FEATURE ARTICLE

ACTUALISM, DUALISM, AND ONTO-RELATIONS: Interrogating Torrance's Criticism of Barth's Doctrine of Baptism

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Abstract: *Thomas F. Torrance criticized Karl Barth's doctrine of baptism in Church Dogmatics 4.4, claiming that it exhibited an improper dualism. This essay explicates Torrance's criticism as one that arises from Torrance's own theological commitments and as a criticism of Barth's doctrine of baptism. It does so by working through a series of four heuristic questions. First, what does Torrance mean when he accuses Barth of baptismal dualism? Second, why did Torrance think that Barth had lapsed into such a dualism? Third, what was Torrance's alternative to Barth's alleged baptismal dualism? Fourth, was Torrance right in his criticism of Barth? The essay concludes by reflecting on the question: where lies the disconnect between Barth and Torrance? Both thinkers are actualist, but they are so in different ways.*

Thomas F. Torrance was not only one of Karl Barth's most noted students, he was also—as Alister McGrath says—"a major figure in relation to English-language Barth-reception."[1] This close association of Torrance with Barth makes it all the more surprising when one encounters the admittedly few criticisms that Torrance made of Barth's theology. This essay is about one of those criticisms.

In his essay entitled "The One Baptism Common to Christ and His Church," Torrance gives voice to perhaps the most penetrating of these criticisms. He

1 Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 117. Two of the means through which the communication of Barth's theology to English-language theology occurred were the founding of the *Scottish Journal of Theology* and the translation of Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik*. See pp. 126–30; D. Densil Morgan, *Barth Reception in Britain* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 218–24; 257–60.

works through an impressive array of biblical and patristic material aimed at establishing in connection to baptism what he had already argued more generally in his dissertation, namely, that "grace is in fact identical with Jesus Christ in person and word and deed."[2] In his "One Baptism" essay Torrance puts this sentiment negatively vis-à-vis the "Augustinian Tradition," in which "grace is not only distinguished from Christ but is an intermediary reality between God and man which holds God himself apart from us."[3] Those who would reject such a disjunction are left, according to Torrance, with a stark binary choice: either "return to a sacramental dualism between water-baptism and Spirit baptism" or pursue "an even stronger unity between water-baptism and Spirit-baptism." Those familiar with the doctrine of baptism that Barth advanced in *Church Dogmatics* 4.4[4] can certainly see where this is going, but Torrance goes on to spell things out and thereby avoid any doubt about the referent for this criticism: "The former alternative has been taken by Karl Barth." Torrance includes another twist in this already interesting story. He wants to be clear that this criticism does not warrant a wholesale rejection of Barth's theology. Rather, what he finds in Barth's last blast of the trumpet, as it were, "seems to me to be deeply inconsistent" with Barth's understanding of the Trinity and incarnation.[5] Rather than an external criticism of Barth's theology, Torrance understands himself to be making an internal criticism, a criticism of Barth by Barth, or as engaging in an exercise to correct the circumference of Barth's theology by more rigorous connection to its center.

What makes this story even more stimulating is that Barth specialists have been at something of a loss when confronted by Torrance's criticisms, and they tend to handle it in one of three ways. The first approach is agreement. John Yocum, for example, accepts Torrance's point and attaches it to a narrative whereby Barth has increasing difficulty holding together divine and human agency in their proper relationship the further into *CD* 4 that he went, until

2 Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*, Theologos: The Torrance Collection (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 21. Molnar notes the significance of this insight both for Torrance's dissertation and his later work. Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, Great Theologians (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 10.

3 Thomas F. Torrance, "The One Baptism Common to Christ and His Church," in *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1996), 99.

4 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, 4 volumes in 13 part vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-75). *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, 4 vols. in 13 parts (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1932, and Zürich: TVZ, 1938–65), hereafter abbreviated as *CD* and *KD* respectively.

5 Torrance, "One Baptism," 99.

finally pulling them apart in *CD* 4.4.[6] I have committed a monograph to the argument that such a narrative of decline is unconvincing and will not rehash that subject here.[7] Second, one might take John Webster's approach and turn the criticism back onto Torrance, arguing that Torrance lacks a sufficiently deep appreciation for Barth's "ethical intention." According to Webster, Torrance's account of Jesus' humanity locates all meaningful human action therein and thus evacuates the Christian life of its ethical aspect. Webster represents Barth's account of Jesus' humanity, on the other hand, as upholding that ethical aspect by evoking in the Christian life meaningful human action that corresponds to God's own action in Christ.[8] But this strategy is, rhetorically speaking, something of a red herring and does not finally provide a sufficient answer to Torrance's criticism of Barth's doctrine of baptism. The present essay, though not without a contrastive element, endeavors to hear and understand Torrance's criticism more fully. The third and final approach is that taken by Paul Molnar in his work on Karl Barth and the Lord's Supper, where he straightforwardly states, "I do not see a Gnostic dualism" in Barth's sacramental theology.[9] While defense of Barth against Torrance's criticism is not inappropriate, it also does not shed further light on the meaning of Torrance's criticism and its place in Torrance's thought. Writing with the purpose of expositing Torrance rather than Barth, Molnar returned briefly to this subject recently with a more satisfying discussion.[10]

The task remains to explicate Torrance's criticism of Barth as one that arises from *Torrance's own theological commitments* and as a criticism of *Barth's doctrine of baptism*. It is this two-pronged, stereoscopic reading that I undertake in this essay. To accomplish this task, I will interrogate Torrance's criticism by working through a series of four heuristic questions. First, what does Torrance mean when he accuses Barth of baptismal dualism? Second, why did Torrance think that Barth had lapsed into such a dualism? Third, what was Torrance's alternative to Barth's alleged baptismal dualism? Fourth, was Torrance right in his criticism of Barth? Having completed this interrogation, I will conclude by asking a final question: where lies the disconnect between Barth and Torrance?

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6 John Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth*, Barth Studies (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 174–75.

7 W. Travis McMaken, *The Sign of the Gospel: Toward an Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism after Karl Barth*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).

8 John Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 171.

9 Paul D. Molnar, *Karl Barth and the Theology of the Lord's Supper: A Systematic Investigation*, Issues in Systematic Theology (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 303.

10 Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 300–303.

1. What does Torrance mean by "dualism"?

McGrath notes that Torrance's work evinces "a growing concern over the issue of dualism" beginning in 1962.[11] This is unsurprising because it was during this period that Torrance was at work on one of his most important monographs, namely, *Theological Science*. As Torrance notes in his preface, this volume started its life as a lecture cycle delivered in 1959 at a number of theological institutions in the United States, before being published in "a considerably expanded" form in 1969.[12] The issue of dualism pervades this volume. For instance, Torrance applauds a "healthy rejection of dualism" on the first page.[13] Both Torrance's interest in theological science and his criticism of dualism predate this period, however, even if the idea and language of dualism only here begin to take center stage. Torrance studied with Barth in Basel from 1937–38. His initial plan for his dissertation was to attempt "a scientific account of Christian dogmatics," which Barth considered "too ambitious." He also wrote and delivered a lecture cycle on theology and science while teaching at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York during the 1938–39 academic year.[14] In other words, the emergence of Torrance's concern about dualism in the early 1960s is unsurprising insofar as it fits nicely with the trajectory and concerns of his thought from its earliest stages.

That his concern about dualism emerged at this point is interesting, because this is when Barth was hard at work on his mature doctrine of baptism. Barth delivered the lectures that would comprise *CD* 4.4 in 1959–60. Furthermore, Barth notes that "a very perspicacious abstract of these lectures" existed and "had a fairly wide circulation in several transcripts."[15] It was during this period that Torrance had a sustained private conversation with both Karl and Markus Barth on the topic of baptism when they visited Edinburgh in 1966.[16] Barth's

11 McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 142.

12 Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), vii.

13 Ibid., 1.

14 Thomas F. Torrance, "My Interaction with Karl Barth," in *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 123, 125. For a discussion of Torrance's theology and science lectures at Auburn, see McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 199–205. Toward the end of McGrath's discussion of these lectures he notes that conversation with Sir Bernard Lovell, a scientist and one of his wife's cousins, provided further impetus for Torrance's engagement in thinking about the intersection of theology and science. He suggests 1946 as the beginning of this influence (p. 205). See also Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 40–41.

15 *CD* 4.4, ix; *KD* 4.4, x.

16 Torrance, "My Interaction," 135.

publication of his revision of these lectures was motivated in part by the desire for his readers to have the full argument and articulation of his position before them rather than simply this précis. The German edition was published in 1967, and the English translation—which was overseen by Torrance as co-editor with Geoffrey Bromiley—appeared in 1969. This brings us to Torrance's criticism of Barth in his "One Baptism" essay, which was delivered as a lecture in 1970, published in German in 1971, and published in English in 1975.[17] As seen previously, this criticism was couched precisely in the language of dualism. Thus, it is interesting that Torrance's concern about dualism and Barth's doctrine of baptism grew up together, as it were. This is a pivotal moment in the development of Torrance's theology at which he clarified his own thought—through engagement with Barth—by developing the concept of "dualism" as an analytic tool.

This tool that Torrance developed proved to be multifaceted. Torrance identifies many different kinds of dualism, tracing their effects through a web of interconnected theological issues. Tapio Luoma helpfully brings together this panoply of dualisms by articulating a three-stage historical typology at work in Torrance's thought.[18] The first is Greek or Ptolemaic dualism with its tendency to distinguish so sharply between the sensible and the intelligible that it becomes difficult to conceive of true incarnation. Torrance analyzes patristic christological heresies in terms of their entanglements with this dualist intellectual framework, giving thinkers like Barth and Athanasius credit for not falling prey to these frameworks.[19] The second is Newtonian dualism, which promulgated an improper distinction between absolute space and time on one side, and relative space and time on the other. This led, as Torrance explains, to a mechanistic determinism. Third and finally, these dualisms are overcome by the dynamic engagement with objective reality found in contemporary "Einsteinian" modes of thought that,

17 Torrance, "One Baptism," 6.

18 Tapio Luoma, *Incarnation and Physics: Natural Science in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance*, American Academy of Religion Academy Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20–21. Luoma provides some helpful criticisms of Torrance's historical typology that deserve to be taken seriously. Such criticism falls outside the scope of this essay, however. For another helpful explication of Torrance on dualism, and on the unitive modes of thought that he advances as the solution to dualism, see Kye Won Lee, *Living in Union with Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance*, Issues in Systematic Theology (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), esp. 11–20. It is further necessary to signal that concerns about epistemological and ontological dualisms are intertwined in Torrance's thought.

19 For example, see Torrance, "Legacy of Karl Barth," throughout, and esp. 167. See also the discussion in Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 39–40, 107; Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 70–71.

consequently, make it much easier to conceive of true incarnation.[20]

The variegated way that Torrance deploys the concept of dualism, briefly illustrated by Luoma's historical typology and familiar to anyone who has read Torrance's work at any length, raises the rather basic question: what is dualism? Torrance does not answer that question in a straightforward way. As Luoma notes, Torrance "fails to define the concept of dualism with sufficient accuracy." But Torrance is not alone in this, and his imprecision arises at least in part because "general definitions of the concept are so ambiguous."[21] It would be a mistake to understand Torrance's rejection of dualism as a rejection of all thinking in terms of duality. Torrance maintains clear dualities in his thought, such as the christological duality between Christ's divine and human natures, or the cosmological duality between God as creator and the creation. So dualism for Torrance is not simply duality. One has dualism rather than duality when the relationship between the two aspects of a duality is not properly conceived. Luoma explains that "the crucial issue [for Torrance's account of dualism] appears to be the nature of the relation between the poles involved," where dualism "distorts the balance between the poles" such that one subsumes the other.[22]

For Torrance, dualism occurs when two things that should be held together in a carefully ordered relationship are no longer understood as such. In such a scenario, one side will overcome the other, or they will be improperly separated. It is hard to ignore the overtones of Chalcedon here, which enjoins us to avoid confusing, changing, dividing, or separating the divine and human natures in Christ. While Torrance affirms Chalcedon, however, his thinking is far more influenced by the Nicene *homoousion*. Affirmation of true incarnation, of the unitive if necessarily differentiated relation between Father and Son, grounds the possibility of an analogously unitive if necessarily differentiated relation between God and the world. Dualism occurs, then, when a unitive relation between God and world as found in the *homoousion* is absent from view. Torrance articulates the importance of this connection with reference to Christian thinking about the relation between Creator and creation: "The distinctly Christian outlook upon the

20 One of the more accessible discussions of this historical trajectory and its multivalence is found in Thomas F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology: Consonance between Theology and Science* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 15–44. See also the brief discussion by Douglas Kelly, who identifies the importance of Maxwell and Gödel for a full-bodied account of this last stage in Torrance's historical typology: Douglas F. Kelly, "The Realist Epistemology of Thomas F. Torrance," in *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Saviour*, ed. Gerrit Scott Dawson (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 94–95.

21 Luoma, *Incarnation and Physics*, 87.

22 Ibid., 91.

relation of God to the universe took shape as theologians thought through the bearing of the incarnation of the divine Logos. . . . One God, the Father Almighty, is the Creator of heaven and earth . . . , while the incarnate Son or Logos, through whom all things were made and in whom they hold together, is the central and creative source of all order and rationality within the created universe."[23] It is the incarnation, then, and the unitive forms of thought that derive from it, that overcomes the improperly disjunctive forms of thought that Torrance characterizes as dualism. Consequently, Luoma is correct when he observes that for Torrance "dualism is theologically reasoned" and "Christologically based."[24]

Dualism is, therefore, what is rejected when the Nicene *homoousion* is affirmed. But what then does this mean for Torrance's theology? What shape does this affirmation take? Torrance's rejection of dualism moves in both epistemological and cosmological directions, and for Torrance the epistemological issues derive from improper cosmological conceptions. The present essay's concern is with the cosmological aspect, and how Torrance's rejection of dualism impacts his approach to what he might call "theological ontology."[25] In other words, if we reject dualism and affirm the *homoousion*, what does that mean for theological ontology? There are three interrelated consequences that are pertinent for the purposes of this essay. They are Torrance's interactionism, his integration of

23 Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 2. Colyer comments that for Torrance the Nicene *homoousion* affirms the "undivided divine-human reality of Jesus Christ." Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 72.

24 Luoma, *Incarnation and Physics*, 152. Torrance's describes the *homoousion* as "the lynchpin" of the "classical Christian theology" that opposed dualism. Torrance, *Ground and Grammar*, 39.

25 Torrance, "My Interaction," 124. For those interested in following up on the epistemological aspect of Torrance's rejection of dualism, there are three primary conceptual clusters to consider. The first is Torrance's account of the "epistemological inversion" that occurs when one engages in a properly scientific theology. Torrance, *Theological Science*, 131. Second, and closely related to the first, there is his discussion of properly scientific epistemology that functions *kata physin*, that is, according to the nature of its object of study. See Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological and Natural Science*, Theologos: The Torrance Collection (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 83. For more on these two points and how they fit into Torrance's epistemology in general and his theological epistemology in particular, see W. Travis McMaken, "The Impossibility of Natural Knowledge of God in T. F. Torrance's Reformulated Natural Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12, no. 3 (2010), 320–26; Myk Habets, *Theology in Transposition: A Constructive Appraisal of T. F. Torrance* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 46–51. Third and finally, attention must be paid to Torrance's work on the stratification of knowledge. See Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, Theologos: The Torrance Collection (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 131–59; Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 29–39; McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 168–74; Benjamin Myers, "The Stratification of Knowledge in the Thought of T. F. Torrance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61, no. 1 (2008).

Christ's person and work, and his notion of onto-relations.

First, rather than improperly separating creation from the Creator, Torrance advocates an interactionist perspective. He advances this point in opposition to the second, Newtonian dualism from the historical typology mentioned above. The "Newtonian world-view" produced a "sophisticated deterministic outlook" that effectively shut God out of the world.[26] Of course, Torrance does not think that Newton alone is responsible for this, or that it is uniquely a problem of the early modern period. A few pages earlier he speaks of "the closed predetermination of Aristotelian final causes or the changeless natural law of the Stoics." The critical point, however, is that all these thought-worlds are opposed to "the concept of the creative interaction of God with the temporal order of the universe."[27] Rather than being apart from the created world, God's transcendence means God's presence in and interaction with the created world. What Torrance finds in thinkers like Einstein and others is a conception of the universe that fits with this picture of the created world as "intrinsically open" to God's interaction rather than "being closed in upon itself."[28] Although Torrance does much of his thinking about these matters in the context of the doctrine of creation, he also makes it clear that his thinking is finally controlled by the incarnation. The incarnation demonstrates the interactionist character of God's relation with the created world because it is there that God "interacts with the world and establishes . . . a relation between creaturely being and Himself." In the incarnation, God "asserts . . . the actuality of His relations with us."[29]

Second, and building on the importance of incarnation and especially hypostatic union in his interactionist account, Torrance emphasizes the importance of thinking in terms of internal rather than external relations. He brings this out especially when discussing soteriology, faulting "Western Christianity" for interpreting the atonement "almost exclusively in terms of external forensic relations" and "as a judicial transaction in the transference of the penalty for sin from the sinner to the sin-bearer."[30] In other words, sin is understood as an external thing that can be disconnected from the sinner and given to Christ. In Torrance's view, this both minimizes the seriousness of sin for human existence and misunderstands

26 Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 75. For more on Newton, see Torrance, *Ground and Grammar*, 68–69.

27 Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 69. See also Torrance's comments about "a covert Aristotelian type of deism." Torrance, *Ground and Grammar*, 63.

28 Torrance, *Theological and Natural Science*, 62.

29 Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 67.

30 Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 40.

the nature of Christ's saving significance. Instead of such an external view, "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" in the incarnation.[31] Salvation occurs as Jesus Christ reconciles human existence to God precisely by living a life of vicarious obedience under the conditions of that existence. His work of salvation is, therefore, internal to his person and unable to be separated from it. Believers share in that salvation precisely by being united with him in the power of the Holy Spirit. Myk Habets summarizes things nicely: "Torrance seeks to avoid . . . dualism and its resultant external, transactional notion of redemption in his incarnational model of atonement."[32]

Lest one think that Torrance's concern for thinking in terms of internal rather than external relations is limited to the intersection of christology and atonement, it is important, third and finally, to discuss Torrance's concept of onto-relations. Gary Deddo rightly sees Torrance's articulation of onto-relations as "a central, if not the central, element in Torrance's approach to theology."[33] Torrance's basic insight is trinitarian in nature and pertains to the status of the inter-trinitarian relations vis-à-vis the shared divine essence. In other words, how do the relations between Father, Son, and Spirit pertain to God's being? For Torrance, "these relations subsisting between them are just as substantial as what they are unchangeably in themselves. . . . That is to say, the relations between the divine Persons belong to what they are as Persons—they

31 Ibid., 41. For more on this prevalent theme in Torrance, see pp. 62–67; Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 22–23, 148–50; Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 37; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 154, 158–61.

32 Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 50. It is worth noting that this aspect of Torrance's thought builds directly upon the foundation laid in his dissertation where, as seen above, he emphasized the identity of grace and Jesus's person. It also builds on the concern with which Calvin began the third book of his *Institutes*: "As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.1.1.

33 Gary Deddo, "T. F. Torrance: The Onto-Relational Frame of His Theology," *Princeton Theological Review* 39(2008), 37. Deddo's article is the best introduction to this subject in the secondary literature, but see also Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 55–57, and 308–21. Consult Colyer's index for further discussion.

are constitutive onto-relations."[34] The mutually constitutive inter-relations between the three divine persons constitute the essence of the triune God, and the triune God has no substance apart from these relations. But this way of integrating relationality within ontology does not stop, for Torrance, with the Trinity. Precisely because God is onto-relationally constituted, we should not be surprised to find that creaturely being is similarly constructed. Onto-relational thinking is, consequently, "applicable in a creaturely way to persons in relation to one another" in a manner that "reflects the transcendent way in which the three divine Persons are interrelated in the Holy Trinity."[35] Furthermore, human being is constructed not only with reference to relationship with other creaturely realities, but also and primarily with reference to relationship with God.[36] In this way, Torrance's onto-relational thinking brings together his concern for unitive and interactionist rather than dualist thinking precisely by extending his concern for thinking in terms of internal rather than external relations.

2. Why did Torrance think that Barth had lapsed into dualism?

Two moves are necessary in answering this question. First, it is important to document Torrance's tendency to credit Barth for supplying him with—or at least providing fertile ground for the development of—Torrance's own analytic tools. This makes Torrance very sensitive to those places where he feels it necessary to disagree with Barth, and he tends to conceptualize these divergences as lapses or inconsistencies on Barth's part. Second, an account must be given for why it is that Barth's doctrine of baptism triggers Torrance's demurral. What factors

34 Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 157. See further n.85 below.

35 Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 43–44. Torrance also points to "modern particle theory and quantum theory" as examples of how contemporary science has "been forced to develop something like onto-relational notions." Torrance, *Ground and Grammar*, 175. As an extension of this, there are interesting connections to be made between Torrance's work on onto-relations and his advocacy for thinking in terms of a "relational notion" rather than a "receptacle notion" with reference to space and time. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 56. One might be tempted to think this onto-relational pattern that includes both divine and creaturely being constitutes an analogy of being. It does, in a certain respect. But Torrance would not countenance an attempt to argue from the character of creaturely being to the character of divine being. The contingence of the created order prevents such an attempt. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, 34. So any analogy of being present in Torrance's account of onto-relations is grounded first in the analogy of faith. This issue is bound up with interpretive questions surrounding Torrance and natural theology. For more on that subject, see n.42 below.

36 See Habets, *Theosis*, 40–41.

contributed to Torrance's interpretation of Barth's mature doctrine of baptism as dualist?

First, Torrance credits Barth for overcoming dualism in recent theology. Indeed, Torrance views this as one of Barth's most important achievements. In Torrance's autobiographical accounts, for instance, he speaks of his early encounter with Schleiermacher and the realization that the latter's theology "lacked any realist scientific objectivity." His reading of Augustine at the same time alerted him to the danger of "powerful Neoplatonic ingredients" that established "controlling presuppositions basically similar to those in Schleiermacher."[37] His encounter with Barth was more cheering but, despite Barth's rigorously scientific approach, "it appeared to be little more than a formal science and fell somewhat short of what [Torrance] had been looking for." But then Torrance encountered Barth's "doctrines of the hypostatic union" and the Trinity, and this provided the material content that Torrance needed to develop "a coherent and consistent account of Christian theology as an organic whole in a rigorously scientific way in terms of its objective truth."[38] Torrance nowhere explicitly identifies the problem of dualism in these reflections, and that is understandable considering that these are reflections on a period of his development before he had clearly conceptualized the problem in dualist terms. But his worries about Neoplatonism (in Augustine) and the lack of objectivity (in Schleiermacher), as well as his concern for thinking about Christianity as an organic whole on the basis of the incarnation, are nevertheless present. These reflections are materially consistent with his account of dualism even if they are not formally thematized as such.

Another example comes from Torrance's essay on Barth's theology and what Torrance calls the "Latin heresy." This heresy involves a tendency that Torrance identifies in the Western theological tradition to think "in abstractive formal relations" and "external relations." Torrance associates this tradition with figures such as Augustine and Newton, asserting that "its roots go back to . . . dualism that prevailed in Patristic and Medieval Latin theology."[39] The alternative is to think in terms of "internal relations." Such relations are patterned on the

37 Torrance, "My Interaction," 121–22.

38 Ibid., 123. Torrance also comments that "it belongs to the nature of the human spirit to reach out toward a unitary understanding of existence." Theology's role is to point to the Word of God as that which "addresses our intra-mundane contradictions . . . in order to point them to the only source of ultimate unity—in God." This is offered as a clarification of Barth's theology. Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology 1910–1931* (London: T&T Clark International 2004), 172.

39 Thomas F. Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39(1986), 463.

incarnation as explicated by the Nicene *homoousion*, which articulates the internal or ontological relation that obtains between the Father and Son in the Triune God.[40] Torrance associates this insight with the figures of Athanasius and especially Barth, going so far as to characterize his essay as an attempt "to direct attention to Karl Barth's non-dualist and holistic way of thinking in contrast to the dualist and abstractive modes of thought that came to be built into the infrastructure of Western theology."[41] Here Barth is the champion of dualism's rejection and thereby the ground upon which Torrance works to develop his own distinction between internal and external relations.

A final example is Torrance's essay on Barth and the problem of natural theology. It is here that Torrance most clearly articulates his distinction between interactionist and dualist accounts of how God relates to the created world. Natural theology, as traditionally conceived, depends on a dualist approach "in which God is thought of as separated from the world of nature and history by a measure of deistic distance."[42] Traditional forms of natural theology take for granted this separation between God and the created world, and then set about trying to bridge that separation from the human side. Barth is the hero of the story once again, rejecting all such attempts and returning focus—by way of a rigorously scientific theological method—to a properly natural theology, which Torrance says "thinks rigorously in accordance with the nature of the divine object" and is therefore "natural to the fundamental subject-matter of theology."[43] But the possibility of doing theology in this way depends on a key

40 Ibid., 464.

41 Ibid., 465.

42 Thomas F. Torrance, "The Problem of Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth," *Religious Studies* 6(1970), 121. I have written about Torrance and natural theology elsewhere. See McMaken, "Impossibility of Natural Knowledge of God." A diversity of opinions exists within Torrance studies concerning his work on natural theology. Habets helpfully summarizes the various positions on offer: "first, that Torrance's theology sponsors a natural theology that functions in an apologetic way (Alister McGrath); second, that Torrance's theology is consistently Barthian and allows no place for a traditional natural theology at all, even though Torrance was at times inconsistent with these intentions (Paul Molnar); and third, that Torrance consistently speaks of natural theology in the way we would normally speak of a theology of nature, and there is no inconsistency within his thoughts on this issue (Elmer M. Colyer, and W. Travis McMaken). It is my contention that there is a fourth way to read his theology, one that seeks to bring the natural and theological sciences into dialogue, which allows a soft apologetic role to natural theology, and yet, one that does not allow any strictly logical bridge to God from unaided human reason on the basis of natural revelation. I also contend that Torrance was less than clear or consistent in his use of and development of his transposed form of natural theology." Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 85-86.

43 Torrance, "The Problem of Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth," 129.

presupposition, namely, that theology's subject matter—God—is available to it within the created world. This is where the incarnation's importance comes to the fore, because "the Incarnation means that the eternal Truth of God has entered time and for ever assumed historical form in Jesus Christ."[44] That this has occurred, however, demonstrates the insufficiency of the dualist conception whereby God is separated from the created world. It demands a unitive and interactionist approach, "one in which God is thought of as interacting closely with the world of nature and history without being confused with it."[45]

Second, Barth's doctrine of baptism triggers censure from Torrance in part because of historical alignment. Despite praising Barth for overcoming dualism with respect to natural theology, Torrance notes that "vestiges of this dualism persisted in Barth's thought, most notably in his understanding of the sacraments."[46] It is significant in this regard that Torrance's essay on Barth and natural theology was published in 1970, the same year in which Torrance first presented the "One Baptism" lecture where he explicitly criticized the dualism of Barth's doctrine of baptism. Torrance speaks of dualism in this context as "an operational disjunction between God and the world,"[47] a disjunction that prevents true encounter between God and humanity. Torrance finds such a disjunction in Barth's distinction between baptism with Spirit and with water. For his part, Torrance lauds "the mighty living God who interacts with what he has made in such a way that he creates genuine reciprocity between us and himself." Torrance then makes clear the incarnational foundation of this interactionist way of thinking about the relation between God and humanity: "This profound reciprocity in word and act is fulfilled in Christ . . . , for it is in hypostatic union that the self-giving of God really breaks through to man, when God becomes himself what man is and assumes man into a binding relation with his own being." Rejecting dualism and affirming the incarnation means developing a unitive and interactionist account of the relation between Spirit and water baptism. Indeed, Torrance had developed such an account already in the 1950s, as will be demonstrated in due course. Torrance may have hoped that Barth would join him in this constructive task but, on Torrance's reading, Barth finally remained caught within dualist patterns of thought.[48]

44 Ibid., 124.

45 Ibid., 121.

46 Ibid., 123.

47 Torrance, "One Baptism," 100.

48 Torrance tells the story of an *Auseinandersetzung* he had with Karl and Markus Barth when they came to Edinburgh in 1966 so that Karl could receive an honorary degree. At this point, Markus Barth had published his book on baptism. See Markus Barth, *Die Taufe - Ein*

It is likely that Eberhard Jüngel's interpretation of Barth's doctrine of baptism played some role in solidifying Torrance's criticism, as it did in the case of others.[49] Jüngel published an essay on Barth's doctrine of baptism in 1968—the year after Barth's publication of *KD* 4.4 in 1967, the year before the English translation was published in 1969, and two years before Torrance's criticism of Barth's doctrine of baptism as vestigially dualist. In this essay, Jüngel argues that a shift took place in Barth's theology from what I have described elsewhere as a sacramental instrumentalism to a sacramental parallelism. The distinction between divine and human agency in Spirit and water baptism is so sharp, on Jüngel's reading, that Barth correlates the agencies exclusively with the different forms of baptism. So, "water baptism is just as exclusively a human action as Spirit baptism is exclusively a divine action."[50] The two forms of baptism correspond to each other so that, for instance, the divine act of Spirit baptism may elicit the human act of water baptism. But they remain distinct acts that are performed by distinct agents in their respective spheres. Like parallel lines, these acts never meet. Such a thoroughgoing distinction between divine and human action, Spirit and water baptism, clearly falls within the boundaries of what Torrance calls dualism. Rather than integrating God and the created world in a holistic, unitive way, Jüngel's reading of Barth seems to separate them. Rather than understanding Spirit and water baptism as internally related, there seems only to be an external relation—or, as Torrance also describes this distinction, there is "not an ontological [i.e., internal] but merely a moral [i.e., external]" relation.[51]

Sakrament?: Ein Exegetischer Beitrag Zum Gespräch Über Die Kirchliche Taufe (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, AG., 1951). Karl Barth had already given his lectures on baptism that would become *CD* 4.4, and he was in the process of revising them for publication. Torrance recounts that the conversation was primarily between himself and Markus, with Torrance arguing "for an understanding of Baptism as the Sacrament of the vicarious obedience of Christ." This reportedly elicited the comment from Karl: "*Nicht so schlecht, Markus!*" Torrance, "My Interaction," 135. Of course, Barth proceeded to publish his baptism lectures the following year in a form that Torrance felt compelled to oppose.

49 John Webster, for instance, is influenced by Jüngel in important ways in his criticism of Barth's mature doctrine of baptism. See W. Travis McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft? Reassessing Barth's Doctrine of Baptism in Church Dogmatics IV/4," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17, no. 1 (2015), 92.

50 Eberhard Jüngel, "Karl Barths Lehre Von Der Taufe: Ein Hinweis Auf Ihre Probleme," in *Barth-Studien* (Zürich: Benziger, 1982), 258. See McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft," 90.

51 Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 464.

3. What was Torrance's alternative to Barth's alleged baptismal dualism?

The doctrine of baptism became a focal point for Torrance when he was named in 1954 as Convener of the Church of Scotland Commission on Baptism, a post which persisted until the commission completed its work in 1962. This body produced a number of lengthy reports which, taken together, comprised hundreds of pages of material. Torrance certainly left his mark on this material, although the exigencies of committee work mean we cannot take them straightforwardly as his own work.[52] However, Torrance also published a number of essays on baptism in the second half of the 1950s that provide us with a sure touchstone of his own thinking on the topic.[53] These essays contain the key moves that will resurface once again in his "One Baptism" essay in the early 1970s. Furthermore, these moves are consistent with his rejection of dualism, which would come into the open in the 1960s. Torrance's doctrine of baptism in these essays prioritizes thinking in terms of internal rather than external relations, especially with reference to the relation of water and Spirit baptism. Indeed, one might even say that water baptism's relation to Spirit baptism is a constitutive onto-relation for water baptism. Such an onto-relational account

52 McGrath provides a brief discussion of Torrance's work with the commission. See McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 99–101. Torrance's son, Iain, stresses in his review of McGrath that this work was shared especially by John Heron, the commission's secretary. See Iain Torrance, "Review of Alister Mcgrath, 'Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography'," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 4 (2009), 513. Although Torrance's was not the only intellect involved in the framing of this material, Bryan Spinks notes that "much of the drafting [of these reports] was in the hands of the Convener." The result is that "a 'Torrance flavour' to these reports is not too difficult to discern." Bryan D. Spinks, "'Freely by His Grace': Baptismal Doctrine and the Reform of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Church of Scotland, 1953-1994," in *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith: Essays in Honor of Aidan Kavanaugh*, ed. Nathan Mitchell and John F. Baldovin (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 220.

53 These essays were originally published in 1956 and 1958, and are collected in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, 2.93–132. Because most explications of Torrance's doctrine of baptism focus on his "One Baptism" essay, as the notes from the following studies make clear, I will develop the material commitments of Torrance's doctrine of baptism from these earlier essays. See Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 263–66; George Hunsinger, "The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 144; Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 295–306; Alexis Torrance, "The Theology of Baptism in T. F. Torrance and Its Ascetic Correlate in St. Mark the Monk," *Participatio* 4(2013). Torrance's sacramentology also contains an interesting eschatological component that, unfortunately, cannot be treated here. This material appears in virtually identical form in the following places: Torrance, *Atonement*, 305–308; Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 148–50.

enables Torrance to make the corollary interactionist claim, namely, that it is Jesus Christ who acts as baptizer.

Perhaps the cornerstone of Torrance's doctrine of baptism, conceptually speaking, is the distinction that he notes between two Greek terms: *baptisma* and *baptismos*. The latter term is what one would expect the New Testament writers to use, while the former is the one they actually use. Furthermore, *baptisma* is not attested in pre-Christian Greek literature. This suggests that the early Christian community intended to distinguish in some way its ritual of purification through water from other such rituals.[54] Torrance notes all this, and then takes the further step of supplying a theological rationale to fit this linguistic use. The term *baptisma* is preferred, on his reading, because of its similarity to *kerygma*. In both cases, one finds a human action—whether that be the church's verbal proclamation of the Gospel or its sacramental sealing of that Gospel in baptism—that serves as a transparent point of access to God's action in Christ. So Torrance: "Just as *kerygma* does not call attention to the preacher or the preaching but only to Christ Himself, so *baptisma* by its very nature does not direct attention to itself as a rite . . . or to him who administers it, but directs us at once beyond to Christ Himself and to what He has done on our behalf."[55]

Torrance trades on a distinction between water and Spirit baptism in his discussion, but the distinction is present only insofar as it is overcome. He speaks of Christian baptism's "double form" of "Baptism in water from below" and "Baptism in heavenly water from above, that is, in the Spirit."[56] But all of this is secondary because the practice and theology of Christian baptism "is determined . . . by the event of Christ's Baptism and by all it involved for Him on our behalf."[57] Water baptism, then, is an access-point for Spirit baptism, whereby one is put in touch with Jesus' own baptism by John in the Jordan. This is why, on Torrance's account, it is designated by the term *baptisma*. Although Torrance does not use the language explicitly here, what he describes is an internal relationship between water baptism and Spirit baptism such that water baptism is related to Spirit baptism in an ontological rather than in a merely moral manner. Furthermore, water baptism as *baptisma* cannot be understood as possessing an existence independent of Spirit baptism. This ritual of purification

54 Markus Barth, "Baptism," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 80; Lars Hartman, "Baptism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 583.

55 Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, 2.111.

56 Ibid., 2.109.

57 Ibid., 2.108.

with water exists as *baptisma* in its internal relation to Spirit baptism, or it does not exist as *baptisma* at all. This internal relation is determinative of water baptism's existence as *baptisma* and is therefore an onto-relation.

On Torrance's account, Spirit baptism refers to how water baptism actualizes in the present Jesus' own baptism by John in the Jordan. Jesus' baptism is important for Torrance because of its unique place in Jesus' history: it stands at an intermediate point, harkening back to Christ's birth and forward to his death.[58] As a result, it becomes symbolic of the whole of his saving person and work. For Torrance, Jesus saves by enacting through the incarnation a perfect and vicarious obedience to God. This means that Jesus obeys God in the place of all other human persons, and that salvation is nothing less than being united to Jesus through the Holy Spirit—an internal, ontological relation rather than an external, moral one—and thereby sharing in that obedience. Because of the symbolic positioning of Jesus' baptism by John in this story of his vicarious obedience, Torrance understands baptism as "above all the Sacrament of that vicarious obedience."[59] Indeed, even Jesus' baptism by John, a baptism of repentance, was vicarious in that Jesus underwent that repentance perfectly and in the place of sinners. Baptism, then, concerns one's incorporation into "Christ's vicarious Baptism" that includes "all He did to fulfil righteousness from His Baptism in the Jordan to His crucifixion on the Cross."[60]

The payoff of this emphasis on baptism as baptism into Jesus' own baptism, and therefore into the vicarious significance of his whole life and death, is the interactionist affirmation that it is Jesus who baptizes. This is because it is not finally the ritual of purification with water that is significant, but how that ritual exists as *baptisma* by way of its onto-relation with Spirit baptism, which actualizes for the baptizand Jesus' own baptism and its significance. Consequently, as Torrance puts it: "It is Christ in His life-act . . . who is always present with us to the end of the world; so that when we in His Name proclaim the *kerygma* and administer the *baptisma* it is actually Christ Himself, really and fully present, who

58 Ibid., 2.112.

59 Ibid., 2.124.

60 Ibid., 2.113. Hunsinger rightly brings out the significance of Christ's vicarious humanity in Torrance's doctrine of baptism, noting that "vicarious humanity means that everything Christ has done and suffered in his humanity was done and suffered in our place and for our benefit." Hunsinger, "Dimension of Depth," 144. Much more recently on the subject of Christ's vicarious humanity, Andrew Purves identifies it as a shared characteristic of the three Scottish theologians John McLeod Campbell, H. R. Mackintosh, and Torrance. Andrew Purves, *Exploring Christology & Atonement: Conversations with John Mcleod Campbell, H. R. Mackintosh and T. F. Torrance* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 11. The theme runs throughout Purves' volume.

acts savingly in His Church, revealing Himself and baptizing with His Spirit."[61] Here is no dualist separation between divine and human action. Rather, water and Spirit baptism are connected onto-relationally, and the resulting *baptisma* is permeated by divine activity. It is Jesus Christ who is the agent of *baptisma*.

Moving forward to Torrance's "One Baptism" essay, one finds much of the same material despite some linguistic development.[62] Torrance foregrounds his understanding of *baptisma* as the onto-relational integration of the Christian ritual of purification with water and Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan—hence the titular "One Baptism Common to Christ and His Church." This language is not new, however. It appeared in the earlier essays in passing, and it also appeared in the 1962 report from the Church of Scotland Commission on Baptism.[63] Torrance also makes central the language of baptism's "dimension of depth" as a way to describe the integration of the baptismal ritual and its basis in Jesus' baptism. But this language is also not new. Torrance speaks of *baptisma*'s "dimension of objectivity" in his 1958 essay, and "dimension of depth" appears in the Church of Scotland Commission on Baptism report from 1955.[64] As a way of describing

61 Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, 2.111–12.

62 Colyer notes that "there is little [in the essays on baptism from the 1950s] that is not also in the later essays." Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 263. By "later essays" Colyer means Torrance's "One Baptism" essay, as well as the discussion of baptism found in Torrance's *Trinitarian Faith*. But Colyer also describes that discussion as "essentially a summary of part of the earlier essay," meaning the "One Baptism" essay. See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 289–301. My claim here moves in the opposite direction from Colyer's, namely, there is little in the later essays that is not first in the 1950s essays.

63 Torrance, "One Baptism," 86; Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, 2.115; Church of Scotland, "Report of the Special Commission on Baptism," in *Reports to the General Assembly with the Legislative Acts* (Edinburgh: Blackwood and T. & A. Constable, 1962), 714.

64 Torrance, "One Baptism," 83, 88; Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, 2.113; Church of Scotland, "Interim Report of the Special Commission on Baptism," in *Reports to the General Assembly with the Legislative Acts* (Edinburgh: Blackwood and T. & A. Constable, 1955), 615. Torrance spoke in 1962 of "the dimension of depth" when expositing Barth's account of *ratio* in Anselm, specifically the distinction and relation between the objective *ratio* of God and the *ratio* of human knowledge of God. Torrance, *Karl Barth*, 187. It appears also in his christology lectures, although it is hard to say when the phrase entered this material. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, 180. Torrance's use of "depth" language here is likely related to the practice of "depth exegesis" that he learned from William Manson. See Torrance's introduction to William Manson, *Jesus and the Christian* (London: James Clarke, 1967). Torrance there writes that Manson "influenced me more intimately than any other of my teachers and over the years he had become to me more and more a spiritual father" (p. 9), and Torrance singles-out Manson's "depth exegesis" as a necessary response to form criticism (p. 10). See also the discussions in Darren Sarisky, "T. F. Torrance on Biblical Interpretation," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 3 (2009), 334–35; John Webster, "T. F. Torrance on Scripture," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65, no. 1 (2012), 49.

how *baptisma* should be approached in view of its depth-dimension, Torrance advocates what he calls "a stereo-understanding of the one baptism" whereby the two levels of *baptisma*—the rite of purification with water and Jesus' own baptism—are integrated such that neither can be entirely understood apart from the other.[65] Another linguistic emphasis that emerges is the importance of *koinonia* as a way of describing the onto-relations that obtain between God and Christians, which are enacted in *baptisma*. To be a Christian means to have one's being as such constituted by and in relation to the Triune God.[66]

This charting of linguistic development-in-continuity helps to make the point that Torrance is working with the same fundamental material doctrine of baptism in both the 1950s essays and the "One Baptism" essay. There are, however, two aspects of his discussion in the "One Baptism" essay that, while not entirely new elements, represent important development in emphasis. The first of these is how the latter essay frames the discussion of baptism within an analysis of the problem of dualism, as was previously discussed. This is to be expected, given that Torrance's concern about rejecting dualism developed in the 1960s and came to open expression especially in the early 1970s. But, as also noted previously, Torrance's concern about rejecting dualism grew organically out of aspects of his thought that are traceable even back into the 1930s. It is thus no surprise to find in his discussion of baptism from the 1950s a brief discussion of "Schleiermacher's radical dichotomy between a realm of sensuous events and a realm of spiritual ideas" that "denies the very essence of the Gospel of Incarnation." Furthermore, this dichotomy denies the incarnation insofar as it disrupts the "binding together into a new unity" of God and humanity in the incarnation.[67] Here are all the hallmarks of Torrance's understanding of dualism, both in terms of its opposition to the incarnation and an interactionist account of

65 Torrance, "One Baptism," 92. Stereoscopic language appears in Torrance's later discussion of baptism as well. See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 294. Torrance also speaks of "stereoscopic viewing" with reference to the importance of integrating a "picture" of "the historical Jesus" with that of "the risen Jesus" in order to "see and understand Jesus Christ as he is in reality." Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 166–67.

66 This is a development of the language of "Covenant-Communion" that Torrance used in his earlier discussion. Torrance, "One Baptism," 82; Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, 2.123. Hunsinger makes "*koinonia*-relations" central to his discussion of baptism, defining such a relation as "a relation of mutual indwelling between two terms . . . with the result that they coexist in a unity-in-distinction." George Hunsinger, "Baptism and the Soteriology of Forgiveness," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 3 (2000), 248. The logic of Chalcedon is clearly in view here. While Hunsinger does not note it explicitly, one might easily suspect that his thought on this count has been significantly influenced by Torrance.

67 Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, 2.126–27.

the relation between God and the created order.

The later "One Baptism" essay foregrounds this angle of analysis, and this shift in emphasis correlates with Torrance's criticism of Barth. This correlation suggests that Torrance's detection of dualism in Barth's mature doctrine of baptism led him in turn to advance a self-consciously and explicitly non-dualist, interactionist account as an extension of the implicitly non-dualist and interactionist account he provided in the 1950s. Further corroboration arises from the second point concerning development of emphasis in Torrance's "One Baptism" essay vis-à-vis the 1950s material, namely, his increased attention to the distinction between water and Spirit baptism. This received only the most cursory discussion in the 1950s material. But Torrance has identified Barth's treatment of this distinction as the central failing of Barth's mature doctrine of baptism, and so Torrance must now address it at greater length. He does so by way of a patristic study that focuses especially on "the anonymous *De rebaptismate* of the third century."[68] Although providing a more extensive discussion of this point, Torrance maintains the importance of providing a unitive account of water and Spirit baptism, of seeing them in a "binocular way."[69] Therefore, and just as in the 1950s material, the distinction between water and Spirit baptism is raised—albeit in a more sustained manner—only to be overcome. As Torrance says, speaking in the context of patristic reflection on baptism not only of Spirit and water but also of blood: "baptism may appear to be divided in a three-fold way, baptism in water, baptism in blood and baptism in Spirit, but actually they are one baptism in Jesus Christ."[70]

Despite linguistic developments and shifts in emphasis, Torrance's doctrine of baptism remains remarkably consistent from its expression in the 1950s to the 1970s. It is christologically focused from first to last, committed to emphasizing the unity of water and Spirit baptism, and explicitly interactionist. Consequently, it is also anti-dualist—whether implicitly so in the 1950s or explicitly so in the 1970s. These and other strands of his doctrine of baptism come together at both stages in an affirmation that Jesus is the agent of baptism, which he expresses as follows in the later essay: "when the Church baptizes in his name, it is actually Christ himself who is savingly at work, pouring out his Spirit upon us and drawing us within the power of his vicarious life, death and resurrection."[71]

68 Torrance, "One Baptism," 90–91.

69 Ibid., 91.

70 Ibid., 92.

71 Ibid., 83. There is irony in noting that the claim that Jesus is finally the agent of baptism goes back at least as far as Augustine, whose tradition Torrance routinely criticizes for its dualism. So Augustine: "Peter may baptize, but this is He [i.e., Jesus Christ] that baptizeth; Paul

4. Was Torrance right in his criticism of Barth?

Answering this question requires making a distinction that Torrance failed to make in his criticism of Barth's doctrine of baptism. On the one side is the question of *being*. Torrance criticizes Barth for succumbing to ontological dualism in his distinction between water and Spirit baptism, such that divine action and human action are not properly integrated in a unitive account. For his part, Torrance purports to offer an account that unites water and Spirit baptism such that there is an integration of divine and human action. On the other side is the question of *meaning*. Torrance also claims that the meaning or significance of baptism requires focusing a doctrine of baptism on Spirit baptism and God's activity rather than on water baptism and the church's human activity. So he writes: "while baptism in water is by no means dispensable, so far as our salvation is concerned we must look to the baptism of the Spirit. . . . [T]he whole significance of baptism was seen to be lodged, not in the due administration of the rite as such . . . but in him unto whom we are baptised."[72] While it is possible that a doctrine of baptism that finds baptism's meaning in its character as a human action is also a doctrine of baptism plagued by an ontological dualism between divine and human action, this is not necessarily the case. It is entirely possible to find baptism's meaning in its character as a human action while simultaneously avoiding ontological dualism. Indeed, I argue that Barth has advanced just such a position.

As noted previously, Torrance's understanding of Barth's account of the relation between divine and human agency in his mature doctrine of baptism is consistent with Jüngel's interpretation. Jüngel's position is properly described as parallelist, in opposition to those interpreters of Barth who advocate a sacramental theology articulated in more traditionally instrumentalist terms. These latter interpreters tend to agree with Jüngel's explication of Barth's mature doctrine of baptism, including his positing of a shift in Barth's thought from an earlier instrumentalist position to his later parallelism. They simply prefer the earlier material. This interpretation of Barth's thought is insufficient, however. There was no shift in Barth's thought from an early instrumentalism to a later parallelism. Rather, there was a development in the complexity of his

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may baptize, yet this is He that baptizeth; Judas may baptize, still this is He that baptizeth." Augustine, "Homilies on the Gospel of John," in *St. Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies*, ed. Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), §6.7; 41.

72 Torrance, "One Baptism," 93.

thought from an early instrumentalism to a later position that both integrated the concerns and surpassed the limitations of the instrumentalist and parallelist dichotomy. Torrance was caught up in this false dichotomy between an earlier, instrumentalist Barth who forged ahead in rejecting dualism and a later, parallelist Barth who succumbed to vestigial dualism. Like many others, this misdirection led him to undervalue the evidence that Barth was working with a much more subtle understanding of the relation between divine and human action in his doctrine of baptism. I categorize Barth's position with the language of paradoxical identity.[73]

In essence, paradoxical identity describes the relationship between divine and human action neither in terms of divine action working *through* human action, nor in terms of divine action working *alongside* human action. These are the instrumentalist and parallelist positions, respectively. Paradoxical identity builds on the logic of the Chalcedonian Definition in an effort to describe the relation between divine and human action such that they are not confused, changed, divided, or separated. Furthermore, paradoxical identity articulates this relation in actualistic terms that focus on the event or occurrence of divine action, rather than on persistent relations between static essences.[74] The eternal Son assumed

73 On the reception of Barth's doctrine of baptism, see McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft," 89–92; McMaken, *Sign of the Gospel*, 38–55. On whether there is a shift in Barth from an early instrumentalism to a late parallelism, see especially McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft," 93–97. On the concept of paradoxical identity, see ibid., 98–107; McMaken, *Sign of the Gospel*, 240–50. The language of "paradoxical identity" comes from Rudolf Bultmann. For an excellent introduction to his usage that correctly identifies it as the development of an insight that was centrally important to Barth's theology from the second edition of his *Römerbrief* on, see David W. Congdon, *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann's Dialectical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 633–36.

74 In his recent study of Barth's christology, Darren Sumner notes that "the Word's becoming flesh is indeed a paradox." Darren O. Sumner, *Karl Barth and the Incarnation: Christology and the Humility of God*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 84. On Barth's actualism, see George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30; Richard Burnett, ed. *The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth*, Westminster Handbooks to Christian Theology (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 1–3. As I have stated elsewhere, I intend paradoxical identity "as a defense, extension and development" of George Hunsinger's account of "double agency." See McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft," 103, n.50. It is an attempt to conceptually redescribe—in an actualist mode that further emphasizes the event-character of the relation between divine and human action—the asymmetrical unity-in-distinction articulated by the Chalcedonian Definition and theorized by Hunsinger as the "Chalcedonian Pattern." See Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 185–87.

It is interesting that Calvin applies a kind of actualist analysis to the relation between divine and human action in his commentary on Malachi 4:6: "When then is it that teachers are co-workers with God? Even when God, ruling them by his Spirit, at the same time blesses

human existence and all of its limitations, thereby enacting a history of human life lived in perfect, obedient covenant partnership with God. It is therefore proper to speak of the life that the eternal Son lived *as* a human being. The incarnation confesses the identity of divine and human being and action in a paradoxical manner that does not allow for the incarnation to be resolved in a reductionist way to either the human or divine side. Just so, paradoxical identity means that when divine action occurs—i.e., in the *event* of divine action—it occurs *as* human action. The human action is, then, identical with divine action in a non-reductively paradoxical way.[75] Consequently, the event must be described both entirely as a human and entirely as divine, just as Jesus's history is both entirely human and entirely divine.

Similarly, baptism can be described as entirely water baptism and entirely Spirit baptism such that the two forms of baptism are paradoxically identical.[76] This is the conceptual superstructure that enables Barth to approach the topic of baptism by first describing one side and then the other, Spirit baptism and then water baptism. Indeed, he appeals to the logic of Chalcedon in relating the two, at points sounding very much like Torrance: "baptism with water is what it is only in relation to baptism with the Holy Spirit," one must maintain the "unity of the two in their distinction," and "each of the elements . . . will be misunderstood

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their labour, so that it brings forth fruit." John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelves Minor Prophets, Volumes 4 & 5: Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, trans. John Owen, Calvin Translation Society ed., Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003), 5.630. Calvin assumes that teachers are not always co-teachers with God, but only become so in the event of the Spirit's blessing their work.

75 As I have noted elsewhere, paradoxical identity between divine and human action outside of Jesus' history must be understood as analogous to that which occurred within that history insofar as it is a secondary and derivative form of the relation between God and humanity that is constitutively and definitively enacted in that history. See McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft," 106, n.58. Theologians of a more analytic bent might object to the language of paradox here by arguing that it is unnecessarily ambiguous. A paradox is always either real or apparent, we might imagine them insisting. If it is real then we should admit that we are dealing with the mystery of God and leave it at that, and if it is apparent then we should explain the resolution and thereby avoid the opaque language of paradox. However, speaking of "paradoxical" identity is salutary insofar as it attempts to communicate the eventful dynamic at play. It reinforces that the identity in question is neither merely mysterious nor a resolved state of affairs, but something that occurs in the event of divine action. Only in this event is the real paradox of identity between divine and human action resolved and recognized in the experience and confession of faith.

76 One might make an analogy here to Barth's doctrine of scripture to say that the being of water baptism is in becoming Spirit baptism. See Bruce L. McCormack, "The Being of Holy Scripture Is in Becoming: Karl Barth in Conversation with American Evangelical Criticism," in *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics*, ed. Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguélez, and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

if it is either separated from or . . . mixed together or confused with the other."[77] Furthermore, and contrary to Jüngel's allegation that Barth understands Spirit baptism as exclusively divine action and water baptism as exclusively human action, Barth provides for a unitive account of divine and human action on both sides. He acknowledges that divine action is not foreign to water baptism and that human action is not foreign to Spirit baptism. Both are present in their proper character as theorized by the concept of paradoxical identity.[78]

With reference to Torrance's desire for a unitive account of the relation between divine and human action that avoids ontological dualism, it is hard to see how one could be more unitive than this. In fact, the only way to do so would be to promote a straightforward rather than paradoxical identity. But this would be to reduce divine to the human or the human to the divine, thus violating the Chalcedonian logic of the incarnation. Given that Barth maintains such a deeply unitive account of the relation between divine and human action in his doctrine of baptism, it is necessary to conclude that Torrance's criticism of Barth at the level of *being*—i.e., as ontologically dualist in his doctrine of baptism—fails decisively. Barth's position does not contain compromising vestiges of dualism but articulates a highly complex and subtle account of the relation between divine and human action that overcomes the tension in the Reformed tradition between instrumentalist and parallelist accounts.[79]

There remains, however, Torrance's criticism of Barth's doctrine of baptism at the level of *meaning*. As noted above, Torrance locates the meaning of baptism not in the human action of baptizand or church to undergo or administer water baptism, respectively, but in Jesus Christ as the administer of baptism in all its dimensions of depth. The contrast to Barth on this point is striking, for Barth carefully avoids speaking of water baptism as a divine act, even if, as just described, he does not deny the involvement of divine action. He avoids

77 *CD* 4.4, 41; *KD*, 4.4, 45. As I note elsewhere, Barth's way of describing the unity between water and Spirit baptism here is similar to his way of describing the unity between Jesus' death and resurrection. See McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft," 99–100.

78 For a more detailed explication of Barth's mature doctrine of baptism that is concerned with making this case, see ibid., 107–11; McMaken, *Sign of the Gospel*, 250–57. Key passages in Barth are to be found in *CD* 4.4, 32, 106; *KD*, 4.4, 35, 116. Ashley Cocksworth helpfully notes the importance of the role of prayer for properly understanding Barth's way of relating water and Spirit baptism: "The charge of agential separation is difficult to sustain once baptism is understood to be prayer." Ashley Cocksworth, *Karl Barth on Prayer*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 120.

79 See B. A. Gerrish, "Sign and Reality: The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004).

speaking of it as such precisely in order to emphasize water baptism's meaning as a human act. He highlights this at the head of his section that explicitly addresses water baptism's meaning (*Sinn*): "the meaning of baptism which we now seek is the meaning of this human action as such," that is, the human act of water baptism as it responds in faithful obedience to God's act of Spirit baptism.[80]

Furthermore, Barth worries about the specter of docetism in much the same way that Torrance worries about dualism. The danger in an account of water baptism, for Barth, is that its character as a human act will be evacuated of meaning such that the proper relationship between water baptism and Spirit baptism, characteristically human and characteristically divine action, breaks down. Rather than understanding each side in its integrity, they are confused, changed, separated, or divided, to draw once more upon the terms of the Chalcedonian Definition. The consequence is that baptism becomes "a strangely competitive duplication of the history of Jesus Christ, of His resurrection, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit."[81]

When it comes to the question of where to locate baptism's meaning, then, Torrance and Barth are diametrically opposed. This naturally raises the question of why they should be so. Perhaps it is a question of context, such that practical theologians should be left to adjudicate between them based on the missionary needs of particular churches in particular times and places. Perhaps it is a question of where one plants one's feet among the various discussions of baptism in the New Testament. On this score, Barth is firmly planted in the ethical perspective on baptism that he finds in Romans 6 especially, whereas Torrance is invested in his conjectures concerning the reason for the use by New Testament authors of the strange term *baptisma* rather than the common *baptismos*.[82] However, both of these avenues for reflection are finally variations on the notion that, when it comes to differences between Barth and Torrance, those differences are simply matters of emphasis. Or, to use a turn of phrase from John Webster, the differences are "descriptive rather than principled."

80 *CD* 4.4, 101 (rev.); *KD*, 4.4, 111.

81 *CD* 4.4, 102; *KD*, 4.4, 112.

82 My own constructive work on the doctrine of baptism can perhaps be seen as a mediating position insofar as it plants itself in Matthew 28 and understands baptism as a form of the church's missionary proclamation. See McMaken, *Sign of the Gospel*, 209–74; McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft," 113–14. My constructive position—developed in a manner consistent with Barth's mature dogmatics—also allows for the baptism of infants, which was an important point of divergence between the doctrines of baptism offered by Barth and Torrance. This divergence is downstream, as it were, from the material treated in this essay and therefore has not been given pride of place.

5. Where lies the disconnect between Barth and Torrance?

This essay has undertaken to explicate Torrance's criticism of Barth as both a criticism that arises from *Torrance's own theological commitments* and as a criticism of *Barth's doctrine of baptism*. That work is now complete. I have articulated how important themes in Torrance's theology, like the rejection of dualism and onto-relations, came together in his criticism of Barth's doctrine of baptism. And I have set that rejection against the backdrop of Torrance's own doctrine of baptism. Furthermore, I have argued that Torrance's criticism of Barth's doctrine of baptism as compromised by vestigial dualism does not succeed, although there is a very real disagreement between Torrance and Barth on the question of where to locate the meaning of baptism—whether in divine or in human action. Such disagreements between Barth and Torrance are usually treated as matters of divergent emphasis rather than as matters of material difference.

Although there is some risk of overemphasizing the distance between Barth and Torrance, an analysis of the relationship between their respective bodies of theological work cannot rest with an appeal to divergent emphasis. Instead, we must penetrate to the theological structures and conditions at work in their respective thought-worlds that produce this apparent divergence in emphasis. George Hunsinger's reflection on Barth and Torrance offers a productive starting point. He couches matters in terms of his "motifs":

> Barth's early theology has been called "revolutionary theology in the making" and the "theology of crisis." From Torrance, however, one cannot help but feel that one is somehow getting revolutionary theology without the revolution, and the theology of crisis without the crisis. The energy, dynamism, and sense of collision which enter Barth's theology by way of the actualistic and particularistic motifs never quite come through in Torrance's account. Instead of actualism and particularism enlivening the objectivism, the objectivism is allowed to mute and soften the actualism and particularism.[83]

Much of the difference that Hunsinger identifies here can be excused as a matter of emphasis or even of style. But Hunsinger also lays his finger on the headwater of these various divergences, namely, the question of actualism.

To be clear, the issue is not that Barth's thinking is actualist and Torrance's thinking is not actualist. If actualism is a habit of mind that thinks in terms

83 Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 11. Molnar addresses criticisms of Torrance, including Hunsinger's. However, Hunsinger's criticism is enumerated among a number of others, and Molnar's reply tends to address those other criticisms. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 328–32.

of dynamic relations rather than static conditions, then Torrance's thought is marked by actualism. How could it be otherwise for someone who so emphasized relations in his theology—whether internal, onto-relations as a positive value or external relations as a negative value? The deep divergence between Barth and Torrance, then, is a divergence between *two different kinds of actualism*. To put it simply: Torrance's actualism *essentializes relations*, while Barth's *historicizes essences*.

As noted in the previous discussion of onto-relations, Torrance conceives of the relations between the three persons of the Trinity as constitutive of the divine essence.[84] This basic insight is not restricted to the divine being, however, and Torrance also thinks of creaturely being as onto-relational. The relations that obtain between different creatures, aspects, and levels of creaturely reality—and especially those between the creature and God—are constitutive for the creature's being. This takes the traditional concept of "essence" and enriches it with a new relational dynamism, which Torrance understands as fitting, given recent developments in physics. This essentializing of relations bears fruit in Torrance's christology in his architectural distinction between discussion of "The Once and for all Union of God and Man" and "The Continuous Union in the Life of Jesus."[85] Torrance intends to provide a unitive account of who Christ *is*—i.e., his person, or being—and what Christ *does*—i.e., the saving significance of his life, or how he relates to others. This essentializing of relations is also evident in Torrance's assessment of Barth's significance. For instance, he thinks that one of Barth's "most important contributions to Christian theology" was the way he "combined the Patristic emphasis upon the being of God in his acts and the

84 One must be careful to avoid giving the impression that this essentializing of relations in the being of the Triune God introduces an improper social trinitarianism into Torrance's thought. His commitment to the oneness or simplicity of God rules out such a conclusion. For Torrance, each of the divine persons is constituted by way of their relations with each other, and it is this web of interrelation that constitutes the divine being or *ousia* as such. So Torrance speaks of "the one Being of God which all three divine Persons have in common: *ousia* is, in fact, identical with the personal Being or intrinsic Communion that the one God is in himself." Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 131. What Torrance attempts in all this is to conceptually articulate the dialectic captured by a passage from Gregory of Nazianzus that Torrance often quotes. It reads in part: "I cannot think of the One without immediately being surrounded by the radiance of the Three; nor can I discern the Three without at once being carried back to the One" (p. 201; see also the slightly different translation that Torrance gives on p. 112, and the accompanying citations for Calvin's quotation of this passage). For more on this aspect of Torrance's trinitarian theology, see Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 308–13; Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2004), 367–69; Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 59–61.

85 See respectively, Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, 87–104 and 105–60.

Reformation emphasis upon the acts of God in his being."[86] In each of these cases, the categories of what a thing is (being) and how it relates to others (action) are integrated such that it is impossible to consider being without understanding relation as ingredient to being. In other words, Torrance essentializes relations.

Barth puts into place a different form of actualism insofar as he historicizes essences. In a passage that sounds very much like Torrance's approach, Barth writes that Jesus' being "is a being, but a being in a history." But Barth elucidates this statement in ways that Torrance does not. For instance, Jesus' being as the unity of God and humanity "takes place in the *event* of God and the concrete existence of this man."[87] The central place that the language and concept of "event" (*Ereignis*) has in Barth's actualism sets him apart from Torrance. Indeed, Torrance criticizes Barth for this, asserting that it is a feature of Barth's thought that "has its roots in an Augustinian and Lutheran dualism" and results in a lack of attention to "the ontology of creaturely structures."[88] But this event-character has been central to Barth's thought from first to last, giving Barth's actualism a more radical aspect than Torrance's. To return to Barth's christology, he writes of Jesus Christ that "His being . . . is His history, and His history is this His being."[89]

86 Respectively, Torrance, "Legacy of Karl Barth," 172; Torrance, "My Interaction," 124.

87 *CD* 4.1, 126 (rev.); *KD* 4.1, 138. Emphasis restored.

88 Torrance, "The Problem of Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth," 122, 133–34. There is irony here since Torrance is often charged with a failure to adequately describe the human aspect in baptism, scripture (see n.83 above), or in the relation between divine and human action (see n.8 above). It is important to note, however, that a forthcoming essay by Todd Speidell argues that some prevailing criticisms of Torrance's ethics—with which these other more technical criticisms are associated, but by which they are not exhausted—are mistaken. See Todd H. Speidell, "The Soteriological Suspension of the Ethical in the Theology of T. F. Torrance," *Participatio* 5 (2015): 56–90.

89 *CD* 4.1, 128; *KD* 4.1, 140. Virtually the same claim occurs earlier in Barth's work: "Jesus does not merely have a history but is Himself this history." *CD* 3.2, 60; *KD* 3.2, 69. It is necessary to make four notes concerning the importance that the concept of "event" (*Ereignis*) holds for Barth's thought.

First, the concept of "event" is central to the whole of Barth's theology, harkening back at least as far as the dialectics and emphasis on *Krisis* found in Barth's commentaries on Romans. For instance, David Congdon argues—building on the work of Michael Beintker and Bruce McCormack—that the heart of the second edition of Barth's *Römberbrief* is an account of salvation "as an eschatological event." Congdon, *Mission of Demythologizing*, 280. Torrance's discussion of Barth's early theology admits the importance of its event-character. See, for instance, Torrance, *Karl Barth*, 98–99. But Torrance's understanding of Barth's development aligns with that of Hans Urs von Balthasar in thinking that Barth moves from an early dialectical stage to a later analogical stage (p. 142). Consequently, Torrance holds that the event-character of Barth's early theology is the result of an improper existentialism (p. 144). It thus becomes easy for Torrance to disregard the persisting importance of "event" in Barth's theology as a form of vestigial dualism. Bruce McCormack's work has demonstrated that this

Here is the historicizing of essences: Barth equates Jesus' being as the incarnate

account of Barth's development is incorrect. See Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

Second, dialectical theology is essentially a missionary theology and one that undertakes to theorize mission in opposition to Christendom. Barth's use of "event" language, early and late, functions in this context to destabilize the attempt to unite Christian mission and colonialism, which results in the loss of the gospel through its perversion into an imperialist ideology. See David W. Congdon, "Dialectical Theology as Theology of Mission: Investigating the Origins of Karl Barth's Break with Liberalism," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 4 (2014). This is important because Torrance, born in China as the son of missionaries, seems to have been tone-deaf to this crucial aspect of dialectical theology. In a letter to his sister from 1937 that is held in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection at Princeton Seminary and quoted by Habets, Torrance wrote: "I have been reading a lot of Barth this summer, and I have been growing rather critical of some things—he lacks the missionary note and the evangelistic note rather sadly." Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 12. Proper interpretation of this comment would require ascertaining which of Barth's writings Torrance was reading at the time, but this does reveal a certain distance in Torrance from perceiving the missiological crucible that produced Barth's theology in particular and dialectical theology as a whole. This is further demonstrated by Torrance's discussion of Barth's dialectical theology. Torrance does not thematize the missionary connection and treats dialectical theology primarily as an ontological and epistemological consideration, noting its opposition to "the assimilation of Christianity to the prevailing culture of Europe." Torrance, *Karl Barth*, 58; see 48–95. This is not incorrect, but neither is it complete. Torrance discusses how the reformational dynamics of sin and grace translate in Barth's theological epistemology, but he does not value the eschatological soteriology at dialectical theology's core (*pace* the first point above) that underwrites the epistemological and ontological dimensions he prioritizes. And because he treats those secondary aspects as primary and detachable from that eschatological soteriology, he does not clearly perceive dialectical theology's missionary character.

Third, the event-character of Barth's thought is a consequence of his influence by Martin Luther. As Congdon makes clear, Martin Luther and the early 20th-century German Luther renaissance were formative influences on the early development of Barth's dialectical theology and his break with liberalism. Congdon, *Mission of Demythologizing*, 262–72. George Hunsinger also highlights Luther's influence on the event-character of Barth's thought. Barth learned from Luther's articulation of justification as "a continuing event . . . that occurred in our lives once and for all through faith, and then on that basis continued to occur throughout our lives again and again." George Hunsinger, "What Karl Barth Learned from Martin Luther," in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000), 297.

Fourth, a full account of Barth's doctrine of baptism, and of his account of the relation between divine and human action, must include a discussion of his similarly important concept of "correspondence" (*Entsprechung*). This is especially necessary when dealing with the ethical dimension of Barth's thought in general and his doctrine of baptism in particular. However, the present essay lacks the scope to supply such a discussion. See McMaken, *Sign of the Gospel*, 186–92; Paul T. Nimmo, *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 111–15; Kimlyn J. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, paperback ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 138–40.

Son of God with the history that he enacts. This is the natural consequence of Barth's rejection of the concepts of divine and human nature, with reference both to divine and to human being.[90] Consequently, it is not that Barth incorporates a concern for relations into his thinking about essences as does Torrance. Rather, Barth historicizes essences by refusing to attribute any content to notions of divinity or humanity except by way of Jesus' history. In order to talk about a union between God and humanity in Jesus, one must describe the history—the series of events—in which this union or "common actualization"[91] occurred.

Recognizing that Barth historicizes essences in his actualism decisively subverts the categories by which Torrance interprets and criticizes Barth's doctrine of baptism. Recall Torrance's concern that salvation be understood in terms of internal rather than external relations, which he articulated through deep engagement with Barth. The distinction that he drew there was between internal relations that are ontological and external relations that are "merely" moral.[92] This distinction makes sense on more traditional ontological grounds, which is why it has such sweeping explanatory power in Torrance's hands. There it stands as a bulwark against a dualism that would separate the ontological from the existential, the realm of being from the realm of history and action. But one important consequence of Barth's historicization of essences is that *what were external, moral relations become internal, ontological ones*. There is no hidden ontological reality behind our existential actuality, no being behind our history and actions. There is no internal, ontological relation to be had with God that is not enacted historically or, as Torrance would say, that is not an

90 See *CD* 4.2, 26–27; *KD* 4.2, 26–28. On Barth's rejection of "nature" language in this regard, see Paul Dafydd Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 31–34.

91 Darren O. Sumner, "Common Actualization: Karl Barth's Recovery and Reappropriation of the Communication of Natures," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 53, no. 4 (2011). Hunsinger notes that Barth "actualized the traditional conception of the incarnation." George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000), 140. Congdon explains that "Barth reinterprets metaphysical concepts in a historical way." Congdon, *Mission of Demythologizing*, 369. See also Bruce L. McCormack, "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?," in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). For my judgment regarding the relation of Barth's thought to the Chalcedonian Definition, see McMaken, "Definitive, Defective or Deft," 98–102. It is worth noting that it is possible to affirm Barth's historicization of God's essence without involving God in any untoward dependency on creaturely reality. One might, for instance, speak of eternity as "the positive mode of time unique to the Trinity," and thus of the Trinity as possessing its own eternal historicity. Hunsinger, "*Mysterium Trinitatis*," 199.

92 Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 464.

external, moral relation.[93] Consequently, Torrance's criticism of Barth's doctrine of baptism cannot be understood as a criticism internal to Barth's theology. For Barth, water and Spirit baptism relate according to the logic of paradoxical identity, which describes the relation between divine and human action in the event of their simultaneity. It is impossible to conceive a closer relation between God and humanity on the grounds of Barth's actualism than such an event of simultaneity, in which faith perceives and confesses that divine action occurs precisely *as* human action.[94]

93 This aspect of Barth's thought was perhaps decisively influenced by his study of Ulrich Zwingli in the 1920s. As Keith Johnson explains, Barth found in Zwingli a mode of thought that "made human action a constitutive element of the relationship between God and the human while also maintaining the proper distinction between God and the creature." Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis*, ed. John Webster, Ian A. McFarland, and Ivor Davidson, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 54. This gains significance when one remembers that Barth, albeit somewhat playfully, described his mature doctrine of baptism as "Neo-Zwinglian." *CD* 4.4, 130; *KD* 4.4, 142. See Akira Demura, "Zwingli in the Writings of Karl Barth - with Special Emphasis on the Doctrine of the Sacraments," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong (Louisville, KY: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1989).

94 I owe thanks to David W. Congdon and Myk Habets, who read and provided valuable feedback on earlier versions of the essay. One such version of this essay was presented to the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship at their annual meeting in conjunction with the annual national meeting of the American Academy of Religion, on November 20th, 2015. I wish to thank the Fellowship's president, Gary Deddo, and the other members of the Executive Committee for inviting me to address them. Discussion following the presentation was quite stimulating and I benefited especially from comments offered by Kimlyn Bender and George Hunsinger.