Christ must be both God and human: if Jesus Christ were not human, then God's revelation would not be revelation to humanity; if Jesus Christ were not God, then his mediation of revelation would not be divine revelation, for only God can reveal God. Torrance (2008:188, 189) continues:

> To reveal God, the revealer must take the place of God, and only God can take his own place. This identity of Christ's revelation with God's self-revelation is the ground of our assurance and certainty that what we know and he whom we know in and through Jesus Christ, is none other than the Lord God himself, and that there is nothing in God essential to our knowledge of him which is hid from us. It is the guarantee that God as he is in himself has no reality other than that revealed to us in and through Jesus Christ.

In Christ, God reveals himself in an act that is identical with his person; that is, the Revealer and the revelation are the same. As the divine Son, who is *homoousios to Patri*, Jesus *is* the revelation he brings (*cf.* Jn 14:9). Torrance (1986b:466) clearly articulates the identity of Revealer and revelation as follows:

> That the *incarnate* Son of God is one in being and agency with the Father means that Jesus Christ, God and man, is the objective content of divine Revelation. Jesus Christ *is* God revealed to us; he *is* the Word of God made flesh. God's Revelation is hypostatically embodied in Christ, and cannot be detached from him as the *Self*-revelation of God, for that would be tantamount to disjoining what God is in his Self-revelation from what he is in his inner Being as God.

As argued above (*cf.* Chapter Four), for Torrance, the Nicene *homoousion* is the ontological and epistemological link between the economic and the immanent Trinity. As the consubstantial Son of the Father, Jesus Christ is the objective content of revelation. The identity of Christ's revelation with God's self-revelation assures us that what we know in and through Jesus Christ is God "as God is" in himself and that there is no reality other than the God revealed in Jesus (*cf.* Kelly, 2007:80). As Torrance (2008:189) argues, "Thus the full reality of Christ's deity is essential to revelation, and faith, for the reality of revelation is grounded in the reality of the action and presence of God in Christ, on the identity of his revelation with God's self-revelation."

5.4.4. Hypostatic Union and the Mediation of Revelation

Nevertheless, not even in Jesus can we bridge the gap between God and humanity, Torrance contends, unless there is in him the hypostatic union, and unless the human speech and acts of Jesus are predicates of the *one* divine person. Because the man Jesus is also God, however, his human speech and actions, as well as his human thought forms, are also divine revelation. Without the hypostatic union, we would not hear God in Jesus' creaturely speech; yet, because Jesus Christ is both divine and human, in the creaturely speech of Jesus, we hear the language of God. As Torrance argues, "It is only in that union in which God's language condescends to take on creaturely form, and human language is joined to God's language, that there is real revelation" (Torrance, 2008:192, 193). As Torrance notes elsewhere (1980a:160):

> It is on the ground of the *hypostatic union***,** the indissoluble union of God and man in the one Person of Christ, that the epistemic reference we make can have any substantiation in reality, for it is through that hypostatic union in Christ that such a reference is firmly anchored in the reality of God and of man.

In the hypostatic union, notes Ho (2008:120, 121), we come to know not only empirical events but also "the deep meaning of reality, which is God Himself." Because the Son is "of one being with the Father," Ho argues, the knowledge of the Father and the knowledge of the Son cannot be separated; that is, we cannot know the Son apart from the Father or the Father apart from the Son. The hypostatic union, therefore, is the "access point" to the knowledge of God, Ho argues, because "it is both in God himself and in our creaturely existence." The hypostatic union is the "place" where God gives himself to us within our space-time conditions, while, at the same time, the divine knowledge revealed in the Son arises from the eternal being of God.

For Torrance, all true knowledge of God comes through the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ, the divine Son who came to reveal the Father. As Torrance (2008:193) notes:

> It is in this particular and unique human form forever joined to the Word or Son of God, that we are given to share in the mystery of God. In Jesus Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3), and in him alone, do we know God, and have communion with him.

As Torrance (1988a:55) argues, without giving up his divinity, the incarnate Son lived his divine life within our humanity, "as a real human life," in such a way as to reveal something of the "innermost secret" of the divine life of God. As Gill (2007:46) rightly notes, for Torrance, it is only in and through Christ that we are able to hear and understand the Word of God; apart from Christ we cannot (*cf.* Torrance, 1962:142). As Ho (2008:121 122) notes, it is only through the incarnate Son that Torrance finds true knowledge of God revealed within the grasp of human understanding.

5.5 Soteriology (Reconciliation)

In addition to its epistemological implications, the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ is of vital soteriological significance. In terms of human salvation, it is not enough that Jesus Christ is "of one being with the Father." If we are to be saved, the incarnate Son must also be *homoousios* with humanity. The remainder of the present chapter will introduce the soteriological implications of the hypostatic union. This theme will be taken up more fully in the following chapter.

5.5.1 Jesus' Humanity and the Mediation of Reconciliation

The consubstantial relation between Jesus and the Father is vital for our salvation. If the ontological bond between the Father and Son is severed, the bottom falls out of the Gospel, because only God can save. Hence, the evangelical significance of the *homoousion* is that Jesus is God (*cf.* Chapter Four).

Following the Council of Nicaea, however, it became clear to the fathers that the humanity of Jesus Christ is as important to our salvation as his divinity. According to Torrance, if in Jesus Christ God did not really become one with sinful humanity by taking our actual human nature upon himself, then the work of Christ on our behalf

would be emptied of saving content, for the work of Christ would have no connection with our side of the gulf opened between God and humanity by our sin. To be mediator between God and humanity, Torrance argues, Jesus Christ must not only be *homoousios* with the Father, but also *homoousios* with us; that is, Jesus Christ must be fully divine and fully human. If Jesus Christ is not fully human as well as fully God, the Gospel is emptied of evangelical and saving import (Torrance, 1988a:3, 4, 146).

In one of his most straightforward and complete statements on the vital importance of the full humanity of Jesus Christ for the mediation of reconciliation, Torrance (1988a:8) writes:

> [I]t is essential to realise that Jesus Christ the Son of God is also man, of one and the same being and nature as we are. If he is not really man, then the great bridge which God has thrown across the gulf between himself and us has no foundation on our side of that gulf. Jesus Christ, to be Mediator in the proper sense, must be wholly and fully man as well as God. Hence the Creed stresses the stark reality and actuality of his humanity: it was for our sakes that God became man, for us and for our salvation, so that it is from a soteriological perspective that we must seek to understand the human agency and life of Jesus Christ. He came to take our place, in all our human, earthly life and activity, in order that we may have his place as God's beloved children, in all our human and earthly life and activity, sharing with Jesus in the communion of God's own life and love as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Torrance (2008:184, 185) argues, "The very fact that God became man in order to save us, declares in no uncertain way that the humanity of Christ is absolutely essential to our salvation." To be our merciful and faithful High Priest, and to make propitiation for our sins, Jesus had to be made like his brethren (*cf.* Heb 2:17). For Torrance, the humanity of Jesus Christ means that God has actually come among us, "in the very same sphere of reality and actuality" to which humanity belongs. If Jesus Christ were not man as well as God, notes Torrance, that would mean God had not actually come all the way to us in order to "gain a foothold" in our creaturely world of space and time. It would mean that God remained far from us, as far as the creature is from the Creator.

As Scandrett (2006:69) rightly notes, for Torrance, the ontological union with our humanity forged by the Word of God in Jesus Christ is essential to our salvation. If the Word of God does not fully share the entirety of our human nature, then humanity is not redeemed from its state of corruption and alienation from God. If Jesus Christ is not *homoousios* with our humanity, then, according to Torrance (1992:62), "[t]here is then no profound cleansing of the roots of the human conscience through the blood of Christ, no radical transformation or rebirth of human being in him, and no ground for

the hope of a creation renewed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Scandrett (2006:69, 70) notes Torrance's critique of "certain forms of Christian theism," which, seeking to safeguard the transcendence of God, fail to acknowledge God's transcendent freedom to become fully and truly human and, thereby, fail to appreciate the necessity of the eternal Word's assumption of our complete humanity in order to secure human salvation and redeem a fallen creation. Consequently, notes Scandrett, Christianity loses its claim that a "real salvation and transformation of human nature" has been accomplished in Jesus Christ.

Torrance goes to great length to argue that the incarnation is to be understood "as God really become man." Jesus Christ is not merely a man "participating" in God but is himself "essential Deity." Against adoptionism, God did not merely descend on Jesus Christ, as on one of the prophets; rather, "in Jesus Christ God came to dwell among us *as himself man*" (Torrance, 1988a:149, 150). Against christologies that compromise the humanity of Jesus Christ, Torrance writes:

> The Johannine statement that "the Word became flesh" must be understood to mean "became man," but "became man" is to be understood in such a way as not to give place to a dualist conception of man, for ... it is the whole man who is body of his soul and soul of his body, not a body without soul or mind, that is meant.

For Torrance, the Johannine assertion that "the Word became flesh" is decisive, for it means the incarnation is an act of "God himself," in which he became fully human in "the undiminished reality of human and creaturely being" without ceasing to be God. Against static interpretations of the immutability of God, therefore, Torrance argues that the incarnation is to be understood as a real "becoming" on the part of God, in which God comes "as man" and acts "as man" for us and our salvation. In short, Jesus Christ is to be understood not as God "in" man but God "as" man (Torrance, 1976a:227, 228; 1988a:150).

Against Docetic christologies that negate the full humanity of Christ, Torrance (1988a:151) writes:

> The incarnation, far from being some sort of docetic epiphany of God the Son in the flesh, involves the full reality and integrity of human and creaturely being in space and time. The immediate focus is undoubtedly centred on the *human agency* of the incarnate Son within the essential conditions of actual historical human existence, and therefore on the undiminished actuality of the whole historical Jesus Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and buried, and rose again from the dead.

The New Testament makes clear that Jesus Christ is fully human: as bone of bone and flesh of flesh, he eats, drinks, thirsts, grows hungry and tired, and feels pain as well as joy. As one of us, in the same sphere of reality in which mankind lives, the "stark actuality" of his humanity, that is, "his flesh and blood and bone," guarantees that God has come among us as a particular, historical man among other human beings, one we could easily pass by, failing to see anything in him other than ordinary humanity (*cf*. Isa 53:2). As the guarantee of the coming of God into our world of space and time, Christ's humanity assures us that God, in the person of the incarnate Son, is one "of" us and one "with" us. On the other hand, as Torrance cogently asserts, "If Christ is not man, then God has not reached us, but has stopped short of our humanity—then God does not love us to the uttermost, for his love has stopped short of coming all the way to where we are, and becoming one of us in order to save us." If Jesus Christ is not human as well as divine, then God has not come all the way to humanity within the world of space and time, but rather remains far from us. A Docetic view of the humanity of Christ means that God only "appears" to act within our human existence; thus, his acts do not reach to the roots of our condition and have no relevance to our need. If the humanity of Christ is imperfect, atonement is imperfect, and we remain in our sins. As Torrance argues, a Docetic view of Christ breaks the link between God and humanity and destroys the relevance of the divine acts of Jesus for our salvation (Torrance, 2008:185, 186).

Noting that the Nicene fathers defended the full humanity of Jesus on soteriological grounds, Torrance (1988a:152) argues:

> It was the *whole man* that the Son of God came to redeem by becoming man himself and effecting our salvation in and through the very humanity he appropriated from us—if the humanity of Christ were in any way deficient, all that he is said to have done in offering himself in sacrifice "for our sakes," "on our behalf" and "in our place" would be quite meaningless.

Here Torrance (1988a:164) echoes Gregory Nazianzus' (*Epistle*, 101; *cf. Orations*, 1.23; 22.13) assertion that "the unassumed is the unhealed." Against Docetic, Apollinarian, and monothelist christologies that compromise the full humanity of the Son, Torrance asserts that the Son of God became a human being, identifying himself with every aspect of our fallen humanity, all "for us and for our salvation."

Moreover, Torrance (1988a:153, 154; 2002b:108-112) argues that in the incarnation, the Son of God took on not only the form of a man but the form of a servant. In an act of "utter self-abasement and humiliation," Jesus assumed our servile condition under

the slavery of sin "in order to act for us and on our behalf from within our actual existence." Following Basil (*Epistle*, 261.2*ff*), Torrance notes that the Pauline expression, "form of a servant," however, does not refer to a mere "likeness" or "appearance" Jesus assumed in the incarnation, "but the actual form of existence which he took over from the 'lump of Adam'—it was a 'real incarnation'." Against "damaging" kenotic theories that claim the eternal Son emptied "something of" himself in the incarnation, Torrance argues that the eternal Word emptied *himself*. Following Gregory Nazianzus (*Orations*, 1.23; 30.5*ff*), Torrance notes that the Pauline *kenosis* (*cf.* Phil 2:7) did not involve a "contraction, diminution or self-limitation of God's infinite being"; rather, in the incarnation, the eternal Son's divinity was graciously "veiled," not diminished, for humanity cannot behold the unveiled glory of God and live. For Torrance, rather than an "emptying out" of "something of" himself, the Pauline *kenosis* refers to the "humiliation" of God, that is, the "self-abnegating love" expressed in the impoverishment or abasement (*tapeinosis*) the Son of God freely took upon himself entirely for our sake. Here Torrance finds the allied concepts of "servant" and "priest." "The servant form of Christ was discerned to be essential to his priestly oneness with us in virtue of which he could act on our behalf, in our place, and in our stead, before God the Father." As servant and priest, Christ's person and act, that is, who he was and what he did, were completely one, "for he was himself both the one offered and the one who offered for mankind." In the mediation of reconciliation, Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human, ministered the things of God to humanity and the things of humanity to God.

In Jesus Christ, argues Torrance, God has come to us in the form of a servant, veiling his divine majesty, for we cannot look on the unveiled face of God and live. The humanity of the incarnate Son is the "veil" under which the transcendent God draws near to reconcile and save us. Torrance argues that God could not have come to us in a form other than that of a servant, for had God come in a form unknown to us, or in his unveiled glory, he would have disrupted the conditions of our world and our humanity, so that rather than save us, he would have triggered our disintegration. The humanity of Christ holds us at "arm's length" from God, in order to give us "breathing space, time, and possibility for surrender to God's challenge in grace, time for decision and faith in him." As Torrance notes, the humanity of Jesus Christ makes salvation possible, for in the incarnate Son, God comes alongside us as a human being and, within our historical

existence with its temporal relations, acts upon us personally through word and love to draw us out in surrender to God (Torrance, 2008:194). He continues:

> God has come in Jesus to be one with mankind, to act from within humanity, and as man to yield to the Father the obedience of a true and faithful Son, and so to lay hold of God for us from the side of humanity. It is within that union of the Son to the Father that the sinner is drawn, and given to share. In other words, the hypostatic union is enacted as reconciling event in the midst of human being and existence, and in it men and women are given to share by adoption and grace in Jesus Christ.

For Torrance, the humanity of Christ is essential to God's act of reconciliation. The atonement is grounded in the fact that, in the humanity of Jesus, God is acting on our behalf. Atonement is real and actual only as the mediator acts fully from the side of humanity "as man" and from the side of God "as God." If Jesus Christ is really and truly human, then his death for our sins is an act of God "in" human nature, not merely an external act "upon" human nature. Moreover, if atonement is to achieve its purpose, it must be not only an act of God in humanity but also an act of humanity in response to God, that is, humanity's satisfaction for sin "by man" before God. Thus, in the full humanity of Jesus Christ, as it is eternally joined to his deity, both in incarnation and atonement, humanity is restored to its place before God from which it has fallen. As Torrance notes, "[M]an's wrong has been set aside in and with the judgment accomplished upon the humanity of Christ, and now in his humanity our new right humanity has been established before God" (Torrance, 2008:186).

5.5.2 Jesus' Divinity and the Mediation of Reconciliation

If the humanity of Christ is the guarantee of God's historical action among human beings as a human being, the deity of Christ means his work of revelation and reconciliation is not "hollow and empty"; rather, it is the guarantee that in Jesus Christ we have to do with "the full reality of God himself" (Torrance, 2008:187). Torrance continues:

> What Jesus does in forgiveness is not just the work of man, but the work of God, and is therefore of final and ultimate validity. Only God against whom we sin can forgive sin, but the deity of Christ is the guarantee that the action of Christ in the whole course of his life is identical with the action of God towards us. It is not something of God that we have in Christ, but God himself, very God of very God.

The significance of the deity of Christ lies in the fact that it is God himself who acts in Jesus. As Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9) (Torrance,

2008:187; *cf.* Kelly, 2007:79, 80). As Torrance (2008:188) notes, if Christ is not God, then God has not come and dwelt among us:

> Thus as the obverse of the fact that Christ's real humanity means that God has actually come to us and dwells among us, Christ's deity means that God himself has come to save us. The dogma of the humanity of Christ asserts the actuality in our world of the coming of God, and the dogma of the deity of Christ asserts the divine content of our knowledge and salvation, the objective reality of our relation to God himself. The dogma of the deity of Christ means that our salvation in Christ is anchored in eternity: that it is more sure than the heavens.

The reality and validity of our salvation, therefore, is dependent upon the reality of Christ's deity, for our salvation must be an act of God. If Jesus is human only, then his actions are not the actions of God on our behalf. Human salvation depends on the fact that it is God in Christ who suffers and bears the sin of the world, and reconciles the world to himself. Torrance (2008:189) continues:

> The validity of our salvation depends on the fact that he who died on the cross under divine judgement is also God the judge, so that he who forgives is also he who judges. The reality of our salvation means that its reality is anchored on the divine side of reality, that the lamb is slain before the foundation of the world, that he has ascended to the right hand of God the Father almighty, and sits down with God on his own throne because he is God. Everything depends upon the fact that the cross is lodged in the heart of the Father.

For Torrance, to deny the deity of the incarnate Son is to separate the work of Christ from God and make a "monstrosity" of the cross. If we put God in heaven and only Jesus the man crucified at Golgotha, we destroy all hope and are left with a doctrine of despair. But if we put God on the cross, the cross becomes salvation for the whole world. As Torrance argues, "The whole gospel rests upon the fact that it is God who became incarnate, and it was God who in Christ has reconciled the world to himself" (Torrance, 2008:190; *cf.* Kelly, 2007:81).

5.5.3 Hypostatic Union and the Mediation of Reconciliation

Not only is the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ essential for the mediation of reconciliation; the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ is also essential for our salvation. As is characteristic of his unitary approach to theology, Torrance rejects any form of Nestorian dualism that would disrupt the unified integrity of the hypostatic union by bifurcating the person (being) and work (acts) of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of the hypostatic union is the assertion that, in the mystery of Christ, divine and human natures and acts are "truly and completely united in one person" or *hypostasis*. Because humanity and deity are "one and indivisibly united" in the one person of the incarnate Son, Torrance argues, the divine acts in the human nature of Jesus Christ and the human acts in the divine nature of the eternal Word "are both acts of one and the same person"; that is, the divine and human acts of the incarnate Son are all predicates of "the one whole Christ." Also known as "personal union," the hypostatic union transcends even the intimate union of two persons in marriage, for the unity of divine and human acts in Christ inhere in only one person (Torrance, 2008:190, 191). In asserting that the divine and human acts of Jesus are predicates of one person, Torrance aligns himself with the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* associated with Cyril and Alexandrian christology (*cf.* above).

In examining the significance of the two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, we find that the humanity of Christ has no revealing or saving significance apart from his deity; likewise, his deity has no revealing or saving significance apart from his humanity. As Torrance (2008:191, 192) carefully explains:

> The doctrine of Christ is the doctrine of true and complete humanity in full union with true and complete deity, and it is in that *union* that the significance of both revelation and reconciliation lies. It is such a union that the presence of full and perfect humanity does not impair or diminish or restrict the presence of full and perfect deity, and the presence of full and perfect deity does not impair or diminish or restrict the presence of full and perfect humanity. It is such a union that true Godhead and true humanity are joined together in Jesus Christ in such a way that they cannot be separated, and yet that they can never be confused, in such a way also that one does not absorb the other, nor do both combine to form a third entity which is neither divine nor human. In the hypostatic union, God remains God and man remains man, and yet in Christ, God who remains God is forever joined to man, becomes man and remains man. In this union God has become man without ceasing to be God, and man is taken up into the very being of God without ceasing to be man. This is the mystery of Jesus Christ in whom we have communion through the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ is the "objective heart" of Torrance's doctrine of atoning reconciliation (*cf.* Chapter Six). In assuming our "flesh of sin" in the hypostatic union, argues Torrance (2008:195), God "has judged sin in the flesh and made expiation for our sin in his own blood shed on the cross, and so has worked the hypostatic union right through our alienation into the resurrection where we have the new humanity in perfect union with God, and in that union we are given to share." Torrance continues:

> The significance of that atonement lies not merely in that Jesus Christ as man offered a perfect sacrifice to God, nor does it lie merely in that God here

> descended into our bondage and destroyed the powers of darkness, sin, death and the devil, but that here in atonement God has brought about an act at once from the side of God as God, *and* from the side of man as man; an act of real and final union between God and man. Atonement means that God's action was translated into terms of human action, for only in so doing does it reach men and women and become relevant to them as saving act; but it remains God's action, for only so does it touch and lay hold of them, and raise them up to salvation in reconciliation with God.

For Torrance, the significance of the atonement lies in that fact that God has acted both from the side of God as God and from the side of humanity as human in an act of real and final union between God and humanity.

In keeping with his non-dualist, unitary theology, Torrance is careful to assert that there are not two acts in the life and death of Jesus Christ, but only one act by the God-man, a single action which is at once "Godward" and "humanward." If atonement is to be real, Torrance contends, it must take place from humanity's side if we are to be reconciled to God; yet, it must also take place from the side of God, that is, as atonement by God for humanity, if it is to be effectual. Echoing *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* of Athanasius, Torrance argues that only the Word through whom humanity was made, by himself becoming human, can act in our place and for us in such a way as to recover and restore that which we lost (*cf.* Kruger, 2003:15*ff*). Hence, atonement is the work of the God-man, of God and humanity in hypostatic union; it is not merely the work of God "in" humanity but an act of God "as man." "Atonement is possible on the ground of the hypostatic union," argues Torrance, "and only on the ground of atoning reconciliation can the oneness of the Word and our flesh of sin be brought to its full *telos* [*i.e.,* "end" or "purpose"] in the hypostatic union of God and man in the risen Jesus Christ" (Torrance, 2008:195).

Torrance (2008:196) reinforces his argument for atoning reconciliation by stating it differently. If the natures of Christ are divided, that is, separated into a divine person and a human person, then his human acts are not the acts of God and his divine acts are not the acts of a human being. In that case, reconciliation is "illusory," for there is no union of God and humanity. To be sure, it is the doctrine of two natures in *one* person that Torrance calls the "mainstay" of a doctrine of atoning reconciliation, for the hypostatic union is central to the mediation of reconciliation and lies at the heart of the atonement. He continues:

> The purpose of atonement is to reconcile humanity back to God so that atonement issues in union between man and God, but it issues in union

> between man and God because the hypostatic union is that union already being worked out between estranged man and God, between man's will and God's will in the one person of Christ. It is the hypostatic union, or hypostatic at-onement, therefore, which lies embedded in the very heart of atonement. All that is done in the judgement of sin, in expiation of guilt, in the oblation of obedience to the Father is in order to bring humanity back to union with God, and to anchor that union within the eternal union of the Son and the Father, and the Father and the Son, through the communion of the Holy Spirit.

For Torrance, the hypostatic union of God and humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ *is* atoning reconciliation already being worked out between God and estranged humanity. As Scandrett (2006:73, 74) notes, for Torrance, "Mediator" is the "principle designation" by which Jesus Christ must be known (*cf.* 1 Tim 2:5), for from the ontological depths of his incarnate constitution as God and humanity united in one person flow all aspects of his reconciling ministry. As Scandrett rightly attests, this is why Torrance so persistently militates against any dualism between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, for any disjunction between the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ makes nonsense of his role as Mediator.

In the indivisible, inseparable, unconfused, and unchangeable personal union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ lies the mystery of our salvation, argues Torrance. In order to reveal God to humanity, Jesus must be God speaking within the limitations and constraints of human thought and speech. In order to reconcile humanity to God, Jesus must be human, so that his acts reach us; at the same time, he must be divine, for only God can save. Yet, for the mediation of revelation and reconciliation to be valid, all Jesus' acts "for us and for our salvation" must issue from one person, so that every act is both human and divine. As Torrance notes, "Only he can be mediator who is himself the union of God and man, only he can be *pontifex* [bridge-maker] who is himself the *pons* [bridge]" (Torrance, 2008:190).

5.6 Summary and Critique

The New Testament proclaims that Jesus is Lord and provides both explicit and implicit indications of the unity of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. While the Nicene Creed follows the biblical witness in asserting the divinity and humanity of the incarnate Son, the early Church struggled with what Torrance describes as the "constant problem of theology": how to apprehend and articulate the relationship between the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ.

The great christological debates between Alexandria and Antioch, with their different emphases on the relation between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, were considered settled at the Council of Chalcedon. Striving to preserve the truth of the rival christological positions, while avoiding the extremes of either, the Chalcedonian Definition asserts that the eternal *Logos* is the subject of the incarnation. The divine Son, Jesus Christ, is one person or *hypostasis* in two natures, "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." The Chalcedonian Definition remains the orthodox expression of the doctrine of the hypostatic union. The epistemological and evangelical significance of the doctrine has been thoroughly articulated by T.F. Torrance. His essay on the hypostatic union (2008:181-234), originally offered to his students as "class handouts" in the late 1960s, has been described as "the best single writing" on who Jesus Christ is and the difference he makes for our salvation. The heart of Torrance's theology is that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, both fully God and fully man, two natures in one person (Kelly, 2007:78).

Along with the Nicene *homoousion*, the doctrine of the hypostatic union constitutes one of the primary elemental forms in Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ. In describing the union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ as a "mystery" that can only be understood "out of itself,'" as it declares itself to us, Torrance consistently applies his realist epistemology and kataphysical theological method to the doctrine of the hypostatic union, a mystery that can be known not in terms of *a priori* speculation about the nature of God but only *a posteriori*, as we allow the nature of the Object of theological science to reveal itself to us. At the same time, in acknowledging the mystery as one that can be known only by the gracious act of God, Torrance maintains his position that faith is a vital part of the epistemological process.

For Torrance, the humanity of Jesus Christ is essential for the mediation of revelation and is the guarantee that revelation is accessible to us within the limitations of our own creaturely existence. Against the Kantian gulf between the knower and the known, Torrance, as an epistemological realist, describes the hypostatic union as a union between divine and created word, revealing divine word in human form and enabling divine revelation to be comprehended within the limitations of human thought and speech. Because God has become human, it is possible for us to know him, not as a result of an innate human capacity to know God, but solely on the ground that a

gracious God has met us within the limitations of our creaturely existence. In denying an innate capacity to know God, Torrance maintains his epistemological stance that accurate knowledge of God is not derived independently of Jesus, as in natural theology or Schleiermacheran subjectivity.

Torrance's insistence that divine revelation is mediated to us through the human word of Jesus Christ can better be seen in light of his position on the relation of the written word of God to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. For Torrance, the Holy Bible is not "the word" of God; rather, Jesus Christ is "The Word" of God. There is an ontological, or "first-order," relationship between divine Word and the human words spoken by the incarnate Son; that is, the human word of Jesus Christ is ontologically "identical" to divine revelation. In short, the words of Jesus Christ are the words of God. The written word of God that grew out of the apostolic community of faith, on the other hand, stands in a "second-order" relation to the Word of God; that is, the words of scripture are not identical to the Word of God that proceeds from the mouth of Jesus. Scripture is ontologically different from the incarnate Word in that it reflects that Word rather than constituting it. While scripture is the divinely provided medium through which the Word of God is mediated to us, the humanity of Jesus Christ is the "real text" underlying the written word of God and by which scripture must be understood and interpreted. In other words, Jesus is our hermeneutic. Thus, ontological priority and authoritative primacy must be given to the divine revelation mediated by the incarnate Word and not to the Holy Bible. In asserting the ontological identity of divine Word and the human word of Jesus Christ, Torrance remains true to his scientific theological method, wherein knowledge of God unfolds as it is disclosed by the nature of the object of inquiry.

Moreover, Torrance rightly argues that the Bible must not be reduced to a collection of propositional truths, abstracted and considered apart from the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. Rather than regarding the Bible as a static repository of divine truth, Torrance takes a broader view of scripture, wherein its truth is to be found in the living person of Jesus Christ to whom it points. For Torrance, the "inspiration" of scripture lies in the fact that it is inspired and shaped by the Holy Spirit to be the written word that leads us to Jesus Christ, while it is itself shaped by and patterned around Jesus Christ (*cf.* Walker, 2009:lxxxi, lxxxii). The Bible is used rightly when the reader attends simultaneously both to the words of the text and to the divine reality to which

they point, so that scripture may fulfil its semantic function as "sign" by pointing not to itself but to the independent Reality that underlies it.

In giving ontological primacy to the incarnate Word of God rather than to the written word of God, Torrance should not be regarded as holding a "low" view of scripture, as do those who reduce the Bible to little more than mythological projections of human fantasy. To the contrary, Torrance argues that the scriptures of both Old and New Testaments deserve "profound respect and veneration," not for what they are in themselves, but because of the divine revelation mediated to us through them. "That is why," he argues, "we speak of them as 'Holy' Scriptures" (Torrance, 1982:95). Torrance's realist position in regard to scripture places him somewhere between fundamentalism, with its insistence on the inerrancy, infallibility, and plenary verbal inspiration of scripture, and liberalism, with its reduction of scripture to the comparatively low status of myth, folklore, or fairy tale. As Torrance (1986b:471, 472) argues, both fundamentalism and liberalism detach the word of God from Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate. Liberalism detaches the word of God from Jesus Christ by reducing it to nothing more than the projections of the human religious consciousness. Fundamentalism detaches scripture from Jesus Christ by elevating it to the status of an independent, static repository of propositional truth, which can be considered apart from the dynamic Living Truth mediated to us by the Holy Spirit. According to Gill (2007:81, 82), the problem Torrance finds in fundamentalism is that it sees revelation as being inherent in the text of the scriptures rather than in the self-disclosing act of God to which they point. In place of God's self-revelation mediated through scripture, fundamentalism substitutes an "infallible Bible and a set of rigid evangelical beliefs," so that the Living God is displaced by a written text and "objectivity" in revelation is displaced by "objectification" in revelation. As Gill rightly argues, this is no minor issue for Torrance, for what is at stake is God's sovereignty and grace in revelation. Whereas fundamentalism finds the source of revelation in a written text, for Torrance the source of revelation is always God. For Torrance, as Gill argues, fundamentalism denies the sovereignty of God in his revelation (*cf.* Torrance, 1982:16, 17). Rather than elevating scripture to a divine status independent of the realities to which it bears witness, as in fundamentalism, Torrance esteems scripture as the divinely provided medium through which the Word of God is mediated to us by the Holy Spirit. Rather than demythologizing scripture, as in liberalism, Torrance, as a theological realist, is committed to the objective Reality to which scripture bears witness.

Furthermore, Torrance's position avoids entanglement in the troublesome web of biblical inerrancy and infallibility and solves many hermeneutical, historical, and scientific problems, for example, those associated with the early chapters of the Book of Genesis. Rather than place our faith in the Bible itself, while attempting to defend it in terms of scientific accuracy and historical factuality, Torrance encourages us to look beyond the words of scripture to the divine Reality toward which they point and whose presence is communicated to us by the Holy Spirit through the medium of scripture. Moreover, Torrance's position precludes the need to micro-manage the text of scripture, again with the understanding that the individual words of scripture are of secondary importance to the Reality that underlies them. As Torrance might argue, the individual words of the text are not "the truth"; Jesus Christ is "The Truth." Rather than a repository of propositional truths to be considered apart from Jesus Christ, scripture is a divinely provided medium through which the Holy Spirit transforms our minds and brings us into a vital relationship with "The Truth" in the incarnate Word of God.

In addition to the importance of the humanity of Jesus Christ for the mediation of revelation, it is essential that his mediation be grounded in the reality of God. While the humanity of Jesus mediates revelation in a means amenable to human understanding, his divinity ensures that his human word is also the divine Word of God. To mediate revelation to us, therefore, Jesus Christ must be both God and human. If Jesus Christ is not human, then God's revelation is not be revelation to humanity; if Jesus Christ is not God, then his mediation of revelation is not divine revelation, for only God can reveal God. His divinity is the guarantee that God has made himself known in Jesus Christ "as he is." Because Jesus is God, his human speech and actions are divine revelation. In him, the Revealer and revelation are identical; Jesus Christ *is* the revelation he brings. Without the hypostatic union, we would not hear God in Jesus' creaturely speech; yet, because divinity and humanity exist in the one person of Jesus Christ, his creaturely speech is the language of God. As the express image of God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all true knowledge of God comes through him.

In regard to the epistemological implications of the humanity of Jesus Christ, however, Purves (2001:73, 74) expresses concern for a "christological constraint" to the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ; that is, we have communion only with Christ in his human nature. Purves rightly notes that Torrance's "genius" is that he has

investigated the possibility of knowledge of God in Jesus Christ to the extent that he has. At the same time, Purves questions whether Torrance has elevated critical realism above christology and moved beyond the "reverential limits" of our knowledge of God. While Purves appears to be sympathetic to Torrance's epistemology, his concern that Torrance has elevated critical realism above christology is questionable. Torrance's critical realism is a direct function of his christology; that is, Torrance identifies himself as a critical realist precisely because he believes, by faith, that God has revealed himself in space-time history in Jesus Christ. His realism, therefore, is a direct consequence of his christological convictions and cannot be separated from them. Against possible assertions that Torrance has exceeded the "reverential" limits of the knowledge of God, Torrance is merely articulating in the language of his scientific theology exactly what Jesus said in simpler terms: "I have come to reveal the Father." There is no knowledge of God "according to his nature" (*kata physin*) apart from Jesus Christ. In his sovereign freedom, God has chosen to reveal himself in the consubstantial Father-Son relation. Torrance is simply elaborating, to the extent possible, the epistemological implications of God's self-revelation in Christ. Charges of exceeding reverential limits should more properly be applied to epistemologies and methodologies that attempt to circumvent Jesus Christ in arriving at knowledge of God, for example, natural theology and Schleiermacheran subjectivism.

In addition, is Purves right to argue for a "christological constraint" to our knowledge of God because that knowledge is limited to Jesus' humanity? To the contrary, such a constraint would only occur in the case of a dualist bifurcation in the person of Christ. If the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ were rigidly compartmentalised, as in a Nestorian dualism, then Jesus' humanity would reveal nothing of his divinity, for his human and divine acts would be those of two persons, not one. At the same time, if we fall prey to presuppositions of divine immutability, arising from the Greek cosmological dualism that has plagued christology since the days of the early Church, we could understandably argue that Jesus' humanity reveals little or nothing of God, for his divinity would be unmoved by his humanity. Olson (1999:234, 235) offers a helpful critique in this regard, particularly in relation to the persistent dualism that plagued even the Chalcedonian understanding of the person of Christ. Notwithstanding attempts to guard the mystery of the union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ, the Chalcedonian doctrine of the hypostatic union is plagued by an inherent ambiguity (*cf.* Olson, 1999:219). Despite the assertion that the *Logos* is the personal subject of the

incarnation, the Chalcedonian fathers were constrained by the ubiquitous Greek philosophical assertions of divine immutability and its corollary, divine impassibility. Hence, they argued that the divine *Logos* was unaffected by the assumption of human nature; that is, God did not actually suffer in the incarnation; rather, he suffered only through the humanity he assumed as the instrument of the incarnation. Yet, as Olson (1999:234) notes, the assertion that God remains undisturbed and unchanged by the experiences of the incarnate life of Jesus has been questioned by modern thinkers, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, including British historical theologian Maurice Relton, who, in his *A Study in Christology* (1917), found the principle of divine immutability and impassibility to be the "Achilles' heel" of at least the classical interpretation of Chalcedon. Against classical interpretations of divine impassibility, is it really accurate to say that God was incarnate in Jesus Christ if God remains entirely unmoved and untouched by his humanness? If the *Logos* is the personal centre of consciousness in the hypostatic union, who is it that experienced fear and anguish at Gethsemane? Who was tempted forty days in the wilderness? As Olson wisely asks, "Can an 'impersonal' nature be tempted?" The great reformer, Martin Luther, who embraced both Nicaea and Chalcedon as respected landmarks in the history of Christian doctrine, rejected the pagan notion of divine impassibility and attributed "creaturely" experiences to the incarnate Son of God. Luther rightly carried the *communicatio idiomatum* to its logical conclusion by asserting that God can not only be born, but can suffer at Calvary as well. Despite the obeisance of the fathers to Greek metaphysics, dualist presuppositions founded on divine immutability must collapse in the face of the Chalcedonian assertion that Jesus Christ is "one person." If divine and human acts are predicates of the one whole Christ, as Cyril's *communicatio idiomatum* would indicate, then, as Torrance argues, the human acts of Jesus are the acts of God, and, hence, are revelatory of the divine nature. We are not, therefore, under a "christological constraint," despite Purves' concerns, but, rather, we are under an "epistemological constraint," wherein knowledge of God is limited, not by God's self-revelation in Christ, but by a limited human capacity that allows us to apprehend but not comprehend God.

In addition to its epistemological implications, the hypostatic union has vital implications for human salvation. Jesus Christ must be not only *homoousios* with God; he must be *homoousios* with humanity as well. Because only God can save, Jesus Christ must be divine; yet, in order for his saving activity to reach us, he must also be human. As Torrance notes, the Gospel is emptied of saving import if Jesus Christ is not

fully human as well as fully God. The fact that God became human in order to save us means that the humanity of Jesus Christ is essential for our salvation. Against adoptionist christologies, Torrance argues that the incarnation must be understood as God really become human, not merely God participating in humanity. In Jesus Christ, God acts "as" a man, not merely "in" a man. Against Docetic christologies that break the link between God and humanity, Torrance draws upon the Johannine statement, "the Word became flesh," to assert that the incarnation must be understood as God becoming fully human, in the undiminished reality of human being. Against static interpretations of divine immutability, Torrance rightly argues that the incarnation involves a real "becoming" on the part of God. To be sure, God has "always" been divine; God has not always been incarnate. The stark actuality of his blood and bone guarantees that God has come among us in Jesus Christ. In Christ's humanity, God is one "of" us and one "with" us. Against Apollinarian and monothelist christologies, Torrance echoes Gregory Nazianzus in asserting that Jesus Christ redeems the whole human person by becoming fully human and identifying himself with every aspect of our fallen humanity "for us and for our salvation."

Following the Nicene fathers, Torrance notes that, in the incarnation, the Son of God took not only the form of a man but also the form of a servant. Jesus assumed our servile condition under the slavery of sin in order to act on our behalf from within our actual existence. The eternal Word's condescension to assume flesh "from the lump of Adam," however, did not involve a diminution of the infinite being of God; rather, it involved the self-abnegating love God expressed in abasing himself for our salvation. By taking upon himself our servile condition and offering himself on our behalf, Jesus Christ fulfilled the role of both servant and priest, ministering both the things of God to humanity and the things of humanity to God. The real humanity of Jesus Christ is the "veil" under which the transcendent God draws near to us, holding mankind at "arm's length," while giving us time to draw near in faith and decision. Against a Docetic view of Christ, Torrance argues that the humanity of Jesus Christ is essential for our salvation: if the humanity of Jesus Christ is imperfect, atonement is imperfect and we remain in our sins. The mediation of reconciliation is possible only when the mediator acts both from the side of God as God and from the side of humanity as a human being. In the full humanity of Jesus Christ, as it is joined eternally to his deity, both in incarnation and atonement, our humanity is restored to its place before God from which it has fallen. In sum, the humanity of Jesus Christ is the guarantee of God's action in

human space-time history, while the deity of Christ is the guarantee that his mediation of revelation and reconciliation has divine validity and authority. As Torrance often notes, the humanity of Jesus Christ means that God has acted among us *as a human being*; at the same time, the deity of Jesus Christ means that *God* has acted among us as a human being.

Furthermore, while it is essential for our salvation that Jesus Christ is both divine and human, it is also essential that the divine and human natures exist in hypostatic union in one person. The humanity of Jesus Christ has no saving significance apart from his deity; his deity has no saving significance apart from his humanity. Both the revelatory and saving significance of the divine and human natures lie in their union. The doctrine of the hypostatic union is the assertion that, in the mystery of Christ, divine and human natures are truly and completely united in one person or *hypostasis*. In asserting that the divine and human acts of the incarnate Son are all predicates of "the one whole Christ," Torrance aligns himself with Cyril's doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, while carefully guarding the boundaries set at Chalcedon: *inconfuse*, *immutabiliter*, *indivise*, and *inseparabiliter*.

For Torrance, any dualistic disjunction between the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ has dire ontological, epistemological, and soteriological consequences. Ontologically, the denial of either Jesus' divinity or humanity means there is no ontological union between God and humanity; hence, the gap between God and us created by human sin has not been bridged. Epistemologically, the denial of Jesus' deity means that he does not reveal God, for his word and act is only that of a creature. The denial of his humanity means that God's love has stopped short of becoming one with us and God has not condescended to address us from within the limitations of our own humanity in a way we can apprehend. Soteriologically, the denial of Jesus' deity means that we are still in our sins, for only God can save. The denial of his humanity means that his saving work has not reached us. Hence, Torrance rightly regards any dualism between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ as catastrophic.

The doctrine of the hypostatic union of God and man in Jesus Christ is the objective heart of Torrance's doctrine of atoning reconciliation. Consistent with his non-dualist, unitary theology, Torrance carefully asserts there are not two acts in the life and death of Jesus Christ, only a single, unitary action that is at once Godward and humanward. If

atonement is to be real, it must take place from humanity's side if we are to be reconciled to God; yet, it must also take place from God's side if it is to be effectual. Thus, atonement must be the work of the one God-man, God and humanity in hypostatic union, not merely God "in" a man but God "as" man. If the natures of the incarnate Son are divided, then the mediation of reconciliation in Jesus Christ is "illusory," for his human acts are not the acts of God, and his divine acts are not human acts for us and our salvation. For Torrance, the doctrine of the hypostatic union of two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ is the "mainstay" of a doctrine of atoning reconciliation, for only he can be "bridgemaker" who is himself the "bridge."

6.0 INCARNATIONAL REDEMPTION

6.1 Introduction

In addition to the Nicene *homoousion* and the Chalcedonian doctrine of the hypostatic union, another elemental form, or basic constitutive concept, of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ is his doctrine of "incarnational redemption." For Torrance, there is an intrinsic connection between the incarnation and the atonement; that is, the incarnation is inherently redemptive and redemption is inherently incarnational. Thus, Torrance's doctrine of "incarnational redemption," or "atoning reconciliation," is a direct correlate of his doctrine of the hypostatic union of God and humanity in the incarnation and constitutes the all-important "Godward-humanward" movement of the mediation of Jesus Christ.

As noted earlier, in the Torrance theological tradition, the "Who?" question is prior to the "how?" question. Torrance does not attempt to articulate a doctrine of the salvific work of Jesus Christ until he has articulated his thinking in regard to "who" Jesus Christ is as the incarnate Saviour of the world. Nevertheless, because of the intrinsic connection between the person of Jesus Christ and the atonement, Torrance does not articulate a doctrine of the hypostatic union only to state subsequently a doctrine of atoning reconciliation, as if the latter were something added to the former. Torrance (2008:183, 184) argues:

> On the contrary, we have to see that reconciliation is the hypostatic union at work in expiation and atonement, and therefore that [the] hypostatic union cannot be expounded aright except in terms of Christ's active ministry within our darkness and estrangement, bringing revelation and reconciliation to bear revealingly on one another.

If Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the eternal purpose of God to bestow eternal love upon us and gather us back into eternal life, Torrance contends, it is paramount to understand that the doctrine of the atonement presupposes the doctrine of the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, "for the whole work of reconciliation depends upon the fact that *one person acts both from the side of God, and from the side of man*, both in his divine acts and in his human acts, and that these acts are really and truly identical in the person of the mediator" (Torrance, 2008:183, 184).

In the previous chapter, we examined Torrance's realist view of the epistemological and soteriological implications of the doctrine of the hypostatic union as articulated at Chalcedon. In the present chapter, we will consider Torrance's unitary, holistic doctrine of the atonement as the correlative outworking of the Chalcedonian hypostatic union. Beginning with the scriptural witness to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, followed by a brief overview of the major theories of atonement that have arisen in response to that witness, we will then examine and explain Torrance's understanding of atonement as "incarnational redemption," with its particular emphasis on the unity of the person and work of Jesus Christ. We will also examine some of the more controversial aspects of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ, including his assertion of the Son's assumption of fallen Adamic flesh, as well as his insistence on the universal range of atoning reconciliation.

6.2 The Atonement in Scripture

The New Testament language for atonement is drawn from the record of revelation and reconciliation in God's long, historical interaction with Israel, wherein that chosen nation served as the "womb of the incarnation" of Jesus Christ (*cf.* Chapter Three).

The events surrounding the cross of Christ constitute the central emphasis of the New Testament proclamation, while the theme of atoning reconciliation between God and humanity runs like a "scarlet thread" throughout the whole of scripture. The Gospel narratives have been described as a "passion story with an extended introduction." Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John devote significant portions of their narratives to the "passion" or suffering of Jesus Christ (Oden, 2006:317, 347). Almost every book in the New Testament at least touches on the life and death of Jesus Christ as the sole basis for human salvation through the grace and mercy of God (Olson, 2002:245, 246).

One of the primary reasons for the writing of the Gospel narratives was to reconcile the seemingly contradictory assertions regarding the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. As Oden (2006:318) notes, the enigma was not that the Messiah was coming but that he must suffer and die. In retrospect, the events prior to Jesus death pointed inexorably to his death as an event that must occur (*cf.* John 1:39; 2:4; 7:6-8; 11:9; 16:4). Suffering and death were a necessary and intrinsic part of Jesus' messianic ministry. As Jesus told his disciples, "The Son of man must suffer many things ... and be killed" (Mk 8:31). He

viewed his mission in terms of Old Testament metaphors of vicarious atonement (*cf.* Mk 10:45; 14:24; Isa 53; Ex 32:30-32), aware that these scriptures pointed toward him. As he neared the inexorable hour of his death, he declared the hour had come, and it was for this reason he had come (Jn 17:1; 12:27). When Peter tried to defend his master against those who had come to arrest him, Jesus made Peter put away his sword, asserting that he (Jesus) must drink the cup the Father had given him (Jn 18:11) (Oden, 2006:317-319).

According to the Apostle Paul, Jesus Christ humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death (Phil 2:8). Throughout his life of humble obedience to the Father, he identified with sinners, being numbered among the transgressors (Isa 53:12), even becoming sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him (2Cor 5:21). Soon after he demonstrated his attitude of humble self-giving by washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:4, 5), he was "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities" (Isa 53:5; *cf.* Gen 3:15; Zech 12:10), as the watching crowd mocked and insulted him at his crucifixion (*cf.* Ps 22:7) (Oden, 2006:320-322).

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29), was crucified on the Jewish festival of Passover (*cf.* 1Cor 5:7; Jn 18:28). He was nailed to a "tree" and became a curse for us (Gal 3:13), according to the "determined purpose and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). When he was lifted up upon the cross, he "drew all peoples" to himself (Jn 12:32) and opened the way to the Father, as attested by the veil in the Temple that was torn in two at his death (Mk 15:38). The cross and the blood of Jesus Christ lie at the heart of divine-human reconciliation (Rom 5:10; Phil 2:8; Heb 2:9-14; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20; Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:14; Heb 9:12, 15; 1Jn 1:7). Christ's atoning death is grounded in the Father's love (Jn 3:16), manifests God's righteousness (Rom 3:25; 2Cor 5:21), and forms the basis of our reconciliation with God and neighbour (Rom 5:11; 2Cor 5:18, 19). Through the cross of Christ, all things have been reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:19; Col 1:19, 20). As the writer of Hebrews (2:9) explains, the eternal Son was made flesh, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

In his important article on the atonement, Torrance (1993:225, 226) identifies a number of verses in the New Testament that witness to the "singularity" and "finality" of the mediation of Jesus Christ in atoning reconciliation between God and sinful humanity,

as well as the "range" or scope of the atonement. By "singularity" Torrance refers to "the one unrepeatable particularity of [Jesus Christ's] incarnate reality as God and man, Creator and creature, indivisibly united once and for all in one Person ... the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega of all God's ways and works." Torrance opens his article with scriptural references to Jesus Christ as "ransom," quoting the Gospel writers (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45) as well as the apostle Paul (1Tim 2:5, 6). He also notes John's assertion that Jesus Christ is the "propitiation" for the sins of the whole world (1Jn 2:2). In a passage of primary importance for his understanding of the relationship between creation, incarnation, and atonement, Torrance quotes a lengthy passage from Paul's letter to the Colossians (1:14-20), a passage that identifies Jesus Christ as the one "in" whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. This same Redeemer is the one "by," "through," and "for" whom all things are created and "in" whom all things consist or hold together. Through Jesus Christ, in whom the fullness of God dwells, God has reconciled all things to himself, whether visible or invisible, making peace by the blood of the cross. Finally, Torrance notes one of the many passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews (9:12, 15) that refer to the singularity and finality of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, who, as the Mediator of the new covenant, entered the heavenly Holy of Holies once for all, to secure by his own blood eternal redemption from the transgressions under the first covenant.

Though not specifically cited in his article on the atonement, another important passage for understanding the relationship between creation, incarnation, and redemption is found in the opening to the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:2, 3). Here the Son of God is identified as the one through whom God made the worlds and who upholds all things "by the word of his power." In addition, the Prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1-14) identifies the Word who became flesh as the one through whom all things were made. This same creator Word, incarnate in Jesus Christ, is later identified as "the Lamb of God" who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). As will be shown below, the relation between creation, incarnation, and atonement is of vital importance to Torrance's doctrine of the atoning mediation of Jesus Christ, particularly in regard to the "range" of atoning reconciliation.

6.3 Major Theories of the Atonement

In an attempt to bring coherence to the scriptural witness to the atonement of Jesus Christ, Christian theologians throughout the centuries have developed a number of "theories," or conceptual models, of the atonement, each with its own distinctive emphases.

6.3.1 Origen's Ransom Theory

The earliest theory of atonement in the history of the Church is the "ransom" theory, a model of atonement usually associated with Origen of Alexandria (*c*.185–*c*.254). This theory draws upon New Testament images of the offering of Jesus Christ as a ransom (*e.g.*, Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). According to this view, Christ's death on the cross was necessary because Satan had "captured" humanity as a result of Adam's sin and the original sin that spread to his posterity and held them in bondage. Because Satan's hold on humanity was "legal," God had to deal justly with Satan; thus, he "paid" his Son to Satan in order to buy back humanity; that is, Christ was offered as "ransom" to Satan in exchange for the souls of the lost. Influenced by Origen's theory, Gregory the Great (*c*. 540-604) described God as "fishing" for humanity, using Jesus Christ as "bait." Imbued with more than a hint of antiquated superstition, this theory has few if any modern adherents, primarily because it implies a dualism between God and Satan, wherein the former is compelled to deal fairly with the latter. At the same time, it portrays God as a deceptive trickster who fools Satan by offering the Son of God as a ransom, knowing that Satan could not keep him because Jesus would rise from the dead on the third day (Olson, 2002:256, 257; Bloesch, 2006:152).

6.3.2 Anselm's Satisfaction Theory

In the Middle Ages, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) replaced the ransom theory with a more rational model of the atonement usually known as the "satisfaction" theory. Also known as the "Latin" or "juridical" view, this model of atonement has been prominent in Roman Catholic Scholasticism and Protestant orthodoxy. Rooted in the feudal societies of his time, Anselm's theory of the atonement depicts God as a "feudal lord" whose honour has been violated by his "vassal," that is, sinful humanity. In order to uphold justice in the cosmos, God must receive "satisfaction" for the affront to his honour occasioned by human disobedience. Humanity's debt is so great, however, that they cannot pay it; hence, it is necessary that God assume human nature, so that, as a

human being, God can pay the debt that humanity otherwise cannot pay. For Anselm, Christ's death on the cross is a substitutionary payment of a debt owed by humanity to God. When Christ dies, atonement is complete; God's honour is satisfied, his wrath assuaged, and humanity's penalty of eternal death is set aside (Olson, 2002:257, 258; Bloesch, 2006:153).

6.3.3 Abelard's Moral Influence Theory

Another medieval theologian, Peter Abelard (1079-1142), offered an alternative to Anselm's satisfaction theory. For Abelard, God does not require payment of a penalty, nor does he need to ransom humanity from the devil. Rather, God needs sinful humanity to repent and throw themselves on God's mercy. People do not repent, however, because they fear and hate God. In consequence, Christ lays down his life in atonement in order to demonstrate God's great love for humanity and to effect a change in sinners' hearts, so they are drawn to God. Abelard portrays the atonement in terms of a "moral influence" that changes the perspective of humanity, causing us to trust God and repent of our sins. In this model, Christ's death on the cross is viewed as exemplary, rather than propitiatory or expiatory. Christ suffered in order to subdue the alienation of humanity by a supreme example of self-sacrificing love. For Abelard, therefore, the atonement is more than a mere moral example, for the cross of Christ has a transforming influence on humanity (Olson, 2002:258, 259; Bloesch, 2006:158).

6.3.4 Luther's *Christus Victor* Theory

Another theory of the atonement depicts the cross of Christ in the "dramatic' terms of struggle, conquest, and victory. Developed by Martin Luther (1483-1546) during the Reformation era, the *Christus Victor* theory of atonement draws on New Testament themes of battle and early Christian concepts of Christ as Victor over Satan and death. This view of the atonement has been championed in the twentieth century by the Swedish Lutheran theologian, Gustaf Aulén (1879-1978). According to Luther and Aulén, the heart of the atonement is Christ's victorious invasion and conquest of Satan's territory, where humanity has been held captive. Atonement is not a ransom paid; it is a spiritual battle fought and won. Christ fights against, and triumphs over, the forces of evil that have held humanity in bondage and suffering, and, in Christ, God reconciles the world to himself. This view is problematic, however, in that it fails to

offer a rational explanation as to *why* Christ had to die. In addition, it is overly objective in that it does not include the subjective aspects of human guilt and response (Olson, 220:259).

6.3.5 Calvin's Penal Substitution Theory

Another theory of the atonement arose during the Reformation as an adjustment to Anselm's satisfaction theory. This is the "penal substitution" theory associated with John Calvin (1509-1564) and Reformed theology. In this view, Christ reconciles God and humanity by taking upon himself the punishment sinful humans deserve, thereby reconciling God's righteous anger with his love for mankind. At the cross, human salvation is made possible and the Father can now regard mankind favourably. In this theory of atonement, the focus is on "punishment." The penalty born by Christ for humanity is not the satisfaction of God's wounded honour; rather, it is capital punishment as retribution deserved by sinful humanity's disobedience. Like Anselm's model, the penal substitution theory is objective; yet, it includes subjective elements insofar as human beings must respond appropriately in faith and repentance in order to receive the saving benefits of the cross. This theory has been rightly criticized, however, because it introduces a disjunction between God the Father and the incarnate Son in which the Father is depicted as angry, wrathful, and punitive, while Jesus is regarded as loving, kind, and forgiving. Moreover, "womanist" theologians regard this theory as sanctioning child abuse and violence (Olson, 2002:259, 260, 262).

6.3.6 John Hick's Moral Example Theory

Lastly, many liberal Protestants view the atonement simply as a "moral example" of God's love. In this view, humanity does not need reconciliation with God or conquest over evil powers that hold us hostage; rather, humanity needs an object lesson of self-sacrificing love and service for others. This example, and nothing more, is provided in the life and death of Jesus Christ. This theory of "atonement" is associated with the liberal Protestant theologian, John Hick (*b*. 1922), who argues that the life and death of Jesus Christ provide a moral example only for Christians primarily in Europe and North America. People from other cultural contexts can find "redemption" through other "saviours" relevant to their own cultures, whether Buddha, Mohammed, or Krishna (Olson, 2002:252). This view may rightly be described as heretical in that it denies the

singularity of the saving work of Jesus Christ, who alone is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" and apart from whom no one comes to the Father (Jn 14:6).

In regard to these major theories of the atonement, most Christian denominations have avoided identifying one particular theory as the orthodox view. Each of the five major theories contains some insight into the cross of Jesus Christ and its saving benefit. According to Olson (2002:261), while none of these five major views encompasses a complete picture of the atonement, considered together they provide a well-rounded, holistic, theological account of the atoning mediation of Jesus Christ.

6.3.7 John McLeod Campbell: The Nature of the Atonement

Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption does not fit neatly into any one of the major theories of atonement that have arisen in the history of Christian theological thought. In fact, Torrance is critical of the "theories of atonement" that have arisen in the history of Western theology. In one way or another, he contends, all these theories operate with an "external way of relating theory and event in the interpretation of Jesus Christ" (Torrance, 1986b:478; *cf.* below). In contrast to Western theories of the atonement developed in terms of "external" relations between Jesus and God, Torrance develops his doctrine of the atonement from the "internal" consubstantial Father-Son relation and the consubstantial God-human relation "within" the one person of Jesus Christ. Torrance's view of the atonement is closely related to the "representative theory" or "theory of vicarious repentance" associated with the Scottish pastor and theologian, John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872) (Torrance, 1996c: 287*ff*). Elements of this view are also found in P.T. Forsyth (1848-1921) and Karl Barth (1886-1968). In this model of atonement vicarious identification is stressed over penal substitution (Bloesch, 2006:157).

In his Auburn lectures, delivered in the late 1930s, Torrance (2002b:166) describes two "notable and significant attempts" to understand the atonement in modern theology. One is the theology of R.W. Dale, who stressed "the substitutionary work of Christ in his submission to divine judgment and in satisfaction for sin offered on the cross." The other is the Scottish pastor and theologian, John McLeod Campbell, who stressed "Christ's vicarious life of obedience to the Father and his atoning suffering in life and death in fulfilment of the love of the Father," without giving major place to the concept

of the "forensic satisfaction" of divine justice at the cross. As Torrance notes, Dale's approach is regarded by many as nearer the traditional Anselmic concept of atonement with a stress on the aspect of "penal judgment and satisfaction" before the righteous wrath of God. Campbell's stress, on the other hand, is on the atoning obedience and love of the incarnate Christ. With his "primary emphasis" on Christ's vicarious life and passion in fulfilling the holy and forgiving love of the Father, Campbell pays relatively little attention to the Anselmic aspect of satisfaction.

In regard to T.F. Torrance's doctrine of the atonement, perhaps no theologian has had greater influence than John McLeod Campbell. According to Torrance (1996c:287, 288), McLeod Campbell was deposed from his ministry in the Scottish Kirk because of his doctrine of "universal atonement and pardon," as well as the doctrine that assurance is "the essence of faith and necessary for salvation," a teaching set out in his great work of 1856, *The Nature of the Atonement* (Campbell, 1996). As Torrance (1996c:289, 290) argues, McLeod Campbell was troubled by the "unnatural violence" done to scripture, particularly passages such as John 3:16, 1John 1:2, 1Tim 2:4*ff*, and Heb 2:9, 17-19, when interpreted according to "logical Calvinism" and its assertion of "particular redemption." Furthermore, McLeod Campbell was disturbed by the doubt he found among his parishioners in regard to the love of God and the nature of repentance and forgiveness. His congregants lacked assurance of their salvation, for their trust was undermined by current doctrines of atonement and election, which held that only some were chosen to be saved.

For McLeod Campbell, notes Torrance (1996c:291, 294, 295), nothing less than "the very nature of God as love" was at stake, for it is in the face of Jesus Christ, the suffering Saviour, that the true character of God as love is revealed (*cf.* Jn 3:16; 1Jn 4:8, 16). In the federal theology of the Scottish Kirk, Campbell perceived what he regarded as a dualism, or "division," between justice and mercy that pitted a merciful, "tender-hearted" Jesus against an angry Father-God. Rather than seeing God as a loving Father who satisfies his justice through the atoning work of his Son, federal theology, according to Campbell, portrayed the "man" Jesus as placating an angry Father God, so that he might finally love the elect. As Torrance argues, the federal theologians thought of God as loving mankind only in response to what Jesus had done and could not understand how, in God, "mercy and justice, love and holiness, grace and judgement, belong intimately and inseparably together." On the other hand, notes Torrance,

McLeod Campbell expounded the atonement, not in "abstract legal terms," but in the "personal," "filial" terms of the Father-Son relation. For Campbell, atonement must be understood in recognition of the fact that *God* provides the atonement; *God* was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Thus, for McLeod Campbell, forgiveness *precedes* the atonement, for the atonement is "the form of the manifestation of the forgiving love of God, not its cause." While he appealed to the New Testament and to the *Scots Confession*, McLeod Campbell's teaching was regarded as a violation of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which was the basis on which Scottish pastors took their ordination vows. As Torrance (1996c:289, 290) argues, though McLeod Campbell was deposed from the Kirk, "his teaching had the effect of opening the door wide to fresh biblical and evangelical understanding of cardinal truths of the Christian faith."

McLeod Campbell's theology of the atonement was a radical break with the federal theology of the *Westminster Confession* and a development of older Scottish theology, represented by the "Evangelical Calvinists" [*e.g.*, Thomas Erskine (1788-1870)], the Reformers, and the Greek fathers (Cass, 2008:59, 60). As Cass (2008:89) argues, Campbell's development of a "Catholic" doctrine grounded in the Triune life of God and a Reformed doctrine of the all-sufficient nature of grace in Christ had a major influence on Torrance's methodology and soteriology. As Cass notes, Torrance regards McLeod Campbell as one of the greatest witnesses in the history of the Scottish Kirk to the unconditional, all-sufficient, and unlimited nature of the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

A further understanding of McLeod Campbell's influence on Torrance can be gained by comparing two differing doctrines of God. As Torrance's younger brother, James (Torrance, J., 1996b:1) argues, the history of Christian thought shows that our doctrine of God shapes our understanding of the atonement and of Christian assurance. If we view God primarily as a lawgiver and judge, with humans created to keep the law, then our doctrine of atonement will portray God as a judge who must be "conditioned into being gracious," either by human merit or by Christ on the cross, "satisfying" the Father's conditions, so that God might be gracious to the elect. According to Torrance, this view arises in some forms of scholastic Calvinism. On the other hand, if our basic concept of God is that of "the Triune God of grace who has his being in communion as Father, Son and Holy Spirit," and who has created us to share as sons and daughters in that communion, then our doctrine of atonement will portray a gracious God bringing

his loving purpose to fruition. In this view, notes the younger Torrance, "we see the priority of grace over law, the filial over the judicial, and that God is a covenant God of faithfulness, not a contract-God." As Torrance notes, no theologian saw the effects of these differing concepts of God on the doctrine of atonement and Christian assurance as clearly as did John McLeod Campbell, who "was so passionately concerned to call the Church back to the Triune God of grace" in a land where God had come to be conceived primarily as lawgiver and judge.

Throughout his writings, one of the fundamental differences Torrance sees between these two differing views of God is whether grace is placed before law or whether law if placed before grace (Cass, 2008:95). According to T.F. Torrance (1996c:293), federal Calvinism incorporated a "legal strain" into their teaching on the atonement shaped by the "reign of law." McLeod Campbell, on the other hand, sought to understand the atonement "in the light of itself," by moving away from the "logical framework" of double predestination (*cf.* below) and a narrow conception of particular redemption. Against his contemporaries, who sought to understand the atonement "within the brackets and abstract definitions of their own rationalistic Calvinism," coupled with their belief that the *Westminster Confession* was "an exact and complete transcript" of biblical doctrine, argues Torrance, McLeod Campbell made a "methodological decision of quite immense importance" by seeking to understand the atonement in its own light and in accordance with its own intrinsic nature, thereby refusing to separate method and content. We note that McLeod Campbell's methodology, with its integration of method and content according to the nature of reality is, of course, in strict harmony with the kataphysical method of Torrance's own scientific theology (*cf.* Chapter Two).

As Torrance (1996c:298) argues, McLeod Campbell clearly "asserts the primacy of the filial relation over the legal relation, of grace over law." For Torrance, as Cass (2008:96) notes, Campbell's "primary theological move" was to "align the character of God the Father totally with Jesus Christ as revealed in the economy of salvation." In locating the revelation of God in the economy of salvation as revealed in Jesus Christ, Torrance (1996c:301) believes that Campbell calls for a recasting of the traditional Scottish Calvinist doctrine of "penal substitution" by returning to the teaching of Athanasius (*Contra Arianos*, 4.6), who regarded the Godward-humanward and humanward-Godward movement of mediation as a two-fold, but unitary, movement of mediation occurring "within," not external to, the incarnate constitution of the mediator

(*cf.* below). Finally, McLeod Campbell's emphasis on the Father-Son relation over the legal aspects of atonement appears to be a return to Athanasius (*Contra Arianos* 1.34; *cf.* Torrance, 1988a:49 n. 3), who argued that "it would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father, than to name God from his works alone and call him Unoriginate" (*cf.* Chapter Four). To be sure, Torrance clearly follows both Athanasius and McLeod Campbell in his oft-repeated assertion that there is no God behind the back of Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1988a:135; 1990:71; 1996c:294).

According to Cass (2008:59, 88, 89), John McLeod Campbell had more influence on Torrance than any other theologian, particularly in regard to McLeod Campbell's understanding of the Father-Son relation, Christ's condemning sin in the flesh in his "active" and passive" obedience, the integration of ontological and forensic metaphors of salvation, and the doctrine of the Judge judged in our place (*cf.* Barth, 1957d:211*ff*). Noting the "enormous influence" of Barth, Cass argues that, at certain points, Torrance rejects Bath's soteriological position in favour of the Greek fathers, Calvin, and McLeod Campbell. The influence of John McLeod Campbell on Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption, or atoning reconciliation, will become more apparent below, particularly in our discussion of the "range" of the atonement and the relation between election and Jesus Christ.

6.3.8 The Mystery of Atoning Reconciliation

In approaching the subject of the death of Christ, Torrance reminds us that we are dealing with a great mystery. In the liturgy of Old Testament Israel, after the cultic sacrifice was made, the high priest "ascended" into the Holy of Holies, where, behind the veil, hidden from public view, he sprinkled the blood shed in sacrifice onto the mercy seat (Lev 16:12-14, 17). God ordained that the mystery of atoning reconciliation, particularly its most "solemn and awful part," should be veiled from the eyes of the people, so that the "innermost heart of atonement" should remain hidden and ineffable. In the same way, even though the veil in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45), the resurrected Jesus ascended to the heavenly Holy of Holies, into the immediate presence of the Father, where, beyond the view of humankind, he acts as our High Priest and Mediator in a work whose nature is "unutterable." The mystery of atonement, therefore, can neither be "spelled out" nor "spied out"; rather, it is a mystery "more to be adored than expressed." As Torrance

reverently notes, as we delve into the mystery of the blood of Christ, the blood of God incarnate, "we must clap our hand upon our mouth again and again for we have no words adequate to match the infinitely holy import of atonement" (Torrance, 2009:2).

In his insistence that the atonement is a mystery to be adored rather than rationally expressed, Torrance is in harmony with Eastern Orthodox Christians, who tend to eschew rational explanations of the atonement in favour of embracing mystery (*cf.* Olson, 2002:261). It is precisely because the mystery of atonement is ineffable and unutterable, argues Torrance (2009:2, 3), that, on the night before his death, Jesus gave us a tangible, earthly reminder of atonement in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "[T]he broken bread and the poured out wine enacted in solemn *anamnesis*" ["remembrance," "calling to mind again"] communicate to us what mere human words are unable to do, that is, "the inexpressible mystery of atonement through the body and blood of the saviour." This sacrament, "ordained to communicate Christ to us in action," forbids us to presume that we can enclose the mystery of atonement in human words or doctrinal formulations, or to think we can articulate any adequate account of its meaning.

The death of Jesus Christ is an act of God that undercuts the ground of all human religion and entails a complete reversal of our previous attitudes and preconceptions, so that we can only understand the cross by repentance and a change of mind (Gr., *metanoia*). This reversal of our preconceived ideas means that we cannot think our way into the death of Christ; we can only think our way from it by following the new and living way opened by the cross. Because the cross of Christ is a "mystery of unearthly magnitude before which we can only bow in utter humility," we can never reduce the act of God at Calvary to any mere "theory" of atonement (Torrance, 2009:3, 4). Torrance cogently continues:

> No merely theoretical understanding is possible, for abstract theoretic understanding does away with the essential mystery by insisting on the continuity of merely rational explanation. But that is just what we cannot give of the awful fact of the descent of the Son of God into our hell and the bearing by the Son of God of divine judgement on our behalf, for all rational explanation must presuppose a basic continuity here between man and God, but that is just what the atonement reveals to be wanting by the very fact that God himself had to descend into our bottomless pit of evil and guilt in order to construct continuity between us and God.

As Torrance (2009:4, 5) argues, rather than seek to understand the cross through abstract theoretical explanations or logical presuppositions derived from the assumption

of a basic continuity between humanity and God, we must put together "conjunctive statements based upon the inherent synthesis to be found in the person of the mediator," for there is a continuity that God himself achieves through his atoning "act" and the intervention of his own divine "being." To understand the cross, we must "follow Christ" and think only *a posteriori*, allowing our minds to be conformed to Jesus Christ, who is himself "the truth" (Jn 14:6). "That is the only way to understand and at the same time to reverence the infinite mystery and majesty of this atoning deed on the cross which by its very nature reaches out beyond all finite comprehension into eternity." As Torrance notes elsewhere (1993:228, 229), the "singularity" of the mediation of Jesus Christ in atoning reconciliation cannot be expressed in the language of abstraction. As a unique and unrepeatable reality, the atonement can only be understood out of itself.

6.4 Incarnational Reconciliation

Torrance's doctrine of atonement, or incarnational redemption, arises as he follows Christ in order to penetrate, as much as humanly possible, into the salvific significance of the Nicene *homoousion* and the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ. These two elemental forms of Torrance's scientific theology provide the framework for an examination of his doctrine of the mediation of reconciliation in Jesus Christ.

Torrance grounds his doctrine of incarnational redemption in the unitary relation between the "being" of Jesus Christ, who is *homoousios to Patri*, and his redemptive "act" of atonement. For Torrance, the incarnation and the atonement are intimately and inseparably related; that is, incarnational redemption, or atoning reconciliation, is a direct function of the incarnate constitution of the Mediator, so that the "work" of Jesus Christ can never be separated from his incarnate "person." In his incarnate constitution as God and man joined together in the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in one person, Jesus Christ *is* atoning reconciliation.

As Hart (2008:80) notes, the intrinsic connection between the incarnation and atonement is evidence of the "perichoretic indwelling" of doctrines in one another in Torrance's unitary, holistic theology. The internal link Torrance forges between the incarnation and the atonement provides what Cass (2008:169) describes as the "basic

ontological foundation" of Torrance's soteriology of "ontological healing." Torrance's unitary view of the incarnation and atonement, and the ontological ground of his soteriology, as Cass rightly notes, are grounded in the consubstantial Father-Son relation, the hypostatic union, and the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ (*cf.* Chapter Seven). As we have already noted, before we can understand the atoning "work" of Jesus Christ, Torrance insists that we must first understand "Who" he is in terms of his consubstantial relation to both God and humanity. Hence, in the present thesis, we have devoted three previous Chapters to an examination and explanation of the nexus of interrelations that disclose the identity of Jesus Christ; that is, his interrelations with historical Israel, his consubstantial relation with God, and his incarnate constitution as God and humanity joined in hypostatic union.

As we begin an inquiry into Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption, we must continue to bear in mind the unitary nature of his theology, where the "work" of Jesus Christ is a direct function of "Who" he is as God and man joined in reconciling union. Mindful that Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption is a direct corollary of his doctrine of the hypostatic union, an examination and explanation of Torrance's unitary approach to incarnational redemption, wherein the person and work of Christ are fully integrated, may be facilitated by an inquiry into the nature of the flesh assumed by the eternal Word in the incarnation, as well as an examination of what Torrance calls the "Latin heresy."

6.4.1 Assumption of Adamic Flesh

The inherent connection Torrance sees between the incarnation and atonement depends heavily upon a particular view of the nature of the flesh the eternal Word assumed in the incarnation. The previous chapter examined the epistemological and soteriological significance of the humanity of Jesus Christ without concern for the manner of the flesh he assumed from the Virgin Mary. In regard to the precise nature of the humanity of Jesus Christ, however, we encounter one of the more controversial aspects of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ: his assertion that the incarnate Word assumed sinful Adamic flesh (Torrance, 1988a:161*ff*; 1990:202-205; 1992:65; 1994a:58-60).

Following Athanasius, in his *Contra Arianos* (Torrance, 1988a:161 n. 52), Torrance argues that in taking upon himself "the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7), Jesus Christ assumed "fallen Adamic humanity" from the Virgin Mary, that is, "our perverted, corrupt, degenerate, diseased human nature enslaved to sin and subject to death under the condemnation of God" (Torrance, 1988a:161; *cf.* 1994a:58). Elsewhere (1992:39) Torrance writes:

> [T]he Incarnation was the coming of God to save us in the heart of our *fallen* and *depraved* humanity, where humanity is at its wickedest in its enmity and violence against the reconciling love of God. That is to say, the Incarnation is to be understood as the coming of God to take upon himself our fallen human nature, our actual human existence laden with sin and guilt, our humanity diseased in mind and soul in its estrangement or alienation from the Creator.

As Gill (2007:53) notes, in his reconciling revelation, God put himself on the side of the enemy (*cf.* Barth, 1957g:151). In becoming flesh, the Son of God "became what we are as sinners alienated from God and existing down to the roots of our being in a state of disobedience against him" (Torrance,1990:203). Torrance continues:

> [I]n his incarnation the Son of God penetrated into the dark recesses of our human existence and condition where we are enslaved in original sin, in order to bring the redeeming love and holiness of God to bear upon us in the distorted ontological depths of our human being.

According to Torrance, the assumption of fallen human flesh was "a doctrine found everywhere in the early Church in the first five centuries" (Torrance, 1992:39). From the time of Irenaeus, the Greek fathers interpreted the teaching of St. Paul (*e.g.*, Rom 8:1*ff*; Gal 3:13; 2Cor 5:21) to mean that "in the incarnation the Son of God condescended to assume from us our fallen, corrupt, mortal human nature, on the ground that what he did not assume did not come within his healing, saving and sanctifying power." The Greek fathers argued that in becoming flesh, the incarnate Son was not merely "externally" or "accidentally" related to us, for without being united with us in "our condition of sin, corruption and slavery," he could not save us (Torrance, 1990:202). According to Gill (2007:53) and Ho (2008:70), Torrance is directly influenced by Barth in asserting the assumption of fallen flesh. For Barth, as Gill notes, the word translated "flesh" in John 1:14 (*i.e.*, *sarx*) means "fallen" flesh (Barth, 1957g:151, 152). Moreover, Gunton (1992:52) supports the "fallenness" position by arguing that Christ assumed our actual fallen nature and not some "idealised" human nature. As Gill (2007:55) correctly argues, the assumption of fallen flesh is "central" to Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption.

In distinction to "forensic" categories of the atonement, Torrance frames his discussion of the atonement in "ontological" terms. For Torrance (1990:204), it is important to realise that "in the very act of taking our fallen nature upon himself Christ was at work healing, redeeming and sanctifying it." Thus, Torrance (1988a:162) views the incarnate Son's assumption of fallen Adamic flesh as a "reconciling, healing, sanctifying and recreating activity." In becoming one of us, Jesus took what is ours and gave us what is his. In great compassion, he gathered up our fallen humanity to himself "in order to purify it and quicken it in his own sinless life-giving life." Cass (2008:169) rightly describes Torrance's soteriology as one of "ontological healing." Torrance's assertion of the incarnate assumption of fallen Adamic flesh flows naturally from his view of atonement as ontological healing and is a natural and necessary aspect of his unitary doctrine of incarnational redemption or atoning reconciliation. As Scandrett (2006:85) notes, Torrance's argument for the assumption of a fallen human nature follows from his understanding of both the incarnation and the atonement. If the goal of the atonement is to heal humanity of sin and death and bring us back into right relationship with God, then the eternal Word must assume our fallen Adamic flesh in order to cleanse and heal it.

Torrance's assertion of the assumption of fallen Adamic flesh in order to heal and cleanse it in the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ is based on the soteriological principle that "only what the incarnate Son has taken up from us into himself is saved," a principle given central place in the theology of the Cappadocian fathers (Torrance, 1988a:163-165). Torrance quotes Basil's (*Epistle*, 261.2) assertion that Jesus Christ could not have "slain sin" and reunited fallen humanity to God if he had not come in "our flesh." As Torrance notes, however, it was Gregory Nazianzus (*Epistle*, 101; *Orations*, 1.23; 22.13), who gave the principle "its most epigrammatic expression" in a trenchant refutation of Apollinarianism: "The unassumed is the unhealed; but what is united to God is saved. If only half Adam fell, then what Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of him who was begotten, and so be saved as a whole." In addition, Torrance notes Gregory Nyssa's (*Contra Eunomium*) assertion that Jesus came to bring home "the whole sheep, not just the fleece," leaving "no part of our nature which he did not take up into himself" (Torrance, 1988a:163, 164 n. 62-64). The early fathers understood that if the whole man was to be healed, the whole man had to

be assumed in the incarnation, for the unassumed is the unhealed, and that which is not taken up by Christ is not saved (Torrance, 1992:39).

In arguing that Jesus assumed sinful Adamic flesh in order to heal and cleanse it, Torrance follows the Greek fathers in placing special emphasis on the healing of the rational human mind. Against the Apollinarian assertion that the mind of the *Logos* replaced the human mind of Jesus, Torrance follows Gregory Nazianzus (*Epistle*, 101) in arguing that it is the rational human mind that is assumed and redeemed in the incarnation, for it is in the mind, not merely in the flesh, that human sin is most deeply entrenched (Torrance, 1988a:164, 165). Torrance (1990:40) writes:

> Divine salvation and reconciliation had to do with human beings, not only in the corruption of their physical nature, but in the depravity of their spiritual nature in which they had become alienated and enemies in their minds so that they turned the very truth of God into a lie. Thus the Incarnation had to be understood as the sending of the Son of God in the concrete form of our own sinful nature ... in which he judged sin within that very nature in order to redeem man from his carnal, hostile mind.

For Torrance, as Dawson (2007b:58-60, 74) argues, the necessity of the assumption of fallen human flesh, including the rational mind, is related to the disease that lies at the root of our existence: our sinfulness. The innumerable problems of human existence, whether evil thoughts, murder, adultery, theft, lying or slander are the symptoms of a problem that is located at the centre of our being, in our very hearts (*cf.* Jer 17:9; Mt 15:18, 19). The depth of our need, therefore, requires a redemption that issues from the depth of our being. If we are to be saved, we must be cleansed from the root of our existence, in the ontological depths of the human heart. Therefore, in order for our redemption to reach to the root of our sinfulness, Jesus had to become what we are, in order that we might be made what he is. Jesus had to assume our diseased, corrupted flesh in order to heal and cleanse it "from the eternal inside out." As Scandrett (2006:88) notes, only by taking the "cursedness" of fallen humanity upon himself, not merely in a forensic way, but in a real ontological sense, could Jesus Christ overcome the curse, heal the sickness of human nature, and resolve the estrangement between sinful humanity and God. As Hart (2008:86) notes, Jesus assumed from the Virgin Mary humanity in the precise condition in which it needs to be redeemed.

Torrance's assertion of the assumption of fallen Adamic flesh takes seriously St. Paul's teaching that "Christ was made man in the concrete likeness of the flesh of sin under the law of sin and death" (*cf.* Rom 8:3), and inexplicably was "made sin" (2Cor 5:21)

and "made a curse" for us (Gal 3:13), in order to redeem and save us from sin and death. Yet, in assuming our sinful flesh, Christ did not himself sin; rather, "by bringing the perfect holiness and righteousness of God in himself to bear upon it, he condemned sin in the flesh, and through his atoning self-offering and self-consecration in our place he healed, redeemed and sanctified in and through himself what he had assumed" (Torrance, 1990:203, 204; *cf.* 1994a:58). Torrance (1988a:162; n. 54) quotes Hilary's assertion (*De Trinitate*, 1.13) that "God took upon himself the flesh in which we have sinned that by wearing our flesh he might forgive sins; a flesh which he shares with us by wearing it not by sinning in it." Torrance (1988a:162 n. 56) also quotes the dramatic assertion of Gregory Nyssen (*Adversus Apollinarem*, 26) that "although Christ took our filth upon himself, nevertheless he is not himself defiled by the pollution, but in his own self he cleanses the filth, for it says, the light shone in the darkness, but the darkness did not overpower it." As Torrance (1986b:476) argues, Eastern theologians from Irenaeus to Cyril of Alexandria taught that, in taking our lost cause upon himself and becoming one with us in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God humbled himself by "assuming our fallen human nature, our humanity diseased in mind and soul, our actual human existence enslaved to sin and subjected to judgment and death, precisely in order to save us in the very heart of our depraved condition where we are in enmity with God." In assuming our diseased and corrupt humanity, the eternal Word condemned sin in the flesh by living a life of perfect obedience "inside" the flesh of Adam, bringing his holiness to bear upon it and healing and sanctifying it.

Noting that Torrance maintains the sinlessness of Christ throughout the entirety of his incarnate life, Gill (2007:55) argues that Torrance's christology is subject to criticism because he does not "define" how the incarnate Word could remain sinless while assuming sinful flesh. In regard to the assumption of sinful flesh and the sinlessness of Christ, Cass (2008:185), however, rightly notes a "two-fold agency" of divine holiness in the redeeming and sanctifying of the fallen humanity assumed in the incarnation. First, as Cass notes, Torrance argues that the incarnate Word penetrates our corrupt humanity, condemns sin in his humanity, and renews our humanity and humanity's relationship with God throughout the course of his obedient life, death, and resurrection. In the eternal Word's incarnational penetration of fallen Adamic flesh, our relationship with God lost in the fall is recovered, with the added gift that our humanity is transformed in Christ to abide in the eternal presence of the Word of God. Second, Torrance contends that the eternal Word empowers the person and humanity of Jesus

Christ to overcome the power of sin, death, and the devil, in order to live a life of obedience to God. In addition, notes Cass (2008:185, 186), Torrance assigns an important but "secondary" place for the Holy Spirit in empowering the humanity of Jesus Christ to defeat the powers of evil and renew humanity's relationship with God. As Cass notes, Torrance contends that Jesus Christ received the Holy Spirit at every point of his human development, so that he could reconstitute and reorient our humanity in himself toward a right relationship with God the Father (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:190).

6.4.2 The Latin Heresy

Torrance argues that we must "relearn" the fundamental soteriological principle that Christ assumed fallen, sinful human flesh, since it has been "suppressed" in the Western Church, where doctrines of the atonement have departed from the soteriological emphasis of the incarnation found in the early centuries of Christianity. Consequently, the atonement has been regarded in the Latin West primarily as an "external transference of penalty" between sinners and God, rather than as "the culmination of God's incarnational penetration into the alienated roots of humanity in order to cancel sin and guilt and undo the past, and to effect within it once for all atoning reconciliation between the world and himself" (Torrance, 1986b:476; 1992:39).

In asserting the assumption of sinful human flesh, Torrance (1986b:477, 478, 480; *cf.* 1990:232, 233; 1992:40, 41; 1993:237-239; 1994a:58, 59) rejects what he terms the "Latin heresy," that is, a "dualist" understanding of the person and work of Christ, traceable to Leo's *Tome* sent to the Council of Chalcedon, that provided the Western Church with its paradigm for a formulation of atoning reconciliation in terms of "external" relations, whether exemplary, as in Abelard, or juridical, as in Anselm. As Scandrett (2006:86) notes, beginning in the fourth century, the idea that the eternal Word of God would assume sinful human flesh was increasingly seen as unworthy of the "holiness and perfection" of God's being. Because the idea of the incarnate assumption of sinful flesh was "odious" to Christians, notes Scandrett, it was largely rejected in the West by the end of the fifth century.

According to Torrance (1986b:477, 478, 480), in asserting that the Son of God assumed a "neutral" human nature, that is, human nature in its perfect original state as it existed

before the fall, unaffected by sin and guilt and not under divine judgement, the Latin position insists that Jesus Christ did not assume our "original sin," lodged within the roots of personal and social human being, but only our "actual sin." This led to the Roman doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary, which continues to divide the Latin and Greek branches of the Church. Consequent to this view, argues Torrance, Protestantism was forced to deal with original sin by an appeal to a separate and subsequent work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, while Roman Catholic theology dealt with original sin through the "healing medicine of grace" merited by Christ and dispensed by the Church in the holy sacraments.

In asserting the assumption of a neutral humanity, argues Torrance (1986b:476), Latin theology rejected the "cardinal soteriological principle," associated with Nicene theology, that "the unassumed is the unhealed." In arguing that Jesus assumed a neutral human flesh, Latin theologians split apart the intrinsic relation between the person and work of Christ by construing the atonement in an "instrumentalist" way, wherein the incarnation was regarded simply as a means of supplying a sinless human being who could live in perfect obedience to the law of God and take our place on the cross. Subsequently, atonement was regarded either as an external moral transaction or as an external penal transaction, wherein the penalty for sin is transferred from sinners to the sinless Saviour. As Gill (2007:48) succinctly states, for Torrance, this transactional view reduces the atonement to an "external action" between the sinless Christ and God, wherein the Son pays the price of human sin to the Father. Either view, however, Torrance (1986b:476) contends, creates a separation (*i.e.,* dualism) between the incarnation and the atonement by construing Christ's saving act in external terms, whether exemplary or juridical, rather than in terms of the internal Father-Son relation, wherein the atoning work of Christ is a function of his incarnate constitution as the eternal Son who is *homoousios to Patri*. Protestant theology, particularly Evangelicalism, has generally followed the Latin Church in this regard, specifically in its development of various theories of the atonement, all of which, in varying ways, dualistically divide the incarnation and the atonement by separating the person and work of Christ (Torrance, 1986b:476).

As Scandrett (2006:86, 87) argues, in the Latin view, the humanity of Jesus Christ must be perfect if the eternal Word is to assume it in the incarnation. The problem with this view, argues Scandrett, is the *de facto* distinction it makes between Jesus' perfect,

sinless humanity and our own sinful humanity. For Torrance, notes Scandrett, this distinction results in the "radical diminution" of the atonement from an ontologically transformative, healing, and, therefore, saving event to a detached externalised transaction understood in purely forensic terms and limited to the cross. For Torrance, as Scandrett rightly argues, such a viewpoint is woefully inadequate, for in its concern to safeguard the holiness of the eternal Word against the taint of original sin, it ironically denies fallen human nature the promise of healing inherent in the incarnation-atonement. Similarly but more simply, as Gill (2007:56) notes, for Torrance, the denial of the incarnate assumption of fallen Adamic humanity is to deny the reality of the incarnation and to throw doubt on the atonement as anything other than an "arbitrary exchange." Against those who argue that Christ assumed a "neutral" human nature in the incarnation, we ask with Gunton (1992:52; *cf*. Gill, 2007:56), "[I]f Christ bore the flesh of unfallen Adam … what is his *saving* relation to us in our lostness?"

According to Cass (2008:159), Torrance has a "rare understanding" of the hypostatic union among Western theologians in arguing that the hypostatic union is itself an atoning union, wherein atonement and reconciliation between God and sinful humanity are "perfectly effected vicariously for all" in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. By grounding salvation in the hypostatic union, argues Cass, Torrance breaks with the Western Augustinian tradition, which grounds salvation in Christ's [external] relationship to humanity and requires a "contribution" from sinners to complete the work of salvation. As Torrance (1992:40) argues:

> If the incarnation is not held to mean that the Son of God penetrated into and appropriated our alienated, fallen, sinful human nature, then atoning and sanctifying reconciliation can be understood only in terms of *external* relations between Jesus Christ and sinners. That is why in Western Christianity the atonement tends to be interpreted almost exclusively in terms of external forensic relations as a judicial transaction in the transference of the penalty of sin from the sinner to the sin-bearer.

The Latin view of the atonement as a "forensic transaction," wherein the sinless Saviour offers his body in an "external," "instrumental" way, stands in marked contrast to Torrance's discussion of the atonement in terms of the eternal Word's "internal penetration" of fallen Adamic flesh and its consequent "ontological healing."

In regard to the external, "transactional" view of atonement, Torrance notes that federal theology, arising from post-Reformation Protestant Scholasticism, works on the premise of a "contract" or "bargain" made between the Father and the Son in eternity

past, and interpreted in causal, necessary, and forensic terms (Habets, 2008:344). Torrance sees this "transactional notion" of atoning reconciliation in post–Reformation Calvinism, particularly in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (VIII:v), where the incarnate Son is said to have "purchased" reconciliation for us. Implied here is an external, transactional view of atonement, wherein Jesus' suffering on the cross is regarded as the fulfilment of a "divine requirement, on the ground of which the Father was induced to reconcile us, and was, as it were, 'bought off'." This transactional view of the cross departs from the teaching of the New Testament, in which, according to Torrance, there is no suggestion that reconciliation is "bought" from God. He argues further that the notion of reconciliation as purchased from God departs from Calvin (2008:II.16.4; 326, 327), who cited Augustine in arguing that the Father's love for humanity is prior to the atoning reconciliation of the cross (*cf.* Rom 5:8); that is, God does not love us because of what Christ has done; rather, it is because God first loved us that he came in Christ to reconcile us to himself (*cf.* Jn 3:16). As Torrance notes, "the truth of the prevenient love and grace of God in Christ was one of the primary principles of the Reformation" (Torrance, 1996c:19, 139; 2009:146).

In contradistinction to the "gospel" of "external relations" that characterizes the Latin heresy, Torrance (1992:41) follows patristic theology in arguing that the incarnation and the atonement are "internally linked," for "atoning expiation and propitiation are worked out in the ontological depths of human being and existence into which the Son of God penetrated as the Son of Mary." As Torrance (1994a:59) argues, if the incarnation itself is essentially redemptive rather than instrumental, that is, merely a means to an end, then "atonement must be regarded as taking place in the ontological depths of Christ's incarnate life, in which he penetrated into the very bottom of our fallen human being and took our disobedient humanity, even our alienated human mind, upon himself in order to heal it and convert it back in himself into union with God." Jesus penetrated to the depths of our original sin "in order to redeem us from it by bringing his atoning sacrifice and holiness to bear upon it in the very roots of our human existence and being." Noting that in his genealogy recorded in Matthew, "Jesus was incorporated into a long line of sinners," Torrance (1992:41) eloquently argues:

> [H]e made the generations of humanity his very own, summing up in himself our sinful stock, precisely in order to forgive, heal and sanctify it in himself. Thus atoning reconciliation began to be actualised with the conception and birth of Jesus of the Virgin Mary when he identified himself with our fallen and estranged humanity, but that was a movement which Jesus fulfilled throughout the whole course of his sinless life as the obedient Servant of the

> Lord, in which he subjected what he took from us to the ultimate judgment of God's holy love and brought the healing and redeeming power of God to bear directly upon it in himself. From his birth to his death and resurrection on our behalf he sanctified what he assumed through his own self-consecration as incarnate Son to the Father, and in sanctifying it brought the divine judgment to bear directly upon our human nature both in the holy life he lived and in the holy death he died in atoning and reconciling sacrifice before God.

In contradistinction to the Latin tradition, Torrance (1992:41, 42) argues that we must "recover the awesome truth that through his Incarnation the Son of God appropriated our fallen humanity under the judgment of God." Throughout the whole course of his life, the incarnate Saviour brought his healing and redeeming power to bear upon sinful Adamic flesh, even in the deep recesses of original sin, in order to heal, cleanse, and sanctify it in atoning reconciliation.

6.4.3 Unity of Christ's Person and Work

A greater appreciation of Torrance's rejection of the Latin heresy, with its dualism between incarnation and atonement, requires an examination and explanation of his holistic view of the unity of Christ's "person" and "work." In Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption, the incarnation and the atonement are intimately connected: incarnation is inherently redemptive and redemption is inherently incarnational (Torrance, 1988a:159; *cf*. 1992:66).

Following Barth (1957b:1*ff*; 1957d:1*ff*), Torrance fully integrates christology and soteriology into a unitary whole, refusing to separate the person and work of Jesus Christ as if these were two distinct doctrines. In Torrance's doctrine of incarnational reconciliation, the doctrines of the hypostatic union and atonement are "inextricably interwoven." The hypostatic union is "the ontological aspect of atoning reconciliation and atoning reconciliation is the dynamic aspect of hypostatic union." For Torrance, the hypostatic union and atoning reconciliation "inhere inseparably in one another" and are the "obverse and reverse" of one another (Torrance, 1990:201; *cf*. 1986a:304-306; 1990:177-179). As Ho (2008:129) notes, the atonement removes sin and guilt from humanity, while the hypostatic union makes it an ontological reality by actualising it within our fallen humanity (*cf*. Torrance, 1992:66).

In keeping with his unitary, holistic approach to theology, Torrance rejects any dualism that separates the "person" and "work" of Jesus Christ. In the one person of the

incarnate Son, divinity and humanity are united together, so that atoning reconciliation takes place "within," not "external" to, the one personal being of the Mediator. As Torrance (1992:63) notes:

> In Jesus Christ ... his Person and his Work are one. What he does is not something separate from his personal Being and what he is in his own incarnate Person *is* the mighty Act of God's love for our salvation. Christ and his Gospel belong ontologically and inseparably together, for that is what he is, he who brings, actualises and embodies the Gospel of reconciliation between God and man and man and God in his own Person. In him the Incarnation and Atonement are one and inseparable, for atoning reconciliation falls within the incarnate constitution of his Person as Mediator, and it is on that ground and from that source that atoning reconciliation embraces all mankind and is freely available to every person.

In Torrance's unitary, non-dualist theology, "Christ" (*i.e.,* "person") and his "Gospel" (*i.e*., "work") are ontologically united, for atoning reconciliation falls "within" the incarnate constitution of the Mediator. Jesus Christ "embodies" the mediation of reconciliation in the unity of divinity and humanity in his one incarnate person.

For Torrance (2002b:151), reconciliation or atonement cannot be thought of as a "kind of transaction apart from or objective to Christ." Reconciliation or atonement is not an "act" done by Christ; rather, it is the person of Christ himself "in activity." The redemptive activity of Christ finds its significance in the "person" who does it. "In other words," argues Torrance,

> the significance of the cross does not lie in the death or the shed blood of Christ in his sacrifice simply, but it lies in the fact that the Person of Christ is the One who shed his own life for us and who bore our sins. The Redemption is the Person of Christ in action; not the action by itself thought of in an objectivist impersonal way, as for example … in St. Anselm.

In describing atonement as the "person" of Christ "in activity," Torrance echoes the Athanasian concept of *enousios energeia* (*De synodis,* 34, 41; *Contra Arianos*, 2.2; 4.1; *cf.* Chapter Four). For Athanasius, God's being is essentially dynamic rather than static, for his being and activity inhere in one another; that is, "his being is his act-in-his-being and his act is his being-in-his act" (Torrance, 1988a:131). In regard to his unitary understanding of the person and work of Christ, for Torrance (2002b:151), "it is not too much to say that 'his Being is itself Redemption.'"

In his emphasis on the ontological union of the person and work of Christ, Torrance (1986b:473) argues that our understanding of atonement must be framed in the context of the consubstantial Father-Son relation. Noting that the Nicene *homoousios to Patri*

was applied to the 'incarnate' Son, who came down from heaven for us and for our salvation, Torrance argues that the oneness in being between the Father and Son must be regarded from a soteriological perspective. Reconciliation is not merely a propositional truth that God has made known to us by sending his only-begotten Son to be our Saviour; rather, God's self-revelation in the incarnate Son "is" reconciliation, "as certainly as it is God himself: God with us, God beside us, and chiefly and decisively, God for us." As Torrance asks, "How could God actually reveal and give *himself* to us across the chasm, not only of our creaturely distance but of our sinful alienation from him, except through a movement of atoning reconciliation?" In bringing together the doctrine of atoning reconciliation and the Nicene assertion of the consubstantial Father-Son relation, Torrance (1986b:473, 474) clearly disavows an Arian view of Christ. If we operate with a view of the Son as created out of nothing and, therefore, only externally related to the Father, argues Torrance, "we are unable to give any saving significance to the human life and activity of Christ in the form of a servant, for it rules out of account any direct personal intervention by God himself in our lost and damned human condition." If Christ is only externally related to God, his reconciling activity can only be construed in exemplary or forensic terms, rather than in the ontological terms of the consubstantial Father-Son relation. As Torrance argues, this is precisely what has occurred in Western theology, for it has allowed "an epistemological and ontological dualism, to cut between the Person of Christ as God incarnate and his saving work, with the result that it has constantly offered an interpretation of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross in external moral or juridical terms." With its dualism between the incarnation and atonement, Torrance contends that Western theology has failed to appreciate the implications for atoning reconciliation of the unity of being between the incarnate Son and the Father.

In contradistinction to the dualism of the Latin tradition, Torrance (1988a:155) argues that "the work of atoning salvation does *not* take place *outside* of Christ, as something external to him, but takes place *within* him, *within* the incarnate constitution of his Person as Mediator." As Torrance (1988a:158) argues:

> [A]toning reconciliation must be understood as having taken place within the personal being of Jesus Christ as the one Mediator between God and man, and thus within the ontological roots and actual condition of the human and creaturely existence which he assumed in order to save. In this event atonement is not an act of God done *ab extra* upon man, but an act of God become man, done *ab intra*, in his stead and on his behalf; it is an act of God as man, translated into human actuality and made to issue out of the depths of man's being and life toward God.

For Torrance (1992:65), incarnation and atonement are "internally and essentially intertwined" in reconciling union in all Jesus Christ became for us and our salvation. As he argues:

> [The hypostatic union] is projected ... into the actual conditions of our estranged humanity where we are in conflict with God, so that the hypostatic union operates as a reconciling union in which estrangement is bridged, conflict is eradicated, and human nature taken from us is brought into perfect sanctifying union with divine nature in Jesus Christ. Embodied within the deep tensions and contradictions of our rebellious humanity, the hypostatic union took on the form of a dynamic atoning union which steadily worked itself out within the structures of human existence all through the course of our Lord's vicarious earthly life from his birth to his crucifixion and resurrection.

It is essential to note that the hypostatic union is not merely a static union of divine and human natures; rather, it is a "reconciling union," or a "dynamic atoning union," wherein the actual condition of human estrangement and conflict is brought into "perfect sanctifying union" with God. As Torrance (1992:66) eloquently argues:

> The hypostatic union could not have been actualised within the conditions of our fallen humanity without the removal of sin and guilt through atonement and the sanctification of human nature assumed into union with the divine. On the other hand, atoning union could not have been actualised within the ontological depths of human existence where human beings are alienated from God without the profound penetration into those depths that took place through the Incarnation and the hypostatic union between divine and human nature that it involved. That is what came about in Jesus Christ, the Mediator, in whom atoning union and hypostatic union served each other.

Torrance's insistence on an ontological, rather than external, view of atonement can better be understood in light of his understanding of "sin." For Torrance, the root of the human dilemma is alienation from God as a result of sin, coupled with human enslavement to a nature determined by its fallen condition. Sin is, thus, far more than a merely forensic or moral problem; sin is an ontological problem; it is the state in which we exist, a state of existential estrangement from our Maker. As an ontological problem, sin must be dealt with at the depths of our fallen, diseased humanity (Hart, 2008:81; *cf*. Torrance, 1992:70). In the hypostatic union of divinity and Adamic flesh in Jesus Christ, God penetrates to the ontological depths of our diseased, broken, and fallen humanity, healing our corrupt flesh, making whole our brokenness, and removing our sin and guilt by sanctifying it in atoning union in the incarnation. Atonement, therefore, is not to be understood in terms of "external relations" between human sin and Jesus Christ, but in terms of his "incarnational penetration" into the ontological depths of human existence under the judgement of God. In Jesus Christ, God the Judge has made himself one with us in such a way as "to get at the very roots of our original

sin and guilt and through his expiatory and propitiatory activity, not only to do away with our sin and guilt, but to sanctify us and creatively to set our life on an altogether new basis in union with himself" (Torrance, 1986a:306; 1990:178, 179).

In regard to incarnational redemption, the hypostatic union is "the immediate ground for all Christ's mediatorial and reconciling activity in our human existence" (Torrance, 1992:64, 65). The hypostatic union is, in itself, an atoning union between the "Holy One of God" and sinful humanity, which Jesus Christ heals and sanctifies by making it his own. Atoning reconciliation, therefore, must be understood as "accomplished *within* the incarnate constitution of the Mediator and not in some *external* transactional way between himself and mankind" (Torrance, 1986b:475, 476). Torrance continues:

> Jesus Christ does not mediate a reconciliation (any more than a revelation) other than what he is in himself, as though he were merely the intermediary or instrument of divine reconciliation. He embodies in himself what he mediates, for what he mediates and what he is are one and the same. He himself in the wholeness of his Person, Word and Act is the content and reality of divine Reconciliation. He *is* the Propitiation for our sins; he *is* our Redemption; he *is* our Justification. It is in this identity between Mediator and Mediation that the living heart of the Gospel is to be found. If we let go of the intrinsic oneness between Jesus Christ and God, or between the Person and the Work of Christ, then our grasp of the Gospel of salvation is bound to disintegrate and we will invariably lose its substance.

In Torrance's unitary theology, there is an "intrinsic oneness" between Jesus and God and between the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ "is" redemption. For Torrance, as Hart (2008:85) notes, atonement is not an abstract quality that arises from something Jesus Christ "does"; rather, atonement is who he "is" in his incarnate constitution as God and humanity joined in reconciling union (*cf.* Torrance, 1992:56, 57). Thus, there can be no separation of the person and work of Christ. As Pratz (1998:6) simply but accurately states, "What he is is what he does."

For Torrance, as Scandrett (2006:71) rightly notes, if Jesus Christ is, in fact, the incarnation of God, then the reconciliation he effects between God and humanity must take place *within* his own Person. It is this fact that constitutes Jesus as the Mediator between God and humanity. To be sure, Jesus Christ *is* the Gospel, because in his one person he embodies reconciliation between God and humanity. For Torrance, as Scandrett (2006:72, 73) rightly notes, if Jesus Christ is truly divine and truly human in one person, then he constitutes the "living nexus" in and through which God and humanity are reconciled. As Scandrett contends, the embodiment of atoning

reconciliation in Jesus Christ consists of "two mutually informing relations" that are mediated in and through the person of Jesus Christ: "the union of God with humanity through Jesus in his divinity, and the union of humanity with God through Jesus in his humanity." In regard to the first relation, because the Father-Son relation falls *within* the being of God (*cf.* Chapter Four), there is an internal relation between Jesus and God; hence, the word and act of Jesus is the word and act of God. For Torrance, as Scandrett notes, it is upon Jesus' internal relation with God that the second relation, the union of humanity with God, is predicated. Because the Father-Son relation falls within the being of God, then all who are united to Jesus in his humanity are also united to the being of God and, hence, share in the inner relation of God's own triune life. For Torrance, argues Scandrett, this is what salvation means: human beings are united to God in such a way that we participate in the very life and love of the Triune Godhead. In short, if the incarnation takes place within the life of God, notes Scandrett, so must the reconciliation.

As Cass (2008:164) rightly notes, by grounding his theology in the person and work of Jesus Christ, Torrance's develops his soteriology within an "ontological framework," grounded in the homoousial Father-Son relation, the hypostatic union, and the eternal triune life of God as revealed in the economy of salvation. As Cass argues, Torrance has recast the "traditional forensic metaphors of salvation," so that "God is understood as the judge in Christ who fulfils the law and is substituted and judged in our place to reveal God's righteousness in graciously dealing with sin and justifying the ungodly." Torrance's ontological framework, argues Cass, gives the Church a way of "integrating central forensic aspects of salvation within the larger framework determined by union with Christ and ontological healing," and is of "profound ecumenical significance" for reconciling important historical differences between the Eastern and Western divisions of the Church.

In summary, just as Jesus Christ is the content of the revelation he brings, so that Revealer and Revelation are one, so also Jesus Christ is the content of reconciliation, so that Mediator and mediation are one. In contrast to the "gospel" of "external relations" of the Latin heresy, atonement is a function of the "internal relations" of the incarnate constitution of Jesus Christ, in whom God and fallen, sinful humanity are eternally united in atoning, reconciling union. Atonement takes place "within" the one person of Jesus Christ, as the eternal Word of God takes our diseased, fallen humanity to himself

in reconciling union, penetrating to the ontological depths of human sin and alienation in order to heal, cleanse, and reconcile fallen humanity to God. In the hypostatic union of divinity and sinful human flesh in his one person, Jesus Christ "embodies" the mediation he brings by healing and sanctifying our fallen humanity in atoning reconciliation. Thus, atoning reconciliation does not occur "outside" the person of Jesus Christ, as though his person and work could be separated; rather, atoning reconciliation falls "within" the incarnate constitution of the God-man, who, as fully God and fully human in one person, "is" atoning reconciliation between God and humanity. As Torrance (1990:204) rightly asserts, Jesus Christ is "the centre of it all," mediating reconciliation in such a way that, in him, we are with God. "In the deepest sense," notes Torrance "Jesus Christ is himself the atonement."

6.4.4 The Wonderful Exchange

Another aspect of Torrance's discussion of the personal, ontological redemption embodied in Jesus Christ is the all-important concept of the "wonderful exchange," that is, "the redemptive translation of man *from* one state *into* another brought about by Christ who in his self-abnegating love took our place that we might have his place, becoming what we are that we might become what he is." The New Testament word for the "exchange" effected between God and sinful humanity in Jesus Christ is "reconciliation" (*katallage*) (*cf.* Rom. 5:11; 11:15; 2Cor. 5:18, 19), a word that brings out the profound importance of "atoning" exchange. For Torrance, the concept of atoning exchange, wherein Jesus Christ assumes our poverty, so that through him we might become rich (*cf.* 2Cor 8:9), is the "inner hinge" upon which the entire doctrine of incarnational redemption turns (Torrance, 1988a:179, 180; *cf.* 2009:151-153). In language echoing the Nicene fathers, Torrance (1988a:181) writes:

> This atoning exchange, then, embraces the whole relationship between Christ and ourselves: between his obedience and our disobedience, his holiness and our sin, his life and our death, his strength and our weakness, his grace and our poverty, his light and our darkness, his wisdom and our ignorance, his joy and our misery, his peace and our dispeace, his immortality and our mortality, and so on.

Torrance's words are an eloquent elaboration of St. Paul's assertion that Jesus Christ assumed our poverty in order to freely and graciously give us his riches. Torrance's description of the wonderful, atoning exchange is similar to that of the great Genevan reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564). Drawing upon the Nicene fathers to articulate his

understanding of the wonderful exchange between our poverty and Christ's riches, Calvin (2008:IV.17.2; 896, 897; *cf.* Torrance, 1988a:179, n. 111) writes:

> This is the wondrous exchange made by his boundless goodness. Having become with us the Son of man, he has made us with himself sons of God. By his own descent to the earth he has prepared our ascent to heaven. Having received our mortality, he has bestowed on us his immortality. Having undertaken our weakness, he has made us strong in his strength. Having submitted to our poverty, he has transferred to us his riches. Having taken upon himself the burden of unrighteousness with which we were oppressed, he has clothed us with his righteousness.

Christ's union with us and our union with him in the wonderful exchange is part of a "miraculous commerce" between God and humanity (Dawson, 2007b:62). As the early Church understood, he who is Son of God by nature became son of man, so that we who are sons of men by nature might, by grace, become the sons and daughters of God (Deddo, 2007:140). The miraculous commerce of the atoning exchange is worked out "within the saving economy of the incarnation," and in the "ontological depths" of the sinful Adamic flesh the incarnate Son assumed, and "therefore reaches its appointed end and fulfilment through his transforming consecration of us in himself and through his exaltation of us as one body with himself into the immediate presence of the Father" (Torrance, 1988a:181). In short, as Torrance (1996b:153) notes, "through his incarnational union with us, he has established our union with him ... Through his incarnational fraternity, that which was lost in Adam is restored."

In regard to Christ's incarnational union with us, we argue that the medieval Latin emphasis on the assumption of a "neutral" human nature offered on the cross in a forensic, instrumental way, denies the "incarnational fraternity" between Jesus Christ and sinful humanity. As Scandrett (2006:87) argues, any attempt to safeguard divine impassibility by denying the assumption of fallen flesh denies the "onto-logic" of the "reconciling exchange" that lies at the heart of the Gospel (*cf.* Torrance, 1996a:250).

6.4.4.1 *Theopoiesis*

Further insight into Torrance's understanding of the wonderful exchange may be gained by an examination of what he regards as one of the significant aspects of the miraculous commerce wrought in Jesus Christ: this is the concept of *theopoiesis* (Gr. *lit*. "making divine"). Prominent in the thought of Athanasius (*De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 54; Torrance, 1988a:188 n. 146; Ho, 2008:131), this is the Greek patristic assertion

that Jesus was made human so that we might be made divine. While there is no formal explication of *theopoiesis* in Torrance's work, his entire theology is influenced by the conception of human salvation as a process of *theopoiesis* (Habets, 2009:2, 5; *cf*. Hart, 2008: 79, 80).

Torrance is reluctant to use the term "deification," preferring instead the term *theopoiesis*, since the word's grammatical construction keeps clear the creaturely nature of the verb's object as well as the full deity of its subject (Hart, 2008:79; *cf*. Torrance, 1992:64; 1996b:243). For Torrance, *theopoiesis* or *theosis*, terms which Torrance uses interchangeably (*cf*. 1992:64), involves no suggestion that the interaction between Christ's deity and our humanity results in any change in either divine or human nature (*ousia*). Just as Jesus Christ is no less divine in assuming human nature, we are no less human in being brought under the cleansing and healing influence of his divinity. As Torrance notes, following Athanasius (*Contra Arianos*, 1.38; 3:38), "What makes us 'divine' is the fact that the Word of God has come to us and acts directly upon us." In other words, in becoming human, Jesus Christ has brought us into "kinship" with himself, so that "our 'deification' in Christ is the obverse of his 'inhomination'." Thus, while we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), *theopoiesis* is not the "divinisation" of humanity; rather, it is the "recreation" of our lost humanity in the dynamic, atoning interaction between the divine and human natures hypostatically united in the one person of Jesus Christ, and its subsequent "exaltation" as it is lifted up in the Risen Saviour into union and communion with the Triune Godhead. While we are recreated and lifted up in Jesus Christ, however, we remain fully human, not divine (Torrance, 1988a:188, 189; *cf*. 1976a:234). As Torrance (1996b:243) notes, "*Theosis* describes man's involvement in such a mighty act of God upon him that he is raised up to find the true centre of his existence not in himself but in Holy God, where he lives and moves and has his being."

Theopoiesis brings out that aspect of the atoning exchange that lies at the heart of Nicene theology, wherein the death and resurrection of Christ were neither separated nor treated in isolation from one another. Redemption was considered to have taken place not only through the death of Jesus Christ but also through the resurrection and ascension, so that redemption is not only release from death, bondage, and judgement but also the pathway to new life and freedom in God (Torrance, 1988a:180). In harmony with Nicene theology, Torrance regards redemption as taking place not only

through the cross of Christ, but also through the empty tomb and ascension of the Risen Saviour. To be sure, the resurrection and the ascension are essential to Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of reconciliation in Jesus Christ, for incarnational redemption involves not only the healing and renewing of our fallen humanity, but also the restoration of relationships and consequent new life in union with God.

Elsewhere, Torrance (1992:64) connects *theopoiesis* or *theosis* to the biblical concept of "adoption" (*e.g.*, Rom 8:15; Eph 1:5). He writes: "*[T]heosis* ... does not mean 'divinisation', as is so often supposed, but refers to the utterly staggering act of God in which he gives *himself* to us and *adopts* us into the communion of his divine life and love through Jesus Christ and in his one Spirit, yet in such a way that we are not made divine but are preserved in our humanity." Torrance writes:

> Mediation of reconciliation which takes place within the Person of the Mediator himself means that men and women are savingly reconciled to God by being taken up in and through Christ to share in the inner relations of God's own life and love. It means that the eternal communion of love in God overflows through Jesus Christ into our union with Christ and gathers us up to dwell with God and in God … [so that] we are enfolded within the infinite dimensions of the love of God.

For Torrance, the eternal Word's union with us in our fallen humanity entails not only the condescension and self-sacrifice of the incarnate Son but also the transformation and exaltation of our humanity, as it is cleansed, healed, and recreated in the incarnation, then lifted up in and through the Risen Christ into the very presence of God, where humanity is given to share in the trinitarian life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As Deddo (2007:138-141) notes, our union with God through the wonderful exchange, wherein our redeemed, recreated humanity is lifted to heaven in the Risen Saviour, allows us to realistically understand the truth of Paul's assertions that not only have we "co-died" with Christ but we have been "co-raised" with him, so that we are seated with God in heavenly places (*cf*. Col 2:12, 13; 3:1; Eph 2:6).

For Torrance (1992:64), the mediation of reconciliation means "much more than the reconstituting of holy relations between man and God." Torrance (1992:66) writes:

> Yet it is not atonement that constitutes the goal and end of that integrated movement of reconciliation but union with God in and through Jesus Christ in whom our human nature is not only saved, healed and renewed but lifted up to participate in the very light, life and love of the Holy trinity.

In Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ, the closely related terms, *theopoiesis*, "adoption," "union with Christ," and "union with God in and through

Christ" mean nothing less than salvation itself. These concepts entail both the *recreation* of our lost humanity in the dynamic, healing interaction of the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ, and the *exaltation* of our humanity in the Risen Christ to dwell with God. Through Jesus Christ our lost and corrupt humanity is healed, renewed, and lifted up by the Spirit into the life of God, where we participate in the trinitarian relations of God's own being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Clearly, for Torrance, *the mediation of reconciliation in Jesus Christ encompasses much more than the forgiveness of sin*. For this reason, as Scandrett (2006:89) notes, Torrance does not restrict the atonement to forensic categories, as if God's sole purpose in atonement is to forgive humanity's sins. Rather, in becoming human and enduring the cross, Jesus Christ unites humanity to himself in the "ontological healing" (*cf.* Cass, 2008:169) of the hypostatic union and ushers humanity into union with the Holy Trinity.

Another vital aspect of Torrance's understanding of *theopoiesis* concerns the reception of the Holy Spirit made possible through the atoning exchange that takes place in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In the incarnation, God is imparted to humanity by means of the Spirit and humanity is attached to God by Jesus' assumption of fallen human flesh. Following Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses*, 3.18.1; 3.21.2; Torrance, 1988a:189 n. 151), Torrance argues that, in the incarnation, the Holy Spirit "became accustomed to dwell in humanity," while, on the other hand, humanity became "accustomed" to receive God and be indwelt by him. Thus, God the Holy Spirit is mediated to mankind "by" and "through" the humanity of Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ in the Jordan River, it was not because the sinless Son of God needed the sanctification of the Spirit; rather, the Spirit's descent was a descent upon the fallen humanity assumed by the incarnate Son. Because Jesus Christ is *homoousios* with fallen Adamic flesh, the descent of the Spirit at the Jordan is a descent upon all those who partake of the nature of Adam, that is, a descent upon all humanity. As Athanasius (*Contra Arianos*, 1.46, 47; Torrance, 1988a:190 n. 152) asserted, when Jesus Christ, as man, was "washed" in the Jordan River, we were "washed"; when he received the Spirit, we received the Spirit (Torrance, 1988a:189, 190). Torrance continues:

> This twofold movement of the giving and receiving of the Spirit actualised within the life of the incarnate Son of God *for our sakes* is atonement operating within the ontological depths of human being. It constitutes the "deifying" content of the atoning exchange in which through the pouring out of the same Spirit upon us we are given to participate. The indwelling of the Spirit mediated to us through Christ is the effective counterpart in us of his self-offering to the Father through the eternal Spirit.

Two important ideas come into view in Torrance's understanding of the mediation of the Spirit by and through the humanity of Jesus Christ. First, because Jesus Christ, the one through whom all things are made and in whom all things consist, has assumed fallen Adamic flesh, all those who partake of the nature of Adam are implicated in the Spirit's descent upon the incarnate Son in the Jordan River. This is the sense in which Peter can proclaim that the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:17; *cf.* Joel 2:28). Secondly, in keeping with his unitary, holistic theology, Torrance does not allow a dualism between the work of the Son in atonement and the work of the Spirit in sanctification. As Torrance (1988a:190) notes, Pentecost (*cf.* Acts 2) is not something "added" to atonement; rather, it is "the actualisation within the life of the Church of the atoning life, death and resurrection of the Saviour." Thus, for Torrance, justification and sanctification are not two separate events but, rather, are each an integral part of the atoning exchange wrought by the assumption of fallen Adamic flesh in the incarnation. Torrance's unitary view of justification and sanctification will be further considered in the following chapter.

6.4.4.2 Range of Atoning Reconciliation

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh through the humanity of Jesus Christ is directly related to the important issue of the "boundless" nature of the atoning exchange. For Torrance (1993:244), the "range" of atoning reconciliation is directly related to the nature of God, whom scripture describes as "love" (1Jn 4:8, 16):

> What are we to think, then, about the range of atoning redemption if it flows from and is anchored in the nature and being, and the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? It cannot but be commensurate with the eternal nature, being and love of the Blessed Trinity, for to limit the range of atoning redemption would be to limit the range of the nature, being and love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Since God *is* love, to limit the range of his love would be tantamount to imposing limits upon the ultimate being of God and to call in question the universal nature of the communion inherent in his triune reality as God.

For Torrance, the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ is the "ultimate ground" of the atonement. In the "indissoluble union" between incarnation and atonement, we learn that God is love (1Jn 4:8, 16), and that he loves all people without exception (*cf.* Jn 3:16), for he cannot be to anyone other than what he is in himself. As Torrance argues, to limit the range of atonement is to introduce a limitation in the eternal nature of God as love, as well as a "schism" or "contradiction" in the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1996c:295-297). The gifts of love that flow to us

through the incarnate Son, Torrance argues, are "quite unlimited" and as "inexhaustible" as God's love for us. Because the life of Jesus Christ "has a value that outweighs the whole universe," Torrance asserts the "infinite," "transcendent" worth, and "universal" range of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, noting that this was a recurrent theme among many of the Church fathers, particularly in the Eastern Church (Torrance, 1988a:181, 182). In contrast to a doctrine of limited atonement, Torrance plainly states that Christ died for "all men" (Torrance, 1957a:114).

Torrance's doctrine of the universal range of the atonement also arises from the unitary relation he sees between creation and redemption. As Torrance (1988a:106, 107) argues, the relationship between redemption and the renewal of the whole creation in Christ was far stronger in Greek than in Latin patristic thought. This was due, on one hand, Torrance contends, to the "profound interrelation of incarnation, atonement and creation" in Alexandrian and Cappadocian theology and, on the other hand, to the "damaging dualism" between the intelligible and sensible realms in Augustinian theology. According to Torrance:

> In the East the fact that there had become incarnate in Jesus Christ none other than the Creator, the ultimate Ground and Source of all being, order and rationality, who had himself penetrated into our death and triumphed over it in the resurrection, was held to mean that the whole universe is ontologically bound to the incarnate and risen Jesus, and therefore that the whole universe is brought to share in the freedom of the Creator. Just as it had its beginning in him, so through redemption, sanctification and renewal it will have its consummation in him.

Torrance attributes great redemptive significance to the biblical assertion that the eternal Word who became flesh is also the one by whom all things were made (*cf.* Jn 1:3, 14; Col 1:16, 17; Heb 1:2, 3). Since the consubstantial Father-Son relation falls "within" the being of God, argues Torrance (1986b:474; *cf.* 1988a:155), the person and work of Jesus Christ must be understood in terms of their "internal" relation to God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Since the Creator Word is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29), Torrance asserts that "the doctrines of redemption and creation cannot be torn apart but must be allowed to interpenetrate each other."

In a passage that integrates the doctrines of creation and incarnation with the doctrine of redemption, particularly in regard to the universal range of atoning reconciliation, Torrance (1988a:182, 183) writes:

> Through his penetration into the perverted structures of human existence he reversed the process of corruption and more than made good what had been destroyed, for he has now anchored human nature in his own crucified and risen being, freely giving it participation in the fullness of God's grace and blessing embodied in him. Since he is the eternal Word of God by whom and through whom all things that are made are made, and in whom the whole universe of visible and invisible realties coheres and hangs together, and since in him divine and human natures are inseparably united, then the secret of every man, whether he believes or not, is bound up with Jesus for it is in him that human contingent existence has been grounded and secured.

Again, Torrance (1993:244, 245) clearly connects creation and incarnation with the unlimited range of atonement as follows:

> By his incarnate constitution as the Mediator between God and man who is at once Creator God and creaturely man, Jesus Christ as Man represents all mankind: in him all men have the creative and sustaining source of their being. He cannot but represent in his death all whom he represents in his incarnate constitution. Atonement and incarnation cannot be separated from one another, and therefore the range of his representation is the same in both. If in his incarnation Christ the eternal Son took upon him the nature of man, then all who belong to human nature are involved and represented—all human beings without exception. It is for all and each that Jesus Christ stood in as substitute and advocate in his life and in his death: as such he died for all mankind and made atonement for their sins.

Torrance articulates his holistic, unitary view of the incarnation-atonement by asserting that the "range of representation" is the same in both. If Jesus Christ took our human nature in the incarnation, then, in both his life and his death, he represents all who partake of human nature. Torrance's doctrine of the universal range of the atonement flows directly from, and is correlative of, his doctrine of the hypostatic union.

In bringing together the doctrines of creation, incarnation, and atonement, Torrance follows Athanasius (*De Incarnatione,* 1-7, 20, 26; Torrance, 1988a:157 n. 41). Torrance (1988a:157) writes:

> In his incarnation he who by nature is internal to the being of God [*homoousios to Patri*] has embodied the creative source and ground of all human being in himself as man. As the Head of creation, in whom all things consist, he is the only one who really can act on behalf of all and save them. When he took our human nature upon himself, and in complete somatic solidarity with us offered himself up to death in atoning sacrifice for man, he acted instead of all and on behalf of all. Thus the redemptive work of Christ was fully representative and truly universal in its range. Its vicarious efficacy has its force through the union of his divine Person as Creator and Lord with us in our creaturely being, whereby he lays hold of us in himself and acts for us from out of the inner depths of his coexistence with us and our existence in him, delivering us from the sentence of death upon us, and from the corruption and perdition that have overtaken us.

For Torrance, as Cass (2008:182, 183) notes, Jesus Christ, as the head of creation and the one in whom all things consist, is the only one who can represent all humanity and save them from their fallen condition. Torrance's doctrine of vicarious humanity (*cf.* Chapter Seven), argues Cass, means that everything Jesus Christ has done and suffered in his humanity was done and suffered in place of, and on behalf of, all (*cf.* Hunsinger, 2001:144). For Torrance, as Cass rightly argues, it is essential that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ be viewed as fully representative, substitutionary, and universal in range, for Torrance rejects as "unbiblical" any doctrine of limited atonement.

In keeping with his holistic, unitary theology, Torrance regards the universal range of atonement as a direct consequence of the incarnate reality of Jesus Christ, who is God and man, Creator and creature, hypostatically united in one person. Because the very one by whom and through whom all things are created and in whom all things consist has united himself in "complete somatic solidarity" with humanity, all people, without exception, are ontologically bound up in the incarnate reality of Jesus Christ; thus, the range of atoning redemption includes all. Jesus Christ died for all humanity, making full atonement for the sin of the whole world (Torrance, 2009:182; *cf.* Jn 1:29; Rom 5:12-21; 2Cor 5:14; 1Tim 2:5, 6; 1Jn 2:2). For Torrance, the range of atonement is as universal in scope as is the incarnation. Anything short of universal atonement implies a circumscribed incarnation and a limitation in the love of God (Habets, 2008:345). To hold that some are not included in the incarnational redemption of Jesus Christ is "to cut at the very root of his reality as the Creator incarnate in space and time, as he in whom all things in the universe, visible and invisible, were created, hold together and are reconciled by the blood of his cross (Col 1:15-20)." Because he is the embodiment of the creative source and ground of all things, every human being is "ontologically bound" to the Creator Word. "Whether they believe it or not," argues Torrance, every human being is "creatively grounded" and "unceasingly sustained" in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Creator (Torrance, 1993:244, 245; *cf.* Acts 17:28; Col 1:17). "It is because atoning reconciliation falls within the incarnate constitution of Christ's Person as Mediator," notes Torrance (1986b:482), "that it is atoning reconciliation which embraces all mankind and is freely available to all in the unconditional grace of God's Self-giving."

It is precisely in Jesus Christ, who is both Son of God and son of Mary, that we are to think of the entire human race, as well as all creation, as in a profound sense already

redeemed, resurrected, and consecrated for the glory of God. The "blessed exchange" between the divine-human life of Jesus Christ and humankind "has the effect of finalising and sealing the ontological relations between every man and Jesus Christ," so that our resurrection is "stored up" in the cross. "How could it be otherwise," Torrance asks, "when he who became incarnate in him is the very one through whom all worlds, all ages, were made?" (Torrance, 1988a:182, 183)

6.4.4.3 Atoning Reconciliation and Election

The boundless nature of the wonderful exchange and the unlimited range of atoning reconciliation bear directly on Torrance's understanding of election or predestination. In keeping with the Reformed tradition of unconditional election, one which reflects a strictly "theonomous" way of thinking centred in God, Torrance's doctrine of election rejects any idea that humanity can establish contact with God or induce God to act in accordance with human will and desires, for all human relations with God derive from God's grace, whereby he freely establishes reciprocity between himself and his creatures. Torrance notes that post-Reformation Reformed theology stressed the priority or prevenience of God's grace, often preferring the term "predestination" to the term "election." He argues that the "pre" in "predestination" emphasised the "sheer," "unqualified" objectivity of God's love and grace toward all, as expressed in the biblical teaching that God has chosen humanity in Christ "before" the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). Torrance links this eternal decree with the truth that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8). Thus, Torrance distinguishes between predestination and election by locating the former in the timeless, eternal purpose of God's love for humanity and the latter in the fulfilment of that purpose in space and time in the history of Israel and the mediation of Jesus Christ. For Torrance, election is more than a static decree located in the timeless past; rather, it is a living reality that enters time and space and confronts us face to face in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1964:152; 1981b:132-134; *cf.* 1996c:14; Habets, 2008:335, 336).

In one of his earliest papers, Torrance (1941:108, 109) identifies two strands of thought in Reformed teaching on predestination. The first is the more familiar tendency to treat the doctrine of predestination along with, even in between, the doctrines of the divine decrees and subsequent doctrines. In this line of thought, Torrance argues, predestination is raised to the position of a separate article in Christian theology, one

that, to a certain extent, "stands on its own legs" and "governs" the doctrines of creation, providence, the fall, and sin and punishment (*cf*. Torrance, 1996c:135). The second characteristic of Reformed teaching on predestination, one that is often overlooked by its critics, and the one that reflects Torrance's own view of election, is the recurring insistence that election is closely connected with Christ; that is, election is *in Christo* or *propter Christum*. This view of election is consistent with Barth's (1957c:94*ff*) theology. Moreover, it is represented in Scottish Calvinism by Thomas Erskine (1788-1870), John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872), and Hugh R. Mackintosh (1870–1936) (Torrance, 1993c:1*ff*; Habets, 2008:353). Torrance even refers to Mackintosh and Campbell as his "fathers in the faith" (Torrance, *et al,* 1999:24). In regard to election *in Christo*, Torrance (1941:108, 109) writes:

> [T[he relation between God and man in predestination is to be thought of in terms of the person of Christ. How does God elect men? Through Christ. Why does He elect them? Because of Christ. Just because Christ is, therefore, the author and the instrument of election, we may not think of it in any deterministic sense, but in terms of the way our Lord treated men when He Himself was on earth. Unless this aspect of the Reformed doctrine of predestination is understood along with the other, it is not really understood at all.

For Torrance, therefore, there are "two sides" to the Christian doctrine of predestination: "that the salvation of the believer goes back to an eternal decree of God, and yet that the act of election is in and through Christ." The connection between election and Christ is essential to a full understanding of the Reformed teaching on election, Torrance argues, for it acts as a "powerful antidote" to the philosophical determinism that arose with the systematisation of Reformed theology (Torrance, 1941:108, 109).

Torrance contends, however, that a division occurred between these two aspects of predestination; that is, election was detached from the historical, incarnate reality of Jesus Christ and hidden in the secret, inscrutable counsel of God. According to Torrance, in post-Reformation Calvinist Scholasticism, under the influence of Augustine's doctrine of "irresistible grace," combined with an Aristotelian doctrine of final cause and imbued with the determinism of Newton's "cause-effect" cosmology, a strongly deterministic slant was read into the doctrine of predestination. Among the problems associated with the hard determinism of Calvinist Scholasticism was the tracing of predestination back to an eternal, irresistible decree in God, wherein election was detached from the incarnation and the cross and grounded in an "arcane dark

patch" in God behind the back of Jesus. In this bifurcation of christology and election, notes Torrance, Christ was regarded as the "instrument" of election, but not the "ground" of election. The ultimate ground of election was found in the secret counsel (*arcanum consilium*) of God. This detachment of election from Jesus Christ, that is, the separation of the eternal will of God from the existence of the incarnate Son, drove a deep wedge between Jesus and God and, thereby, introduced not only a "suspicion of Deism" in the Calvinist predilection to detach election from Christ, but also an element of Nestorianism into Calvinist christology, a dualism which not only separated the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, but also called into question any essential relation between Jesus and the Father and, thereby, provided ground for "a dangerous form of Arian and Socinian heresy" in which the atoning work of Christ was separated from God's essential nature and character as love. This dualism between election and the incarnation, argues Torrance, was far removed from Calvin himself, who insisted that Christ is the "mirror of election" (Torrance, 1941:109, 110; 1981b:134, 135; 1990:200; 1996c:133).

According to Torrance, when the doctrine of election is interpreted within a dualistic framework that separates the incarnate Son from election, coupled with the cause-effect determinism of Newtonian cosmology, the doctrine of predestination is "turned on its head." Instead of being regarded as the dynamic movement of God's love into human existence in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, it is twisted and distorted into a "mythological projection into the realm of God's Being and Activity of cultured-conditioned concepts and creaturely distinctions" (Torrance, 1981b:137). For Torrance, when we project back into God the kind of logical, causal, or even temporal connections we find on earth, we corrupt the doctrine of election or predestination and twist it into a kind of "predeterminism" or "fatalism," which he regards as "very wrong, and quite un-Christian" (Torrance, 1964:152). "We cannot let go the truth," Torrance insists, "that God has come in person in Jesus Christ, and that in Him we have a full and final revelation of the Father." Election "in Christ," therefore, means that Christ is the "ground" of election. To detach election from Christ makes election precede grace; that is, it implies that "there is a higher fact than Grace, and that therefore Christ does not fully go bail for God" (Torrance, 1941:109, 110). Torrance continues:

> Christ is himself identical with the action of God toward men; He is the full and complete Word of God. There is therefore no higher will than Grace or Christ. There are no dark spots in the character of God which are not covered by the Person of Christ; as the express image of God He covers the whole Face

> and Heart of the Father. And while election must be grounded in the eternal decree of God, Christian faith cannot allow that to be separated in the very least from the Word. Christ is in His own Person the eternal decree of God—and it is a false distinction to make Him only the *causa et medium* and not also the full ground of predestination.

In his assertion that election cannot be detached from Christ, Torrance will not allow the subordination of the love of God revealed in Christ to a "higher and more comprehensive decree of Providence." For Torrance, a doctrine of predestination must start *in Christo*, for "[t]here is no higher will in God than Grace" (Torrance, 1941:110).

In another early paper, Torrance (1949:314, 315) describes election as "nothing more and nothing less than the complete action of God's eternal love" for the whole world, as expressed in John 3:16. He further describes election as "the eternal decision of God who will not be without us entering time as grace, choosing us and appropriating us for Himself, and who will not let us go." For Torrance, election is the love of God "enacted and inserted into history" in Jesus Christ, "so that in the strictest sense Jesus Christ is the election of God." Decades later Torrance (1981b:131, 132) writes:

> Properly regarded, divine election is the free sovereign decision and utterly contingent act of God's Love in pure liberality or unconditional Grace whether in creation or in redemption. As such it is neither arbitrary nor necessary, for it flows freely from an ultimate reason or purpose in the invariant Love of God and is entirely unconditioned by any necessity ... in God and entirely unconstrained and unmotivated by anything beyond himself ... [Moreover] election refers to the eternal decision which is nothing less than the Love of God himself is, in action ... [flowing] freely and equably to all irrespective of any claim or worth or reaction on their part.

Simply stated, election is the concrete expression of what the love of God is by nature (*cf*. Habets, 2008:346).

Torrance (1981b:133) describes the doctrine of election as the "counterpart to the doctrine of the incarnation." As "the exact antithesis of all mythology," that is, in contradistinction to all mythological projections of the human psyche onto God, the incarnation is the "projection of God's eternal purpose of Love into our creaturely existence and its embodiment in a unique and exclusive way in Jesus Christ," in whom authentic relationship between God and man is established. Torrance continues:

> The incarnation, therefore, may be regarded as the eternal decision or election of God in his Love not to be confined, as it were, within himself alone, but to pour himself out in unrestricted Love upon the world which he has made and to actualise that Love in Jesus Christ in such a way within the conditions of our spatio-temporal existence that he constitutes the one Mediator between God

> and man through whom we may all freely participate in the unconditional Love and Grace of God.

Torrance (2009:183) captures the relation between election and the incarnation by insisting that election or predestination does not occur "behind the back of Jesus Christ"; that is, there can be no dualistic divide between election and grace, wherein election is detached from Jesus Christ and located in inscrutable divine decrees from eternity past (*cf*. Torrance, 1949:315; 1996c:133). To go behind the back of Jesus and speak about election apart from Christ, Torrance contends, is to fail to fully appreciate the soteriological significance of the consubstantial Father-Son relation. The creedal assertion that the incarnate Son is *homoousios to Patri* means there is no inscrutable will or hidden nature of God other than the will and nature of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Hence, for Torrance, God's eternal purpose of election (*cf*. Eph 1:4, 5) cannot be separated from the divine love revealed by God in sending his Son to be the Saviour of the whole world (*cf*. J. Torrance, 1983:87, 88).

In keeping with his unitary, holistic approach to the mediation of Christ, Torrance (2009:183) argues against any dualism between election and Christ's atoning work on the cross. He writes:

> God's eternal election is nothing else than God's eternal love incarnate in his beloved Son, so that in him we have election incarnate. God's eternal decree is nothing other than God's eternal word so that in Christ we have the eternal decree or Word of God made flesh. Election is identical with the life and existence and work of Jesus Christ, and what he does is election going into action.

For Torrance, election or predestination means that "what God is toward us in Jesus Christ on earth and in time, he is antecedently and eternally in himself (Torrance, 1964:153). In Jesus Christ, the eternal decision of God has entered time and space and become "acutely personalised." Election is not, therefore, some "dead predestination" hidden in the past or "some still point in timeless eternity," Torrance argues, but is a living act that enters time and confronts us in the Word of God incarnate (Torrance, 1949:315; *cf*. 1941:112). Torrance continues:

> The great fact of the Gospel then is this: that God has actually chosen us in Jesus Christ in spite of our sin, and that in the death of Christ that election has become a *fait accompli*. It means too that God has chosen all men, in as much as Christ died for all men, and because that is once and for all no one can ever elude the election of His love. In as much as no one exists except by the Word of God by whom all things were made and in whom all things consist, and in as much as this is the Word that has once and for all enacted the eternal election of grace to embrace all men, the existence of every man whether he will or no is bound up inextricably with that election—with the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Torrance's assertion that "God has chosen all men" reflects the biblical principle governing salvation history: that is, God elects the one for the many, just as Israel was elected to serve as a light to the nations (*cf.* Torrance, 1996c:134, 135). It is this corporate covenant-election that is brought to fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, in whom election and substitution "combine in the most unique, most intense and personal concentration of the one and the many." According to Torrance, Jesus Christ is the "actualisation" of the eternal purpose of God to give himself to humanity in pure love and grace. Every human being is loved by Jesus Christ, so that his atoning work is the "pouring out of the pure love of God upon all humanity" (Torrance, 1981b:132, 133; 2009:109, 183, 184).

For Torrance (1996c:14), therefore, election is "christologically conditioned." While election proceeds from the timeless, eternal decree of God, this eternal decree, or word of election, enters historical space-time in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The "heart of the mystery of election," Torrance contends, is found in the hypostatic union, where God and humanity are reconciled in the one person of Jesus Christ. For Torrance, "Christ is himself the Elect One—in him election becomes and operates as atoning mediation." If there is a paradox in the grounding of election in both the eternal decree of God and the space-time reality of Jesus Christ, Torrance (1941:111) argues, "it is nothing else than the central paradox of the Christian faith, the Incarnation of the Son of God."

6.4.4.4 Universalism and Limited Atonement

Torrance's assertion that God has chosen all humanity in Jesus Christ, coupled with his insistence on the universal range of atoning reconciliation, may lead to the erroneous conclusion that he is a "universalist," that is, one who believes in the salvation of all mankind (Bloesch, 2004:14, 39, 40). In this regard, an examination and explanation is needed of his rejection of both "universalism" and the doctrine of "limited atonement." As will become plain, Torrance's argument against a doctrine of limited atonement is directly related to his rejection of the Latin heresy described above, particularly in regard to his repudiation of atonement as an "external" rather than ontological reality.

As Torrance (1986b:481; 1993:245, 246) notes, the argument for either universal salvation or limited atonement is commonly cast as follows: If Christ died for all, then all must be saved, whether they believe or not; but if all are not saved, then Christ did not die for all; therefore, atonement is limited. Behind both these alternatives, however, Torrance finds two "very serious heresies." First, in regard to the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement, there is a "disjunction" or dualism that bifurcates the divine and human natures of Christ, divides his being and his acts, and consequently separates the incarnation from the atonement. As Torrance (1986b:481) notes:

> On this view the humanity of Christ is not regarded as having any inner ontological connection with those for whom he died, but is regarded only as an external instrument used by God as he wills, in effecting salvation for all those whom God chooses and/or for those who choose to accept Christ as their personal Saviour. Thus a separation can be made between the universal range of the Kingdom of Christ and the limited range of his atoning sacrifice.

In failing to appreciate the ontological connection between Jesus Christ and all humanity, Torrance argues, a doctrine of limited atonement minimizes the significance of the incarnation for atonement by treating the humanity of Jesus Christ in an "external" and "instrumental" way. In contrast to Torrance's doctrine of atonement as the "ontological healing" that results from the "internal" union of God and humanity in the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ, the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement reduces the cross to an external forensic transaction, or the fulfilment of a legal contract, between God and mankind by making the Son's humanity a mere tool used by God for a temporary repair job and then returned to the cosmic tool box in heaven (Torrance, 2009:182; *cf*. Kruger, 2003:36).

In addition to its merely external or instrumental nature, Torrance contends that a doctrine of limited atonement implies a "restricted and partial" view of the incarnate Son's assumption of fallen Adamic flesh and a consequent notion of partial rather than total substitution in the atonement. According to Torrance, hyper-Calvinist views of the atonement create a Nestorian dualism, or split, in the incarnate reality of Jesus Christ by asserting that the deity of Christ was in "repose" at the cross, so that the incarnate Son suffered in his humanity only (Torrance, 2009:184). Against this view, Torrance (1993:246; *cf*. 2009:184, 185; Torrance, *et al,* 1999:29) argues:

> If we really hold that it is God himself who bears our sins in Jesus Christ, God himself who in becoming man takes man's place and stands with man under his own divine judgement, God himself the Judge becoming the man judged, then we cannot allow any divorce between the action of Christ on the cross and the action of God. How is it at all possible to think of the divine judgement in the cross as only a partial judgement upon sin, or a judgement only upon some

> sinners, for that is finally what it amounts to if only some sinners are died for, and only some are efficiently implicated in atonement? The concept of a limited atonement thus rests upon a limitation of the very being of God as love, and a schizoid notion of the incarnation, *i.e.,* upon a basic Nestorian heresy.

For Torrance, a doctrine of limited atonement rests on a Nestorian dualism that breaks apart the hypostatic union with its implication that God is not intimately and personally involved in the suffering of Calvary; rather, only the humanity of Jesus Christ suffers on the cross. Since God is not involved at the cross, except by consent, the atonement can be construed in a restricted and partial, as well as external and instrumentalist way, wherein Jesus offers his humanity on behalf of the elect few only. On the other hand, against a Nestorian dualism between the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ implied in a doctrine of limited atonement (*cf.* Torrance, 1996c:19, 133), Torrance rightly asserts, along with the New Testament writers, that the one who died on the cross is the eternal Word made flesh, the very one by and through whom all things are created and have their being, and in whom all things hold together. Because all humanity is ontologically bound to the incarnate Creator Word, there can be no restriction to the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

In addition to a Nestorian dualism underlying the partial judgement implied in the doctrine of limited atonement is the second of the serious heresies Torrance finds in common arguments regarding both limited atonement and universalism: that is, a controlling framework of thought based upon "logico-causal connections." As Torrance argues, the insertion of a logico-causal relation between the death of Christ and the salvation of men and women has led to a view that the atonement of Jesus Christ is "sufficient" for all but "efficient" only for some. According to the logic of this argument, if the atoning death of Christ applies to everyone, then logically and causally everyone must of necessity be saved; on the other hand, if some perish in hell, then logically and causally the efficacy of the atonement does not reach them. According to Torrance, this view was introduced into post-Augustinian high medieval theology, later rejected by Calvin, then reintroduced into Calvinist orthodoxy by Theodore Beza (1519-1605). The place of "logico-causalism" within Protestantism was considerably reinforced by the Newtonian view of "causal connections" between external entities such as atoms or particles, a view that gave rise to the hard determinism of hyper-Calvinistic notions of predestination and limited atonement. As Torrance notes, the ongoing problem of universalism versus limited atonement attests to the deep entrenchment of the Latin heresy in Protestant and Evangelical thought, wherein

atonement continues to be reduced to a logical framework of cause and effect (Torrance, 1986b:481, 482; 1992:xiii; 1993:245, 246).

At the heart of the "logico-causal" (*i.e.*, "if ... then") assertions regarding universalism and limited atonement, Torrance (1993:246-249) finds "two fatal interconnected errors" that completely "shatter" the argument. First, to posit a logico-causal connection between the atonement and the forgiveness of sins is "falsely to project into the atonement a kind of connection which obtains between finite events and statements about them in our fallen world, and to substitute it for the transcendent kind of connection that is revealed in the creative and redeeming activity of God himself." As Torrance argues elsewhere (1981b:135, 136), a logico-causal approach to the atonement, as particularly evident in Calvinist Scholasticism, attempts to read back into God the temporal, causal, and logical relations characteristic of human experience in the world. This forced Calvinist Scholasticism to connect "the relative apparent distinctions" between believers and unbelievers to the absolute decree of God, thereby forcing the construal of predestination into the double form of election and reprobation. The doctrine of double predestination, however, entailed a dualism in the heart of God, "an ultimate 'Yes' and an ultimate 'No,'" that could not be explained away by regarding the "No" of reprobation as only the "passing over" of some rather than their deliberate damnation. Calvinism was trapped in its own logic, notes Torrance. While there is a "logic of grace" exhibited in the pattern of God's grace in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, wherein "he acted under the freely accepted constraint of his unreserved self-giving for our salvation," to construe the logic of grace in terms of necessary, logical connections is to convert grace into something other than itself, for such a construal implies there is not a "free, contingent relation" between the self-giving of Christ in the cross and human salvation but, rather, a "logico-causal" relation.

In a similar vein, Torrance argues that a doctrine of universalism commits the "logical fallacy" of "transmuting movement into necessity." That is, universalism destroys the free decision of faith by making salvation necessary rather than possible. For Torrance, universalism can, at best, only be expressed in terms of "hope" or "possibility," but never in terms of dogmatic necessity (Torrance, 1949:313; 1996c:277). It is the construal of a logico-causal relation between grace and human salvation that gives rise

to the "twin errors" of both limited atonement and universal salvation (Torrance, 1981b:136).

As Torrance (1993:246, 247) wisely notes, the miraculous acts of God cannot be construed in the ordinary categories of human thought, for they operate from a "transcendent presence in which his being and act and Person are integrated in the power of his triune being." Torrance finds this transcendent connection in the virgin birth, the resurrection, the miracles of divine healing, and the multiplication of a few loaves and fish. He continues:

> Jesus Christ *is* the resurrection and the life, and that cannot be construed within a system of this-worldly logico-causal relations. The kind of connection that obtains in the atoning death of Christ was demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus. The connection between the atoning death of the Lord Jesus and the forgiveness of our sins is of an altogether ineffable kind which we may not and cannot reduce to a chain of this-worldly logico-causal relations. To do that comes very near to sinning against the Holy Spirit.

As Torrance rightly argues, there is no "logical-causal" connection between the death of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins. Rather, the connection between the cross and human salvation is an ineffable mystery hidden in the heart of the Triune Godhead, one that cannot be captured within the bounds of ordinary categories of human thought. As Torrance (1981b:136) cogently notes, if human salvation is dependent on a logical connection between the death of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins, "we would all be unforgiven whether we believe or not."

The second fatal error in logico-causal arguments for universalism or limited atonement, wherein attempts are made to explain why some are finally saved and others are not, involves a "rationalisation of evil." For Torrance, a doctrine of universalism fails to take into account the irrational nature of the "mystery of iniquity" and the "abysmal irrationality of evil," realities that cannot be explained away rationally, for to do so would mean that God need not have taken the way of the cross in order to save humanity. Evil involves a "radical discontinuity" that cannot be explained in terms of logico-causal relations (*i.e.*, "continuity") without explaining it away. Evil is so "bottomless," or "abysmal," that to overcome it requires nothing less than the direct presence and power of the eternal, infinite God (Torrance, 1949:313; 1996c:277; 1993:247; *cf.* 1992:xiii, xiv). Torrance (1993:247, 248) argues:

> In order to redeem us from the enormity of evil God "had to" become incarnate in our mortal existence and penetrate into the chasm of our sinful and guilty separation from himself, which he freely did on the cross out of his unlimited

> and unstinting love. Conversely, the fact that God himself, God incarnate, penetrated into our damned existence and death in order to save us, reveals the bottomless chasm and the irrational, inexplicable nature of evil by which we are separated from him. If then anyone thinks he can explain why the atoning death of Christ avails efficaciously only for some people but not for all through offering a logico-causal explanation, he is really putting forward an argument which is tantamount to doing despite to the infinite agony of God Almighty at Calvary, for he does not consider the fearful nature of sin and evil which cost God the sacrifice of his own beloved Son.

For Torrance (1993:248), both universalism and the doctrine of limited atonement are "twin heresies which rest on a deeper heresy," that is, the recourse to a logico-causal explanation of why the atoning death of Christ avails or does not avail for all humanity. As Torrance pointedly argues, "Any such an attempt at logico-causal explanation of the efficacy and range of the atonement is surely a form of blasphemy against the blood of Christ."

6.4.4.5 Reprobation

Despite his rejection of a doctrine of limited atonement and his assertion of universal election in Jesus Christ, Torrance finds room for a doctrine of reprobation in his understanding of the wonderful exchange embodied in Jesus Christ.

Against a doctrine of universalism, Torrance regards the reprobate as those who, subject to the irrational and accidental nature of sin, reject God's love as revealed in his gracious universal pardon. "Why anyone who is freely offered the unconditional love of God in the Lord Jesus should turn away from him," writes Torrance (*et al,* 1999:31), "is something quite inexplicable and baffling." Torrance (1949:312) cites Judas Iscariot as an example of one who inexplicably rejected the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. As Torrance (1981b:136; 1993:248) notes, why some do not believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and go to hell cannot be explained, for here we have to do with something that happens "accidentally," "irrationally," and "inexplicably." Rather than attempt to construe unbelief in terms of logico-causal connections, Torrance argues that if some do not believe and perish, this must be understood as "accidental" or "adventitious," for Jesus Christ came to save sinners (1Tim 1:15), not to condemn them. It is the nature of the Gospel to bring life, not death, just as it is the nature of light to illumine, rather than to bring darkness. Nevertheless, while God does not desire the death of sinners but, rather, that they turn and live and come to the knowledge of the truth (*cf.* 1Tim 2:4), argues Torrance (1996c:283), God does not impose the Gospel

upon people whether they believe or not. "Hence, while there is no divine decree of reprobation, God allows his will for the salvation of all for whom Christ died, to be frustrated, so that in view of the tears of the Redeemer for the lost, it may be said that God wills the salvation of those who perish."

In the face of the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, Torrance regards reprobation as an "un-understandable mystery." He (1949:316, 317) writes:

> To choose our own way in spite of God's absolute choice of us, to listen to the voice of His infinite love and to know that we are already apprehended by that love in the death of Jesus, and by that very apprehension of love to be given the opportunity and capacity to respond in faith and love, and still to draw back in proud independence and selfish denial of God's love, is an act of bottomless horror ... Can we imagine anything more appalling than that a man should use the very power that God gives him to choose to contradict God, should choose to depart from God, and yet be unable to depart, because in spite of all he is still grasped by God in an act of eternal love that will not let him go?

Even the one who wilfully rejects the love of God, Torrance argues, is held in the eternal embrace of Jesus Christ, in whom all things consist and move and have their being. Should Jesus Christ let him go even for an instant, he would vanish into nothingness. God's eternal love will not let him go, however. "Even when a man has made his bed in hell," argues Torrance, "God's hand of love will continue to grasp him there." And therein lies the "hell" of hell: it is to choose one's own way and, yet, in that choice, still to be chosen by God. As Torrance notes, it is not God who makes hell, for hell is the contradiction of all that is of God (Torrance, 1949:316, 317). Hell is the place in which the sinner is forever imprisoned in his own refusal of God's love, and that is, indeed, the "hell" of it. Against the hyper-Calvinist doctrine of double predestination, Torrance writes regarding those in hell: "[The reprobate's] being in hell is not the result of God's decision to damn him, but the result of his own decision to choose himself against the love of God and therefore of the negative decision of God's love to oppose his refusal of God's love just by being Love." This "negative decision" of God's love is what Torrance calls "the wrath of the Lamb" (Torrance, 1959:cxv, cxvi).

Elsewhere, Torrance (2009:157, 158) writes more pointedly that if anyone goes to hell, it is by a "downright refusal" of the reconciliation that Christ has already provided to all in pure love. He continues:

> Because of the blood of Christ there is no positive decision of God to reject anyone, but only the gracious decision to accept them, and that decision has once and for all been enacted in the cross and resurrection so that nothing in

> heaven and earth can change it or undo it or reverse it. To reverse it would be to bring Christ back to the cross again, and to deny the reality of what he has already done. *That decision is not altered if man refuses it, but if someone goes to hell, they go because they dash themselves in judgement against an unalterable positive act of divine reconciliation that offers to them only divine love*. (Emphasis in original.)

In loving humanity even to the point of death on the cross, "God risked the happening of the incredible," that we would choose to reject the love revealed at the cross. Thus, for Torrance, the cross unmasks "the bottomless dimension of sin in the human heart." The witness of scripture stands aghast at the mystery of iniquity, notes Torrance; therefore, it refuses to betray the love of God and the agony of Jesus by a doctrine of universalism. On the other hand, scripture refuses to teach that God's love is split in two by a doctrine of double predestination. To the contrary, Torrance argues, God's action towards humanity remains forever the one, indivisible act of love, and even the "dark whirlpool" of human sin, particularly as revealed at Calvary, cannot alter that fact (Torrance, 1949:317).

6.5 Summary & Critique

6.5.1 Summary

In regard to his doctrine of incarnational redemption, Torrance remains true to his kataphysical theological method by steadfastly refusing to develop his doctrine of the atonement in terms of *a priori* religious conceptions or formal logical relations. As a theological realist, Torrance allows his thought to be shaped by God's self-revelation in the historical space-time incarnation of Jesus Christ. By "following Christ," Torrance thinks *a posteriori* in order to penetrate into the soteriological significance of the Nicene *homoousion* and the Chalcedonian hypostatic union. These two elemental forms of Torrance's scientific theology provide the foundation for his doctrine of the atonement.

Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption is a direct correlate of his doctrine of the hypostatic union. As Torrance argues, Jesus Christ does not mediate a reconciliation other than who he is; that is, the atoning "work" of Jesus Christ is a direct function of his incarnate constitution as God and man joined together in atoning reconciliation. For Torrance, the hypostatic union is the immediate ground of all Christ's mediatorial and reconciling activity in our human existence. Jesus Christ is no mere agent of

reconciliation; rather, he is the "embodiment" of atoning reconciliation between God and humanity. He "is" propitiation; he "is" redemption; he "is" justification.

In regard to the "flesh" assumed in the incarnation, Torrance argues that we must "relearn" the fundamental soteriological principle that "the unassumed is the unhealed," for, in Latin Western theology, the Nicene fathers' understanding of the incarnation has been displaced by the "Latin heresy," that is, a view of the atonement cast in terms of "external relations." In the Latin view, with its implicit Nestorian split between the person and work of Christ, the eternal Word assumes "neutral" human flesh, as it existed in its perfect state before the fall, in order to offer it as an instrument in an "external" juridical transaction with the Father.

In aid of a clearer understanding of Torrance's critique of the Latin view of the atonement in terms of "external relations," Hart (2008:81, 82) is helpful. In Latin Western theology, notes Hart, atonement is regarded as "external" to the being of God rather than located at the heart of it. Consequently, the work of Christ on the cross has been fundamentally construed in either judicial or ethical terms, with atonement regarded as a "transaction" between various parties, whereby the status of the parties relative to one another, or to a legal code and its sanctions, is "adjusted" in the wake of the redemptive work of Christ. In both the judicial and exemplary view, notes Hart, the relation between the atoning work of Christ and our humanity is "external," because there is a tacit denial of any change at the level of our "being." In the Latin view of atonement, as Torrance notes, we are freed from the penalty of sin, yet the atoning work of Christ does not penetrate to the ontological roots of our fallen condition where we are enslaved to sin. Because change is effected at only the forensic or moral level, Protestantism is forced to deal with original sin by an appeal to a separate and subsequent work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, while Roman Catholic theology deals with original sin through the "healing medicine" of grace dispensed by the Church in the holy sacraments. Against a Protestant view of the "imputation" of righteousness or a Roman view of the "infusion" of righteousness (*cf.* McGrath, 1998:184-195; 2001:457-459), Torrance views atoning reconciliation as an ontological reality that effects a change in the depths of fallen human nature. In the atonement, human "being" as it actually exists in the world is reconciled to God. Our fallen, debased, and diseased humanity is laid hold of in the incarnation by the eternal Word and refashioned in a supreme creative act of "ontological healing"; that is, our twisted

human nature is bent back to the Father and given, in the incarnate Son, the shape it was always intended to have within the "teleology" of creation. As Hart notes, atonement is not merely retrospective, that is, a mere modification of our legal or moral standing before God; rather, it is prospective, having as its outcome the fitting of human nature to share in the communion of the Father that is its proper eschatological destiny.

Torrance's repudiation of the Latin heresy and its dualist split between the person and work of Christ is consequent to his unitary, holistic view of the incarnation and the atonement. For Torrance, incarnation and atonement are internally linked; that is, there is an unbroken unity in the "being" (*i.e.* "person") and "act" (*i.e.,* "work") of the Mediator. The hypostatic union is not merely a static union; rather, it is a dynamic atoning union, wherein the actual condition of human estrangement is brought into sanctifying union with God. In the unity of divinity and humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ, God has made himself one with us in such a way as to get at the roots of original sin, not only to expiate our sin and guilt, but also to sanctify us and bring us into union with himself. Thus, the incarnation is inherently redemptive and redemption is inherently incarnational. Despite those who betray the ongoing presence of the dualist Latin heresy in Western theology by accusing Torrance of reducing soteriology to christology (*cf.* Pratz, 1998:2, 3) or falling prey to a "christocentric constriction" (Thimell, 2008:27), Torrance, with his insistence on the unbroken unity between the person and work of Christ, rightly aligns himself with the scriptural and creedal witness to the identity of purpose between the person of Jesus Christ and the work he came to do. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (Mk 10:45); he came down from heaven "for us and for our salvation." To be sure, Torrance follows St. Paul in bringing "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2Cor 10:5).

Torrance further articulates the intrinsic connection between incarnation and atoning reconciliation in terms of the "wonderful exchange" embedded in the incarnation, wherein our sinful, diseased humanity is not only healed, cleansed, and saved in the incarnate assumption of our fallen Adamic flesh, but also renewed and lifted up at the empty tomb and the ascension, so that, in union with God, humanity may participate in the life and love of the Holy Trinity. The two-way movement of descent and ascent, humiliation and exaltation, and death and resurrection are inseparable aspects of the atoning exchange, for they are worked out "within" the one person of Jesus Christ,

who, in his incarnate constitution as Mediator between God and humanity, embodies in himself the atoning exchange. As Colyer (2001a:93, 94) rightly notes, "The atoning exchange *is* incarnational redemption, and incarnational redemption *is* atoning exchange, all worked out in the one person of the incarnate Son of God within the twisted depths of our fallen humanity."

Further understanding of the atoning exchange can be facilitated by an examination of the patristic concept of *theopoiesis*, the assertion that Jesus was made human so that we might be made divine. Eschewing patristic concepts of "divinisation," Torrance regards *theopoiesis* as the "recreation" of our lost humanity in the dynamic, atoning interaction between the divine and human natures hypostatically united in Jesus Christ, and its subsequent "exaltation" as it is lifted up in the Risen Saviour to participate in the life and love of the Trinity. Torrance also connects *theopoiesis* with the biblical concept of "adoption," wherein humanity is adopted into the communion of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Before reviewing another significant aspect of the atoning exchange, we may note what appears to be a considerable overlap in Torrance's thought among the kindred concepts of the "wonderful exchange," *theopoiesis*, "adoption," "union with Christ," and "union with God through Christ." These concepts all have in common the recreation of our fallen humanity in the hypostatic union and its subsequent exaltation into the trinitarian life of God by the Risen Saviour. Unlike the other terms, however, the "wonderful exchange" also emphasises Christ's assumption of our poverty in exchange for his riches. These terms also indicate that Torrance regards the atonement as far more than the forgiveness of sins. Torrance eschews purely forensic theories of atonement in favour of a doctrine of "ontological healing," wherein atonement includes not only the cleansing, renewal and recreation of our fallen humanity but also our exaltation into the life and love of the Holy Trinity.

Another important aspect of the interchange between Jesus Christ and humanity concerns the reception of the Holy Spirit. In the incarnation, the Holy Spirit is mediated to mankind through the humanity of Jesus Christ, so that the Holy Spirit becomes "accustomed" to dwell in humanity. At the Jordan, the Holy Spirit's descent upon the fallen humanity assumed by the incarnate Son is a descent upon all humanity and constitutes the "deifying" content of the atoning exchange. Because Jesus Christ, the

one through whom all things are made and in whom all things consist, has assumed fallen Adamic flesh, all those who partake of the nature of Adam are implicated in the Spirit's descent upon the incarnate Son in the Jordan River. In this regard, Torrance maintains his holistic, unitary theology, for he does not allow a dualism between the atoning work of the Son and the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Against the traditional Protestant *ordo salutis* (*cf.* Olson, 2002:284, 285), where justification and sanctification are considered two separate, sequential events, Torrance views both as an integral part of the atoning exchange wrought by the assumption of fallen Adamic flesh in the incarnation. The place of justification and sanctification in Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ will be further considered in the following chapter.

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh through the humanity of Jesus Christ is directly related to the important issue of the "boundless" nature of the atoning exchange. The range of atoning reconciliation is anchored in the nature of God, whom scripture describes as "love" (1Jn 4:8, 16). Because the love of God is unlimited and inexhaustible, argues Torrance, to limit the range of atonement is to introduce a limitation in the nature of God, as well as a "schism" or "contradiction" in the hypostatic union. To support his assertion of the infinite range of atoning reconciliation, Torrance brings together the doctrines of the incarnation and atonement with the doctrine of creation. Because the incarnate Son, the eternal *Logos* in whom all humanity coheres and the very one "by" whom and "through" whom all things are created and "in" whom all things consist, has united himself to creation, all things, including all human beings without exception, are ontologically bound up in the incarnate reality of Jesus Christ. In his incarnate constitution as both Creator and created, Jesus Christ stands in for all, both in his life and in his death. Thus, the entire human race is, in a profound sense, already redeemed, resurrected, and consecrated for the glory of God. Torrance's insistence on the universal range of atoning reconciliation reflects what Olson (2002:248) describes as the consensual opinion of the early Church fathers, not the least of which includes Athanasius (Olson, 2002:248 n. 1, 2).

The universal range of atoning reconciliation bears directly on Torrance's doctrine of election. In keeping with the Reformed tradition, Torrance stresses the prevenience of grace, while rejecting any Pelagian idea that humanity can reach God through our own resources. Torrance argues, however, that the more familiar form of Reformed teaching on predestination, wherein election is detached from the incarnate Jesus Christ and

grounded in the secret counsel of God in eternity past, was influenced by a hard determinism associated with Aristotle, Augustine, and Newton. Consequently a deep wedge was driven between the Father and the incarnate Son which introduced a suspicion of Deism, along with an element of Nestorianism, in Calvinist christology.
For Torrance, to detach election from the incarnation makes election precede grace and implies a higher will in God than the grace revealed in Jesus Christ. Torrance disavows any subordination of the love of God to an eternal decree or word of God conceived apart from the eternal Word of God incarnate in Jesus.

In contradistinction to the traditional Calvinist doctrine of election, Torrance follows a less familiar strand of Reformed thought by grounding his doctrine of election *in Christo*. For Torrance, election is God's eternal love for the whole world historically revealed in the incarnate Son; that is, Jesus Christ "is" the election of God. Torrance captures the relation between election and the incarnation by insisting that election or predestination does not occur "behind the back of Jesus Christ"; that is, there is no dualism between election and grace, wherein election is detached from the historical incarnation and located in an inscrutable divine decree from eternity past. To the contrary, the Nicene assertion of the consubstantial Father-Son relation means there is no inscrutable will or hidden nature of God other than the will and nature of God revealed in Jesus Christ. For Torrance, therefore, election is christologically conditioned; that is, the eternal Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ "is" the eternal word or decree of God.

Notwithstanding his assertion that all humanity is elected in Jesus Christ, and despite those who suggest that his thought tends toward universalism (*e.g.*, Ho, 2008:134), Torrance is no universalist. Behind the doctrines of both universalism and limited atonement, Torrance finds two serious heresies. First is a Nestorian dualism that separates the incarnation from the atonement by dividing the person and work of Jesus Christ, so that substitution is partial and the range of atonement is limited. Second is a controlling framework of thought based upon "logico-causal connections" that deny the ineffable nature of the atonement by attempting to articulate the nature of a transcendent reality within the ordinary categories of logical human thought. As Torrance rightly argues, there is no "logical-causal" connection between the death of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins. In addition, a "logico-causal" view of

atonement fails to appreciate the radical discontinuity between ordinary thought and the irrational nature of evil.

Notwithstanding his rejection of a doctrine of limited atonement in favour of a doctrine of universal reconciliation, Torrance articulates a doctrine of reprobation. In contradistinction to a doctrine of double predestination, he argues that reprobation is not the result of a divine decree but, rather, of the reprobate's free decision to choose himself against the love of God by adamantly refusing the reconciliation Christ has already provided for all. In this regard, Torrance fully acknowledges the reality of hell. Nevertheless, those who inexplicably choose to reject Jesus Christ are unable to escape the love of God, even in hell, and that is, indeed, the "hell" of hell.

Torrance's assertion that the reprobate freely chooses to refuse the reconciliation Christ has provided for all, however, raises important questions regarding his view of the relation between divine sovereignty and human "free will." Clearly, Torrance appears to support human freedom to choose either to accept or to reject the love of God revealed in Christ. In addition, his view of reprobation is a rejection of the Calvinist doctrine of "irresistible grace" (Olson, 1999:459, 460; McGrath, 2001:468, 469), for he clearly endorses the possibility that God's will for the salvation of all (*cf.* 1Tim 2:4) may be frustrated by unbelief, a condition he regards as inexplicable and baffling. In his defence, Torrance's scientific theological method, wherein knowledge of God is developed according to the divine nature revealed in Christ, would preclude an articulation of the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom within a framework of "logico-causal" relations, particularly as derived from the alien, antecedent presuppositions of Greek philosophy, for example, divine immutability and divine impassibility. Moreover, his rejection of "logico-causal" explanations of atonement would preclude him from offering rational reasons as to why anyone would reject the grace of God. While he refuses to locate reprobation in an eternal decree of God, Torrance makes no attempt to explain it; rather, he is content to regard reprobation as accidental, irrational, and inexplicable and to relegate the problem to the realm of mystery. Moreover, as will be shown in the following chapter, Torrance articulates the relationship between divine and human agency in terms of the "logic of grace" revealed in the mystery of the incarnation. As a Reformed theologian, Torrance rightly asserts that salvation is "all of grace"; but, for Torrance, "all of grace" does not mean "nothing of man."

Notwithstanding the irrational possibility that we may choose to reject Jesus Christ, Torrance's insistence on the universal range of atonement has profound pastoral and missional implications. Because all humanity is "elect" in Jesus Christ, Christians need not doubt their election and succumb to the spiritual malaise and fear that plagued, for example, nineteenth-century Scottish Christians, who, as John McLeod Campbell observed, could never find assurance that they were safe among the chosen (Torrance, 1996c:290, 291). Moreover, Torrance's view of the atonement transcends the seemingly irreconcilable divide between Calvinist and Arminian theologians. Against hyper-Calvinism, Torrance insists that God's love and reconciling activity are not limited to a select few, whose election is hidden from eternity past in the inscrutable will of God. Rather, Torrance rightfully insists that election does not occur "behind the back of Jesus," for he is the eternal word of decree of God made flesh. Against Arminian theology, Torrance's insistence upon the objective inclusion of all humanity in the atoning reconciliation of Jesus Christ bears directly on the eternal fate of those who have never heard the Gospel. Because all are included in the atoning reconciliation of Jesus Christ, those in the mission fields may joyfully proclaim the good news of universal inclusion in the mediation of Jesus Christ. While Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, he is, nevertheless, the way of salvation for all humanity.

6.5.2 Critique

Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption has been decried as a "physical theory" of redemption. In addition, his assertion of the incarnate assumption of fallen Adamic flesh is a matter of ongoing debate.

6.5.2.1 A "Physical Theory" of Redemption?

As Torrance (1988a:156; *cf*. Pratz, 1998:3) notes, critics have decried his connection of incarnation and reconciliation as a "physical theory" of redemption, with the implication that the salvation of the human race is a result solely of the union of the divine *Logos* with human flesh. While Torrance describes the incarnation in terms of "ontological healing," to assert that the incarnation effects redemption, however, is a serious misrepresentation of his views, for such an assertion overlooks the fact that the eternal Son acts "vicariously" on our behalf and in our place, offering to the Father,

"from within the ontological depths of our human existence which he has penetrated and gathered up in himself," notes Torrance, the perfect response of faith and obedience on behalf of all humanity. For Torrance, the atonement of Jesus Christ begins with his conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary and continues throughout his life, death, resurrection and ascension. Thus, for Torrance, the "vicarious" faith and obedience of Jesus Christ (*cf.* below) offered throughout the whole course of his life of filial obedience to the Father is a constitutive aspect of the atonement. As Torrance (1988a:156 n. 39) notes, Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses*, 2.33) has already made this point by applying the Apostle Paul's concept of "recapitulation" (Eph 1:10) to the redemptive restoration of humanity through the obedient life and sacrificial depth of Jesus Christ on behalf of all. The "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ and its implications for the mediation of reconciliation is explored and explained in the following Chapter.

6.5.2.2 The "Fallenness" Debate

The intrinsic relation Torrance sees between incarnation and atonement is heavily dependent upon his assertion of the assumption of "fallen" human nature in the incarnation. While Torrance asserts that the doctrine of the assumption of a fallen nature was prominent in the early Church, there are divergent historical assessments in regard to the prevalence of this position. For example, Macleod (1998:224) makes the excessive claim that "none of the fathers held that Christ took fallenness," while Ho (2008:77, 78) notes that both positions can be found in the patristic writings. Kapic (2001:156-160) argues, however, that the preponderance of evidence appears to favour Torrance's position. To be sure, Torrance's array of patristic support for the fallenness position is impressive (*cf.* Torrance, 1988:161-165). In addition, Torrance's view has found more modern proponents in the Scottish theologians, Edward Irving (1792-1834) and Thomas Erskine (1788-1870), the Swiss Protestant theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1968), the Swiss Roman Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), and the American Roman Catholic theologian, Thomas Weinandy (*b.* 1946) (Kapic, 2001:155, 159; McFarland, 2008:404, 405). In addition, Ho (2008:71) includes among the modern proponents of the fallenness position theologian Gottfried Menken (1768-1831) of Bremen, whose view was expanded by Edward Irving. Moreover, Molnar (2009:150) notes that this view is commonly espoused in Eastern theology.

Despite its modern proponents, the assertion of the Son's assumption of fallen Adamic flesh remains controversial, for there is ongoing debate among contemporary theologians as to the nature of the humanity assumed by Jesus Christ in the incarnation (*cf.* Kapic, 2001:154*ff*; Crisp, 2004:270*ff*; Allen, 2007:382*ff*; McFarland, 2008:399*ff*). Moreover, Cass (2008:181, 182), noting that Torrance's position is "rare" but not unique, argues that Torrance's assertion of the assumption of fallen humanity is rejected by "the vast majority" of Roman Catholics, liberal Protestants, and Evangelicals, including many Reformed theologians. Complicating the debate is a lack of clear and agreed definitions among present and past theologians as to the exact meaning of the terms "fallen" and "unfallen" (Kapic, 2001:164). Torrance, however, is clear in his understanding of "fallenness," for he does not hesitate to describe the humanity assumed in the incarnation as "diseased in mind and soul" (1986b:476; 1992:39), "enslaved to sin and subject to judgement and death" (1988a:161), or in a "depraved condition where we are in enmity with God" (1986b:476). Moreover, Torrance uses words like "sinful" (1990:202) and "fallen" (1992:39), as well as "perverted, corrupt, degenerate, [and] diseased" (1988a:161) to describe the nature of the flesh assumed in the incarnation. Thus, Torrance clearly describes the flesh taken up by the eternal Word in terms of sinful, postlapsarian humanity.

While Crisp (2004:272) argues that the "traditional" Augustinian view of the doctrine of original sin precludes Christ's assumption of a "fallen" human nature, and while McFarland (2008:408, 409) questions the coherence of maintaining the "fallenness" position in the light of a Western doctrine of original sin, Allen (2007: 382, 383) asserts that Calvin's doctrine of original sin, as articulated in the *Institutes* (Calvin, 2008:146-150, 863; II.1.1-5; IV:15:10), and the *Commentaries* (Calvin, 1948-50), particularly *On Genesis* (3:6), *Psalms* (51:5), and *Romans* (5:12-19), wherein fallen nature may be considered in distinction from inherited guilt, allows for the advancement of the "fallenness" position, a position that Allen rightly regards as essential to the economy of grace. Allen cites McCormack (1993:20) to argue that Calvin limits the results of original sin to its debilitating or corrupting effects upon human nature and refrains from promulgating a doctrine of inherited or imputed guilt. For Calvin, argues Allen, inherited corruption or depravity invariably leads to sinful acts; yet, while we are corrupted by Adam, we are guilty by our own fault. Thus, according to Allen, the assumption of fallen human nature does not, in and of itself, amount to the inheritance of guilt. As Kapic, (2001:160, 161) argues, referencing Calvin (2008:150-153;

Institutes, II.1.5.6.8), as long as inherited corruption is separated from inherited guilt, as in Calvin's doctrine of original sin, the effects of original sin do not preclude the assumption of fallen Adamic flesh by the sinless Saviour. Calvin's doctrine of original sin, therefore, allows for the discussion of Christ's assumption of corrupt human flesh without also his partaking of personal guilt.

In a similar vein, McFarland (2008:401, 412-415), defends the position that Jesus Christ assumed a fallen human nature by a careful delimitation of the way in which the Chalcedonian categories of nature and *hypostasis* relate to the hamartiological concepts of "fallenness" and "sin." For McFarland, "fallenness" and "sinfulness" are predicates of nature and *hypostasis* respectively; that is, fallenness is a property of nature and sinfulness a property of person (*hypostasis*). He notes that a nature can be "damaged" and, thus, fallen, but a nature cannot sin; rather, sin is attributed to "agents" and is, thus, a matter of *hypostasis* (person), not nature. In short, sin is a matter of "who" we are, not "what" we are. McFarland's argument is useful in that it allows the incarnational assumption of postlapsarian human nature, while, at the same time, making room for the Spirit's empowering involvement in the human agency of the sinless Saviour. McFarland (2008:413 n. 50) adds, however, that since the "person" of Christ is the eternal Word who is inherently free from sin, it is better to argue that the Holy Spirit keeps the "human will" of Jesus from sinning.

If the "fallenness" position is to be supported, Allen (2007:395) argues that the proponents of this view must show that, in the incarnation, the Holy Spirit acted in such a way that Christ was empowered to resist the demands of the corrupt flesh he assumed and, thus, remain sinless. In this regard, Kapic (2001:164) notes that proponents of the fallenness position typically argue that the Holy Spirit kept the "person" of Jesus Christ free from sin, though the human nature he assumed was itself "sinful flesh." As Cass (2008:185, 186) argues, Torrance assigns an important but "secondary" place for the Holy Spirit in empowering the humanity of Jesus Christ. Yet, more characteristic of Torrance's doctrine of ontological healing is his assertion that the eternal Word brings his own perfect holiness and righteousness to bear upon the fallen Adamic flesh he assumes in the incarnation, thereby cleansing, healing, and sanctifying it, and bending it back to the Father. Thus, in regard to the sinlessness of Christ, Torrance gives primary place to the eternal Word, who brings his holiness to bear upon sinful Adamic flesh,

and an important but secondary place to the Holy Spirit, who empowers the "person" of Jesus to remain sinless.

Further support for the fallenness position comes from the scriptural portrayal of Jesus of Nazareth as an actual human being. According to Torrance (1988a:114), the New Testament presents Jesus Christ "as God become man." For Torrance, as Gill (2007:44; *cf.* Torrance, 1988a:147) asserts, the incarnation is not the unity of divine nature with an "ideal" or "abstract" human nature, nor is it a union with "humanity in general." Rather, it is a union with a "particular, historical man" (*cf.* Torrance, 2002b:132). For this reason, notes Gill, Torrance argues that, in the incarnation, the Word assumed "fallen" human nature. Taking Gill's argument farther, we argue that unless the eternal Word assumed an abstract, universal human nature akin to a Platonic "form," then the eternal Word must have assumed an earthly human nature in the incarnation, that is, a fallen nature. Our argument is supported by the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* couplet of Chalcedonian christology. While *anhypostasis* asserts that no independent human person existed apart from the incarnate Word, *enhypostasis* asserts, nevertheless, that a "real" human nature was assumed. Hence, in the absence of the abstractions of Platonic thought, and notwithstanding the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, we argue that the human nature the eternal Word assumed from Mary was a fallen human nature.

In regard to Torrance's assertion of the assumption of fallen flesh, Dawson (2007b:63*ff*) reduces the problem to a pithy question: "How can a holy God coexist with sinful humanity?" Pertinent to this question, and supportive of Torrance's position, is the frequent scriptural portrayal of Jesus in intimate contact with sinners, even to the extent that he was known as the "friend of sinners" (*cf.* Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34; 15:2). In his intimate relations with fallen humanity, the holiness of Jesus was not compromised, for he remained "without sin" (Heb 4:15). Moreover, the scriptures tell us that not only did Jesus associate with sinners, he became sin for us (*cf.* 2Cor 5:21). In addition, a straight-forward reading of the New Testament appears to support Torrance's position. The apostle Paul plainly asserts that God sent his own Son in the "concrete likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3; Torrance, 1988a:161), while the writer of Hebrews (2:17) argues that "in all things, he [Jesus] had to be made like his brethren." Given the array of scriptural and patristic support for his position, Torrance's assertion of the assumption of fallen Adamic flesh in the incarnation appears well-founded.

Unless one is constrained by Greek philosophical views of divine immutability or the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, it seems unreasonable to conclude that the sinlessness of the eternal Word is compromised by his union with fallen Adamic flesh. To be sure, it seems more reasonable to follow Gregory Nyssa in support of Torrance that grace overcomes sin as light overcomes darkness.

7.0 THE VICARIOUS HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST

7.1 Introduction

As a "direct correlate" of the hypostatic union (Purves, 2005:3), Torrance emphasises the "two-fold" ministry of the incarnate Son of God, wherein Jesus Christ mediates the things of God to humanity and the things of humanity to God. As Athanasius and Barth understood, unless it was God himself who was personally and directly active in Jesus Christ, nothing he did is of any saving significance; yet, in effecting reconciliation in Jesus Christ, God acted from the side of humanity "as man" and from the side of God "as God." Like Athanasius and Barth, Torrance stresses not only the "Godward-humanward" movement of mediation but also the "humanward-Godward" movement of Christ's reconciling life and passion, for his humanity is not merely "instrumental," as in forensic theories of atonement, but "integral" and "essential" to the vicarious nature of his redemptive activity. This two-fold movement of mediation, in both its Godward and humanward directions, must be thought of as an inseparable whole arising from the unity of the person of Jesus Christ as God and human, and as continuous throughout the whole reconciling movement of his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension (Torrance, 1986b:479; 1992:73).

The previous chapter examined and explained the "Godward-humanward" movement of the mediation of Jesus Christ, who, in his condescension to assume fallen human flesh, embodies atonement in his incarnate constitution as God and humanity joined in reconciling union. The present chapter will examine and explain the "humanward-Godward" movement of the mediation of Jesus Christ, who, in his "vicarious humanity," ministers the things of humanity to God on behalf of all. Torrance regards the doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ as the "cutting edge" of his theology (Palma, 1984:16). This doctrine constitutes one of the elemental forms of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ and is a direct correlate of his doctrine of the hypostatic union. As Gill (2007:40) rightly notes, the doctrine of Christ's vicarious humanity is one of Torrance's most important contributions to Christology and is found in his early and late works.

As Torrance's younger brother David (Torrance, D., 2010:1) notes, "vicarious" is a Latin word that means "speaking and acting in place of another, on that other's behalf."

This is exactly what Jesus Christ has done for us in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. As Hunsinger (2001:144) notes, "vicarious humanity" means that everything Christ has done for us in his humanity was done in our place and on our behalf. According to Kettler (2005.6), "the vicarious humanity of Christ speaks of the deep interaction between Christ's humanity and our humanity at the level of our *being*, the *ontological* level." Against "external" forensic or exemplary theories of atonement, the atoning work of Christ is not merely a means by which we are "declared" righteous or merely an example of God's love. "It is both," argues Kettler, "but much more, in the sense of God desiring to recreate our humanity at the deepest levels, addressing our needs ... from within our very being." As Molnar (2009:119) argues, because it eliminates the idea that the humanity of Jesus played merely an "instrumental role" in atonement, the doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ plays a pivotal role in much of Torrance's theology.

7.2 Epistemology (Revelation)

As noted earlier (*cf.* Chapter Three), in his historical dialogue with Israel, God revealed himself in such a way as to mould his chosen people into a suitable vessel for the communication of divine revelation. Throughout Israel's tumultuous existence, the word of God came through prophets like Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah, as well as in such disparate forms as a still small voice, a refining fire, or a hammer breaking rocks into pieces, gradually imprinting itself upon the innermost being of God's chosen people. While the presence of the divine word in the heart of Israel intensified the relationship between God and his people, sometimes favourably, sometimes unfavourably, God's word did not return to him void; rather, it accomplished its revelatory purpose. Divine revelation laid hold of the mind and will of the people, calling forth from them "responses that were taken up, purified and assimilated to the Word of God as the means of its ever-deepening penetration into the understanding, life and service of Israel, so that it could be bearer of divine revelation for all mankind" (Torrance, 1992:77, 78).

As Chung (2011:30) notes, for Torrance, revelation involves both God and humanity; it is a form of "relational revelation." As argued above (*cf.* Chapter Three), revelation and human response *taken together* constitute the movement of revelation in Torrance's theology. According to Torrance, divine revelation completes "the circle of its own

movement" only when it is truly and faithfully received by humanity. In God's "dialogue" with ancient Israel, human response constitutes an indispensable place in the "reciprocal" movement of the mediation of revelation.

The reciprocal movement of revelation and human response in ancient Israel bears directly on Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. For Torrance, there can be no true understanding of the incarnation apart from Israel, for the mediation of revelation in Israel is the "first stage" of the divine mediation which finds its final and definitive fulfilment in Jesus Christ (*cf.* Kruger, 1989:50; Scandrett, 2006:32, 33). Chung (2011:29, 30) uses Torrance's "tool analogy" (*cf.* Chapter Three) to describe Jesus Christ as the "perfect tool" God forged out of Israel. In regard to the two-fold movement of mediation in Israel and its relation to the mediation of Jesus Christ, notes Chung, "The former is the womb of the latter, and the latter is the recapitulation of the former." The two-way movement of God's covenantal relation with Israel, in both its Godward-humanward and humanward-Godward aspects is fulfilled in the hypostatic union of God and humanity incarnate in Jesus Christ. As Chung rightly argues, the "normative pattern" of revelation [and human response] initiated by God in Israel finds its ultimate completion in the incarnation. As the Mediator of the new covenant, notes Chung, Jesus Christ embodies the "perfect subject-object relation, the perfect giver-receiver relation, and the perfect speaker-hearer relation." Following Chung, we argue that what takes nascent form in the womb of Israel is birthed at Bethlehem and finished in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, who, in his incarnate constitution as God and man hypostatically united in reconciling union, completes the "circle of movement" of divine revelation, embodying *both* God's definitive revelation to humanity *and* humanity's perfect, all-sufficient response to divine revelation.

7.2.1 Jesus Christ: God's Address to Humanity

According to Torrance (1992:78), in the incarnation, the Word of God actualised itself in time and space, in Israel and within humankind, in "the visible, tangible form of a particular human being who embodied in himself the personal address of God's Word to man and the personal response of man to God's Word." In Jesus Christ, argues Torrance, the Word of God is "translated" into human form. Thus, Torrance (1992:78)

asserts that "*the real text* of New Testament revelation is *the humanity of Jesus*." Torrance continues:

> As we read the Old Testament and read the New Testament and listen to the Word of God, the real text is not documents of the Pentateuch, the Psalms or the Prophets or the documents of the Gospels and the Epistles, but in and through them all the Word of God struggling with rebellious human existence in Israel on the way to becoming incarnate, and then that Word translated into the flesh and blood and mind and life of a human being in Jesus, in whom we have both the Word of God become man and the perfect response of man to God offered on our behalf.

For Torrance, the written word of God communicated through the prophets is an incipient or nascent word. The voice of the prophets is the Word of God in gestation, nourished in the corporate womb of Israel and finally emerging from the womb of the faithful daughter of Israel, the Virgin Mary. At Bethlehem, the Word of God takes on flesh and blood and is laid in a manger; divine revelation takes on human form.

7.2.2 Jesus Christ: Humanity's Perfect Response to God

In his vicarious humanity, Jesus Christ is not only "the real text" of God's Word addressed to us; he is also "the real text" of our address to God. As Torrance (1992:78, 79) argues:

> We have no speech or language with which to address God but the speech and language called Jesus Christ. In him our humanity, our human understanding, our human word are taken up, purified and sanctified, and addressed to God the Father for us as our very own—and that is the word of man with which God is pleased.

Torrance asserts the "double fact" that, in Jesus Christ, the Word of God has assumed human form in order, as such, to be God's language to humanity, while at the same time, Jesus Christ embodies humanity's "true word" and "true speech" to God. According to Torrance, "Jesus Christ is at once the complete revelation of God to man and the correspondence on man's part to that revelation required by it for the fulfilment of its own revealing movement" (Torrance, 1996b:129). For Torrance, as Chung (2011:27; *cf.* Ho, 2008:88) notes, the act of perfect obedience is unattainable by fallen human beings; it can only be achieved by God. Hence, Jesus Christ embodies not only the address of God to humanity but also humanity's perfect response to God. Thus Torrance (1992:78) writes:

> [I]n Jesus there was provided for mankind a way of response to God which issued out of the depths of its existence and as its very own and in which each human being was free to share through communion with Jesus. Thus in Jesus the final response of man toward God was taken up, purified through his

> atoning self-consecration on our behalf, and incorporated into the Word of God as his complete self-communication to mankind, but also as the covenanted way of vicarious response to God which avails for all of us and in which we all may share through the Spirit of Jesus Christ which he freely gives.

In the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ, our response is vicariously taken up and incorporated into the two-fold movement of divine revelation and human response. In the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ, there is provided for all humankind a way of response to God which issues from the ontological depths of our own fallen Adamic existence, which he assumed in the incarnation. As Torrance (1996b:131, 132) notes, the incarnation provides for all humanity a "truly human," yet "divinely prepared," response to divine revelation. "The Incarnation was wholly act of God," notes Torrance, "but it was no less true human life truly lived in our actual humanity. Jesus Christ is not only Word of God to man, but Believer." That is, in terms of faithful response to the Word of God, Jesus Christ, and no other, is the one "true believer." Throughout the entirety of his obedient life, the incarnate Word yielded the "perfect response of man" to the divine revelation he himself embodied. "We are not concerned," argues Torrance, "simply with a divine revelation which demands from us all a human response, but with a divine revelation which already includes a true and appropriate and fully human response as part of its achievement for us and to us and in us." As Gill (2007:52) notes, in the incarnation, not only is the eternal Word "translated" into human form (*cf.* Torrance, 1992:78), but also there is provided for humanity a way of response in which each person is free to share in communion with Christ. As Gill rightly argues, Jesus is both the "content" of God's revelation to humanity and our "response" to God. "In Torrance's understanding of the nature of Christ," Gill writes, "not only does the Word become flesh; the flesh of Jesus becomes our word of response to God." As Chung (2011:27) notes, for Torrance, Jesus' perfect obedience is an integral and essential aspect of the humanward-Godward movement of mediation because it achieves for humanity what humanity cannot do if left alone.

According to Torrance, the Gospel includes "the all-significant middle term, the divinely provided response in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ himself "is" the perfect human response to God. He is both the divine Word of God spoken to humanity and, at the same time, the perfect human word addressed to God. Parallel to a "theological form of Fermat's principle," in accordance with which the selection of one path from among many in the formulation of natural law sets aside and excludes all others as "unentertainable" and "impossible," Torrance argues that the

incarnation of the eternal Word in our contingent existence in Jesus Christ excludes every other way to the Father and stamps the vicarious humanity of Christ as "the sole norm and law" and "the sole ground of acceptable human response to the Father" (Torrance, 1971:145, 146; 1982:88, 89).

In Jesus Christ, notes Torrance (1969a:50), God has not only condescended to "objectify" himself so that we may know him, but also has provided from the side of humanity, and from within humanity, "adequate and perfect reception" of the truth of divine revelation. Torrance continues:

> [Jesus Christ] is in Himself not only God objectifying Himself for man but man adapted and conformed to that objectification, not only the complete revelation of God to man but the appropriate correspondence on the part of man to that revelation, not only the Word of God to man but man obediently hearing and answering that Word. In short, Jesus Christ is Himself both the Word of God as spoken by God to man and that same Word as heard and received by man, Himself both the Truth of God given to man and that very Truth understood and actualized in man. He is that divine and human Truth in His one Person.

In his incarnate constitution as God and man joined in reconciling union, Jesus Christ is both the objective revelation of God to humanity and the appropriate response and conformation of humanity to divine revelation. He is not only the Truth (*cf*. Jn 14:6) spoken from the highest, he is also the perfect response to that Truth, heard and actualised from within the ontological depths of the fallen humanity he assumed in the incarnation (*cf*. Torrance, 1971:138).

According to Torrance (1969a:50, 51), Jesus Christ is the one human being in whom the truth of God and human knowledge of the truth "are fully and faithfully correlated." At the same time, Torrance notes that in Jesus Christ, revelation (and reconciliation) has taken place "for all other men." He continues:

> [I]n His true and obedient humanity, the Truth of God has been given and received for all men, and as such is made openly accessible to us in the Gospel, not only as the objective Word of God to man but as the same Word subjectively realized and expressed within our human and historical existence.

In the historical actuality of Jesus Christ, knowledge of God is possible. In the incarnation, Torrance argues, God has broken through human "inability," "inadequacy," and "self-will" in order to establish real knowledge of God within the limitations of our estrangement and alienation. Human knowledge of God is grounded in the divine Word's "condescension to enter within our creaturely frailty and incompetence and so to realize knowledge of Himself from within our mode of

existence, in the incarnate Son." Hence, in Jesus Christ, Torrance asserts, "we may now freely participate in the knowledge of God as an actuality already translated and made accessible for us by his grace" (Torrance, 1969a:51).

Here the implications of Torrance's understanding of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ begin to emerge. In regard to divine revelation, Jesus Christ "is" the Word of God incarnate in a particular human being, so that the human speech of Jesus is the divine Word of God. In regard to the human response to that Word, Jesus Christ "is" the "perfect response" to divine revelation. In the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God has provided a vicarious way of human response in place of, and on behalf of, all who partake of the nature of Adam.

Torrance's assertion that human knowledge of God is grounded in the incarnation is consistent with his realist, interactionist epistemology and his kataphysical scientific theological method. In the incarnation, the eternal Word of God bridges the Kantian epistemological gulf between the knower and the known in order to bring actual knowledge of God into our historical, space-time reality, while "translating" it into language amenable to the limitations of our creaturely minds.

7.3 Soteriology (Reconciliation)

According to Torrance, the ministry of Jesus Christ toward God on our behalf, that is, the humanward-Godward movement of incarnational redemption, can be better understood by taking our "initial cue" from God's relationship with Old Testament Israel, particularly in regard to the "reciprocity" which God patiently and lovingly worked out in covenant relationship with his chosen people. While a covenant is generally thought to involve two parties, for Torrance, there is an all-important "middle term" between the polarities of the covenant. As previously noted (*cf.* Chapter Three), this is the "covenanted way of response" God provided for his people; that is, a divinely prepared pattern of liturgy and worship designed to testify to the fact that only God can expiate guilt, forgive sin, and bring about propitiation between himself and his people (Torrance, 1992:73, 74). As Scandrett (2006:79) notes, the covenanted way of response consisted of the law, with its moral and legal prescriptions, as well as the sacrificial system of the Levitical priesthood. For Torrance, notes Scandrett, these two aspects of the covenanted way of response were provided by God as way of calling

Israel to be holy, while providing a means by which Israel could be forgiven for its inevitable failure to do so.

Over time, as the covenanted way of response was worked into the flesh and blood existence of Israel, Torrance sees the gradual conflation of the mediatorial and priestly roles of Moses and Aaron, as well as the notions of guilt-bearer and sacrifice, as providing the "interpretive clue" to the identity of the Isaianic "servant of the Lord," the "hypostatized actualisation" within the flesh and blood existence of Israel of the divinely provided covenant way of response set forth in the cultic liturgy. A messianic role was attributed to the servant of the Lord in which mediator and sacrifice, priest and victim, were combined in a form that is both representative and substitutionary (Torrance, 1992:75, 76).

7.3.1 The Fulfilment of the Covenanted Way of Response

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is seen as the historical incarnation of this prophetic vision (*cf.* Torrance, 1971:158). Jesus Christ embodies the "prophetic apprehension" foreseen in the Isaianic servant of the Lord (*cf.* Scandrett, 2006:79). For Torrance, as Scandrett (2008:79, 80) rightly notes, Jesus Christ is "nothing less than the fulfillment and realization not only of Israel's entire history, but also of Israel's covenanted way of response to God." In Jesus Christ, Torrance (1992:75-77) argues, the prophesied servant of the Lord and the promised Redeemer come together, as he bears away the iniquities, transgressions, and guilt not only of Israel, but of the whole world (*cf.* Jn 1:29; 1Jn 2:2). Torrance regards the identity of servant and redeemer as "the essence of the Gospel." As the incarnate Son of the Father, Jesus Christ came to fulfil all righteousness as both priest and victim. Through his one self-offering in atonement for sin, he mediated a new covenant of universal range, wherein humanity is presented to the Father as redeemed, sanctified, and perfected forever in Jesus. As Torrance notes, "Jesus Christ constitutes in his own self-consecrated humanity the fulfilment of the vicarious way of human response to God promised under the old covenant, but now on the ground of his atoning self-sacrifice once for all offered this is a vicarious way of response which is available for all mankind." For Torrance, Jesus Christ, in his incarnate constitution as God and humanity joined in reconciling union, is the fulfilment of the covenanted way of response, now vicariously once for all offered, not only for Israel, but for the whole world.

As Torrance (1992:77) argues, this is surely how we are to understand the two-fold ministry of Jesus Christ, from God to humanity and from humanity to God. Jesus Christ himself fulfils the covenant from both sides. In regard to the Old Testament commands, "I shall be your God and you shall be my people," "I am holy, be you holy," and "I will be your Father and you will be my son," Jesus Christ is both the covenant-making God and the one true Israelite, who, as the obedient and faithful servant, fulfils both polarities of the covenant. Our immediate concern in the present chapter is the "humanward-Godward" movement of the covenant, that is, the fulfilment of the covenant in the body and blood of Christ, "from the side of human beings toward God the Father as the divinely provided counterpart to God's unconditional self-giving to mankind."

7.3.2 The Whole Course of His Obedience

As Gill (2007:45, 46) rightly asserts, one of the strengths of Torrance's theology is that he focuses attention on the salvific significance of Jesus' life, while much Western theology has seen soteriological import only in his death. As Kettler (2005:5, 6) notes, in older theology it was common to speak of the "vicarious death" of Christ. Yet, with no intent to minimize the importance of Christ's sacrificial death, Torrance argues that the death of Christ must be seen in the wider context of his whole life. In the humanward-Godward movement of mediation, Jesus Christ fulfils the covenant vicariously from his birth through his death, resurrection, and ascension. The nature of Christ's reconciling activity is not accomplished in only the few hours he hung on the cross, but encompasses the entirety of his life, so that the entirety of our lives might be affected. As Chung (2011:18) notes, citing an unpublished lecture of Torrance's, the atoning reconciliation embodied in the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ is "'one long act' stretching from Bethlehem to the resurrection."

Following the Nicene fathers, Torrance (1988a:167, 168) argues that Jesus' life, not only his death on the cross, was a priestly self-offering on our behalf:

> [T]he priestly self-consecration and self-offering of Christ throughout the whole of his earthly life are to be regarded as belonging to the innermost essence of the atoning mediation he fulfilled between God and mankind. Reconciliation through the life of Christ and reconciliation through the passion of Christ interpenetrate each other ... [A]s one of us and one with us, he shared all our experiences, overcoming our disobedience through his obedience and

> sanctifying every stage of human life, and thereby vivified and restored our humanity to communion with God. He sanctified himself for our sakes that we might be sanctified in him.

In "an agonising union between God the Judge and man under judgment in a continuous movement of atoning reconciliation running throughout all his obedient and sinless life," Jesus Christ sanctified every phase of human life through his filial obedience to the Father. Atonement, therefore, did not begin at the cross. To the contrary, atoning reconciliation began with the incarnation itself; that is, the assumption of sinful Adamic flesh was redemptive from the moment of Jesus' "conception and birth when he put on the form of a servant and began to pay the price of our redemption" (Torrance, 1986b:475; *cf.* 1988a:167). Torrance continues:

> As the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus is not only God *with us*, but God *for us*, God who has crossed the chasm of alienation between us and himself, God who has taken our rebellious and corrupt human nature upon himself, God who has made our sin and guilt, our misery and death, our condemnation and godlessness, his very own, in order to intercede for us, to substitute himself in our place, bearing the just punishment of our sin, and offering and making restitution by suffering what we could not suffer and where we could make no restitution at all. That is the doctrine of Jesus Christ as Mediator who is God of God and Man of man in one Person, and who as such reconciles God to man and man to God in the hypostatic union of his divine and human natures.

For Torrance, as Ho (2008:129) notes, the scope of the entire life of Jesus Christ is itself an atonement, beginning with his birth and culminating at the cross. Throughout his entire life, Jesus Christ is "God for us." In taking sinful humanity to himself in the incarnation, the eternal Word began cleansing it, and continued to do so throughout what Calvin (2008:II.16.5; 327; Torrance, 1959:lxxxi) called "the whole course of his obedience," that is, throughout the entirety of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension (*cf.* Dawson, 2007b:56, 62). For Torrance, therefore, atoning reconciliation is accomplished within the incarnate constitution of Jesus Christ (1986b:475; *cf.* Chapter Six), who acts on our behalf throughout the whole course of his obedient life, bending our fallen human will back to the Father and restoring communion between God and humanity. Following Greek patristic theology, Torrance (1993:238) writes:

> [I]t is the whole incarnate life of Christ vicariously and triumphantly lived out from his birth to his crucifixion and resurrection in perfect obedience to the Father within the ontological depths of his oneness with us in our actual fallen existence, that redeems and saves us and converts our disobedient alienated sonship back to filial union with the Father. That is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The "whole course" of Jesus' obedient response, vicariously offered in our place and on our behalf, is an integral aspect of the unitary, holistic connection Torrance sees

between the incarnation and the atonement. For Torrance, the "whole course" of Jesus' obedient life is itself an intrinsic part of the atonement, as the incarnate Son redeems and bends our fallen nature back to filial union with the Father. As Cass (2008:173) notes, for Torrance, the incarnation, conception, and birth of Jesus Christ are not merely "preconditions" for atonement; rather, they are the "beginning" of the atoning work of Jesus Christ in the flesh, for Jesus Christ begins to "condemn sin in the flesh" from the moment of his conception (*cf.* Cass 2008:182). While the cross is central to Torrance's discussion of the atonement, as Gill (2007:49) argues, he does not neglect the atoning significance of Jesus' entire incarnate life. Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, notes Gill, is grounded in the atoning significance of the entire incarnate life of the Saviour. According to Cass (2008:182), one central reason Torrance grounds the atonement in the incarnation is that Jesus Christ assumes our sin and alienation in the incarnation, and the condemnation of sin in his flesh begun at conception is completed at the cross. For Torrance, notes Cass, redemption begins with the "advent" of Jesus, so that his conception and birth [as well as the whole course of his obedient life] are constitutive aspects of his redemptive activity. Torrance sees this intrinsic connection between the incarnation and atonement because atoning reconciliation falls "within" the person of the mediator, Jesus Christ (*cf.* Torrance, 1992:63). Yet, as Cass (2008:173) argues, Torrance never "abstracts" the incarnation from the cross; rather, "for Torrance, the incarnation and the cross are always correlative terms," for there is no biblical understanding of the incarnation apart from the cross. For Torrance, argues Cass, "the incarnation reaches its fulfilment on the cross, and the cross finds its indispensable understanding in the incarnation."

7.3.2.1 Active and Passive Obedience

In regard to the "whole course" of Jesus' atoning life, Torrance (1960b:229-231) draws upon the Reformed doctrine of the "active" and "passive" obedience of Jesus Christ. The active obedience of the incarnate Son refers to the positive fulfilment in the whole life of Jesus, who, from beginning to end, lived a life of perfect filial obedience to the Father, perfectly fulfilling God's will in our name and laying hold of the Father's love on our behalf. The passive obedience of Jesus Christ refers to his willing submission to the judgement of the Father upon our sin, especially as manifested in his expiation of our sins upon the cross. Christ's passive obedience, however, cannot be limited to the cross, for his passion began at his birth, so that his entire life was a bearing of the cross.

Torrance follows Calvin (2008:II.16.5; 327) in asserting that as soon as Christ put on the form of a servant (*cf.* Phil 2:7), he began to pay the price of liberation for our salvation. As Torrance notes, the Reformed distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ is not intended to divide the work of Christ, but to insist that atonement cannot be limited to his passive obedience at the cross; rather, the whole course of Christ's life of filial obedience to the Father is absolutely integral to our reconciliation. Torrance (1960b:230) continues:

> How could it be otherwise when in the Incarnation there took place a union of God the Judge and the man judged in one Person, so that all through His life, but especially in His death, Jesus bore in himself the infliction and judgement of God upon our sinful humanity, and wrought out in His life and His death expiation and amendment for our sin?

Though Jesus Christ was obedient throughout the whole course of his life, notes Torrance (1996b:132), he had to "learn" obedience. Though conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus was born in the womb of a sinner, within the compass of sinful flesh. Torrance continues:

> As the Son of Adam he was born into our alienation, our God-forsakenness and darkness, and grew within our bondage and ignorance, so that he had to beat his way forward by blows, as St. Luke puts it, growing in wisdom and growing in grace, before God as well as before men. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered, for that obedience from within our alienated humanity was a struggle with our sin and temptation ... fought out with strong crying and tears and achieved in desperate anguish and weakness under the crushing load of the world's sin and the divine judgment. Throughout the whole course of his life he bent the will of man in perfect submission to the will of God, bowing under the divine judgment against our unrighteousness, and offered a perfect obedience to the Father, that we might be redeemed and reconciled to him.

Finally, at Calvary, Jesus "penetrated to the utmost extremity of our self-alienating flight from God where we are trapped in death, and turned everything around so that out of the fearful depths of our darkness and dereliction we may cry with him, 'Our Father'." In his anguished experience at Gethsemane, where he wrestled with God over the cup he had been given to drink, Jesus cried out, "Yet not my will but thine be done." As Torrance notes, it is "your will and my will," that is, our Adamic self-will that Jesus appropriated in the incarnation, which is "bent back in the agony of Gethsemane in total obedience to the will of the Father." Thus, we must think of "the whole life and activity of Jesus from the cradle to the grave" as constituting the vicarious human response which God has graciously and unconditionally provided for us (Torrance, 1992:79, 80; *cf.* 1988a:167).

The "mutuality" of the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ is important in regard to justification, for it means that we have imputed to us not only the passive righteousness of Christ, when he satisfied for our sins in judgement on the cross, but also the active righteousness of Christ, in which he "positively" fulfilled the Father's will in an obedient life. For Torrance, therefore, justification means not merely the "non-imputation" of our sins through the pardon of Christ but also "the positive sharing in his divine-human righteousness" (Torrance, 1960b:230, 231). He continues:

> We are saved, therefore, not only by the death of Christ [passive obedience] which He suffered for our sakes, but by His life [active obedience] which He lived in our flesh for our sakes and which God raised from the dead that we may share in it through the power of the Spirit. It is in that light, of His atoning and justifying Life, that we are to understand the Incarnation of the Son in the whole course of His obedience from His Birth to His Resurrection.

According to Torrance (1993:238, 239), the "cardinal issue" here is the all-important truth of the vicarious humanity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. When we assign central place to the humanity of Jesus and his atoning acts throughout the whole course of his obedient life, atonement cannot be regarded merely as an "external" juridical transaction that took place at the cross, but "as something made to issue out of the depths of our actual existence through the incredible oneness which Christ forged with us in his vicarious humanity." Torrance's view that the entire life of Christ was lived vicariously on our behalf and in our place gives the humanity of Jesus Christ an "essential" and "integral" place (*cf.* Torrance, 1996b:131) in the indivisible unity of agency of the Father and Spirit and stands in stark contrast to the Latin view that the humanity of the incarnate Son played merely an instrumental role in an external, legal transaction between the Father and the Son at the cross. As Torrance (1996b:132, 133) argues, in the midst of our sinful humanity, the incarnate Word of God takes the way of vicarious suffering and judgement. The revelation he embodies is not complete apart from reconciliation, "for only through reconciliation can revelation complete its own movement within man, bringing out of our humanity the obedient reception of revelation which is an essential part of its very substance." As he who is both God and man, Jesus Christ penetrates to the depths of our sinful existence in order to overcome our estrangement and reconcile us to the Father. He acts from the side of God in the faithful revelation of divine truth and, at the same time, acts from the side of humanity "in the faithfulness of a life wholly obedient to the Father."

As Torrance (1992:80) argues, Jesus' filial obedience to the Father is not "an answer to God" that arises merely through an external transaction, as in the Latin view of atonement; rather, it is an obedient response that arises from the depths of the fallen humanity Jesus has made his own. Moreover, Jesus' obedient self-sacrifice is not a mere moral example we may follow; rather, it is a "final answer" to God actualised in "the flesh and blood of our human existence and behaviour" which remains "eternally valid." Against external forensic and exemplary theories of the atonement, Torrance asserts that "Jesus Christ *is* our human response to God."

As Cass (2008:188, 189) notes, Torrance adds an "ontological" dimension to the Reformed doctrine of the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ. In his active obedience, Torrance contends that Jesus covered and reversed the sin of Adam "vicariously" on behalf of all by living a life of perfect filial obedience to the Father. Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves, by loving the Father with all his heart, mind, and strength, and loving his neighbour as himself, so that we might participate in his righteousness and be restored to God (*cf.* Torrance, 1996b:154). According to Cass (2008:190, 191), Torrance finds this doctrine in Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses*, 2.33), who argued that Christ "recapitulated" (*cf.* Eph 1:10) in himself the work of Adam by restoring fallen humanity to God (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:167). For Torrance, as Cass (2008:191) notes, recapitulation can only find its form and meaning within an ontological framework, where incarnation and atonement are mutually grounded.

While Torrance rejects as inadequate purely moral and forensic theories of the atonement, however, he does not entirely reject forensic elements in his own discussion of the atonement. As Cass (2008:189, 190, 199*ff*) argues, Torrance integrates ontological and forensic metaphors in his doctrine of atonement. Ontologically, Torrance argues that Christ assumed our original sin in the incarnation, condemned it in the flesh through his holiness, and carried it to the cross so we could be free of its alien power in union with Christ. Forensically, notes Cass, Torrance argues that, at the cross, Jesus Christ stood in for all humanity as our substitute under the verdict of God. In his passive obedience, Jesus Christ the righteous Judge was judged and condemned in our place, so that we might take his place and receive the free gift of eternal life. Noting that Torrance follows the Greek fathers in emphasising the ontological aspect of the atonement, Cass (2008:190) argues that Torrance also develops the forensic metaphors

associated with Western theology, particularly in terms of the "Judge judged in our place," who takes responsibility for our sin, so that we might take his place as the justified children of God. As noted above (*cf.* chapter Six), we find here the influence of John McLeod Campbell, particularly in relation to Christ's condemning sin in the flesh in his "active" and "passive" obedience, the integration of ontological and forensic metaphors of salvation, and the doctrine of the Judge judged in our place (*cf.* Barth, 1957d:211*ff*; Cass (2008:59, 88, 89).

7.3.2.2 Representation and Substitution

Torrance (1992:80; *cf.* 1988a:168) asserts the "radical nature of Jesus' mediation of our human response to God" by bringing together, and "thinking into each other," the concepts of "representation" and "substitution." It will not do, argues Torrance, to think of what Jesus has done for us merely in terms of "representation," for that would imply that Jesus represents our response merely as the "leader" of humanity in its response to God. On the other hand, if Jesus is merely a "substitute" in detachment from us, who simply takes our place in an external forensic way, then his act has no ontological bearing upon us, but, rather, is "an empty transaction over our heads." As Torrance argues, a "merely representative" or "merely substitutionary" concept of vicarious mediation is "bereft of any saving significance." As Ho (2008:80, 81) notes, as the Mediator of our human response to God, Christ's vicarious humanity is both representative and substitutionary. If the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ means only "simple representation," however, then, for Torrance, it is insufficient in terms of the "efficacy" of the atonement, because mere "representation" does not include "ontological identity" with those who are represented. Thus, as Ho notes, it is important for Torrance to have a "substitutionary" element which involves an "ontological exchange" between Christ's humanity and our humanity. Torrance (1992:80, 81) writes:

> But if representation and substitution are combined and allowed to interpenetrate each other within the incarnational union of the Son of God with us in which he has actually taken our sin and guilt upon his own being, then we may have a profounder and truer grasp of the vicarious humanity in the mediatorship of Christ, as one in which he acts in our place, in our stead, on our behalf but out of the ontological depths of our actual human being.

As Scandrett (2006:81, 82) notes, Torrance is critical of theological traditions that emphasise federal and forensic aspects of atonement while failing to adequately recognise the "ontological union" that has taken place between God and humanity in

Jesus Christ. By way of correction, notes Scandrett, Torrance asserts that representation, substitution, and incarnation are properly related only when they are grounded in the ontological union of God and humanity in the incarnate person of Jesus Christ. For Torrance, notes Scandrett, Jesus Christ acts in our place and on our behalf in terms of an "ontological solidarity" with humanity, not in terms of a "distinction" from us. As such, he is not merely a "substitute" for humanity, as though he did not participate in the human condition or as if his humanity was different from ours. Rather, because he is fully human, he penetrates the depths of our fallen condition and incorporates it into his own response to God. Because he is truly God, his assumption of our human nature is imbued with transcendent salvific power. For Torrance, notes Scandrett, anything less results in the "ontological, epistemological and soteriological disintegration of the Gospel."

Against "external" concepts of representation and substitution, Torrance (*cf.* 1992:80) argues, Jesus Christ acts on our behalf, and in our place, from "within" the ontological depths of his incarnational penetration into the fallen flesh he assumed in common with sinful humanity. Because Jesus has identified himself with us in the assumption of our diseased and sinful humanity, there is an ontological connection between us and what he does as our representative and substitute; that is, Jesus acts on our behalf and in our place, throughout the whole course of his life, from within the depths of fallen Adamic flesh. As Torrance (1976a:136) notes elsewhere:

> [T]he Son of God united himself with us in our actual human condition so intimately and profoundly that through his healing and sanctifying of our human nature in himself we may be made with him sons of God. As such he acts with us and for us and on our behalf towards the Father in all our distinctive human experiences as children of God, such as confession, penitence, sorrow, chastisement, submission to the divine judgement, and faith, obedience, love, prayer, praise, adoration, that we may share with him what he is in his ascension and self-presentation before the Father as the beloved Son in whom he is well-pleased.

The Son of God assumes sinful human flesh, then "as man," as son of Adam and son of Israel, acts vicariously for us, as our representative and substitute, in all our human experiences as children of God, so that we may share in his intimate experience as the Father's beloved Son. Torrance (1986b:479) writes:

> Although atonement was certainly the Act of God himself, it was the Act of God *as Man*, and thus act of God translated into our human existence and made to issue out of it as a fully human act in the obedient self-offering of man in holiness and filial love to God the Father and in unbroken fellowship with him

Because it is God who acts "as man" on our behalf and in our place, "central place" must be given to the representative and substitutionary aspects of the humanity of Jesus Christ in atoning reconciliation. As Torrance (1986b:479) argues:

> Now if it was as Man as well as God that Jesus Christ took our place, he must be recognised as acting in our place in *all* the basic acts of man's response to God: in faith and repentance, in obedience and prayer, in receiving God's blessing and in thanksgiving for it.

Jesus Christ acts "as man," "in our place," in all aspects of humankind's response to God. In the Gospel, therefore, we do not have to do simply with the Word of God and the human response to it; rather, we have to do with the "all-significant middle term," that is, "the divinely provided response in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ." Because he is the one in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28), the humanity of Jesus Christ occupies a "unique place in the creative ground of our humanity" (Torrance, 1971:145). Torrance continues:

> [The vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ] fulfils a representative and substitutionary role in all our relations with God, including every aspect of human response to Him: such as trusting and obeying, understanding and knowing, loving and worshipping. Jesus Christ is presented to us in the Gospels as He who in and through His humanity took our place, acting in our name and on our behalf before God, freely offering in Himself what we could not offer and offering it in our stead, the perfect response of man to God in a holy life of faith and prayer and praise, the self-offering of the Beloved Son with whom the Father is well pleased.

For Torrance, Jesus is our representative and substitute in every aspect of our response to God. "[E]ven in our believing, praying, and worshipping of God ... he has yoked himself to us in such a profound way that he stands in for us and upholds us at every point in our human relations before God (Torrance, 1994a:30, 31).

In this regard, a clear description of what Torrance means by the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ is found in Torrance (2008:205 n. 32), edited by R.T. Walker:

> "Standing in our place" (Lat, *vicarius*, substitute). Christ in his humanity stands in our place and represents us, and hence the term the "*vicarious humanity*" of Christ in which the humanity of Christ takes our place and represents us, so that what is true of him is true of us, and what he did in his (our) humanity is ours.

By bringing together and thinking into each other the concepts of "representation" and "substitution," Torrance is in complete harmony with the New Testament (*cf.* Hebrews) description of Christ as both our High Priest (representative) and sacrifice (substitute), the "Offerer" and the "Offering" (*cf.* Torrance, 1988a:173-178). In representing our humanity before the Father, Jesus Christ is the High Priest representing the people

before God. At the same time, he is also the sacrifice, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8), and "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). He is our substitute, taking our place and offering to the Father the life of perfect filial obedience we are unable to offer. As Kettler (2005:6) notes, this is the true sense of "vicarious": doing something for another in their place, doing for them what they are unable to do for themselves. This is the heart of Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ.

7.4 Vicarious Humanity and Human Response

A clearer understanding of Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ may be gained by an examination and explanation of the relationship he sees between the humanity of Jesus and the mediation of the human response to God. Following Scottish pastor and theologian, John McLeod Campbell (Torrance, 1976a:141), Torrance identifies Galatians 2:20 as a passage of "primary importance" in his doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, a passage he personally translates as follows (Torrance, 1994a:31; Torrance, *et al*, 1999:24, 25; *cf*. Torrance, 1957b:113):

> 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 the *faith of the Son of God,* who loved me and gave himself for me.

Commenting on his translation of this passage, Torrance (1994a:31; Torrance, *et al*, 1999:25) argues:

> "The faith of the Son of God" is to be understood here not just as my faith in him, but as the faith of Christ himself, for it refers primarily to Christ's unswerving faithfulness, his vicarious and substitutionary faith which embraces and undergirds us, such that when we believe we must say with St. Paul "not I but Christ," even in our act of faith.

Galatians 2:20 is the paradigmatic text for understanding Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. As Torrance (1992:98) argues, this text informs all our human responses to God, including faith, conversion, and worship, the sacraments, and evangelism (*cf*. Torrance, 1992:81-98). For Torrance, as Ho (2008:81) states, Christ is "the embodiment of all our necessary salvific ingredients." The relationship between the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and specific aspects of human response to God will be the subject of the remainder of the present Chapter.

7.4.1 Faith

Torrance's early article on faith (1957) ignited a "firestorm" of controversy. In this article, Torrance argues that human faith is grounded in God's faithfulness, indeed, that faith and believing do not apply to humanity, but to God. Torrance's discussion of faith and its relation to the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ reveals the "fundamental contours" of his theology, particularly in regard to the "once-for-allness" of what God has accomplished in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (Thimell, 2008:27, 28).

While we are accustomed to thinking of faith as something we possess, or as an activity in which we engage, faith is not to be construed as an independent, autonomous act which arises from a base within ourselves (Torrance, 1992:81, 82). Arguing that the intellectual aspect of faith (*pistis*) is grounded in "the basic fact of the faithfulness of God," Torrance (1957b:111) notes that the Old Testament concept of faith ('*emunah*) mirrors the "constancy" and "steadfastness" of a parent to her child (*cf.* Is 49:15) and is properly applied to God in his covenant faithfulness, not to people (*cf.* Dt 7:9). Thus, faith and belief do not properly describe a virtue or quality of human beings; rather, "they describe man as taking refuge from his own frailty and instability in God who is firm and steadfast."

According to Torrance, the biblical conception of faith is rooted in the covenant relationship between God and Israel. In the "community of reciprocity" established between God and his people, there is a reciprocal movement of faith, that is, a "polarity between the faithfulness of God and the answering faithfulness of man." Even when the people's faith faltered, God would not let them go. Despite their rebellion and unfaithfulness, God held on to them in "undergirding" and "utterly invariant" faithfulness, as revealed in his covenant love for Israel. Hence, the ultimate ground of Israel's faith toward God was God's faithfulness toward Israel. As Torrance argues, the steadfast faithfulness of God is the ground on which redemption rests, as the divinely prepared pattern of Israel's cultic liturgy attests (Torrance, 1992:82).

The New Testament concept of faith is not different, although it is "intensely personalised" in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He is "the Truth of God actualized in our midst, the incarnate faithfulness of God" (Torrance, 1971:154; 1992:82). In an important passage for understanding the relation between human faith (*pistis*), God, and

the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, Torrance (1957b:113; *cf.* 1971:154) describes Jesus Christ as the "embodiment and actualization" of human faith in covenant with God. He writes:

> Like the Old Testament, the New Testament also lays emphasis upon the faithfulness of God, and requires from man a corresponding faithfulness. But in the gospel the steadfast faithfulness of God has achieved its end in righteousness and truth in Jesus Christ, for in Him it has been actualised as Truth, and is fulfilled in our midst. Jesus Christ is not only the Truth of God but also Truth of God become man, the Truth of God become truth of man. As such, Jesus is also the truth of man before God, for God, and toward God. Jesus Christ is thus not only the incarnation of the Divine *pistis*, but He is the embodiment and actualization of man's *pistis* in covenant with God. He is not only the Righteousness of God, but the embodiment and actualization of our human righteousness before God.

The Old Testament concept of the faithfulness of God is actualised in Jesus Christ, who, at the same time, is the embodiment and actualisation of human faith toward God. In his incarnate constitution as God and man in one person, Jesus Christ manifests a "two-fold" faithfulness or steadfastness; that is, "the steadfastness of God and the steadfastness of man in obedience to God." Jesus Christ is both the Word of God revealed to humanity and humanity in steadfast obedience and faithfulness to that Word. As Torrance argues, "He is from the side of man, man's *pistis* answering to God's *pistis*, as well as from the side of God, God's *pistis* requiring man's *pistis*: as such He lived out the life of the Servant, fulfilling in Himself our salvation in righteousness and truth." Torrance finds this truth summed up in the New Testament assertion that Jesus Christ is both the faithful "Yes" of God to humanity and the faithful "Amen" of humanity to God (*cf.* 2Cor 1:18-20). "He offers to God for us, and is toward God in His own person and life, our human response of obedience and faithfulness" (Torrance, 1957b:114).

In this regard, Torrance notes two great aspects of the Gospel which need fuller consideration in modern theology than they have been given. First, the "whole of our salvation" is dependent upon the "faithfulness of God." It is God's faithfulness that undergirds and supports our "feeble and faltering" faith, and enfolds it in his own. In Jesus Christ, we are unable to disentangle our faith from the faithfulness of God, for it is the nature of our faith to be implicated in the faithfulness of Jesus. Second, Jesus Christ is not only the incarnate Word of God; he is also "Believer," "Believer for us," "vicariously Believer, whose very humanity is the embodiment of our salvation" (Torrance, 1957b:114). Torrance continues:

> In Him who is Man of our humanity, we are graciously given to share, and so to participate in the whole course of His reconciling obedience from His birth to His death. That He stood in our place and gave to God account for us, that He believed for us, was faithful for us, and remains faithful even when we fail Him again and again, is the very substance of our salvation and the anchor of our hope.

In Torrance's theology, notes Ho (2008:82), "our faith is not ours, but rather [Jesus'] faith on our behalf." Our faith is implicated in his, for Christ is the great Believer who believes for us (*cf*. Torrance, 1996b:156, 157). For Torrance, as Thimell (2008:32) more simply notes, Jesus Christ upholds "both ends" of the divine-human relationship. In his solidarity with us, argues Torrance (1971:154), Jesus Christ stands in our place, in his life and in his death, in utter faithfulness to God and humanity. In his complete filial obedience and faithfulness to the Father, Jesus offers to God the "perfect response of faith" which we are unable to offer; that is, Jesus "offers to God, and is toward God in His own person and life, our human response of faith and obedience to God." He is humanity keeping faith and truth with "perfect correspondence" between his life and the word of God. In Jesus, there is "utter consistency" between the revealed word of God and human hearing, believing, and obeying that word. According to Torrance (1992:82), Jesus enters into the relationship between the faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of human beings to restore the faithfulness of mankind by grounding it in his own faithfulness, thereby perfectly answering God's faithfulness. Torrance continues:

> Thus Jesus steps into the actual situation where we are summoned to have faith in God, to believe and trust in him, and he acts in our place and in our stead from within the depths of our unfaithfulness and provides us freely with a faithfulness in which we share. He does that as Mediator between God and man, yet precisely *as man* united to us and taking our place at every point where we human beings ... are called to have faith in the Father, to believe in him and trust him.

As Mediator between God and humankind, Jesus steps into the arena of human faith in order to act in our place from within the depths of our fallen and unfaithful humanity. As Torrance argues, "[I]f we think of belief, trust or faith as forms of human activity before God, then we must think of Jesus Christ as believing, trusting and having faith in God the Father on our behalf and in our place." Note that for Torrance, the "human activity" of trust and faith does not arise from within us; rather, these "activities" are offered to the Father on our behalf by Jesus Christ. Even in regard to our belief, Jesus acts vicariously, that is, in our place, offering to the Father the fullness of faith we are unable to offer. Torrance illustrates his argument with a story about teaching his young daughter to walk. While the little child held firmly to her father's hand as tightly as she

could, it was not her feeble grasp that enabled her to remain steady, but, rather, her father's strong grip on her hand. As Torrance argues, "This is surely how God's faithfulness actualised in Jesus Christ has hold of our weak and faltering faith and holds it securely in his hand" (Torrance, 1992:82, 83; *cf.* 1994a:32; Torrance, *et al*, 1999:26).

For Torrance, our response of faith is a "free participation" in the faithful response of Jesus Christ already made on our behalf. Our response of faith is encompassed "within the ring of faithfulness which Christ has already thrown around us, when in faith we rely not on our own believing but wholly on his vicarious response of faithfulness toward God." Hence, Christ's faith undergirds our feeble faith and enfolds it in his own. Moreover, since the faith of the incarnate Word includes both the faith of God and our faith, "we are unable to disentangle our acts of faith in Christ from their implication in the eternal faithfulness of God" (Torrance, 1971:154).

For Torrance, faith is a "polar concept" that "reposes upon and derives from the prior faithfulness of God which has been translated permanently into our actual human existence in Jesus Christ." We do not rely upon our own faith, "but upon the faith of Christ which undergirds and upholds our faith" (Torrance, 1960b:235). In the "polar relation" between Christ's faith and our faith, "our faith is laid hold of, enveloped, and upheld by his unswerving faithfulness." Jesus Christ takes our place, making our cause his own, and offering to the Father the response of faith and love we are altogether unable to offer. Human faith, therefore, has its proper place, not within the autonomous individual, but within the "polar relationship" between God and mankind, a relationship that is "actualised" in Jesus Christ, with whom we are yoked together and made to share in his vicarious faith and faithfulness on our behalf. Through his incarnational and atoning union with us, our faith is implicated in his faith; yet, far from being depersonalised, our faith is made to issue "freely and spontaneously" out of our own lives before God. To be sure, we rest in the faithfulness of the incarnate Saviour, and even the way in which we rest is undergirded by his own faithfulness. For Torrance, therefore, the relation between our responses in faith to the vicarious faith of Christ can be summed up in the Pauline principle, "not I but Christ." Even in our believing we must say with St. Paul, "I believe, yet not I but Christ" (Torrance, 1992:83, 84; 1994a:31, 32; Torrance, *et al*, 1999:25; *cf.* Torrance, 1957b:113).

In Torrance's discussion of faith, we see the same two-fold movement of revelation and response that characterised God's interaction with historical Israel. The liturgical-sacrificial system of Israel constituted the "covenanted way of response," that is, the all-important "middle term" between God and humanity, whereby a sinful people could respond to a holy God in appropriate and reverent worship. For Torrance, Jesus Christ embodies the "middle term" between God and sinful humanity, vicariously offering to the Father on our behalf the perfect response of faith we are unable to offer. In the incarnation, our weak and faltering faith is taken up into his perfect faith by virtue of his ontological union with us, and then vicariously offered to the Father throughout the whole course of his obedience. Thus, for Torrance, the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ does not render our faith redundant; rather, in the humanward-Godward movement of faith embodied in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ establishes our faith by enfolding it in his own, undergirding it, lifting it up, and offering it to the Father in union with his own perfect faith.

7.4.1.1 Justification

Torrance finds this understanding of faith in St. Paul's teaching that we are "justified by faith" and that "the just shall live by faith" (*cf.* Rom 1:17; 3:28). For Torrance, these passages do not refer to the faith of the individual believer; rather, they refer to "the faith of God." According to Torrance, Paul's phrase, "the just shall live by faith," comes from Habakkuk (*cf.* 2:4) and, in a commentary on the same found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, is interpreted to mean that the just live from "the faith of God," as also understood by Athanasius, Calvin, and Barth (Torrance, 1994a:31; Torrance, *et al*, 1999:25). In regard to the locus of justifying faith, Torrance (1960b:236) writes:

> [Jesus Christ] stood in our place, taking our cause upon him, also as Believer, as the Obedient One who was himself justified before God as his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased. He offered to God ... a perfect faith and response which we are unable to offer, and he appropriated all God's blessings which we are unable to appropriate. Through union with him we share in his faith, in his obedience, in his trust and appropriation of the Father's blessing; we share in his justification before God. Therefore when we are justified by faith, this does not mean that it is *our* faith that justifies us, far from it—it is the faith of Christ alone that justifies us, but we in faith flee from our own acts even of repentance, confession, trust and response, and take refuge in the obedience and faithfulness of Christ—"Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." That is what it means to be justified by faith.

Justification is an objective reality (*cf.* Torrance, 1960b:228, 233) appropriated for us by Jesus Christ, who rendered to the Father the perfect faith and obedience we are

unable to offer. In the union with Christ wrought by "the wonderful exchange" (*cf.* Chapter Six), in which he assumed our poverty and gave us his riches, humanity is made to share in the beloved Son's justification before God. This interpretation, however, does not denigrate the faith of the individual believer. Rather, in Torrance's understanding of the "polar relation" of faith, the "primary pole" is God's faith. Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, is the faithful one who lays hold of us and brings us into relationship with himself. Within that relationship, the "secondary pole" is that of the believer and his or her response of faith; yet, the human response is an act of faith "evoked by," and "sustained by," the faithfulness of God, so that far from being an act of worship arising from the individual believer, it is "a gift of God" (Torrance, 1994a:31, 32; Torrance, *et al*, 1999:25). As Torrance argues elsewhere (1992:84):

> Thus the very faith with which we confess is the faith of Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us in a life and death of utter trust and belief in God the Father. Our faith is altogether grounded in him who is "the author and finisher of our faith," on whom faith depends from start to finish.

Following John McLeod Campbell, Torrance argues that justification is not merely the "non-imputation" of sin which we accept by "our" faith; rather, it is a "participation" in the righteousness or "actualised holiness" of Jesus Christ, who sanctified himself on our behalf so that we might be sanctified in him. Thus, "to be justified by faith is to be justified in him in whom we believe, not by an act of our own faith as such" (Torrance, 1976a:141). For Torrance, as Kettler (1986:129) notes, justification can never be separated from Christ, for it is centred in "the positive obedience and filial life" Jesus lived vicariously in the flesh on our behalf. Our justification, notes Kettler, comes from our ontological "participation" in the obedience of Christ. The vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ enables us to receive not only the pardon of sins but also a new righteousness, which come through union with Christ. Therefore, for Torrance (1996b:150, 151), justification is not the beginning of a new "self-righteousness," but the perpetual end of it.

As Torrance (1960b:236, 237) notes, because our faith rests in, and is undergirded by, the faith of Jesus Christ, the great Reformer, John Knox (*c.* 1510–1572), hesitated to use the expression, "justification by faith," for its common usage seems to transfer emphasis from Jesus Christ and his faith to our own acts of trust or believing. In later Scots theology, however, anthropocentric questions regarding faith arose because the believer's heart turned inward to reflect upon the nature of his or her own faith, rather than taking assurance in the faith of Christ. In this regard, argues Torrance, whenever

questions arise regarding "justifying faith," we are thrown back upon ourselves and doubts are cast on assurance, for if we must rely upon our own repentance and faith, who can be sure of his or her own salvation? For both Knox and Calvin, however, questions of assurance had little place because they understood faith as grounded, not upon the believer's faith, but upon the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Thus, as Torrance rightly asserts, when we use the expression, "justification by faith alone," we must be "crystal clear" that by "faith alone" we mean by "the faith of Christ alone."

Moreover, for Torrance, justification is "double-sided" (Kettler, 1986:130). Just as justification is "objectively" realised in Jesus Christ, justification is "subjectively" realised for mankind through the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. As Torrance argues, what Jesus did in his human nature was not for his own sake; rather, all he did was for our sake. Throughout the whole course of his obedient life and death, he stood in our place, acting vicariously on our behalf. He is the Word of God brought to bear upon humanity, but he is also humanity hearing that Word and responding to it by faith. He is "the great Believer," who vicariously believes for us, in our place, and in our name. Moreover, he is both the will of God enacted in human flesh and humanity responding perfectly to that will, bending our human will back in perfect obedience to the Father. Likewise, in regard to justification, he is both "the embodiment of God's justifying act" and "our human appropriation of it" (Torrance, 1960b:233). Torrance continues:

> In that unity of the divine and the human, justification was fulfilled in Christ from both sides, from the side of the justifying God and from the side of justified man ... Justification as objective act of the redeeming God and justification as subjective actualization of it in our estranged human existence have once and for all taken place—in Jesus.

As the divine Son of the Father, Jesus "embodies" the divine act of justification from the side of God; as the human son of Mary, he "appropriates" justification from the side of humanity, so that both the objective (*i.e.*, Godward-humanward) and subjective (*i.e.*, humanward-Godward) aspects of justification are fulfilled in his incarnate person.

Torrance (1960b:236) expresses the relationship between the "objective" and "subjective" aspects of justification, and their relation to union with Christ through the Spirit, as follows:

> Justification has been fulfilled subjectively as well as objectively in Jesus Christ, but that objective and subjective justification is objective to us. It is freely imputed to us by grace objectively and we through the Spirit share in it subjectively as we are united to Christ. His subjective justification becomes

> ours, and it is subjective in us as well as in him, but only subjective in us because it has been made subjectively real in our own human nature, in our own human flesh in Jesus, our Brother, and our Mediator.

Note that Torrance does not say justification is subjectively realised in the believer when he or she "accepts" Christ through a personal decision of faith. To the contrary, justification is subjectively realised in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, a reality in which we share through union by the Spirit with the Risen Christ. For Torrance, justification by faith is a "once and for all" reality that has been objectively and subjectively fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who, in the hypostatic union of God and humanity, is, at once, the embodiment of God's justifying act and the human appropriation of that act on behalf of all humanity.

7.4.1.2 Sanctification

The Pauline principle, "I, yet not I but Christ," applies not only to justification by faith but also to sanctification. Like justification, sanctification is an objective reality already accomplished in Jesus Christ. Torrance (1960b:231) writes:

> By the *sanctification of our human nature* we refer to what was wrought by the Son, not only in his active and passive obedience, but through the *union* he established in his birth, life, death, and resurrection between our fallen human nature and his divine nature.

In regard to sanctification, it is important to remember that Torrance regards the incarnation as a "healing," sanctifying," "reconciling" union between God and sinful Adamic flesh (Torrance, 1988a:162; 1990:204). In the incarnation, Jesus not only assumed our fallen flesh from the Virgin Mary; he also "sanctified it in the very act of assumption and all through the holy Life he lived in it from the beginning to the end." For Torrance, the incarnation itself is a "redeeming event," beginning with Christ's birth in Bethlehem and reaching out to its full *telos* in his death and resurrection. Thus, sanctification is an intrinsic aspect of the incarnation. Jesus' incarnational assumption of our fallen flesh deals with our original sin by "sanctifying" our human nature as it is brought into union with his holy nature. As Torrance notes, "In [Christ's] holy assumption of our unholy humanity, his purity wipes away our impurity, his holiness covers our corruption, his nature heals our nature." At the same, the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ deal with our actual sin and its penalty. As Calvin wrote in a famous section of his *Institutes* (2008:338; II.16.19), this applies to the entire life of Jesus, from birth through death, resurrection and ascension, for throughout the whole

course of his filial obedience to the Father, as Torrance argues, "he has sanctified our conception, birth, childhood, youth, manhood, and death, in himself" (Torrance, 1960b:231, 232). This is "supremely important," notes Torrance. He continues:

> [F]or it is only through this union of the human nature with his divine nature that Jesus Christ gives us not only the negative righteousness of the remission of sins but makes us share in the positive righteousness of his obedient and saving life lived in perfect filial relation to the Father from the cradle to the grave.

For Torrance, as Trook (1986:366, 377) notes, "original" sin is "justified" in the ontological union with our humanity in the incarnation; that is, "objective justification entails sanctification." Our "actual" sin is supplanted and forgiven by the righteousness of Christ, who, through the whole course of his obedient life, stood in our place, vicariously offering to the Father the perfect response of faith and obedience we are unable to offer. As noted above, Torrance follows John McLeod Campbell in regarding justification as more than the "non-imputation" of sin. For Torrance, as Trook (1986:376) simply states, Christ imputes to us his active righteousness along with the pardoning of sin (*cf.* Torrance, 1996b:155, 156). While Kettler (1986:130) notes a tendency for Torrance to "blend" justification and sanctification, Trook (1986:377) argues that justification and sanctification are "inseparable though distinct" in Torrance's thought, so that, in the final analysis, the very foundation of the Christian life is inseparable from the perfect life of Christ. If we neglect the sanctifying aspect of the union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ, argues Torrance (1960b:232), we reduce atonement to a "merely forensic non-imputation of sin." At the same time, we lose the redemptive significance of the humanity of Jesus Christ by failing to give his entire life its proper place in the doctrine of atonement. Thus, in regard to the atonement, full consideration must be given to the union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ, for it is this "saving and sanctifying union" in which we are given to share that belongs to the very substance of our faith and life in Jesus. In other words, as Torrance continues:

> [W]hat we are concerned with is the *filial relation* which the Son of God lived out in our humanity in perfect holiness and love, achieving that in himself in assuming our human nature into oneness with himself, and on that ground giving us to share in it, providing us with a fullness in his own obedient Sonship from which we all may receive.

Thus, for Torrance, both justification and sanctification are objective realities vicariously appropriated for us through the union of God and humanity realised in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

7.4.1.3 Rejection of *Ordo Salutis*

Torrance's understanding of saving faith as an essential aspect of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ has profound implications for the doctrines of justification and sanctification. Nevertheless, confusion may arise for those who are accustomed to thinking of justification and sanctification as two separate events in a "process" of salvation. In Torrance's thought, justification and sanctification are objective realities "already" realised in the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ and subjectively appropriated for us throughout the whole course of his filial obedience to the Father. Both justification and sanctification are integral aspects of the "Godward-humanward," "humanward-Godward" movement of mediation in Jesus Christ. In his union of divine and human natures, Jesus Christ is, at once, the justifying God and man justified (Torrance, 1960b:232, 233).

This objectively realised, "once and for all," aspect of justification, however, was lost in the *ordo salutis* of Protestant Scholasticism, wherein justification and sanctification were assigned different, successive stages in an ongoing "process" of salvation (*cf.* Olson, 2002:276*ff*). In the Westminster Standards of later Scots theology, notes Torrance, justification was put first, with union with Christ and sanctification following upon the "judicial act" that takes place in justification. In the New Testament, however, argues Torrance, "sanctification" and "consecration" in Christ are spoken of in the perfect tense and express the same thing. "Christ has already consecrated or sanctified himself for our sakes, so that we are already consecrated or sanctified in him—therefore sanctification or consecration is imputed to us by his free grace just like justification." These are not, however, two different processes or events. Rather, Torrance contends that "sanctification" in the Johannine literature and "consecration" in Hebrews correspond closely to the Pauline concept of "justification" (Torrance, 1960b:233, 234).

Torrance finds this teaching "deeply embedded" in Calvin's theology, although it was obscured in subsequent "Calvinism." In regard to the "subjective" aspects of justification, wherein God's righteousness and holiness is translated and appropriated into human life, Calvin, in the *Geneva Catechism*, spoke of the consecrated and sanctified flesh or life of Jesus in which we are given to share, so that even his obedience is "imputed" to us. Through the union Christ wrought with us in the

incarnation and throughout the whole course of his filial obedience to the Father, we are given to share in his holy and obedient life. Essentially the same point was made by Knox, notes Torrance, who said that justification, regeneration, and sanctification flow out of our "adoption" in Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1960b:234).

For Torrance as Cassidy (2008:166) rightly notes, all the traditional *ordo salutis* is "encapsulated objectively in Jesus Christ." Hence, as Torrance (1960b:235, 236) argues, justification and sanctification are not sequential steps in a logical, orderly process of salvation. While the two terms can be conceptually distinguished, they are inseparable in Torrance's thought, for both are objective and subjective realities fulfilled once-for-all in the incarnate constitution of Jesus Christ as lived throughout the whole course of his filial obedience to the Father as our Representative and Substitute. Thus, justification is in no wise dependent upon the believer's personal decision of faith; rather, it is an objective reality already subjectively realised on behalf of the believer by Jesus Christ.

7.4.1.4 *Sola Gratia*

In arguing that Jesus acts on our behalf in all aspects of our response to God, Torrance is in line with Barth's "soteriological objectivism," the assertion that there is no other truth about us than who we are in Jesus Christ, that we have no existence before God that is independent of Jesus (Hunsinger, 1991:167*ff*; *cf*. Barth, 1957b:167). For Torrance, like Barth and the Reformed tradition in general, salvation is "all of grace." Torrance notes, however, both liberal and evangelical theologians object to the assertion that Jesus Christ acts in our place in "all" aspects of our response to God. According to their argument, God may do everything else but he cannot act for us in regard to the personal decision of faith and repentance, which, it is argued, each person must choose for himself or herself. Thus, liberals and evangelicals eschew any doctrine of "total substitution," arguing in a logical-causal manner that "all of grace" implies "nothing of man" and, thereby, threatens human freedom. Torrance argues, however, that both liberals and evangelicals juxtapose God and humans or grace and human freedom in a "logical" way in which all of grace must necessarily mean nothing of humanity. This logical connection between divine grace and human freedom betrays the deep entrenchment of the Latin heresy (*cf*. Chapter Six) in Western theology, with its construal of the "gospel" in dualist and "abstractive" terms. Torrance notes further

that it is an "unbaptised rationalism" of this kind that frequently characterises fundamentalist theology, particularly in its apologetics and polemics (Torrance, 1986b:480).

For Torrance, justification by faith means that we reject all forms of self-justification. We look away from ourselves and exclusively toward Christ for the locus of justification. As Torrance (1960b:238) argues:

> Justification by grace alone remains the sole ground of the Christian life; we never advance beyond it, as if justification were only the beginning of a new self-righteousness, the beginning of a life of sanctification which is what we do in response to justification. Of course we are summoned to live out day by day what we already are in Christ through his self-consecration or sanctification, but sanctification is not what we do in addition to what God has done in justification.

According to Torrance, it is one of the great tragedies of Protestantism that justification by grace has often been corrupted into a form of self-justification, "which easily serves to cover up gross unrighteousness" (Torrance, 1964:153). For Torrance, sanctification is not something the believer "adds to" justification by a "new self-righteousness." Rather, both justification and sanctification are realised *in Christo*; that is, both are intrinsic to Christ's incarnate assumption of fallen Adamic life and the whole course of his filial obedience to the Father. Torrance argues, however, that there is a tendency in the *Westminster Catechisms*, evidenced by their emphasis on the Ten Commandments, to return to the old Roman notion of infused sanctification worked out through strict adherence to legal precepts. The insistence that something must be added to justification and sanctification appears in both liberal and evangelical Protestantism in the idea of "co-redemption" and its emphasis on an "existential decision" as the means whereby we "make real" for ourselves the *kerygma* of the New Testament. This effectively means, argues Torrance, that in the last resort, our salvation depends on our own personal decision. For Torrance, however, justification by faith calls into question everything we have done as believers. As a Reformed theologian, he rejects any idea of co-redemption and aligns himself with the theology of the old *Scots Confession* and its assertion that "we willingly spoil ourselves of all honour and glory of our own salvation and redemption, as we also do of our regeneration and sanctification." As Torrance rightly asserts, justification by grace alone guards the Gospel from corruption, whether by evangelicalism, liberalism, or Roman Catholicism (Torrance, 1960b:238, 239).

7.4.2 Conversion

The Gospel calls us to repent and believe, even to make a "personal decision" for Christ. That is something each of us must do for ourselves. No one can substitute in that "ultimate act of man in answer to God," no one, that is, notes Torrance, "except Jesus." If we fail to allow Jesus Christ to substitute for us at the point of conversion, argues Torrance, we make his substitutionary atonement "partial" and, thereby, empty it of saving significance (Torrance, 1992:84).

In regard to our need of conversion, Torrance likens our fallen humanity to the prodigal son, who ran away from his father into the "far country" (Lk 15:11*ff*). By making himself one with us in our fallen and estranged humanity as it was running away from the Father, Jesus Christ "reversed its direction and converted it back in obedience and faith and love to God the Father." In the incarnation, Jesus assumed our sinful humanity, and laid hold of us, even in the depths of our fallen minds where we were alienated and estranged from God, and "altered them from within and from below in radical and complete *metanoia*, a repentant restructuring of our carnal mind," converting it into a "spiritual" mind. As Torrance notes, in our fallenness, we were unable to escape from our self-will and the sin ingrained in our minds, so that we were unable to repent. Yet, Jesus Christ laid hold of our fallen minds, turning them around through his "vicarious repentance," when he bore God's righteous judgements on our sinful minds and, as the firstborn of every creature, "resurrected our human nature in the integrity of his body, mind and soul from the grave" (Torrance, 1992:84, 85). In regard to this great transformation of the human mind in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, Torrance continues:

> It is significant that the New Testament does not use the term regeneration (*paliggenesia*), as so often modern evangelical theology does, for what goes on in the human heart. It is used only of the great regeneration that took place in and through the Incarnation and of the final transformation of the world when Jesus Christ will come again to judge the quick and the dead and make all things new. That is to say, the Gospel speaks of regeneration as wholly bound up with Jesus Christ himself.

Thus, for Torrance, conversion, or the "new birth," does not apply to what happens in the heart of the individual believer but, rather, to the regeneration (*paliggenesia*) that takes place in the incarnation and the final transformation that will occur when Christ returns.

In this regard, Torrance (1992:85, 86; *cf*. Torrance, J., 1996a:75) describes a conversation he had when he was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. When asked "if" he was "born again," Torrance replied affirmatively. When asked "when" he had been born again, Torrance replied that he had been born again "when Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary and rose again from the virgin tomb, the first-born from the dead." When asked to explain, Torrance replied: "[Jesus] took my corrupt humanity in his Incarnation, sanctified, cleansed and redeemed it, giving it new birth, in his death and resurrection." That is, our "new birth," "regeneration," or "conversion" has taken place in Jesus Christ himself, so that when we speak of these terms, we are referring to "our sharing in the conversion or regeneration of our humanity brought about by Jesus in and through himself for our sake." Torrance continues:

> In a profound and proper sense, therefore, we must speak of Jesus Christ as constituting in himself the very substance of our conversion, so that we must think of him as taking our place even in our acts of repentance and personal decision, for without him all so-called repentance and conversion are empty.

Because Jesus Christ is its "substance," conversion in a "truly evangelical sense" calls for a turning away from ourselves toward Christ. As Torrance (1992:86) argues, we must be converted from our "in-turned notions" of conversion to a doctrine of conversion grounded in, and sustained by, Jesus Christ himself.

In regard to the relationship between grace and human salvation, Torrance adheres to the Reformed tradition of election, with its stress upon the priority of God's action in salvation over against that of human free will (Habets, 2008:350 n. 92). For Torrance, atoning reconciliation is a sheer act of grace on the part of God on behalf of all humanity. Because atoning reconciliation takes place in the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, Torrance is critical of those who base salvation upon a personal "decision" for Christ. He regards the Arminian assertion that the atoning reconciliation of Jesus Christ is available to sinners only "if" they repent and believe as "unevangelical," for it throws believers back upon themselves for their salvation and has the effect of telling "poor sinners" that, in the last resort, they are responsible for their salvation (Torrance, 1992:93).

In contradistinction to the evangelical insistence on connecting conversion to the individual believer's personal decision of faith, Torrance locates conversion in the incarnation, wherein Jesus Christ acts in our place, that is, vicariously, even in regard to

the personal decision of faith and repentance. As discussed above (*cf.* Chapter Six), when Jesus received the baptism of repentance from John the Baptist, it was not because the sinless Son was in need of repentance. Rather, Jesus was baptised in the Jordan River as a sign of the conversion of human nature wrought in his cleansing, sanctifying assumption of fallen Adamic nature. Thus, as Athanasius (*Contra Arianos,*1.46, 47; Torrance, 1988a:190 n 152) asserted, when Jesus Christ, as man, was "washed" in the Jordan River, we were "washed."

7.4.3 Worship and Prayer

For Torrance, the relationship between the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and the Church's worship is rooted in God's covenant relationship with ancient Israel, wherein God required the people to walk before him and be perfect, while graciously providing them, in the cultic liturgy, the appointed way of response to his divine requirement. The prophets, insisting that this vicarious response be enacted by way of obedience into the life of Israel, pointed ahead to the servant of the Lord as the chosen instrument for its actualisation. The role of the servant of the Lord in fulfilment of the covenanted way of response is exactly what occurred throughout the whole course of the obedient life of the incarnate Son (Torrance, 1971:158). Torrance continues:

> [Jesus Christ] fulfilled in Himself the Word of God tabernacling among men, the covenanted way of response to God set forth in the ancient cult, and constituted Himself our Temple, our Priest, our Offering and our Worship. It is therefore in His name only that we worship God, not in our own name, nor in our own significance but solely in the significance of Christ's eternal self-oblation to the Father.

The cultic liturgy of Israel is now embodied in Jesus Christ. Throughout the entirety of his life, through death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ fulfils the covenanted way of response by offering himself through the Spirit on our behalf, so that "he remains for ever our sole offering in deed and word with which we appear before God." Like Israel of old, we draw near to God neither empty-handed nor through worshipful "self-expression" but only with "hands of faith filled with the self-oblation of Christ," who, in his vicarious humanity, constitutes "the eloquent reality of our worship" (Torrance, 1971:158). Elsewhere (1992:87) Torrance writes:

> Jesus Christ embodied in himself in a vicarious form the response of human beings to God, so that all their worship and prayer to God henceforth became grounded and centred in him. In short, Jesus Christ in his own self-oblation to the Father *is* our worship and prayer in an acutely personalised form, so that it is only through him and with him and in him that we may draw near to God

> with the hands of our faith filled with no other offering but that which he has made on our behalf and in our place once and for all.

In regard to worship and the vicarious humanity of the incarnate Son, notes Torrance, "the whole of our worship and ministry reposes upon the substitutionary work of Christ." By standing in our place, Jesus Christ substitutes his humanity for our humanity, so that we must deny ourselves and follow Christ (*cf*. Matt 16:24), displacing our own "centrality" by letting him take our place. From first to last, Torrance argues, the ministry and worship of the Church is governed by the fact that Jesus Christ stands in our place as our substitute, so that our worship is displaced by his. Thus, when we appear before God, it is not in our own name, or by virtue of our own acts of confession, contrition, worship, and thanksgiving, but solely by virtue of what Christ has done in our place on our behalf (Torrance, 1960b:243).

Noting that it was one of the favourite themes of John McLeod Campbell (1869:51*ff*; 92, 130) that Christian worship is the presentation of "the mind of Christ" to the Father, Torrance (1976a:139, 140) describes worship as "a form of the life of Jesus Christ ascending to the Father in the life of those who are so intimately related to him through the Spirit, that when they pray to the Father through Christ, it is Christ the Incarnate Son who honours, worships and glorifies the Father in them." Thus, while our worship of the Father through the priestly mediation of the Son is still the worship of the Church on earth, it is "essentially a participation in the heavenly worship beyond where Christ ever lives in the presence of the Father, for it is worship in the one Spirit by whom we have access through Christ to the Father." Torrance's younger brother James (J. Torrance, 1996a:71) describes the human response of worship more simply: "[Worship is] the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father and his mission from the Father to the world, in a life of wonderful communion."

The relationship between the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and worship also applies to prayer, for worship and prayer are intimately connected in Torrance's thought. In the fallen Adamic humanity Jesus assumed from the Virgin Mary, notes Torrance, Jesus stands in for us, vicariously offering to the Father the perfect human response of prayer and worship we are unable to offer. The incarnate Son of God has stepped into the covenant relationship in order to bring "God and man and man and God" near to each other, even in worship and prayer. He stands in that place where we

cry out to God and "makes himself our prayer," not a prayer in word and act only, "but a prayer which he is in his own personal Being" (Torrance, 1992:87). Torrance continues:

> Just as in Jesus Christ God addresses his word to us in such a way that he himself is wrapped up in his word in the form of personal being, so in Jesus Christ God has provided us with prayer that is identical with the personal self-offering and self-oblation of Jesus Christ to the Father on our behalf. It is as such that Jesus Christ stands in our place where we pray to the Father, so that from deep within our humanity, where he has united himself to us, and from out of it, assimilated to his own self-consecration to God, he prays: "Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name."

When we pray, therefore, we rely solely on Christ's prayer to the Father offered on our behalf. To turn away from our own prayer in order to rest in Jesus' vicarious prayer for us, Torrance argues, is what it means to pray "in Christ's name" (Torrance, 1976a:141). Because we are unable to pray as we ought, Jesus "puts his prayer ... into our unclean mouth," so that we may pray in, with, and through him to the Father and be received by the Father in him. Citing an old hymn, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling," Torrance notes that we do not come to the Father in our own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ, taking refuge solely in his atoning sacrifice (Torrance, 1992:88). He continues:

> In worship and prayer Jesus Christ acts in our place and on our behalf in both a representative and substitutionary way so that what he does in our stead is nevertheless effected as our very own, issuing freely and spontaneously out of ourselves. Through his incarnational and atoning union Jesus Christ has united himself with us in such a reconciling and sanctifying way that he interpenetrates and gathers up all our faltering, unclean worship and prayer into himself, assimilates them to his one self-oblation to God, so that when he presents himself as the worship and prayer of all creation, our worship and prayer are presented there also.

Torrance (1992:88, 89) sums up the vicarious nature of Jesus' prayer with poignant reference to his own private devotion:

> At the end of the day when I kneel down and say my evening prayer, I know that no prayer of my own that I can offer to the heavenly Father is worthy of him or of power to avail with him, but all my prayer is made in the name of Jesus Christ alone as I rest in his vicarious prayer. It is then with utter peace and joy that I take into my mouth the Lord's Prayer which I am invited to pray through Jesus Christ, with him and in him, to God the Father, for in that prayer my poor, faltering, sinful prayer is not allowed to fall to the ground but is gathered up and presented to the Father in holy and eternally prevailing form.

Noting that the Father has promised to send the "Spirit of the Son," mediated to us through the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, Torrance is assured that when he cries, "Abba, Father," he is, despite his own infirmities, caught up in the "inarticulate

intercession" of the eternal Spirit of the Father and the Son, from whose love nothing in heaven and earth can separate him (Torrance, 1992:89).

In regard to worship and prayer, Torrance clearly sets forth the Pauline principle, "I, yet not I but Christ." Because we are inseparably united with Jesus Christ in his incarnational assumption of our humanity, we are gathered up in him, so that we may pray and worship as we could not do otherwise. When the Father accepts us in Jesus Christ his beloved Son, there is no distinction between Jesus' prayer and our prayers, for they are "one and the same," "wholly his and wholly ours." As Torrance argues, we can adapt Galatians 2:20 to our prayers and worship and rightly say, "We pray, and yet it is not we who pray but Christ who prays for us and in us; and the prayers which we now offer in the flesh, we offer by the faithfulness of the one who loved us and offered himself for us." In all our prayer and worship, whether formal or informal, we come before God in such a way that Jesus Christ takes our place, replacing our offering with his own, "for he *is* the vicarious worship and prayer with which we respond to the love of the Father" (Torrance, 1992:88; Torrance, J., 1996a:89).

Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ has profound implications for the Church's worship, for our doctrine of God determines our understanding of worship and prayer (Torrance, J., 1996a:71, 72). Throughout his life and work, Torrance sought to recover a Christ-centred, trinitarian worship for the Church, one that is evangelical, orthodox, and catholic (Newell, 2008:49). Torrance argues that over the course of time an over-reaction to adoptionism and Arianism caused the Church to focus on the "perfect deity" of Christ, with a consequent emphasis on his divine priesthood. As the Church in both the East and the West lost sight of the saving significance of Jesus' humanity and his human priesthood, a "liturgical Apollinarianism" arose, as evidenced in the hymnody that praises the exalted Christ, rather than the human Suffering Servant who assumed our poverty. As the humanity of the incarnate Son was obscured by the emphasis on his divine nature, Torrance argues, not only did the veneration of the human saints arise, but a powerful "substitute priesthood" began to mediate between God and humanity in the place of Jesus Christ. Torrance rightly calls the Church to recover an emphasis on the incarnation as God coming "as man," as a "human" priest who vicariously does for us what we are unable to do for ourselves (Torrance, 1976a:185*ff*; *cf.* Newell, 2008:49*ff*).

Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and his substitutionary and representative role in both worship and ministry brings a much-needed critique to all forms of sacerdotalism, whether Roman Catholic or even Protestant. Against Roman sacerdotalism, Torrance rightly asserts only Jesus Christ is Priest; only Jesus represents humanity; only Jesus presents our prayers before God; only Jesus brings an offering with which the Father is well-pleased. To be sure, no one stands between God and humanity but Jesus Christ, who, in his incarnate constitution of divine and human natures, is the only Mediator. Against what he calls "Protestant sacerdotalism," Torrance adds a timely critique of the personality-cult of much contemporary evangelicalism. He accurately notes that in much modern Protestantism, the whole worship and life of the Church revolve around the personality of the minister. He or she is the one who stands at the centre of worship, offering the prayers of the congregation, and mediating between the people and God by conducting worship entirely on his or her own. Consequently, the humanity of Jesus Christ is displaced by the humanity of the charismatic leader, who obscures the person of Christ by his or her own personality. Against all forms of sacerdotalism, including any ministry that displaces Jesus Christ as its centre, Torrance cogently argues that Jesus Christ must be given his rightful place as "the Head and Lord of the Church, as its sole Prophet and Priest and King" by "being set right in the centre" of the worship, ministry, and life of the congregation "as the Body of *Christ alone*" (Torrance, 1960b:244-246; *cf*. 1976a:206).

7.4.4 Sacraments

As a Protestant theologian, Torrance acknowledges "two basic sacraments" of the Gospel: baptism and the Eucharist. While baptism and the Eucharist are acts of human response to the proclamation of the Gospel, Torrance contends that they are "above all divinely provided, dominically appointed ways of response and obedience of a radically vicarious kind." Just as ancient Israel was not allowed to come before God with offerings and sacrifices of their own choosing, but rather was commanded to approach him in the divinely provided cultic liturgy centred around circumcision and Passover, notes Torrance, so also in the new covenant appropriate forms of human response are "vicariously provided in Jesus Christ" and are represented by baptism and the Eucharist. The sacraments "replace the rites of circumcision and Passover in accordance with the fundamental change in the covenant relation between God and his

people brought about through the Incarnation and Atonement" (Torrance, 1992:89-91). Torrance continues:

> As such they are sacraments of the vicarious human response to God effected by Jesus Christ in his representative and substitutionary capacity in our place and on our behalf. They are sacraments of the finished work of Christ to which we can add nothing, sacraments which have as their substance and content none other than Jesus Christ clothed with his Gospel of atoning mediation and reconciliation, and thus sacraments which in their unique way represent the indivisible oneness of Christ's Word and Act and Person as Mediator between God and man.

For Torrance, the sacraments must be understood as "having to do with the whole historical Jesus Christ from his birth to his resurrection and ascension, for their content, reality and power are constituted ... by the act of God fulfilled in the humanity of Christ." Thus, "the primary *mysterium* or *sacramentum* is Jesus Christ himself" (Torrance, 1976a:82). Baptism and the Eucharist direct us away from ourselves toward Jesus Christ. While they are liturgical responses we are commanded to make, Torrance argues, they add nothing to the finished work of Jesus Christ, for they are not sacraments of what we do but of what Christ has done in our place and on our behalf. They are "instruments of the Holy Spirit's operation" by which we are "exercised," as John Knox put it, in our union with Christ. In baptism we are ingrafted into Christ and in the Eucharist we are continually nourished through our union with Christ. "Both sacraments tell us that we live not out of ourselves, but that we find our life and righteousness outside of ourselves, in Christ alone, through union and communion with him." "As such," argues Torrance, "they are liturgical acts of prayer in the form of divinely provided ordinances of response, sealing to us within the new covenant our sharing in the vicarious obedience of Christ" (Torrance, 1992:90; 1996b:152).

7.4.4.1 Baptism

In order to explicate his understanding of the relationship between baptism and the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, Torrance (1976a:83, 84; 1988a:292) carefully distinguishes between the Greek words, *baptisma* and *baptismos*. In speaking of Christian baptism, notes Torrance, the New Testament uses the unusual word *baptisma*, not the more common *baptismos*. While the latter is regularly used in Greek to refer to a "repeatable" rite of ceremonial cleansing, the former refers not to the rite itself but to the "reality signified" by the rite, that is, the unique saving event in Christ on which the rite rests. This appears to be the reason, notes Torrance, that New Testament writers do

not describe the rite of baptism, for they are concerned with the objective reality behind the ritual more than the rite itself. In this respect, *baptisma* is like *kerygma*, which refers not to the "proclamation" of the Gospel as such, but to the "reality" proclaimed, for it is not the proclamation itself that saves, but the one who is proclaimed, that is, Jesus Christ. Like *kerygma*, notes Torrance, the word *baptisma* in the New Testament directs us beyond the rite of baptism to its "objective ground and reality, Christ clothed with the saving truth of his vicarious life, death and resurrection." In regard to both *kerygma* and *baptisma*, the primary reference of both words is the mystery of Christ, "God manifest in the flesh," while the secondary reference is to the Church's activity in preaching and baptising. Thus, *baptisma* does not refer merely to the baptising of an individual, but rather to "the baptism with which Jesus Christ himself was baptised for our sakes in the whole course of his redemptive life from his birth to his resurrection, the one baptism which he continues by his Spirit to apply to us in our baptism into him, thereby making himself both its material content and its active agent." Torrance (1976a:84) continues:

> All this helps to make it clear that while baptism is both the act of Christ and the act of the Church in his Name, it is to be understood finally not in terms of what the Church does but in terms of what God in Christ has done, does do and will do for us in his Spirit. Its meaning does not lie in the rite itself and its performance, nor in the attitude of the baptised and his obedience of faith—even the secondary reference of baptism, by its nature as a passive act, in which we receive baptism and do not administer it to ourselves, directs us to find its meaning in the living Christ who cannot be separated from his finished work and who makes himself present to us in the power of his own Reality.

For Torrance, baptism is "the sacrament of our incorporation into Christ on the ground of his finished work" (Torrance, 1992:90); thus, it is not a sacrament of what the Church does but of what "God has done for us in Jesus Christ, in whom he has bound himself to us and bound us to himself, before ever we could respond to him" (Torrance, 1976a:103). As Torrance (1992:90, 91) argues, we are baptised "out of ourselves" and into Christ, who has taken our place. Baptism expresses the "character of faith in which our faith is implicated in the faith and faithfulness of Christ." He continues:

> Thus Baptism tells us that in our believing we do not rely upon our own faith but upon the vicarious faith of Christ which in sheer grace anticipates, generates, sustains and embraces the faith granted to those who are baptised. [As St. Paul teaches] it is by grace that we are saved through faith, and that is not our own doing for it is God's gift. Quite consistently we do not baptise ourselves but are baptised, for Baptism proclaims to us that we are saved by the unconditional grace of Christ alone ... who has cleansed us and set the seal (*sphragis*) of his ownership upon us. As such Baptism constitutes the divinely provided witness (*martyria*) that we are no longer our own but belong to Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Lord. It is in that belonging that faith takes its source and out of it that it continues to grow.

According to Torrance (1976a:86, 87), the whole course of Jesus' obedient life, from his birth of the Virgin Mary though his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension was a "baptism," not for his sake but for our sakes, for he received the "baptism" meant for sinners. Torrance continues:

> In our human nature he received the divine judgement upon sin; in our human nature he made atonement, and in our human nature he rose again from the dead. When he was born, died and rose again, it was our human nature which was born, died, and rose again in him. For Jesus ... became one with us, taking upon himself our unrighteousness, that his righteousness might become ours.

Hence, for Torrance, the baptism of individual persons is to be understood as their "initiation" into the one vicarious *baptisma* of Jesus Christ, whereby we are given to share in his righteousness and are sanctified in him as members of the one Body of Christ (Torrance, 1976a:87). Torrance continues:

> Through his birth they have a new birth and are made members of the new humanity. Through his obedient life and death as the incarnate Son their sins are forgiven and they are clothed with a new righteousness. Through his resurrection and triumph over the powers of darkness they are freed from the dominion of evil. Through his ascension to the Father the Kingdom of Heaven is opened for them, and they wait for his coming again to fulfil in them the new creation. Through sharing in his Spirit they are made members of his Body and are initiated into the communion of the Holy Trinity.

As an ordinance, then, baptism sets forth not what the Church or the individual believer does but what God has already done in Christ and continues to do through his Spirit. Thus, notes Torrance, it is appropriate that we "are baptised." Our part is only to receive passively what Christ has done for us, for we can add nothing to his finished work. By his Spirit, Christ acts upon us in terms of his "atoning and sanctifying incorporation of himself into our humanity" in such a way that it effects our "ingrafting" into Christ and our "adoption" into the family of God. Our understanding of the ordinance of baptism, therefore, cannot be separated from what Christ has done in his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. According to Torrance, "It is precisely that union or inseparable relation which is the very meaning of the sacrament in which we are baptised into Christ's baptism, and why the sacrament is spoken of [in the New Testament], not as *baptismos*, but as *baptisma*." The rite of baptism, therefore, does not constitute a "new" or "separate" baptism, but a "participation in the one all-inclusive baptism common to Christ and his Church, wrought out vicariously in Christ alone but into which he has assimilated the Church through the baptism of the one Spirit, and which he applies to each of us through the same Spirit. Hence, it is *baptisma* in the Name of the Triune God" (Torrance, 1976a:87, 88).

For Torrance (1988a:294), this is surely how St. Paul's teaching on baptism (*cf*. Rom 6) is to be understood, wherein "the implied rite was, so to speak, stereoscopically related to the reality discerned through it." Noting that Paul was accustomed to speaking of our dying and rising in Christ in the aorist tense (*e.g*., Eph 2:1-6), Torrance contends that it was not the "rite" of baptism to which Paul referred, but to what had "once and for all" taken place in Jesus Christ on our behalf, and in which we are implicated. Torrance continues:

> [A]t the Jordan it was our humanity which was baptised in him, so that it was our humanity that was crucified and resurrected in him. When he died for us and was buried, we died and were buried with him, and when he rose again from the grave, we were raised up with him—that is the truth sealed upon us in "one baptism."

In emphasising the objective, once-for-all aspect of baptism (*baptisma*), that is, the unrepeatable reality signified by the rite, Torrance follows Athanasius (*Contra Arianos,* 1.46, 47), who argued that the Spirit's descent upon Jesus at the Jordan River was not for his own sanctification, but was a descent upon us for our sanctification. When Jesus Christ, as man, was washed in the Jordan, it was we who were washed, and when he received the Spirit, it was we who received the Spirit. Commenting on this passage, Torrance (1988a:292) writes:

> For Athanasius, the decisive point ... was that in his baptism in the Jordan the incarnate Son of God received the Spirit upon the humanity he had taken from us, not for his own sake, but for our sake. That is to say, it was our humanity that was baptised, anointed, sanctified, and sealed in him. Thus when he was baptised for us we were baptised in him. Our baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, therefore, is to be understood as a partaking through the Spirit in the one unrepeatable baptism of Christ which he underwent, not just in the Jordan river, but throughout his life and in his death resurrection [sic], on our behalf.

According to Torrance (1988a:293, 294), Jesus' vicarious baptism on our behalf is the "objective truth" to which the "one baptism" of the creed refers (*cf*. Eph. 4:4-6). Jesus Christ underwent "one baptism" vicariously as Redeemer. By uniting us to himself by the Holy Spirit, he makes us participate "receptively" in his one baptism as those whom he has redeemed. Torrance continues:

> The central truth of baptism, therefore, is lodged in Jesus Christ himself and all that he has done for us within the humanity he took from us and made his own, sharing to the full what we are so that we may share to the full what he is. *Baptism is the sacrament of that reconciling and atoning exchange in the incarnate Saviour.*

Note here Torrance's connection between the sacrament of baptism and the "wonderful exchange" (*cf*. Chapter Six) embodied in the incarnate constitution of Jesus Christ.

When we receive baptism within the Church, we are granted by the grace of God participation in the "one all-inclusive incarnational *baptisma* of Jesus Christ" and are made to become members of his Body and children of our heavenly Father. This takes effect through the Spirit bestowed upon us according to the promise of Jesus Christ, yet its "taking effect" is not a different and subsequent event (Torrance, 1976a:89). Torrance explains:

> Our adoption, sanctification and redemption have already taken place in Christ, and are fully enclosed in his birth, holy life, death and resurrection undertaken for our sakes, and proceed from them more by way of realisation or actualisation in us of what has already happened to us in him than as new effect resulting from them: we have been adopted through his incarnational assumption of us into himself, sanctified through the obedient self-offering of Christ in his life and death, and we have been born again in his birth of the Spirit and in his resurrection from the dead.

Commenting on this passage, Hunsinger (2001:144, 145) observes that "the perfect tense determines the present tense." In the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, the "definitive" sanctification of our humanity has taken place. In the incarnate assumption of fallen Adamic flesh, as lived out through the whole course of his obedience, "our human nature has been judged, purified, and renewed." Therefore, as Torrance notes above, salvation comes to us more by the "realisation" or "actualisation" in us of what has already been accomplished in Christ than by a "new effect" in us as a consequence of our own salvific experience. Here, the implications of Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ are clearly articulated: 1) humanity is "adopted" into the family of God through the incarnational assumption of Adamic flesh; 2) we are "sanctified" by the whole course of Christ's obedient life, and 3) we are born again, both in Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and in his new birth in the resurrection from the dead. Hunsinger (2001:144) sums this up simply: "Vicarious humanity means that everything Christ has done and suffered in his humanity was done and suffered in our place and for our benefit."As Torrance (1976a:89) argues, "As Jesus Christ is, so are we in this world, for what happened to Him as Head of the Body happens to us also who are members of the Body." This is why baptism (*baptisma*) must be understood in terms of its "dimension of depth," as it relates to the objective reality that underlies it, that is, to the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, "for it belongs to the peculiar nature of baptism that in it we partake of a redemption that has already been accomplished for us in Christ." As Torrance argues, in baptism, the "end" is already given to us in the "beginning." In the sacrament of baptism, we look away from ourselves, seeing beyond

the Church's activity in the administration of the rite, toward the crucified and risen Christ, who, in his vicarious humanity assumed for us, is the "content, reality and power" of baptism.

Thus, as Torrance (1988a:294) notes, when we think of baptism (*baptisma*) objectively, that is, in relation to the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, we are directed away from ourselves to what took place "in Christ in God." But if we think of baptism (*baptismos*) subjectively, then we can only give it meaning in terms of our own subjective experience, or in terms of its "efficacy" as a rite. Torrance (1976a:88-99) details how, partly in consequence of the Augustinian dualism between the intelligible and the sensible worlds, *baptisma* was gradually detached from its objective reality in Jesus Christ and reduced to *baptismos*, wherein the rite itself ascended in importance as a means of grace to "bridge" the gap between the divine and the material. Among the problems that arose from this view was the issue of rebaptism for those who had committed serious sins after their initial baptism.

Finally, Torrance (1988a:297- 299) notes that, in baptism, "we partake of the whole substance of the Gospel." In the Nicene Creed, baptism is closely connected to "the remission of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come," for these are "the saving benefits that flow from union with Christ through one baptism and one Spirit, and are enjoyed in one Body." As Torrance argues, to be united to Christ through baptism "necessarily" carries with it a sharing with him in the resurrection and the life of the world to come. In the incarnation, Jesus Christ takes upon himself our physical existence enslaved to sin and makes our corruption, death, and judgement his own, so that by offering himself as substitute for us, he might destroy the power of corruption and death to which we are enslaved. Through the bodily resurrection of the human nature he assumed in the incarnation, notes Torrance, "Christ has set us upon an altogether different basis in relation to God in which there is no longer any place for corruption and death." The "central focus" of Christian belief, therefore, is upon Jesus Christ, who, in his resurrection from the dead, has conquered death and brought with him immortality, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection of the dead "into which we are once for all baptised by the Holy Spirit."

In this regard, notes Torrance (1976a:94; *cf.* Hunsinger, 2001:145), Irenaeus described baptism as the "sacrament of the incarnational reversal of the estate we have lost in

Adam and of our participation in the new humanity of Jesus Christ." Just as Adam's disobedience was reversed by Christ's obedience, so also our lost, fallen condition is reversed through our participation in Christ's new humanity, first objectively (*extra nos*), then subjectively (*in nobis*). For Torrance, therefore, the reality of baptism is to be found in the objective reality of what Christ has already done for us in the whole course of his filial obedience to the Father. This reality is "savingly operative" in us through union and communion with Christ effected by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, for Torrance, the central focus of our faith is far from being a promise for the future only; rather, it is an "evangelical declaration" of what has already taken place in Christ and continues in him as a "permanent triumphant reality" throughout the course of time until its consummation in his return, when he will come in glory to judge the living and the dead. In the ongoing life of the Church, notes Torrance, we live "in the midst of the advent-presence of Christ, already partake of the great regeneration (*palliggenesia*) of the future, and share in its blessings with one another." All that is said in the creedal assertion of "one baptism for the remission of sins" is "proleptically conditioned" by the future, Torrance argues, so that we might look beyond our present participation in the death of Christ through his vicarious humanity to our own participation in the resurrection from the dead at the return of our Lord and Saviour (Torrance, 1988a:299, 300).

7.4.4.2 Eucharist

The second of the two basic sacraments of the Gospel is the Eucharist. While baptism reflects our "once-for-all union" with Christ, the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper, reflects our "continuous participation" in Christ (Torrance, 1992:91).

To rightly understand the meaning of the "Eucharistic sacrifice," argues Torrance (1976a:117, 118; 1992:91, 92), we must take into account the two-fold movement of God in Jesus Christ. First is the Godward-humanward movement, wherein the divine Son assumes our human flesh in the incarnation "in order to identify himself with us to the uttermost," penetrating into the depths of our disobedient Adamic flesh in order to pour out the love of God upon us, take away our corruption, sin, and guilt and to endow us with his holiness. Yet, the divine Son did not come simply "in" a man, as in adoptionist christologies; he came "as" a man, consecrating himself for us and offering

to the Father the perfect life of filial obedience we have failed to offer. This is the second aspect of the two-fold movement of atoning reconciliation, that is, the humanward-Godward movement, wherein Jesus offers to the Father "a holiness from the side of man answering to his own." For Torrance, it is this humanward-Godward movement that is prominent in the Eucharist, whereby we "participate" through the Spirit in the self-consecration and self-offering of Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is the sacrament of our union with Christ in his act of self-consecration, so that we might be consecrated in him, as he offers himself in holy obedience and atoning reconciliation to God on our behalf, then lifts us up and presents us to the Father in his resurrection and ascension. As such, notes Torrance, the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, is the sacrament "in which we offer Christ eucharistically to the Father through prayers and thanksgivings in Christ's name as our only true worship, but in which the memorial of Christ which we lift up before God is taken by Christ and sanctifyingly assimilated into his own self-offering to the Father through the eternal Spirit." In regard to our "participation" in the ongoing self-offering of the Risen Son to the Father, Torrance (1976a:118) continues:

> That is what we do in *anamnesis* [remembrance] of him at the celebration of the Supper where Christ through the Spirit is really present in body, mind and will, taking up the Eucharistic memorial we make of him as the concrete form and expression of his own self-giving and self-offering, assimilating us in mind and will to himself and lifting us up in the closest union with himself in the identity of himself as Offerer and Offering to the presence of the Father.

Torrance (1976a:119) describes our partaking of the bread and wine not merely as something we do to "remember" Christ, but as a "communion" (*koinonia*) in the body and blood of Christ and his eucharistic offering to the Father. Like baptism, the *anamnesis* of the Eucharist is to be understood in the same "dimension of objective depth," wherein the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and his self-offering to the Father is the objective reality underlying the rite. In the Eucharist, notes Torrance, "Jesus Christ constitutes himself in his paschal mystery as its objective reality, conferring his real presence upon it, so that the *anamnesis* of the Redeemer in the celebration of the Eucharist becomes the effective form of participation which he grants to us in his self-offering through the eternal Spirit to God the Father."

As Hunsinger (2001:152, 153) correctly notes, Torrance's notion of "participation" is the key to the two-fold, God to humanity and humanity to God, movement of atoning mediation, particularly in its latter aspect. Heaven participates in earth that earth might participate in heaven, yet not in a "synergistic" way, whereby our participation

contributes something to our salvation. It is the action of the Holy Spirit, not the Church, which brings us into communion with Christ. To be sure, the Eucharist, like baptism, is both the act of Christ and the act of the Church, but as Torrance (1976a:107) argues, it is the nature of the case that the act of the Church serves the act of Christ and directs us away from itself toward Christ. As Torrance argues, "The Eucharist is what it is not because of what it is in itself as an act of the Church but because of what it is in its grounding beyond in what God in Christ has done, does do, and will do for us in his Spirit."

As in the case of baptism, serious problems have arisen in the history of the Church when the Eucharist is detached from its objective ground in Jesus Christ. According to Torrance, when considered apart from the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, the Eucharist becomes a sacramental rite, the performance of which is interpreted to imply a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ or, at least, to have only a moral meaning as evoked by its symbolism. When grounded objectively in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, however, the Eucharist points away from itself to its "constitutive reality" in Jesus and to "the saving mystery which he is in the unity of his person and work and word as the one Mediator between God and man." At the Holy Table, notes Torrance, our attention must be focused beyond the rite itself to the "inner relations" of the incarnate Son of God, who took our mortal humanity, making it his own in order to heal, sanctify, and renew it in himself, then lift it up in his ascension to communion with the Father (Torrance, 1976a:107-109). Torrance (1976a:109) continues:

> Here we have to do both with the kenotic abasement of the Son of God to be one with man, and therefore with the participation and even passion of God in our actual human, historical and creaturely existence, and with the saving and sanctifying assumption of our human nature into the eternal life and love of God, and therefore with its participation and passion in the divine nature.

As with atoning reconciliation, or incarnational redemption, Torrance contends that the Eucharist is not to be understood in terms of "external causal relations" between Christ and the Eucharist or between the Eucharist and ourselves. Rather, the Eucharist is to be understood in terms of "our participation through the Spirit in what the whole Christ, the incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended Son, is in himself in respect both of his activity from the Father towards mankind and of his activity from mankind towards the Father." For Torrance, it is Jesus Christ himself who constitutes the "living content, reality and power of the Eucharist" and who gives meaning and efficacy to its celebration by being savingly present in his mediatorial agency, blessing what the

Church does in remembrance of him and accepting it as his own act done in heaven (Torrance, 1976a:109). Continuing, Torrance argues:

> In so far as the Eucharist is the act of the Church in his name and is also a human rite, it must be understood as an act of prayer, thanksgiving and worship, i.e., as essentially *eucharistic* in nature, but as act in which through the Spirit we are given to share in the vicarious life, faith, prayer, worship, thanksgiving and self-offering of Jesus Christ to the Father, for in the final resort it is Jesus Christ himself who is our true worship.

Even as an act of the Church, the Eucharist is not to be detached from the vicarious, ongoing mediation of Jesus Christ, so as to be regarded as an "independent" act on our part in response to what God has already done for us in Christ. Rather, argues Torrance, the Eucharist is an act toward God "already fulfilled in the humanity of Christ in our place and on our behalf, to which our acts in his name are assimilated and identified through the Spirit." The Eucharist is a "form of the life of Jesus Christ ascending to the Father" in the life of those so intimately united to Christ through the Spirit that when they pray, it is Christ himself who "honours, adores and glorifies the Father" in them. While the Eucharist is an act of human beings, notes Torrance, it is a participation in the same Spirit through whom Christ fulfilled his life of filial obedience within our humanity. Thus, participation in the Eucharist is "essentially a participation in the worship of the heavenly sanctuary which Jesus Christ their ascended High Priest renders to the Father" (Torrance, 1976a:109, 110).

For Torrance, the celebration of the Eucharist means that, by communion in his body and blood, we are so intimately united to Christ through the Spirit that we participate in his self-offering and self-consecration to the Father made in our place and on our behalf. We appear before God in worship and praise with no other worship and sacrifice than that which is "identical" with Jesus Christ, our Mediator and High Priest (Torrance, 1992:91, 92). Torrance continues:

> We come to the Holy Table to worship God, not protesting our own faith or conversion or godliness, but proclaiming the death of Christ who through his atoning exchange has replaced our poverty with his boundless grace. And so we put out empty hands and bread and wine are put into them which we eat and drink in communion with his body and blood, for we have no other offering with which to draw near to God but that one offering which is identical with Jesus Christ himself, through whom, with whom and in whom we glorify the Father.

Note here the all-important "middle term" in the covenant relationship between God and humanity. As Torrance notes, we bring nothing to the Holy Table, for we have nothing to offer other than what God has provided in his incarnate Son. In this regard,

Torrance (*et al*, 1999:27, 28) finds it easiest to teach and preach the doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and his substitutionary role in faith in the context of the Eucharist. Following the call to repentance and faith, we stretch out empty hands to receive the bread and wine. At the Holy Table, we realise we cannot rely on our own faith but only on the vicarious faith of Jesus Christ. Torrance continues:

> Faith, as John Calvin taught, is an empty vessel, so that when you approach the Table of the Lord, it is not upon your faith that you rely, but upon Christ and his Cross alone. That is what the Covenant in his body and blood which the Saviour has forged for us actually, practically and really means. It is of the very essence of the Gospel that salvation and justification are by the grace of Christ alone, in which he takes your place, that you may have his place.

Torrance traces the reluctance of many believers to approach the Holy Table to the "subtle Pelagianism" that marks much contemporary preaching and teaching, with its tendency to throw believers back upon their own faith, so that, in the final analysis, the responsibility for their salvation rests upon their shoulders rather than upon Christ. As Torrance argues, believers are pushed away from the Church on Communion Sundays when they fail to understand the absolutely free and unconditional nature of the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. To be sure, Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (Mk 2:17). "Through the miracle of the Cross," notes Torrance, "he turns our sins and failings into the very means he uses in order to save us and bind us to himself. That is precisely what he pledges to us in the Communion of his Body and Blood" (Torrance, *et al*, 1999:28).

In regard to differing views of the degree of Christ's presence in the bread and wine (*cf.* McGrath, 2001:522-528), Torrance espouses the doctrine of "real presence." In describing how Christ is present in the Eucharist, Torrance (1971:119, 120) writes:

> [I]t is nevertheless the real presence (*parousia*) of the whole Christ, not just the presence of his body and blood, nor just the presence of his Spirit or Mind, but the presence of the actual Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, ascended, glorified, in his whole, living and active reality and in his identity as Gift and Giver.

In keeping with Reformation theology, Torrance (1976a:119, 120; *cf.* 126, 127) contends that "how" Jesus is present in the Eucharist is explicable only from the side of God, "in terms of his creative activity which by its very nature transcends any kind of explanation which we can offer." Jesus is really present "through the Spirit," not merely as a spiritual reality, notes Torrance, "but present through the same kind of inexplicable creative activity whereby he was born of the Virgin Mary and rose again from the grave." Torrance continues:

> He is present in the unique reality of his incarnate Person, in whom Word and Work and Person are indissolubly one, personally present therefore in such a way that he creatively effects what he declares, and what he promises actually takes place: "This is my body broken for you," "This is my blood shed for many for the remission of sins." The real presence is the presence of the Saviour in his personal being and atoning self-sacrifice, who once and for all gave himself up on the Cross for our sakes but who is risen from the dead as the Lamb who has been slain but is alive for ever more, and now appears for us in the presence of the Father as himself prevalent eternally propitiation [sic].

For Torrance, therefore, the Risen Jesus is "personally" present in the Eucharist, making his mediatory activity through the bread and wine "real" and actual for us, not merely symbolic or commemorative, in a mysterious and miraculous way known only from the side of heaven.

In summary, the "key" to understanding Torrance's view of the Eucharist is found in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and the priesthood of the incarnate Son, as he represents God to us and us to God. In becoming one with us in the incarnation, he receives the things of God on behalf of humanity; having received what is ours through union with us, he, in turn, offers them to God as Mediator, thereby enabling us to draw near to God in worship. By eating his flesh and drinking his blood in the Eucharist, we are given participation in his vicarious self-offering to the Father. Jesus Christ unites us and our worship with his own self-consecration and offers us up to the Father "in the identity of himself as Offerer and Offering." In other words, we worship the Father through the priesthood of the Son in such a way that "it is Christ himself who is the real content of our worship." Thus, even in the Eucharist, the Pauline axiom, "I, yet not I but Christ" (Gal 2:20), applies, "for what God accepts as our true worship is Christ himself" (Torrance, 1976a:110, 111).

7.4.5 Evangelism

For Torrance (1992:92, 93), Jesus Christ must take centre stage when the Gospel is proclaimed. Noting Jesus' teaching that we must deny ourselves to follow him, and that we must lose our own lives for his sake (Mt 16:24, 25), Torrance writes:

> Face to face with Christ all would-be followers find themselves called into radical question, together with their preconceptions, self-centred desires and self-will, for to have him as Lord and Saviour means that he takes their place in order to give them his place.

Giving centre place to Jesus Christ is made difficult, however, by the "unevangelical" way in which the Gospel is often preached, for the call to repentance and faith seems to

turn its hearers back upon their own faith and obedience rather than that of Jesus Christ. Torrance (1992:93) continues:

> There is, then, an evangelical way to preach the Gospel and an unevangelical way to preach it. The Gospel is preached in an unevangelical way, as happens so often in modern evangelism, when the preacher announces: This is what Jesus Christ has done for you, but you will not be saved *unless* you make your own personal decision for Christ as your Saviour. Or: Jesus Christ loved you and gave his life for you on the Cross, but you will be saved only *if* you give your heart to him.

Torrance describes this "unless," "if" form of evangelism as a doctrine of "conditional" grace which "belies the essential nature and content of the Gospel as it is in Jesus" by telling "poor sinners" that the final responsibility for their salvation is transferred from the shoulders of the Lamb of God to their own shoulders. This conditional or legalist proclamation may lead sinners to doubt their salvation, notes Torrance, for if the chain that binds them to God in Jesus Christ has for even one of its links their own weak faith, then the integrity of the entire chain is in question. Because they are aware that the very self that is being called upon to make a decision for Christ is in need of salvation, the Gospel is not really "good news" for them unless it is announced that Jesus Christ, in his unconditional love, has put the human self on an entirely different basis by replacing it with his own vicarious faith and obedience (Torrance, 1992:93). As Gill (2007:42) argues, Torrance exhorts the Church to proclaim, not conditional grace, but the unconditional grace of God in Jesus Christ, so that sinners may put their trust in Christ, not only as their Redeemer, but also as the one who offers for them the perfect response to God. For Torrance, as Gill rightly notes, we appropriate the unconditional grace of God by trusting in Christ's response on our behalf rather than trusting in our own response (*cf.* Torrance, 1992:98; Gal 2:20: "not I but Christ").

For Torrance (1992:94), the Gospel can only be preached in a genuinely evangelical way "when full and central place is given to the vicarious humanity of Jesus as the all-sufficient human response to the saving love of God which he has freely and unconditionally provided for us." According to Torrance, the Gospel is preached evangelically as follows:

> God loves you so utterly and completely that he has given himself for you in Jesus Christ his beloved Son, and has thereby pledged his very Being as God for your salvation. 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 upon it without undoing the Incarnation and the Cross and thereby denying himself. Jesus Christ died for you precisely because you are sinful and utterly unworthy of him, and has thereby already made you his own before and apart from your ever believing in him. 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.

Torrance (1992:94) goes on to assure us that Jesus Christ, "as man," has acted in our place, even in our personal response to the love of God and our acts of faith. He continues:

> He has believed for you, fulfilled your human response to God, even made your personal decision for you, so that he acknowledges you before God as one who has already responded to God in him, who has already believed in God through him, and whose personal decision is already implicated in Christ's self-offering to the Father, in all of which he has been fully and completely accepted by the Father, so that in Jesus Christ you are already accepted by him. Therefore, renounce yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

To preach the Gospel in this way, notes Torrance (1992:94, 95), is "to set before the people the astonishingly good news of what God has freely provided for us in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ." The evangelical proclamation frees us from doubts about the adequacy of our own faith, for it is not our faith, belief, and commitment that we rely on, but rather upon what Jesus Christ has done for us, in our place and on our behalf. Thus, we are liberated from all "ulterior motives" in following Christ on the ground of his vicarious response for us, so that we are "free for spontaneous joyful response and worship and service" in a way that we could not otherwise be.

7.5 Logic of Grace

As Torrance (1992:xii) notes, some may feel that his stress on the unconditional grace of God, particularly in regard to the vicarious word and act of Jesus Christ in our place and on our behalf, undermines the integrity of the personal response of faith and repentance we are called to make in acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Gill (2007:41), for example, argues that Torrance, like Barth, wrestles with the problem of proclaiming the Gospel of absolute grace, while insisting upon the necessity of a human response to grace. According to Gill, Torrance struggles against the "universalistic implications of the epistemology of grace." Yet, as Torrance (1992:xii) argues:

> Part of the problem here is that unconditional grace is too costly, for it calls into question all that we are and do, so that even in our repenting and believing we cannot rely upon our own response but only upon the response Christ has offered to the Father in our place and on our behalf.

While Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ radically undermines any Pelagian approach to redemption, as Colyer (2001a:117, 118) rightly observes, Torrance's doctrine of vicarious humanity includes the human response to the Gospel, yet in such a way that may require rethinking the relationship between divine and human agency.

Torrance's view of the "inner logic of grace," as it relates to divine and human agency, can be approached through the "theological couplet" of *anhypostasis-enhypostasis*, a technically precise expression that guards against certain heretical christologies. Though Torrance first learned it in interaction with Karl Barth, this concept is traceable through older Scots theology back to Cyril of Alexandria (*Apologia contra Theodoretum*; Torrance, 1996a:160 n. 73). Cyril conceived the terms to guard against a "schizoid" christology, such as Nestorianism, by asserting the "indivisible union of the divine and human natures in their undiminished reality in the one Person of Jesus Christ." The negative term, *anhypostasis*, means that "apart from the incarnation of the Son of God Jesus would not have come into being." Against adoptionist christologies, *anhypostasis* means that Jesus would not have existed apart from the incarnation of the *Logos*, for, in the incarnation, there was no "independent" human *hypostasis* (person) or reality which was "adopted" into union with the eternal *Logos*. On the other hand, the positive term, *enhypostasis*, asserts that "with the incarnation Jesus came into being and exists as a completely human person *in* the full hypostatic reality of the incarnate Son of God"; that is, the human nature of Jesus became *enhypostatic* "in" the pre-existent Son, so that the divine and human natures of Christ constitute "in their union one indivisible subsistent person." In other words, against *monophysitism*, *enhypostasis* asserts that in the incarnation there is a real, fully human Jesus of Nazareth who exists in perfect "oneness" with the divine nature of Christ (Torrance, 1990:125, 199, 200; 1993:230; 1996c:71).

Torrance (1993:230) applies the "logic of grace" embodied in the incarnation, as expressed in the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* couplet, to the relationship between divine and human agency in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He writes:

> [T]he incarnation was brought about through the grace of God alone, without any human cooperation, yet in such a way that through the sheer act of divine grace the human nature of Christ, the incarnate Son, was given complete authentic reality as human nature in inseparable union with his divine nature. This gives expression to the singular "logic of grace" embodied in the incarnation: "all of grace" involves "all of man." Instead of discounting human

> nature the downright act of God's grace incarnate in Christ creates and upholds human nature.

Thus, while the human Jesus had no independent existence apart from the divine act of God in the incarnation (*anhypostasis*), at the same time, the human agency of Jesus is no less real because of its indivisible union with the divine nature (*enhypostasis*).

Torrance (1990:190) applies the "logic of grace" embodied in the incarnation to the "movement" of grace by which we become children of God. He writes:

> The theological couplet *anhypostasia/enhypostasia* expresses in succinct hypostatic terms the essential logic in the irreversible movement of God's grace. It is by grace alone that man comes into being and by grace alone that he is saved and made a child of God, which he cannot achieve for himself. However, by grace alone does not in any way mean the diminishing far less the excluding of the human but on the contrary its full and complete establishment.

Hence, for Torrance (1992:xii), "all of grace" does not mean "nothing of man." Rather "all of grace means all of man," for God's gracious act toward us in Jesus Christ "includes the fullness and completeness of our human response in the equation." Thus, the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* couplet expresses the logic of grace, wherein "all of grace" (*i.e.*, full divine agency) includes "all of man" (*i.e.*, full human agency).

As Torrance (1992:xii), argues, the relationship between divine and human agency cannot be understood logically, because logically, "all" of grace would mean "nothing" of man. As Colyer (2001a:120, 121) rightly notes, however, to assert that the relationship between divine and human agency cannot be understood logically does not imply that it is illogical. For Torrance, the complex, ineffable relationship between divine and human agency is *sui generis*, that is, unique or in a class by itself. It cannot be reduced to logico-causal categories of thought. The problem is similar to that faced in modern physics, with its lack of an adequate conceptuality to schematize the nature of light as both wave and particle.

Nevertheless, thinking in terms of logical, causal, or necessary relations has led to the development of classic, competing theological explanations for the relationship between divine and human agency: for example, "monergism", in which God is the sole agent in salvation and "synergism," wherein agency is apportioned both to God and man (Colyer, 2001a:120; Olson 2002:276*ff*). Against those who would divide the responsibility for human redemption into that which God does for us and that which we must do for ourselves, Torrance (1992:xii) argues:

> *All* of grace means *all* of man! We must remember that in all his healing and saving relations with us Jesus Christ is engaged in personalising and humanising (never depersonalising or dehumanising) activity, so that in all our relations with him we are made more truly and fully human in our personal response of faith than ever before. This takes place in us through the creative activity of the Holy Spirit as he unites us to the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary and raised again from the dead.

As Colyer (2001a:119) notes, just as there is full divine and human agency in Jesus Christ, there is an "analogous" fully divine and fully human agency in the human response to the Gospel. For Torrance (1990:125, 199), the relationship between divine and human agency is given "archetypal" or paradigmatic expression in the Virgin birth, an act that is at once fully divine and fully human. The "inner logic of grace" embodied in the incarnation applies to "all the ways and works of God" in his dealings with humanity. Torrance's emphasis on the gracious nature of Jesus' vicarious acts in our place and on our behalf does not rule out human involvement in redemption; yet, our response to Christ is not under our own disposal, nor is it determined by the very human will we are called to renounce. Nevertheless, as noted above, human faith has its proper place in the "polar relationship" between God and humanity, wherein our weak and faltering faith is lifted up and undergirded by the faith "of" Jesus Christ. Our response of faith is a free participation in the faithful response of Jesus Christ already made on our behalf. Consequently, our faith, and human response to the Gospel in general, is not made redundant by the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ; rather, it is established, undergirded, and empowered.

In terms of their "for us-ness," the implications of Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ for human response to the Gospel are astonishing, for his vicarious word and act includes "all of man." In his faithful response to the Father, Jesus Christ believes "for us." In regard to obedience, he offers the perfect human response to God "for us." He justifies and sanctifies humanity in himself "for us." Moreover, he worships "for us." He even makes the "personal decision" of faith "for us." Our faith, our obedience, our personal decision, our justification and sanctification are all implicated in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and his self-offering to the Father, so that we are fully and completely accepted by the Father in him. To be sure, the Gospel is truly "good news," for Jesus Christ, in his vicarious humanity, is truly "God for us."

7.6 Summary and Critique

7.6.1 Summary

As a direct correlate of the hypostatic union, Torrance emphasises the "two-fold" ministry of the incarnate Son of God, wherein Jesus Christ mediates the things of God to humanity and the things of humanity to God. Torrance articulates his understanding of the humanward-Godward movement of mediation in his doctrine of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ, a doctrine rooted in the "all-important middle term" of the covenanted way of response God graciously provided ancient Israel.

The movement of divine revelation in historical Israel culminated in Jesus Christ. In the incarnation, the Word of God actualised itself in time and space, "translating" itself into the acutely personalised form of a particular human being, who embodies in himself the two-fold movement that constitutes the mediation of revelation; that is, Jesus Christ *is* the personal address of God's Word to humanity and the perfect human response to God's Word. In the inseparable unity of divine revelation and reconciliation, Jesus Christ is both the revealing God and the perfectly responding man, the faithful son of Israel, who fulfils the covenant from both sides, both as the covenant-making God and the covenant-keeping man.

For Torrance, the perfect response Jesus offered on our behalf must be regarded as including the entirety of his life, from birth through death, resurrection, and ascension. Throughout the whole course of his life, in both his active and passive obedience, the incarnate Word yielded the perfect human response to the divine revelation he embodied, thereby sanctifying every stage of human life. The Gospel is not to be understood, therefore, as the Word of God coming to us and inviting our response; rather, the Gospel includes "the all-important middle term," the divinely-provided response in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ.

Torrance asserts the radical nature of the mediation of Jesus Christ by bringing together the concepts of "representation" and "substitution." For Torrance, Jesus is no mere leader who represents humanity, nor is he merely a "substitute" who stands in for us at the cross in an "external" forensic way. Torrance describes representation and substitution in ontological rather than external or instrumental terms. Jesus Christ acts

on our behalf from "within" the depths of the fallen Adamic humanity he assumed in the incarnation, so that there is an ontological connection between all humanity and his representative and substitutionary acts. "As man," Jesus Christ acts "in our place" in all aspects of humankind's response to God, so that we may share with him in all his acts of obedience to the Father.

The essential, integral role of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ in regard to human response to divine revelation emerges through an examination of the language Torrance uses in this regard. From within the fallen humanity he assumed in the incarnation, Jesus Christ acts vicariously as the *final*, *perfect*, and *sole norm and law* of human response to God. He is the *sole ground* of acceptable human response as well as the *appropriate correspondence* on the part of humanity to divine revelation. He is both the Truth of God given to humanity and that same *Truth understood and actualized* in humanity. As the one true Israelite and the second Adam, Jesus Christ fulfils the covenant God established at Sinai, both from the side of God "as God" and from the side of humanity "as man."

Rooted in the Scottish theological tradition, particularly in John McLeod Campbell and John Knox, the doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ plays a central role in Torrance's theology. The key to this doctrine is found in Galatians 2:20, a passage of scripture that functions in a "hermeneutical manner" by providing a significant point of access for understanding Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. The two-fold ministry of Jesus Christ, wherein he ministers the things of God to humanity and the things of humanity to God, may be summed up in the theological intent of "I, yet not I but Christ" (Purves, 2005:1, 2). In Torrance's translation of this verse, St. Paul asserts that he lives by the faith "of" the Son of God. As Torrance argues, it is not our faith "in" Christ that saves us; rather, we are saved by the faith "of" Christ, who offers, in our place and on our behalf, the perfect human response of faith we are unable to offer.

Galatians 2:20 is the paradigmatic text for Torrance's articulation of the relationship between the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and all aspects of human response to God, including faith, conversion, worship, sacraments, and evangelism. As Purves (2005:10, 11) notes, following Torrance, before we can consider our own faith, we must first consider Jesus Christ as having stepped into the breach between the

faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of human beings. Jesus not only embodies and actualises the faith of God; he also restores the faithfulness of humanity by grounding it in the incarnate medium of his own faithfulness, so that it answers perfectly to God's faithfulness. As God and humanity joined in hypostatic union, Jesus acts in our place, from within our unfaithfulness, and gives us a faith in which we may share. Thus, we do not rely on our own believing; rather, Jesus Christ, in our place and on our behalf, believes for us. Jesus Christ is not only Word of God to humanity, but also "Believer."

Torrance's discussion of faith and its relation to the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ reveals the "fundamental contours" of his theology, particularly in regard to the "once-for-allness" of what God has accomplished in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a potential reality awaiting our ratification and response; it is an already accomplished event in which we are invited to share (Thimell, 2008:27). As Thimell (2008:28-30) rightly notes, Torrance's view of faith challenges contemporary views, where faith is regarded as a kind of "spiritual muscle" or "latent potency" we must actualise in order to reap both spiritual and material benefits. In each instance, whether faith is viewed as a "pious attitude" needed for salvation or as a spiritual "force" we control, the emphasis on the believer's faith bypasses the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and substitutes in its place our own weak faith.

Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ also challenges the evangelical emphasis on "justification by faith," particularly in regard to its tendency to shift the locus of saving faith from Jesus Christ to the believer. When the burden of faith is taken off Jesus and placed on the shoulders of the individual believer, anxious questions may arise as to whether one possesses the "right" mental state needed to appropriate redemption. This problem is particularly evident in the Arminianism that underlies much modern evangelicalism, wherein the human response is seen as a condition of grace, rather than the appropriate response to grace. As Thimell (2008:28) notes, following Torrance, if our faith is the vital link between God and humanity, a link whose strength depends on our piety, we are most miserable. At this point, Torrance's doctrine is especially relevant, for it is not our faith, but the vicarious faith of Jesus Christ that constitutes the vital link between us and God. To be sure, faith is indispensable (*cf.* Acts 16:30, 31), yet Torrance's contribution is to emphasise the

reality that our weak faith is undergirded and supported by Jesus Christ, the vicarious believer, who believes for us.

Torrance's assertion that our faith is undergirded by, and enfolded in, the faith of Jesus Christ is in keeping with the Reformed tradition and its insistence that God always gives what he demands. The "sola" of *sola gratia* excludes all aspects of human performance as playing any role in our salvation. The faith we need for salvation, as Torrance argues, is located in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Thus, we may turn away from our anxious concerns as to the nature of our individual faith and turn toward Jesus Christ, trusting in his absolute faithfulness on our behalf and in our place (Thimell, 2008:32).

Torrance's discussion of the believer's faith as a participation in the vicarious faith "of" Jesus Christ provides the framework for his understanding of conversion. "Conversion," or "regeneration" (*paliggenesia*), does not refer to a subjective experience that takes place in the human heart, but to the objective regeneration that takes place in the incarnation. For Torrance, faith, conversion, repentance, justification, and sanctification are objective realities accomplished for all humanity two thousand years ago in the eternal Son's incarnational assumption of fallen Adamic flesh and subjectively realised for all throughout the whole course of his life of filial obedience to the Father, from birth through death, resurrection and ascension.

In addition, worship and prayer, the sacraments, and evangelism are human responses that participate in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. In regard to our imperfect worship and prayer, Jesus stands in for us, offering to the Father his own worship and prayer in place of that which we offer to God. There is no distinction between Jesus' worship and prayer and our worship and prayers, for they are wholly his and wholly ours. Thus, even in worship and prayer, we must say with St. Paul, "I, yet not I, but Christ."

As in worship, our human response in the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist is undergirded by the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. In regard to baptism, Torrance carefully distinguishes between *baptisma* and *baptismos*, the latter referring to a repeatable rite of ceremonial cleansing and the former to the "reality signified" by the rite, that is, the unique saving event in Christ on which the rite rests. Thus, *baptisma*

does not refer merely to the baptising of an individual, but, rather, to the "baptism" Jesus Christ underwent for our sakes in the whole course of his redemptive life from his birth to his resurrection and ascension. Baptism (*baptisma*) is not, therefore, a sacrament of what the Church does but of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, long before we responded to him. At the same time, baptism is the sacrament of what Christ continues to do in us as we are united to him through the Spirit. Thus, it is appropriate that we "are baptised," for our part is only to passively receive what Christ has done for us. When we receive baptism within the Church, we are granted by the grace of God participation in the all-inclusive *baptisma* of Jesus Christ and are made, by the Spirit, members of his Body and children of our heavenly Father.

As Hunsinger (2001:143, 144) observes, following Torrance, there is a two-fold reference to baptism. The primary reference is to what God has done for us in Christ. This is the "perfect tense" of our salvation in Christ and its ultimate ground. At the heart of this "perfect tense," for Torrance, is the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. The secondary, or dependent, reference is to what God is presently doing in us through the Spirit. This is the "present tense" of our salvation in Christ. The connection of the present tense of our salvation to the perfect tense, that is, the objective reality underlying it, gives the sacrament what Torrance refers to as its "dimension of depth." It is the reference to the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ that is crucial, for the sacraments can only be seen in their "depth" when traced back to the incarnation and the vicarious obedience of Jesus Christ in our place and on our behalf. Hence, as Torrance (1976a:83) argues, baptism must not be regarded "in the flat" as an event in itself, that is, as a ritual act that has its meaning in its performance, or as an ethical act that has its meaning as a human response to what God has done.

In locating saving faith in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and grounding baptism in the objective reality that underlies it, Torrance lends compelling support to the ancient practice of "infant baptism." In keeping with the Reformed tradition, Torrance argues that human salvation is in no way dependent upon the faith, worship, and obedience of the believer. It is not the individual believer's personal decision of faith that saves; rather, it is the vicarious faith "of" Jesus Christ that saves. To be sure, grace is not conditioned by anything in us, not even our faith (*cf.* Torrance, J., 1996a:80). Salvation is *sola gratia*. Hence, it is appropriate that the rite of baptism be administered to infants and small children, for their lack of "resources" perfectly

illustrates their utter helplessness to effect their own salvation, as well as their total dependence on the vicarious activity of Jesus Christ.

At the same time, by grounding his doctrine of baptism in the vicarious baptism Jesus Christ underwent throughout the whole course of his obedient life, Torrance ameliorates the Church's internecine quarrels regarding the appropriate age for baptism and the method used to administer the rite, whether, sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. These historically divisive concerns are of minor importance in comparison to the "reality signified" by baptism, that is, the objective reality that underlies the rite. By directing our attention to the "one baptism" (*baptisma*) of Jesus Christ, on which the rite rests, Torrance opens the way for ecumenical reconciliation regarding this important sacrament.

Just as baptism reflects our "once-for-all union" with Christ, the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper, is the sacrament of our "continuous participation" in Christ. Hunsinger (2008:109, 110) offers a helpful summary regarding Torrance's view of the Eucharist. As he argues, the sacrifice common to Christ and his Church can be seen in three "modes": 1) the once-for-all, historical mode in which the work of expiation was completed; 2) the ascended mode by which Christ' sacrifice is rendered eternally efficacious, and 3) the eucharistic mode, wherein we dwell in Christ and he in us as his sacrifice "continually" becomes ours and ours his.

The Eucharist is both the act of the Church and the act of the Risen Christ, our Mediator, who lifts us up in union with him to the presence of the Father. As Hunsinger (2008:106) rightly notes, following Torrance, although Christ's sacrifice is once-for-all and unrepeatable, it is not hidden in the past. His earthly life and passion, including his unique and unrepeatable sacrifice on the cross, far from being past, persist through the triumph of his bodily resurrection. The Lamb who was slain (Rev 5:12) is alive, forevermore offering his body and blood, so that we may participate in his self-offering to the Father; thus, he "is" the expiation (*hilasmos*) for our sins (1Jn 2:2). In the Eucharist, we enjoy "the real presence" of the Risen Lord, who mediates himself to us, taking up our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and sanctifyingly assimilating it into his self-offering to the Father through the Spirit. To his credit, Torrance upholds the Reformed emphasis on the "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist, yet he avoids

divisive arguments and promotes ecumenical reconciliation by wisely asserting that "how" Christ is present is a mystery known only from the side of heaven.

Hunsinger (2001:151, 155, 156; 2008:106-108) is helpful in understanding Torrance's position on the Eucharist in relation to Protestant and Roman Catholic positions. As Hunsinger notes, following Torrance, the content, reality, and power of the Eucharist is one and the same as that of the incarnation. Yet, this one reality has two temporal forms, such that the "subsequent" form, the Eucharist, "participates in, manifests, and attests" the original form, that is, the incarnation, or the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. Thus, what takes place in the eucharistic sacrifice is not a matter of repetition but of participation, manifestation, and witness, wherein we share "here and now" in the salvation fully accomplished "there and then." Torrance's assertion of eucharistic mediation and participation in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ addresses the problem of repetition that concerned the Reformers. In the Eucharist, the living Lord "re-presents" himself in his vicarious humanity, that is, his body and blood, so that the Church is given an "active," though "secondary and derivative" participation in it. In short, rather than repetition of the one-for-all sacrifice of Christ, Torrance views the Eucharist as a real, present participation in our eternal High Priest's ongoing self-offering to the Father.

In regard to "merit," Torrance follows the Reformed tradition in asserting that the Eucharist has no salvific import in itself; that is, the Eucharist is not "meritorious." Rather, in its "dimension of depth," the Eucharist derives its content, reality and power from the cross. We appear before God with no other sacrifice than that which is identical with Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is the concrete form and expression of Christ's self-offering to the Father, an offering in which we participate at the Holy Table. Like baptism, notes Hunsinger (2008:106,107), the Eucharist is no more than a "mediating form" of the saving act of Jesus and is in no sense a "constitutive" form. The cross is the "constitutive," "primary" form of atonement, while the Eucharist is the "mediating," "secondary," "derivative" form. The Eucharist does not attempt to repeat the unrepeatable sacrifice of Jesus Christ; rather, "it does attest what it mediates and mediates what it attests." What it attests is the one whole Jesus, who, in his body and blood is both sacrifice (Offerer and Offering) and sacrament (Gift and Giver). As Hunsinger (2001:155, 156) accurately notes, "No secondary form can do anything more than manifest, attest, mediate, and participate in the one central form," because Christ's

salvific work is perfect, finished, and complete (*opus perfectus*). However, the finished work of Christ allows for "secondary forms of self-manifestation, self-attestation, and self-mediation" (*operatione perpetuus*) which "participate" in the primary or central form without being confused with it or changed into it. With his emphasis on *opus perfectus*, focused on the vicarious significance of the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ, Torrance upholds the Reformation principle, *sola gratia*. At the same time, with his complementary emphasis on how the *operatione perpetuus* mediates, attests, and participates in the *opus perfectus*, Torrance upholds "Catholic substance" by making sense of the Church's Eucharistic offering to the Father in a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving that is taken up by Christ and assimilated into his own self-offering to the Father for our sakes. The mediating factor joining the *opus perfetus* of Christ's finished work with the *operatione perpetuus* is the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, particularly its real Eucharistic presence in the form of his body and blood. As Hunsinger (2001:155; 2008:106) argues, by showing how the cross and the Eucharist are held in unity without violating their distinction, Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ "amounts to a powerful theological and ecumenical advance in understanding the Eucharist."

In addition, Hunsinger (2001:139-143) asserts that Torrance has made an "immense contribution" to the understanding of the sacraments in the Reformed tradition by bringing together Calvin and Barth into a "brilliant new synthesis." Unlike Barth, who views the sacraments "ethically," that is, as a grateful human response to a prior divine grace not mediated by the sacraments themselves, Torrance, like Calvin, sees the sacraments as forms of God's word, that is, as "vehicles of testimony" that, by the work of the Holy Spirit, impart the very Christ they proclaim. Unlike Calvin, who Hunsinger argues was ambiguous in regard to the perfected and finished salvific work of Christ, Torrance, like Barth, has an unambiguous grasp of how the sacraments are to be spoken of essentially in the perfect tense, that is, in reference to the already "perfect actuality" of Christ's fully completed salvific work, to be received and partaken in the present, not as a present existential possibility remaining to be actualised and completed upon the Church's reception of it. As Hunsinger argues, the result of Torrance's synthesis of Calvin's and Barth's view of the baptism and the Eucharist is "surely the most creative Reformed breakthrough on the sacraments in twentieth-century theology, and arguably the most important Reformed statement since Calvin."

In regard to evangelism, Torrance rightly insists that Jesus Christ must be given centre stage in the proclamation of the Gospel. Yet, he sees much "unevangelical" preaching of the Gospel, that is, a form of preaching that turns its hearers back upon their own faith and repentance rather than upon the vicarious response of Jesus Christ in their place and on their behalf. This "conditional" form of evangelism denies the essential content of the Gospel by telling sinners that the responsibility for their salvation is laid upon their own shoulders rather than upon Jesus. This conditional proclamation causes sinners to doubt their salvation, for they see their own faith as a weak link in the chain that binds them to Christ. As Torrance argues, the Gospel can only be preached in an evangelical way when central place is given to the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient human response to a loving God. "As man," Jesus Christ has offered to the Father the perfect response of faith and obedience in place of, and on behalf of, all humanity. This truly evangelical proclamation frees us from doubt about the adequacy of our own faith and obedience, for it is not our own response on which we rely, but that of Jesus Christ, who, in his vicarious humanity, truly is God for us.

Finally, Torrance uses the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* couplet as the basis for his understanding of the "movement" of grace in redemption. Torrance approaches this couplet in ontological (*i.e.*, "being") terms, then applies it dynamically (*i.e.*, "act") to the divine and human agency in Christ. He then applies it to the relationship between divine and human agency in general to assert that "all of grace" includes "all of man." That is, Jesus Christ offers to the Father the perfect response of faith and obedience in place of, and on behalf of, all humanity, yet in such a way that our human response is lifted up and included in his vicarious humanity and his priestly self-consecration and self-offering to the Father. The logic of grace embodied in the incarnation, as expressed in the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* couplet, provides a fertile ground for discussion of historically problematic theological issues such as the relationship between divine and human agency in response to the Gospel. In addition, the relationship between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ may provide a useful framework for conceiving the relationship between divine and human agency in the "inspiration" of scripture. Just as the word and act of Jesus Christ is both fully divine and fully human, it may be argued that Holy Scripture, at least in its original form, is both a fully divine and fully human product.

7.6.2 Critique

In addition to a concern for the danger of "antinomianism" in his emphasis on the "I, yet not I" of Galatians 2:20, Torrance's use of the subjective genitive (*i.e.,* "faithfulness *of* Christ") is subject to debate. Moreover, Torrance has been criticised for an overly objective approach to salvation which leaves no room for a subjective, personal response of faith.

7.6.2.1 The Danger of Antinomianism?

In regard to Torrance's emphasis on the Pauline "I, yet not I" (Gal 2:20), Purves (2005:14) cautions against a specific danger he sees arising from Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ: the danger of "antinomianism." As Purves notes, when so much is cast on the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, we must remember that the "imperative of discipleship" is not cancelled by the representative and substitutionary acts of the incarnate Son. For Torrance, however, the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ must always imbue the Gospel with a "suspicion of antinomianism" (*cf.* Trook, 1986:379), for the Gospel of grace undermines all our attempts at self-justification. Perhaps a greater danger than antinomianism is Purves' insistence on the "imperative of discipleship" and the concomitant legalism that may easily arise. When the responsibility for our salvation is cast back upon our own shoulders by what Torrance describes as "unevangelical" preaching, faith, worship, and obedience may easily devolve into duties to be performed, while assurance is displaced by anxiety, dread, and fear of awful punishment. Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, however, with its assertion that Jesus has already offered the perfect response of faith and obedience in our place and on our behalf, invites us to discipleship, not as a duty to be performed as a condition for salvation but as a grateful, joyful response to the free gift of God's riches in Jesus Christ. To be sure, Torrance asserts "evangelical" rather than "legal" repentance (*cf.* J. Torrance, 1970:57), where the former is a response to salvation offered in love, while the latter is a condition for salvation met by the effort of duty. Purves is, of course, right to assert the "imperative of discipleship," for faith, worship, and ministry remain essential aspects of the life of the community of faith. While these responses are vital, they are not conditional requirements for salvation; rather, they are a free participation, through the Spirit, in that which Jesus Christ has already accomplished on our behalf, so that our faith, worship, and ministry are not cast aside but grounded in, and upheld by, Jesus Christ.

7.6.2.2 *Pistis Christou*: The Ongoing Debate

In translating Galatians 2:20 as the faith "of" Jesus Christ, Torrance is in harmony with the King James Version of the Bible. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing debate regarding the "correct" translation of the Greek *pistis christou* (Ho, 2008:82*ff*; Bird & Sprinkle, 2010:1*ff*). Noting that the majority opinion favours the objective genitive (*i.e.*, "faith *in* Christ), Matera (2007:94) argues that, grammatically, the phrase may be properly translated either as an objective genitive or as a subjective genitive (*i.e.*, "faithfulness *of* Christ"). Perhaps the best known criticism of Torrance's position is that of James Barr (2004:161-163). Remembering that Torrance draws upon the Old Testament to support his translation of *pistis christou*, Barr contends that Torrance is linguistically incorrect to assert that the Hebrew word *'emunah* applies only to the "faithfulness of God." Noting that this remains an "unsolved open issue" for many, Ho (2008:85) asserts that Torrance's "theological spectacles" cause him to read his interpretation "into" the text rather than "from" it, so that Torrance's translation is more "theological' than "linguistic."

Notwithstanding the ongoing debate regarding the proper translation of *pistis christou*, Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ does not depend on a particular translation of this phrase; rather, it depends on his entire doctrine of the atonement (*cf.* Torrance, 1957b:113, 114). Torrance's translation of *pistis christou* as "faithfulness of Christ" arises from his doctrine of vicarious humanity, which itself is a direct correlate of his doctrine of the hypostatic union, particularly in regard to the healing, sanctifying, reconciling assumption of corrupt, sinful flesh in the incarnation. As the representative and substitute of all human beings, with whom he is ontologically united in the incarnation, Jesus offers, from "within" the fallen flesh of Adam, throughout the whole course of his obedience, the perfect human response to God. As the embodiment of the two-fold movement of divine mediation, Jesus Christ is both the covenant-making God and the covenant-keeping man, upholding both sides of the covenant in place of, and behalf of, all humanity. Hence, Ho is right to assert that Torrance's translation of *pistis christou* is "theological" rather than "linguistic," for his translation follows from his understanding of the vicarious role of Jesus Christ the Mediator.

7.6.2.3 The Subjective Response

Torrance argues persuasively that the eternal Word's ontological penetration into the depths of the fallen Adamic flesh assumed in the incarnation is a healing, reconciling, and sanctifying union between God and sinful humanity. Yet, while "humanity" in general is objectively reconciled to God in the incarnation, the subjective aspects of Torrance's doctrine of atoning reconciliation require further examination and explanation.

Because of his emphasis on the objective reality of salvation, fully realised and accomplished on behalf of all humanity in the vicarious humanity and obedience of Jesus Christ, Torrance has been criticised for failing to make room for the subjective, individual response of faith. After expressing his appreciation for the soteriological objectivity of Barthian-Torrancian soteriology, Smail (2004:109), argues that, while Christ enables our response of faith to God, we must each finally answer for ourselves. Similarly, Ho (2008:87) argues for a more active role in the human response of faith. According to Ho, *pistis christou* is "an objective genitive [*i.e.*, "faith *in* Christ"] that we play active role of our faith in Christ (sic) … however, this faith actually originates from the faith and faithfulness of Christ." Both Smail and Ho appear to agree with Torrance's assertion that our faith originates from, and is undergirded by, the faith of Christ; yet, each writer asserts the necessity of an *individual* response of faith, that is, faith "in" Christ.

In this regard, Hart (2008:87, 88) is particularly helpful in his explanation of the connection he sees between the substitutionary and representative aspects of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and humanity in general. As Hart perceptively asks, if Christ's humanity is the "locus" of God's regenerative and redemptive activity, then in what sense are we ordinary humans actually reconciled and healed in the process? In place of a legal fiction, does Torrance devise an ontological fiction which leaves us essentially unchanged? More to the point, while Torrance plainly asserts that every human being is objectively reconciled to God in the atoning union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ, "whether they believe or not," is there a place in his doctrine of ontological healing for faith, repentance, and obedience in the life of the individual believer? According to Hart, Torrance plainly asserts that all Jesus is and does, he is and does "for us." In assuming fallen Adamic flesh, the Son of God unites humanity to

himself, thereby establishing an ontological bond by virtue of which, notes Hart, "his particular humanity was rendered inclusive in its relationship to ours." All human beings have drawn near to God in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and are "included" in him, prior to, and apart from, any salvific response on our part. Because we have no existence apart from the "ontological solidarity" God has established with us in the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ, what takes place in the incarnation and throughout the whole course of Jesus' life of filial obedience to the Father is no ontological fiction but, rather, impacts us in the depths of our being. As Hart notes, this is no mere philosophical notion of "concrete universals" or "primitive notions of 'corporate personality'"; rather, this is the specifically Christian claim that Jesus Christ is the Creator *Logos*, the one in whom we live and move and have our being (*cf.* Acts 17:28), and who, in taking human flesh to himself, binds us to himself by virtue of both his humanity and his deity. Following Torrance, Hart states that "all" humans are united to the regenerated and sanctified humanity of Jesus Christ and are, thereby, granted access to the life of "sonship." Relevant to the specific concerns of Smail and Ho (*cf.* above), Hart goes on to argue, correctly, that substitution is "not the whole story" for Torrance, for substitution must be complemented by, and come to fruition in, our active participation, as we are led by the Spirit to become what we are by virtue of our ontological union with Christ. [1] The union Christ established with us in his body and blood demands our union with him in his body and blood, as we draw near to him in worship and the sacraments. Our participation in baptism and the Eucharist bears witness to our appropriation, by faith, through the Spirit, of what is already ours in Jesus Christ (*cf.* Torrance, 1976a:111).

[1] In regard to the Spirit, we note that Smail (2004:109, 110) is concerned to differentiate the work of Christ "for" us and the work of the Spirit "in" us. For Torrance, the Holy Spirit is not a substitute for Christ; rather, the Spirit unites the Church to Christ (Torrance, 1996a:65). Therefore, we should not think of the Holy Spirit as acting in the place of, or in the absence of, Christ, for in the Spirit's coming and presence, Christ himself is with us, acting "for" us from the side of God toward man and acting "in" us from the side of man toward God (Torrance, 1996b:250). As Colyer (2001a:225) notes, Torrance sees here a two-fold movement of the Spirit (Godward-humanward/humanward-Godward) that parallels and answers the two-fold movement of the mediation of Christ. From the side of God, the Spirit unites Christ to us; at the same time, the Spirit upholds us from our side and sustains us from within, so that we are set free to cry, "Abba, Father," in faith, worship, and obedience, and be raised up in the Spirit, through Christ, into the life of the Trinity. For Torrance's doctrine of the Holy Spirit: (*cf.* Torrance, 1959:xcv-cxxvi; 1988a:191-251; 1996a:147-155; 1996b:192-258). For an introduction to Torrance's doctrine of the Holy Spirit: (*cf.* Colyer 2001a:211-241; Deddo, 2001:81-114).

Similarly, Kettler (1986:129-133) argues that Torrance's doctrine of vicarious humanity does not exclude the personal response of faith, but *includes* it, not as something "added" to the faith of Christ, however, but as a "participation" in it. Jesus does not merely enable us to respond in faith; he acts on our behalf, accomplishing what we are unable to accomplish, not in order to destroy our individual responses, but to establish a foundation for them. As Kettler notes, we can respond for ourselves, so long as we understand that our response is grounded in the representative and substitutionary act of Christ, which invalidates all other forms of response. While we are truly summoned to believe, our faith is undergirded and supported by his faithfulness in which we share (*cf*. Torrance, 1992:82). The result of our participation in the faithfulness of Christ, notes Kettler (1986:132), is a human response which is "not arbitrary self-determination or independent self-expression on the part of humanity," but one that is grounded in and derived from the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. As Thimell (2008:33) argues, following Torrance's younger brother James (Torrance, J., 1996a:44, 45), we are summoned to a life of "evangelical repentance," not as a "condition" of grace, but as a "response" enabled by grace. So it is with faith. It is a great mistake, argues Thimell, to detach faith from Christ, as did the medieval Church, and to suggest that there is a great chasm between us and God which we must cross by the exercise of our own faith. On the contrary, the whole of our salvation depends on Jesus Christ; thus, the content of *sola fide* is really *solus Christus*.

In agreement with Hart, Kettler and Thimell (*cf.* above), we argue that Torrance does indeed find a place in his doctrine of the mediation of Christ for the subjective, personal response of faith, worship, and obedience as "participation" by faith, through the Spirit, in the gift of salvation that is graciously and objectively realised for all in Jesus Christ. Torrance's emphasis on the vicarious faith and obedience of Jesus Christ as the objective actualisation of the human response to the Father on behalf of all does not negate or render redundant the individual, personal response of faith and repentance. Rather, Jesus' vicarious offering to the Father enables and undergirds our individual, personal responses of faith, obedience, prayer, and worship, as he enfolds them in his own vicarious response, lifts them up, and includes them in his self-offering to the Father.

At the same time, we appreciate Smail's concern for what may arguably be regarded as Torrance's "failure" to give an "adequate" account of the place of the subjective,

individual response of faith in his doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, for Smail touches upon an area of possible misunderstanding in Torrance's doctrine of vicarious humanity. Given his laudable concern to safeguard the Reformation principle, *sola gratia*, while rejecting the implicit Pelagianism of modern evangelicalism, wherein salvation is held to be a "potential" that must be "actualised" by a "personal decision of faith," Torrance has gone to great lengths to consistently and clearly articulate the objective actuality of salvation as a fully realised for all in Jesus Christ. Yet, when so much emphasis is placed upon salvation as an already objective actuality realised for all humanity in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, we argue that the possibility for misunderstanding arises, specifically, the danger of misreading Torrance in such a way as to erroneously conclude that his doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ renders redundant the need for an individual, personal response of faith and repentance.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 General Summary

The doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ in the scientific theology of T.F. Torrance rests on the fundamental scientific axiom, derived from the natural sciences, that knowledge is developed in accordance with the nature (*kata physin*) of the object of study as revealed in the course of scientific inquiry. To know God through the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, who is of "one nature with the Father" (*homoousios to Patri*), is to know God in strict accordance with God's nature and, hence, in a scientific theological way. As Torrance argues, scientific theology will operate on a christological basis, for the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the "controlling centre" for the Christian doctrine of God.

A corollary to Torrance's fundamental principle of kataphysical inquiry is the "interrelationality" of reality. As Clerk Maxwell argued in his "field theory" of electromagnetism, a theory in which Torrance invests significant theological capital, the "object" of scientific inquiry exists within a nexus or matrix of "being-constituting" interrelations, or "onto-relations," that disclose its identity. Because the fundamental aspects of reality are relational rather than atomistic, the goal of Torrance's scientific theology is to investigate and articulate the essential interrelations embodied in our knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. If being-constituting relations (*i.e.,* "onto-relations") are to be given their proper place in an examination and exploration of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation, then Jesus Christ must be viewed within three specific nexuses of "onto-relations" that disclose his identity: these are his interrelations 1) with historical Israel, 2) with God, and 3) with humanity.

Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ is rooted historically in the incarnate Son's relationship with ancient Israel, a nexus of interrelations Torrance cogently describes as the "womb of the incarnation." The cultic liturgy, particularly as enacted on the annual Day of Atonement, constituted the all-significant "middle term," whereby a sinful, rebellious people could approach a holy God in appropriate worship. This "covenanted way of response," which God graciously provided Israel constituted the humanward-Godward aspect of the two-fold but unitary movement of revelation in Israel. As a constitutive aspect of the mediation of revelation in Israel, this "answering

movement" to divine revelation established permanent structures of thought and speech about God. Torrance describes these "conceptual tools" as the "essential furniture of our knowledge of God." Apart from the pattern of divine revelation imparted in God's historical dialogue with ancient Israel, particularly as enacted in the cultic liturgy, the mediation of Jesus Christ, as High Priest and sacrifice, Offerer and offering, would be quite incomprehensible.

In addition to his interrelations with Israel, the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ must be viewed within the nexus of his interrelations with God. In developing his scientific theology according to the divine nature as revealed in Jesus Christ, Torrance adheres to his fundamental methodological principle of kataphysical inquiry, a methodology which requires him to develop his epistemology *a posteriori*, as he allows God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ to guide his thinking. Torrance follows Barth in rejecting natural theology as an *a priori*, antecedent conceptual system developed "independently" of the divine self-disclosure in the incarnate Son, then offered as a preamble to faith. Torrance also rejects anthropological approaches to the knowledge of God, for example, Schleiermacher's "feeling" of dependence, regarding these as mythological projections of the human psyche onto the heavens. For Torrance the Nicene *homoousion*, that is, the creedal assertion that Jesus Christ is "of one being (nature) with the Father," is the epistemological linchpin in the knowledge of God and the *sine qua non* of his doctrine of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is not God in the same way the Father is God, then his mediation of revelation lacks divine content. Moreover, if Jesus Christ is not God, then his mediation of reconciliation lacks divine validity, for only God can save.

The mediation of Jesus Christ must also be viewed within the matrix of his interrelations with humanity. Torrance draws upon the Chalcedonian doctrine of the hypostatic union to argue that the humanity of Jesus Christ means that God has acted among us *as man*; at the same time, the deity of Jesus Christ means that *God* has acted among us as man. For Torrance, the humanity of Jesus Christ is essential for the mediation of revelation and is the guarantee that revelation is accessible to us within the limitations of our own creaturely existence. At the same time, the deity of Jesus Christ ensures that his human word is also the divine Word of God. To mediate divine revelation to us, therefore, Jesus Christ must be both God and human, yet he must be

God and humanity joined in hypostatic union, so that his word and act are predicates of one divine person. Otherwise, his divine word is not human speech to us and his human speech is not the word of God. Because the words spoken by Jesus Christ are the words of very God, Torrance rightly identifies Jesus Christ, not the Holy Bible, as "The Word of God." The humanity of Jesus Christ is the "real text" underlying the written word of God and by which scripture must be interpreted. While the *homoousion* constitutes the ontological and epistemic bridge between Jesus and God, the hypostatic union constitutes the ontological and epistemic bridge between Jesus and humanity.

In addition to its epistemological implications, the hypostatic union has vital implications for human salvation. Because only God can save, Jesus Christ must be divine; yet, in order for his saving activity to reach us, he must also be human. Consistent with his non-dualist, unitary theology, Torrance asserts there are not two acts in the life and death of Jesus Christ, but only a single, unitary action that is simultaneously Godward and humanward. If atonement is to be real, it must take place from the side of humanity if we are to be reconciled to God; yet, it must also take place from the side of God if it is to be effectual. Thus, atonement must be the work of the one God-man, God and man in hypostatic union, not merely God "in" man but God "as" man. To be sure, Jesus Christ, who is both Son of God and son of Mary, the covenant-making God and the covenant-keeping man, fulfils the covenant, both from the side of God and from the side of humanity, in one unitary movement of atoning reconciliation.

A corollary of Torrance's doctrine of the hypostatic union and another elemental form of his doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ is his doctrine of incarnational redemption, that is, the Godward-humanward aspect of the unitary movement of atoning reconciliation. In keeping with his unitary, holistic theology, Torrance asserts an intrinsic, internal connection between the incarnation and the atonement. For Torrance, the incarnate Son is no mere agent of reconciliation; rather, Jesus Christ "embodies" atoning reconciliation in his incarnate constitution as God and humanity hypostatically united in reconciling, sanctifying union. Simply stated, atonement is not what Jesus "does"; it is what he "is." For Torrance, there is an unbroken unity between the person and work of Jesus Christ; that is, the incarnation is inherently redemptive and redemption is inherently incarnational. The unitary connection Torrance sees between the incarnation and the atonement is heavily dependent upon his controversial

assertion of the assumption of "fallen" human nature in the incarnation. In contradistinction to the "Latin heresy," that is, the view that the eternal Word assumed "neutral" human flesh as it existed in its perfect state before the Fall in order to offer it as an instrument in an "external" juridical transaction with the Father, Torrance supports the Patristic assertion that the "unassumed is the unhealed," arguing that Jesus Christ had to assume Adamic nature in order to penetrate to the ontological roots of our fallen humanity in order to heal and sanctify it by bending the rebellious human mind and will back to God in reconciling union. For Torrance, the hypostatic union is not merely a static union; it is a dynamic atoning union, wherein the actual condition of human estrangement is brought into reconciling, sanctifying union with God.

Torrance further articulates the intrinsic connection between incarnation and atoning reconciliation in terms of Calvin's "wonderful exchange," wherein Christ takes our poverty in order to give us his riches, and in the Patristic doctrine of *theopoiesis*, wherein Christ becomes what we are that we might become what he is. For Torrance, the atoning exchange "is" incarnational redemption, and incarnational redemption "is" atoning exchange, all worked out in the one person of the incarnate Son of God within the ontological depths of fallen humanity. An important aspect of the wonderful exchange between Jesus Christ and humanity concerns the reception of the Holy Spirit. All who partake of the nature of Adam are implicated in the Spirit's descent upon the incarnate Son in the Jordan River. This has profound implications for the "range" of the atoning exchange. The range of atoning reconciliation is anchored in the nature of God, whom scripture describes as "love." Because the love of God is unlimited and inexhaustible, argues Torrance, to limit the range of atonement is to introduce a limitation in the nature of God. Because the incarnate Son, the eternal *Logos*, in whom all humanity coheres and the very one "by" whom and "through" whom all things are created and "in" whom all things consist, has united himself to creation, all things, including all human beings without exception, are ontologically bound up in the incarnate reality of Jesus Christ, and are, in a profound sense, already redeemed, resurrected, and consecrated for the glory of God.

The universal range of atoning reconciliation bears directly on Torrance's doctrine of election. Torrance's rejects the Calvinist predilection for locating predestination or election in an inscrutable decree of God hidden in eternity past. For Torrance, Jesus Christ "is" the eternal word or decree of God. To detach election from the incarnation

makes election precede grace and implies a higher will in God than the grace revealed in Jesus Christ. While Torrance rejects the traditional Calvinist doctrine of predestination, with its logical corollary of limited atonement, Torrance is no universalist. Notwithstanding the boundless nature of the atoning exchange, Torrance develops a doctrine of reprobation. In contradistinction to a doctrine of double predestination, he argues that reprobation is not the result of a divine decree but, rather, of the reprobate's free but inexplicable decision to reject the reconciliation Christ has already provided for all.

An additional corollary of Torrance's doctrine of the hypostatic union and another elemental form of his doctrine of mediation is his doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. Emphasising the humanward-Godward aspect of the unitary movement of atoning reconciliation, this doctrine asserts that, as God and man joined in hypostatic union, Jesus acts from within the depths of the fallen humanity he assumed in the incarnation to offer to the Father the perfect response of faith and obedience on behalf of, and in place of, all. This vicarious response includes not only Jesus' passive obedience on the cross but also the entirety of his active obedience offered to the Father throughout the whole course of his life. The key to this doctrine is found in Galatians 2:20, where Torrance translates *pistis christou* as a subjective genitive to assert that we live by the faith "of" Jesus Christ. This passage functions in a hermeneutical manner to provide a significant point of access for understanding Torrance's theological vision of conversion, worship and prayer, the sacraments, and evangelism. In all these important aspects of discipleship, Jesus acts as both representative and substitute, offering to the Father, from within the ontological depths of the fallen Adamic humanity he assumed in the incarnation, perfect faith, obedience, worship, and prayer on behalf of, and in place of, all. Jesus' response on our behalf, however, does not undermine our own response, but, rather, undergirds it as he takes our feeble efforts and unites them with his own self-offering to the Father. The sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist are visible forms of the Church's participation in the self-offering and ongoing priesthood of Jesus Christ. Each sacrament finds its meaning, not in the rite itself, but in the objective reality underlying it, that is, the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ and his self-offering to the Father. When the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ is emphasised in preaching the Gospel, evangelism becomes an invitation for hearers to become what they are, that is, to participate actively in the reality of the salvation that is already theirs in Jesus Christ.

Finally, Torrance models his understanding of the "movement" of grace in redemption on the "logic" of grace in the *anhypostasis-enhypostasis* couplet. Transcending monergistic and synergistic views of the relationship between divine and human agency, Torrance asserts that "all of grace includes all of man."

8.2 The Order Underlying Torrance's Doctrine of Mediation

Having examined and explained the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ in Torrance's scientific theology, I have identified a basic "order" or progression of ideas that may guide and facilitate understanding. This basic order arises logically, systematically, and coherently from the methodological axiom that is fundamental to Torrance's scientific theology. The present thesis has been organised according to this systematic, coherent order.

I began by examining and explaining Torrance's scientific theology, particularly in regard to the relation between methodology, epistemology, and ontology. As Torrance repeatedly argues, in any field of scientific inquiry, knowledge must be developed according to the nature (*kata physin*) of the object of study as it reveals itself in the course of scientific investigation. Torrance's "kataphysical" method is the foundation of his scientific theology and sets the proper relationship between "knowing" and "being," wherein knowledge is developed *a posteriori*, as epistemology follows ontology.

From Torrance's kataphysical method, two other basic principles naturally emerge: these are the principles of "onto-relationality" and "theological holism." Because reality is interrelational, as Torrance argues, following Clerk Maxwell, an inquiry into the *nature* of the object of study requires that it be investigated within the nexus of "being-constituting" interrelations, or "onto-relations," that disclose its identity. In keeping with this principle, I have examined and explained Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ within the nexuses of "onto-relations" that disclose his identity as incarnate Saviour of the world. These are his interrelations with Israel, with God, and with humanity.

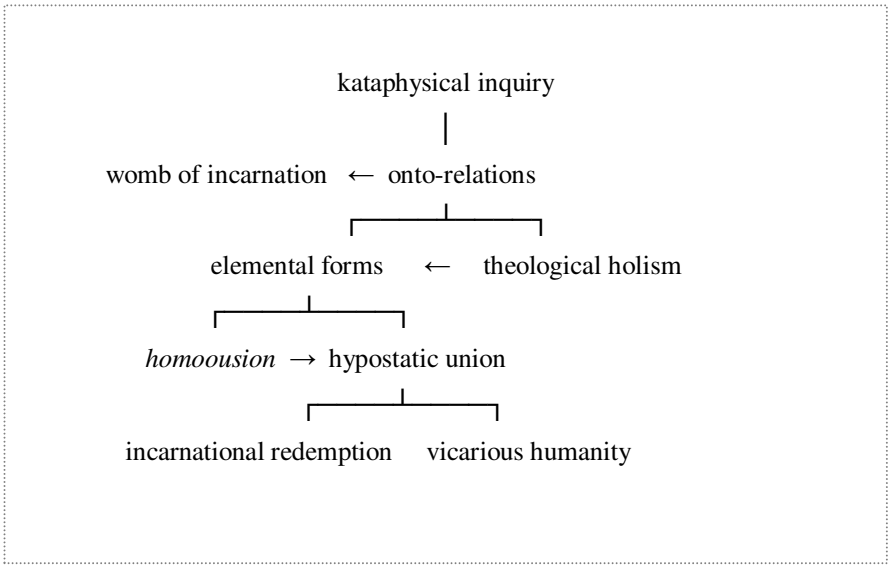
In regard to the principle of "onto-relationality," I began by examining the prehistory of revelation and reconciliation in Israel, locating the mediation of Jesus Christ within the nexus of historical interrelations that Torrance cogently describes as the "womb of the incarnation." Next, I examined and explained the mediation of revelation and reconciliation within the nexus of "onto-relations" that constitute the identity of Jesus Christ. These "being-constituting interrelations" are the consubstantial Father-Son relation, as articulated in the Nicene *homoousion,* and the consubstantial God-humanity relation, as articulated in the Chalcedonian doctrine of the hypostatic union.

The *homoousion* and the hypostatic union evidence another fundamental principle of Torrance's scientific theology, one he adapted from Einstein. This is the principle of "logical simplicity," whereby a vast and seemingly disconnected array of knowledge is reduced to a minimal number of "elemental forms" or basic constitutive concepts. I have followed the principle of logical simplicity to organise the themes of revelation and reconciliation around the elemental forms of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ. The elemental forms of Torrance's christology, constituting the primary "christological tools" of his doctrine of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ, are the Nicene *homoousion* and the Chalcedonian doctrine of the hypostatic union. Two additional elemental forms of Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ, each a direct corollary of Torrance's doctrine of the hypostatic union, are the doctrine of "incarnational redemption" and the doctrine of the "vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ."

The elemental forms of Torrance's christology are related to another fundamental aspect of his scientific theology: theological holism. Each elemental form displays a unitary, non-dualist character. By affirming that the incarnate Son is "of one nature with the Father," the *homoousion* precludes a dualism between Jesus and God, such as is found in adoptionist christologies. By affirming that the incarnate Son is both fully human as well as fully divine, the hypostatic union precludes a docetic dualism that separates Jesus from humanity. Likewise, Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption precludes a dualism between the incarnation and the atonement, or between the person and work of Christ, by asserting that the incarnation is inherently redemptive and redemption is inherently incarnational. Finally, Torrance's doctrine of vicarious humanity describes the intrinsic connection between the faith and obedience of Jesus Christ and our own salvation.

The basic order or progression of ideas that underlies the doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ in Torrance's scientific theology may be diagrammed as follows:

DIAGRAM 1



In summary: By firmly grounding Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ in his kataphysical method, wherein the incarnate Saviour is viewed within the nexuses of onto-relations that disclose his identity as Son of God and son of man, the complexity of Torrance's thought can be reduced to a minimal number of holistic, non-dualist elemental forms.

The relationship between the mediation of revelation and reconciliation and the elemental forms of Torrance's scientific theology can be visually conceptualised in a 2 x 4 table as follows:

(Continued next page)

TABLE 1

Elemental Forms	Homoousion	Hypostatic Union	Incarnational redemption	Vicarious humanity
Revelation	Jesus "is" the revelation of God; epistemological linchpin of knowledge of God	Words of Jesus are words of God; first-order relation between Jesus' speech and divine revelation	n/a	God's address to man in human speech; "real text" of divine revelation
Reconciliation	Only God can save; Jesus is God	ontological aspect of atoning reconciliation; union of divine and human natures "is" atoning reconciliation	Dynamic expression of hypostatic union; Godward-humanward movement of reconciliation	Jesus embodies covenanted way of response on behalf of all; humanward-Godward movement of reconciliation

By examining and explaining Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation within the framework of the minimal number of elemental forms that arise from his kataphysical theological method, I have organised a vast, scattered, and seemingly disconnected array of knowledge into a systematic and coherent framework, thereby filling a gap in the literature on Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Jesus Christ.

8.3 Completion of Objectives

In the Introduction to this thesis, I argued that Torrance's vision of the mediation of Jesus Christ can be best approached in a scientifically theological way by addressing the elemental forms or basic concepts of his christology as they relate to the overarching themes of revelation and reconciliation. Moreover, I proposed that the aim of this research was to address the themes of revelation and reconciliation in Torrance's vision of the mediation of Jesus Christ in terms of the elemental forms or basic concepts central to his christology, such as the *homoousion* and the hypostatic union, while remaining faithful to the fundamental axiom of his scientific theology. I have endeavoured to support my central theoretical argument and to meet the aim of this research through the completion of a number of objectives.

My first objective was to evaluate the epistemology and methodology of Torrance's scientific theology and its relation to the mediation of Jesus Christ. This objective has been met in Chapter Two, wherein I described Torrance's critical realist, interactionist

epistemology, one that rejects all attempts to demythologise scripture by taking seriously the biblical account of God's self-revelation in history in ancient Israel and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit. I also described Torrance's fundamental methodological axiom, wherein scientific theological knowledge is developed according to the nature (*kata physin*) of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, who is *homoousios to Patri*. I showed that Torrance's method of kataphysical inquiry requires his epistemology to be developed *a posteriori*, as he allows the divine nature revealed in Jesus Christ to guide his theological thought. Finally, I showed that Torrance's scientific methodology rightly places Jesus Christ squarely in the centre of the entire theological enterprise and introduces a christological control to the traditional loci of systematic theology.

My second objective was to evaluate Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ in the matrix of Israel and its relation to revelation and reconciliation. This objective has been met in Chapter Three, wherein I introduced Torrance's description of the prehistory of the mediation of revelation and reconciliation in Israel as the "womb of the incarnation." I described three important aspects of the mediation of revelation in Israel. Among these is the establishment of a community of reciprocity, wherein were developed the permanent structures of thought and speech about God which Torrance describes as the "essential furniture of our knowledge of God." In regard to the mediation of reconciliation, I described four aspects of Torrance's view of the prehistory of mediation in Israel. Among these is the "covenanted way of response" with which God graciously provided Israel, so that an unholy people could approach a holy God in appropriate worship. I also described the incipient concept of the Suffering Servant that arose in Israel and was finally embodied in Jesus Christ.

My third objective was to evaluate Torrance's understanding of the mediation of Christ in regard to the inner nature of God, that is, in terms of the Nicene *homoousion* and its relation to the mediation of revelation and reconciliation. This objective was met in Chapter Four, wherein I began with the New Testament witness to the relation between Jesus and the Father. I then provided an overview of the Patristic development of the Nicene *homoousion* in the face of aberrant christologies that challenged the orthodox view of the consubstantial Father-Son relation. In regard to the mediation of revelation, I explained the epistemological significance of the *homoousion*, noting Torrance's regard for the *homoousion* as the "ontological and epistemological linchpin" of

Christian theology. Next, I identified the *homoousion* as the thread that holds together the levels of Torrance's stratification model of the knowledge of God. Then I offered a detailed explanation of Torrance's rejection of natural theology as an independent conceptual system developed prior to the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ and offered as a preamble to faith. After noting the epistemological significance of the Reformation hallmark, *sola gratia*, I described Torrance's call for a return to a unitary epistemology grounded in the divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. Moreover, I reiterated Torrance's insistence that a truly scientific theology will begin its inquiry with Jesus Christ, for to know God through the incarnate Son, who is "of one being with the Father," is to know God in strict accordance with his nature. In regard to the mediation of reconciliation, I described the evangelical significance of the *homoousion*, noting that the integrity of the Gospel depends upon the unity of being and agency between Jesus Christ and God. I then described the pastoral implications of the *homoousion*. After explaining Torrance's description of the "theological schizophrenia" that has resulted from the medieval dualism between the loving Son and the unknown Father, I noted Torrance's frequent assertion that there is no dark, unknown, inscrutable God "behind the back of Jesus."

My fourth objective was to evaluate Torrance's understanding of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the one incarnate person of Jesus Christ and its relation to the mediation of revelation and reconciliation. This objective was met in Chapter Five, wherein I began with an overview of the christological controversies that were considered to have been resolved at the Council of Chalcedon. Then I explained the epistemological and evangelical significance of the humanity, deity, and the hypostatic union of humanity and deity in Jesus Christ. I addressed the epistemological significance of the humanity of Jesus Christ by explaining Torrance's assertion that the very "creatureliness" of Jesus constitutes the act of divine revelation in a means accessible to humankind. Next, I explained how the full deity of Jesus Christ is essential for the mediation of divine revelation: the identity of Christ's revelation with God's self-revelation assures us that what we know in and through Jesus Christ is God "as God is." Then I explained the epistemological significance of the hypostatic union for revelation, noting that without the hypostatic union, we would not hear God in Jesus' creaturely speech. I then explained the significance of the humanity of Jesus Christ for reconciliation, noting that mediation between God and humanity requires that Jesus Christ not only be *homoousios* with the Father, but also *homoousios* with

humankind. Next, I explained the significance of the divinity of Jesus Christ for the mediation of reconciliation. Because Jesus is God, his mediation of reconciliation is the guarantee that the redemptive acts of Christ are identical with the acts of God and, therefore, have final and ultimate validity. I then explained Torrance's view of the significance of the hypostatic union for the mediation of revelation. Because humanity and deity are united in the one person of the incarnate Son, the divine acts in the human nature of Jesus Christ and the human acts in the divine nature of the eternal Word are both predicates of one and the same person. Finally, I explained how, in the atonement, God has brought about an act at once from the side of God "as God," and from the human side "as man," an act of real and final union between God and humanity.

My fifth objective was to evaluate the relationship between the incarnation and the atonement in regard to Torrance's doctrine of the mediation of Christ. This objective was met in Chapter Six, wherein I emphasised the Godward-humanward movement of the mediation of reconciliation. I began with an overview of the major "theories" of atonement that have been articulated in the history of the Church. Then I explained how Torrance remains true to his unitary, non-dualist theology by asserting an intrinsic connection between the incarnation and the atonement. For Torrance, the hypostatic union is no mere static union; rather, it is a dynamic, atoning union; that is, the atoning "work" of Jesus Christ is a direct function of his incarnate constitution as God and man hypostatically joined together in atoning reconciliation, so that his work is not different from who he is. The mediation of reconciliation depends on the fact that, in the hypostatic union, one person works both from the side of God "as God" and from the side of humanity "as man." Moreover, I explained how the inherent connection Torrance sees between the incarnation and atonement depends heavily upon his controversial view of the assumption of sinful Adamic flesh in the incarnation. I articulated Torrance's appeal for a return to the Patristic assertion that "the unassumed is the unhealed." I then explained how the doctrine of the assumption of Adamic flesh was gradually replaced in the Western Church by what Torrance calls the "Latin heresy," that is, the Western tendency to view the atonement in terms of an "external," forensic transaction between Jesus and God, wherein the incarnate Son's humanity plays merely an instrumental role in atonement. Next, I explained how Torrance's unitary theology interweaves the doctrines of the hypostatic union and the atonement, so that the hypostatic union is the "ontological" aspect of atoning reconciliation and atoning reconciliation is the "dynamic" expression of the hypostatic union. I then

explained Torrance's unitary, holistic view of the person and work of Christ. In contrast to the "gospel" of "external relations" of the Latin heresy, with its dualism between incarnation and atonement, Torrance regards atonement as a function of the "internal relations" of the incarnate constitution of Jesus Christ, in whom God and fallen, sinful humanity are eternally united in atoning, reconciling union. That is, atonement takes place "within" the one person of Jesus Christ, wherein he takes our diseased, fallen humanity to himself in a dynamic, atoning union, penetrating to the ontological depths of human sin in order to heal, cleanse, and reconcile fallen humanity to God. Thus, Jesus Christ "embodies" the mediation of reconciliation. Finally, I explained Torrance's understanding of Calvin's doctrine of the "wonderful exchange," detailing its implications for the range of atonement, election, and reprobation.

My final objective was to evaluate Torrance's understanding of the "vicarious humanity" of Jesus Christ and its relation to the mediation of Christ. This objective was met in Chapter Seven, wherein I emphasised the humanward-Godward movement of mediation. In regard to the mediation of revelation, I explained Torrance's view that Jesus Christ is both God's address to humanity and the perfect human response to God. In regard to the mediation of reconciliation, I described how Jesus embodies the all-important middle term between God and humanity; that is, in his vicarious humanity, he "is" the fulfilment of the covenanted way of response God provided Israel. Next, I explained Torrance's view of the Gospel, not merely as a divine revelation which demands a human response, but as divine revelation which includes, in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, the appropriate, fully human response to God on behalf of all. I explained Torrance's unitary view of revelation and reconciliation, noting that Jesus acts from the side of God in the revelation of divine truth and, at the same time, acts from the side of humanity in faithful obedience to that revelation on behalf of all. Finally, I explained Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ in terms of specific human responses to the Gospel. With Torrance's understanding of saving faith as the faith "of" Jesus Christ as a hermeneutical guide, I explained how Torrance relates the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ to justification and sanctification, conversion, worship and prayer, the sacraments, and evangelism.

8.4 Recommendations for Further Study

Because his vast theological output is scattered across numerous books and journal articles and addresses a variety of theological, philosophical, and scientific concerns, there is an ongoing need for further systematic research and articulation of the scientific theology of T.F. Torrance.

We believe preaching, evangelism, and missions provide a particularly fruitful field for further research on Torrance's theology. Torrance's doctrine of incarnational redemption and its correlative doctrine of universal reconciliation may have a profound impact on the proclamation of the Gospel. Rather than a "negative" demand for repentance backed by the threat of a dark, inscrutable God of wrath hidden behind the back of Jesus, the good news that "God was in Christ reconciling all things to himself" facilitates a "positive" proclamation of the Gospel that accentuates the love of God revealed in the incarnation. In light of Torrance's doctrine of universal reconciliation, the *kerygma* is not a dire warning to the "lost," but rather the announcement of good news to the "found," wherein repentance, faith, and obedience are preached as the appropriate responses to unconditional grace rather than conditions for it. In this regard, Torrance's persistent and articulate critique of the epistemological and cosmological dualisms endemic to Western thought and their influence on the Christian doctrine of God is relevant. While many theses, articles, and books have addressed various aspects of this important dimension of Torrance's thought, we believe there is need for further research into what we regard as the negative effect of a dualist doctrine of God on preaching, evangelism, and missions. In relation to the *kerygma*, we believe that a unitary, non-dualist doctrine of God, that is, a doctrine of God firmly based on the love of God revealed in the consubstantial Father-Son relation, is the proper theological beginning point for the proclamation of the Gospel. Plainly stated, and we believe Torrance would agree, all our preaching and teaching about God must begin with Jesus. A suggested title for further research is: 'Kerygma' *in Relation to T.F. Torrance's Doctrine of the Mediation of Christ.*

In addition, since the present thesis has focused on the mediation of Jesus Christ, we would welcome further research on Torrance's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, specifically with a view toward the role of the Spirit in relation to the mediation of Jesus Christ. A suggested title is: *The Holy Spirit in T.F. Torrance's Doctrine of the Mediation of Jesus Christ.*

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