Participatio

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Biblical Theology

PHOTOGRAPH: FIGURES DE LA BIBLE (THE HAGUE, 1728), MOUNT SINAI (see article, p. 31)
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Participatio: The Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship

Participatio is an annual, peer-reviewed, open access journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship (tftorrance.org), a research fellowship within the Christian Church and tradition based on the theology of Thomas F. Torrance. The journal's mission is two-fold: to apprehend the significance of Torrance's work and to advance his evangelical and scientific theology for the benefit of the Church, academy, and society. Researchers interested in engaging the theology of T. F. Torrance may submit manuscripts in accordance with the policies specified below. Contributions from diverse disciplines and perspectives will be encouraged to explore the wide-ranging significance of Torrance's legacy. Occasional miscellaneous issues will include paper presentations and responses from the annual conference, book reviews, etc. For more information see participatio.org. ISSN: 1932-9571

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Volume 8 (2020): Biblical Theology

Contents

T. F. TORRANCE ON THE REALIST RECONFIGURING OF THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL STUDIES TO BE CO-SERVANTS OF THE WORD OF GOD[1]

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Thomas F. Torrance regarded as valid both the disciplines of biblical studies and theological studies. Although needing to be properly distinguished, he believed they could both contribute "hand in hand" to the life, ministry and mission of the church. However, he also saw a need to critique the approach, assumptions and methods often used in our contemporary churches and schools for educating and forming both biblical scholars and theologians in their vocations. His assessment was that they both were largely not conducted with the "realism" that a proper study requires if it is to contribute to knowing the God revealed in Jesus Christ according to Scripture and building up the church. But they are largely beholden to rather deistic, nominalistic and dualist assumptions. These assumptions are not neutral or scientific, but at odds with the biblical texts being studied and the "ultimate beliefs" pervading the entire economy of revelation. The result has been that these disciplines are inhibited from cooperatively working together and that their conclusions have been thereby distorted, confused and confusing. Only a proper non-deistic, non-dualist, realism demanded by the Object of study, the Reality to which the biblical texts refer, should and could bring these two disciplines together.

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[1] This is a completely revised version of "T. F. Torrance on Theological and Biblical Studies as Co-Servants of the Word of God, Living and Written" in *Reconsidering the Relationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology in the New Testament: Essays by Theologians and New Testament Scholars*, edited by Benjamin E. Reynolds, Brian Lugioyo, and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, Germany, 2014.

This essay surveys Torrance's double critique and summarizes his alternative approach, assumptions and methodology for biblical studies and the theological interpretation of Scripture.

The theological works of T. F. Torrance are saturated with biblical references and myriad allusions to biblical texts. Torrance's use of Scripture matches his explicit descriptions of the nature and purpose of Scripture in the life of the church. What we know of his upbringing and his life-long discipline of Bible reading, indicate it had a central and irreplaceable place in his life and ministry, both pastoral and academic. In short, Scripture served as an absolutely unique source of revelation by the action of God, both in the past and in the present by the ministry of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the church and through the church for the sake of the world.

This paper cannot achieve the task of giving a comprehensive overview of Torrance's theological understanding of the Word of God written and the disciplines of biblical studies and theological studies. But we will attempt a much more limited project of indicating something of why and how, in Torrance's understanding, the two disciplines should be able to serve together and not be at odds with one another. Torrance saw no necessary antagonism or separation between the two, even if that is largely how their practice could be characterized in the church, the academy or seminaries of today. Torrance did affirm a proper distinction between the two that would allow for, even call for, a proper coordination. But he himself affirmed that they should work "hand in hand"[2] and demonstrated in his own writings how they could.

Torrance experienced himself something of the alienation or independence of the two disciplines in our contemporary universities and seminaries. Concern regarding such bifurcation was also reflected in the voluminous writings of Karl Barth of which Torrance became both personally and practically familiar, having studied with Barth and also being the editor and one of the translators into English of Barth's voluminous *Church Dogmatics*.

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[2] *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982; reprinted Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 121.

Part of Torrance's aim was to bring back together in a proper way biblical studies and theological studies so that both, together, might serve the Word of God, Living and so written. But in order to do that he saw the need to critique certain rather pervasive forms of theological method as well as the methods of biblical studies. In his view there are some fundamental assumptions operating in the church and in the academy that have distorted both disciplines and have significantly hindered their coordination and cooperation. This bifurcation has led to a relative autonomy of each, which in Torrance's view, has been detrimental to them both. In turn, the worship, ministry and mission of the church of Jesus Christ was being undermined.

Torrance affirmed, demonstrated and called for a cooperation of theological studies with biblical interpretation. He could characterize his own work as grounded in the theological interpretation or exegesis of scripture.[3] Nevertheless, given most current definitions biblical theology, Torrance's work does not fall under such a classification.[4] His understanding of just what biblical interpretation and dogmatic theology involve exceeds the boundaries to which, it would seem, most if not all of those who self-consciously engaged in biblical theology methodologically restrict themselves. Torrance sees such restriction not only as unnecessary, but also seriously misguided. It hinders not only the closely related disciplines of biblical studies and biblical theology, but also derails a proper coordination and mutual assistance to the conduct of dogmatic theology.

However, Torrance does not put the blame exclusively on the biblical studies side of things. He finds the same damaging restriction operating in the realm of theological studies. Torrance's point is that a pervasive kind of restriction applied to both the disciplines is what keeps them from serving well together and subsequently weakens each discipline and their contribution to the wellbeing of the church at large.

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[3] *Reality*, 42, 69, 107, 117.

[4] See this brief overview of three standard definitions, https://www.crossway.org/articles/3-ways-to-define-biblical-theology/.

Torrance has written at length about the nature of dogmatic theology,[5] including consideration of its relationship to Scripture and to biblical scholarship.[6] This essay will focus on the fundamental obstacle Torrance found to hinder and even undermine each one pursuing its own task as well as the proper working together of the two disciplines.

Torrance located the most fundamental obstacle in certain assumptions that inevitably become operationalized in the methods and attitudes of both theological and biblical studies. He was especially concerned when those presuppositions and attendant methods either qualified or set aside foundational elements of Christian belief. It was on these grounds that Torrance leveled his serious critiques of both theological and biblical studies. This essay will attempt to illuminate more fully and exactly the nature of his objection and also, even more importantly, his positive proposal for setting these disciplines within a proper framework.

Carrying across numerous books, select chapters of books and various articles written by Torrance, we find extensive discussions of the nature of dogmatic theology and, often connected with this topic, its relationship to Scripture and its interpretation. Although much less frequently, we also have some relatively extensive treatments of the relationship of theology proper to two other conventionally distinguished disciplines, biblical theology and biblical studies, the latter of which deals with the most detailed matters related to exegesis. In Torrance's judgment, interpretive or hermeneutical issues, beginning with the exegesis of Scripture, pervade all these disciplines for they all involve the discernment of meaning of biblical texts.

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[5] Torrance by far prefers the designation of dogmatic over systematic theology. Theology can also be regarded as having various sub-disciplines, such as philosophical and historical theology but these are not a central concern for Torrance.

[6] Major works addressing the nature of doctrine and its relationship to Scripture are *Theological Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982; reprinted Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999); *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995); *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1980). Also see his substantive article, "The Deposit of Faith," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), 1-28; and essay in Chapter 8, "The Place of Christology in Biblical and Dogmatic Theology" in *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

Crucial to grasping Torrance's most fundamental concerns is the recognition of his conviction that an "ultimate belief"[7] of Christian faith and the church is that the Creator God, the God referred to in the biblical texts, is a personal God who intends to be actually and truly known by human creatures and has provided the means to achieve that end. Such knowledge is intended to bring about actual renewed relationship with God expressed in repentance and faith, worship and obedience, in a communion with God.[8] Those means that are needed have been established by this God. They are the written Word of God, the canonical biblical texts of the church, and the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ. These are the revelatory acts forged in the sphere of creation by the God who intends to be known by human creatures.

Every discipline operates with some ultimate beliefs, even those of the natural sciences, including biblical and theological studies. The fundamental question Torrance probes is whether or not these two disciplines in particular operate on the basis of the ultimate belief in God's acts of revelation and reconciliation. That is, are these disciplines conducted with assumptions, attitudes and methods geared to them serving as means to the ends of the knowledge of God according to his acts of revelation? Do they accord with reconciliation to God, the goal of redemption.[9] In other words, do the practices of dogmatic theology, biblical theology and biblical studies have their *raison d'être* in our knowing and being, or becoming, reconciled to the God of Scripture?

While Torrance has no particular objection to these disciplines being conventionally differentiated according to their distinct focal tasks, he marshals considerable argument against their serving other purposes divergent from this ultimate belief. Structuring them to serve that single aim is what Torrance believes can co-ordinate if not unify their efforts.

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[7] *Reality*, 53-58.

[8] Biblical examples of such are poignantly demonstrated in the Psalms as well as the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul.

[9] *Theological Science*, 41.

Torrance's argument about why there must be this unity of purpose is multifaceted, but at heart, fairly straightforward. His fundamental axiom, as it were, is a biblical-theologically grounded one. Scripture is an indispensable element in both these disciplines of study and Scripture has intrinsic to it a particular purpose, one that has pervaded the entire history of its formation, preservation and subsequent interpretation. The Bible itself, taken as a whole, is about God making himself known — known under fallen conditions and achieved to such a degree that it necessarily involves reconciliation — a reconciliation that is a result of God's own work of redemption.[10] Those disciplines of study when formed and conducted with assumptions, methods and attitudes that are at cross purposes with the nature and aim of Scripture cannot yield meaningful results that are related in any significant way to Scripture.[11] Consequently, their outcomes will be decidedly divergent, discontinuous and incoherent with each other.[12]

Torrance argues that the study of Scripture in connection with any of these disciplines will contribute to the knowledge of and reconciliation to God only if they operate in ways that exhibit direct continuity with the Apostolic mind discerned in Scripture. In Torrance's judgment that approach to Scripture was largely represented in the early church's formation of its ecumenical creeds, especially as understood by Irenaeus, and Athanasius along with the Cappadocian Fathers.[13] But most importantly such an orientation of these disciplines, aligned with the early church in continuity with the Apostles, would also then be congruent with the very mind of Christ as conveyed in the Apostolic word itself.

Now perhaps this all seems unexceptional and self-evident, at least for the church. However, Torrance is at pains to point out that significant divergence from this understanding with its correlating practices is widespread in both liberal and

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[10] *Reconstruction*, 132.

[11] *Reality*, 56-57.

[12] Torrance also maintains a continuous line of argument that any study involving biblical texts that do not cohere with their own intrinsic purpose and nature will not be scientific and so will not yield knowledge of the object being studied. All scientific study requires conforming the ways of knowing to the actual nature of the object being known, *kata physin*. Epistemology must follow ontology.

[13] *Deposit*, 6-14.

conservative theological/ecclesiological camps, in both biblical and theological academic studies.

According to Torrance, the misguided habits and assumptions that foster such departure have ancient roots in Greek cosmological and epistemological dualism and in medieval nominalism. These basic assumptions have been further reinforced by modern idealism and atomistic, empiricist/naturalistic modes of thought.

These modes of thought have in turn become embedded in Western institutions of higher education breeding a scientism (that is not actually scientific), skepticism and individualism which can shade off into solipsism, agnosticism or atheism. Institutionally these approaches have contributed to fostering and valuing analytic modes of thinking over synthetic or integrative learning and have resulted in specialization and compartmentalization to such a degree that a fragmentation of knowledge has resulted not only in theology but among all areas of study.[14]

It is Torrance's contention that biblical and theological studies have not been immune to these corrosive elements. The outward evidence of this is the compartmentalization of biblical studies from theological studies and, of course, the exile of theology and biblical studies from secular higher education. Evidence of the loss of coherence and continuity between biblical and theological studies is not just found in the organizational compartmentalization found in theological schools, but also in the dichotomous ways in which biblical studies and theological studies are regarded, often pitting them one against the other, if both are not dismissed altogether. Consequently, while Torrance was noted for his ecumenical service to the church, I think he was equally ecumenical in his desire to see reconciliation between these two disciplines and traced out a way forward towards their reconciliation, yet without a demand for their fusion.

We have now sketched in a very general way how Torrance thought that biblical studies and theological studies ought to be approached via a continuity of ultimate belief and purpose intrinsic to the economy of God's revelation and

[14] *Ground and Grammar*, Chapter 2. See also Torrance's *The Trinitarian Faith* and *The Christian Doctrine of God* for extensive discussions.

reconciliation and touched on influences that have diverted them from that approach. Now we must turn to the details of Torrance's critique and prescription. That will require a survey of the three primary phases of the economy of revelation: 1) God's initiative with Israel, 2) The Self-revelation and Self-giving of God in Jesus Christ by the Spirit, and 3) The Apostolic Appointment

The Initiative of God

The most fundamental fact to take into consideration in the church's coming to know God and so having the possibility of understanding God, of having anything true or accurate to say of God, is that the God known in the church is the God that has personal agency and has acted to make himself known. The knowledge of God is entirely the result of the initiative of God. The early church summarized this by saying: Only God knows God and only God reveals God. This expression is a rendering of Jesus' saying: "Only the Father knows the Son and only the Son knows the Father, and those to whom he chooses to reveal him." In the Old Testament we hear that God himself will make himself, his name, known and we read of many incidents where God takes action to do just this. We can say, along with Torrance, that God is known by the grace of his revelation.[15] Torrance's contention is that this should serve as an ultimate belief for any discipline involving the study of Scripture and must serve if there is to be any true knowledge of the subject of Scripture and Christian theology.

What is ruled out by this fundamental insight is attributing knowledge of the God of the Bible to human capacity, innovation, imagination, creativity, ingenuity, spiritual or moral virtue. The actual knowledge of this God in the church has undoubtedly made use of these capacities, but it is not the result of their exercise. Knowledge of God is the achievement of God among us and, in that sense, it is always a miracle, even if it is one we receive, one in which we participate.

The corollary of this fact is that we can only know God if, where, when and how God reveals himself. This is absolutely fundamental. Departure from this foundation in our biblical or theological studies represents a radical departure from

[15] *Theological Science,* 43ff.

the economy of revelation. But more significantly, if there is ontological truth to it, departure necessarily means a disjunction from any real knowledge of God. Biblical and theological studies that do not build on this foundation are no longer engaged in seeking to know and understand this God. Another object and aim have supplanted it at some point.

So the knowledge of God and the possibility of any theological articulation of our knowledge begins with God, the living, acting, self-communicating, God. But more fundamental than the general description of the benefits to us of this initiative of God is the revelation of who this particular God is who benefits us in this way. This God is a speaking and eloquent God who makes himself known, not a mute God who wills to remain the unknown God.[16] If God had willed to remain unknown there would be no knowledge of God. But the God of the Bible is a God who wants to be known and so has acted accordingly towards his creation. Torrance refers to this as the economy of God's revelation. The outworking of this economy reveals that God is a self-revealing God who desires to be known and has made a way for just this to be accomplished among his creatures.[17]

Now often among those who acknowledge at the outset the absolute necessity of the initiative of God are some who turn immediately to the role the Bible plays and offer descriptions of the attributes of the Bible that are thought to establish its potential to make God known, namely, its authority, infallibility and/or inerrancy, inspiration, perspicuity, etc. In short, the line of thought goes: we know this God because God inspired Scripture to be written and written in certain ways so as to vouchsafe accurate knowledge of God. So, when we attentively and humbly read Scripture, we come to know God.

But Torrance thinks this description is far too oversimplified and can be downright misleading! Such a truncated understanding can open the door to a departure from the trajectory of the whole economy of revelation and the purpose of Scripture. It can give room for a kind of deistic understanding of revelation to

[16] *Ground and Grammar*, 152, 154.

[17] *Reality*, 107 ff.

form and so a deistic view of God to develop.[18] And that would contribute to a false understanding of God of the Bible since the God of the Bible is not a deistic god.

But more importantly, simply attributing our knowledge of God to Scripture via its inspiration, fails to account for all that we have come to know about what was involved in the total process of God's self-revelation. There's much more to the story. In particular, account must be taken of God's working in Israel and ultimately in the Incarnation and the appointment of the apostolic witnesses by Jesus. Such accounting of the economy of revelation leaves no room for the imposition of a deistic ultimate belief. Rather Torrance shows how an incomplete understanding of the whole non-deistic economy of revelation and the purpose and place of Scripture in it leaves the findings of biblical studies and theology vulnerable to distortion.

Yes, in the order of our experience of knowing (*ordo cognoscendi*) we at first do not know God, and then we read Scripture or hear it proclaimed, and then we come to know and trust in this God, the God of the Bible. But Torrance wants us to pay attention to those features involved in God's revelatory initiative that are independent and prior to our coming to know God by means of the Bible. This requires comprehending God's achievement according to the order of being (*ordo essendi*). That requires our tracing out the knowledge of God according to the total reality of who God is and all that God did prior to, although concomitant with, our subsequently coming to know him in the hearing of Scripture. We have to ask, "Where exactly did Scripture come from and how was God involved in that process?"

There was a time when Scripture was not! That's not heresy. So, where did Scripture come from? The answer has to begin when God especially chose to work with Ancient Israel, beginning with the calling of Abraham and the formation of a distinct people. God established with Israel a particular relationship to make himself and his ways known to them and through them, to all the nations of the earth. That history of God's revelation journeys through the long and sometimes tortuous history of God's interaction with Israel.[19]

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[18] *Ground and Grammar*, 30.

[19] *Reality*, 86ff.; *Reconstruction*, 143-44.

That interaction involves God's acting in Israel's history, a history that also involves Israel's interaction with other nations. But Israel's God also provided her prophetic interpretations of those actions, spelling out the meaning and significance of God's actions and so revealing the character and purpose of God that gave rise to those actions. Revelation is comprised of a word/deed event. Not an event without prophetic interpretation, not prophetic words without deeds. Israel not only comprehends God in acts of a given moment, but comes to understand the nature, character, purposes and will of God evident from prophetic words that disclose the heart and mind of God behind all his actions, even those that reach back to the beginning of creation, and point forward to the fullness of time when promises God made to her will be fulfilled. The prophetic words reveal realities that are ontologically distinct[20] from Scripture, namely, God himself and those actions of his that took place both before Scripture was written, such as creation.

Furthermore, God provides Israel with very particular ways of interacting more directly and personally with him by giving them specific ways of worshipping and living together. Israel lives in a circle of covenant relationship with God which encloses prescribed ways of living that are congruent with God's covenant relationship with them. This includes calling her to be a light to the nations. So in Israel, the knowledge of God begins to indwell or be embodied in a people which has a history and certain social, cultural, ethical, liturgical, linguistic and conceptual features. It takes on a creaturely form, as Torrance says.

Torrance, at this point, makes an important observation. Israel's knowledge of God is not complete even as the last of her prophets speak and write. In fact, part of what is revealed to Israel is that her knowledge of God is incomplete, there is more yet to come. Enshrined in the prophetic word is the promise of a greater and more full knowledge of God not only for Israel, but for all humanity. God's ultimate purposes for Israel and all his creation have not yet been accomplished. There is more God will do, not the least of which is sending his Messiah.[21]

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[20] We might say, realities that are ontologically *extra* textual.

[21] *Reconstruction*, 144-45.

As it turns out, Torrance notes, all the ways Israel was led and taught served as anticipations of what was to come. God was preparing the mind and heart of Israel for the fullness of his revelation and the manifestation of his ultimate purposes. Their ethical ways, their liturgical ways, the patterns of God's actions and interactions with them and other nations throughout the history of their relationship were not just accidental or incidental. They were purposeful preparations shaping the life, the heart, the mind of Israel in order for her to grasp and receive the greater revelation of God to come.

Scripture was born in the life of Israel. But her Scripture contained not just ideas about God but the record of God's actual interaction with Israel, including Israel's responses, and the inspired interpretations of the history of those interactions that shaped Israel's whole life, memory and hope. Thereby, the *dabar Yahweh* (the Word of the Lord) became imprinted onto their whole humanity. They became a people, the people who belonged to God, a God they knew, could trust and so worship.

In Torrance's terms, Israel was the socio-cultural-linguistic-intellectual womb and matrix formed by God in anticipation of and preparation for the final step in his activity of revelation and reconciliation.[22] God had acculturated a people for himself ready to receive the fullness of his revelation and presumably did so because without it no one would have grasped sufficiently, according to God's own satisfaction, that final phase of his revelation. Yes, without Israel and its prophets we would not have what we now call the Hebrew Scriptures. But more than that, there would not have been formed a people with a preserved and prophetically interpreted mind and memory ready to receive the full revelation and reconciliation of God.

Revelation, then, does not come by way of an oracle nor by private mental events or through the conveyance of particular concepts, ideas or symbols of God that are essentially mental or sheerly conceptual. Through God's own initiative the Word of the Lord was conveyed in conjunction with God's own actions and

[22] *Reconstruction*, 145.

interactions with a whole and particular people played out down through a particular history of relationship.

The key elements of this history of relationship (presumably all that was needed, according to God's own reckoning) were then brought to articulation by the prophets appointed by God to speak and write. By God's own providence that prophetic word was preserved (again, presumably as God saw fit) so that it was passed on from generation to generation. And in this way God acculturated to himself a people with a particular mind.

Torrance stresses that the economy of God worked out in Israel involved revelation and reconciliation. These two elements cannot be separated, since there is in the essence of the matter no possibility of really knowing this God without being reconciled to this God. For this God is a God who faithfully maintains his covenant love and purposes and so restores their broken relationship. Time and again this God acts as Israel's Deliverer and Redeemer from iniquity who provides atonement for sin, who upholds his righteous mercy towards all. Failing to recognize and relate to this God as the faithful, atoning, healing, reconciling God is to fail to receive the revelation of who God is.

For Torrance the crucial elements of this phase of the economy can then be summed up in four points: 1) the economy of revelation and redemption is driven and accomplished by God's own initiative. 2) God's actions unfold in the ongoing full-orbed life of Israel in such a way that he forms and shapes the entirety of their social, cultural, ethical, liturgical, intellectual history. 3) the economy included, as one element within it, the formation of Israel's Scripture, 4) all this was a preparation for the further unfolding and promised fulfillment of the economy of revelation and reconciliation. Later phases of this economy can only be understood in terms of this earlier phase as it is the same God at work to accomplish one and the same purpose: revelation and reconciliation.

The Self-revelation and Self-giving of God in Jesus Christ by the Spirit

The next phase of the unfolding of God's economy took a surprising, perhaps even shocking turn for Israel at the end of its preparation. God did not send mere prophets or kings or priests to reveal and redeem. God came himself. The Word of God became incarnate. The Son of God appeared in person, in flesh and blood in space and time. The people of God now beheld God face to face. No longer were they faced simply with indirect prophetic words about God and the meaning of his actions among them. But in Jesus of Nazareth, they met God, the whole God, both veiled and manifested in his humanity. No longer were they being prepared with signs and promises, but the fulfillment, the Reality itself became present and active among them, directly addressing them.[23] The Reality that was signified in all their previous knowledge of God now stood before them, interpreting himself to them. To be sure, this self-revelation made use of all God's providentially arranged preparations. But also required were corrections of any less than faithful apperceptions of that history of revelation, any distortions of the character, heart, mind, purpose and ways of God that might have infiltrated the teachings given and recollected within Israel.

In Christ, Torrance points out, the Word of God is embodied in the humanity of Jesus, without ceasing to be the eternal Word of God. God in wisdom and mercy, in righteousness and faithfulness, has now placed his own image among us, in the very place reserved by God's "No" to Israel against setting up any graven images. He is Immanuel, God with us. Wanting to make the distinctive nature of this phase of God's revelation and reconciliation as clear and precise as possible, Torrance emphasizes that in Jesus we have God's own *self*-revelation and *self*-giving. No longer does God stay at a distance and act indirectly or communicate through mere creaturely interpreters via the humanity of Israel. The fulfillment of revelation and redemption takes place by the direct action and speaking of God in person, in time and space, in flesh and blood, in the incarnate Son of God.

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[23] *Reality*, 93-99.

Torrance explores this astounding event and fact, noting that Jesus reveals himself to have existed in relationship with the Father and Spirit from before creation itself came into existence. In his self-identification with the the I-Am disclosed to Moses and his being before Abraham, Jesus places himself on the Creator side of the Creator-Created ontological distinction. He is the one his appointed interpreters recognize as the one though whom all creation was made and continues to be upheld. Jesus then, gives us a share of his own internal knowledge of the God of Israel. Jesus indicates he alone knows the Father and that others can know God the Father in this way only by means of Jesus choosing to revealing him to others. "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22). As John the Gospel writer conveys, Jesus alone has from eternity existed in the "bosom" of the Father and has seen him and known him (John 1: 16-18).

Assuming our humanity, within his human mind and with human words, concepts and images formed in the womb of Israel, Jesus shares his insider knowledge of God with us and accomplishes for us his redemptive purposes. There is now in Jesus a place in creation where divine and human knowledge of God intersect. There is now a place where perfect communion of God with humanity occurs — in the Person of the Son of God incarnate. At no other time and no other place and in no other person do we have embodied this knowledge and this communion.

This reconciled knowledge of God that is grounded in God is finally and ultimately actualized in Jesus Christ. But in Christ, Torrance emphatically reminds us, we not only have the revelation of God to humanity but also have the only perfect human reception of that knowledge resulting in a life of perfect response to of God. This bi-directional reality is most concretely pointed to in Jesus' own self-designation in his saying: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." He does not say that he will show us the way or tell us the truth or show us how to have life. He is, in his own person, the Way of God, the Truth of God and the Life of God and he is this now for us as one of us, in his humanity united to his eternal divine Person. So, Jesus can say, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." This action of revelation

and response in Jesus is qualitatively different from any that has preceded it.[24] It is a *self*-revelation.

This is not to deny that God was the agent in previous acts of revelation and preparation for fulfillment in the life of Israel. But in Jesus we have an absolutely unique personal union of God with creaturely human reality. That is why Jesus is not merely another priest, another king, another prophet. He does not come to offer us more information about God or a new method or technique for approaching God. Rather, God came himself in the Person of his Son and made himself known, by his own self-action, self-interpretation and self-giving. Torrance can't emphasize enough how crucial it is to see how qualitatively different this act of revelation, reception and response is compared to all that has gone on before.[25] In Jesus Christ we reach the zenith of God's own once-and-for-all economy.

If study of the biblical texts embraces ultimate beliefs that are divergent from or incompatible with these non-deistic revelatory events, the we can expect no true knowledge to result and the outcomes of such study to be divergent and even incoherent with one another. But a further element has also to be taken into account to give a complete picture of the economy of revelation.

The Apostolic Appointment

The story of revelation and reconciliation continues as it slopes down and away from that concrete, embodied, intensely personal high point. Jesus appoints the apostles to be his authorized interpreters through their preaching and in their writings. And this is a particular, personal and therefore unique appointment or calling. This appointment, Torrance notes, included their proper response to Jesus himself according to the truth and reality of who he was. The apostles received the self-revelation and self-giving of God as God intended, as the qualitatively unique and central event of the culmination of God's own initiative to be known and reconciled to his people. So the Apostles not only proclaimed a message but

[24] *Reality*, 89.

[25] *Reconstruction*, 129-134.

embody in their persons the essential reception of and response to God's self-revelation and self-giving in Jesus.[26]

The ministry of the Apostles was not merely to hand over a message but to embody right, truthful reception and response to all of who Jesus was and revealed himself to be in word and deed. Torrance points out that this bi-directional ministry is what became identified in the early church, especially with Irenaeus, as the apostolic foundation of the church.[27] As the Apostle Paul put it, this foundation had Christ himself as the cornerstone and the whole renewed people of God are built upon it and into it as a place of worship, a temple (Ephesians 2:20-22).

On the basis of Christ's own initiative we now have a written record of the Apostolic teaching and their response oriented around the reality of Christ the cornerstone, gathered together in what we now call the New Testament. Torrance notes that the early church recognized that there was a center, a core reality, to which all the Apostolic *kerygma* (proclamation) was oriented. That center was Jesus' own self-interpretation which revealed his identity and the nature and purpose of his redeeming work. And key to Jesus' self-revelation of his true identity was the revelation of his relationship to the Father and the Spirit, also preserved in that Apostolic foundation.

In the mind of the early church that core became designated the "deposit of faith."[28] Torrance clarifies that this deposit of faith was not just the message *about* the person and work of the incarnate Son of God, but included reference to having actual relationship to the Reality itself, the risen and ascended Lord. The words of the Apostles directed their hearer's attention beyond the words themselves to the actual Living Word of God. Their intention was to contribute to the formation or maturity of a reciprocal relationship between the hearers and the God revealed supremely, directly and personally in Jesus Christ. That relationship would involve the hearers sharing in their own response of worship. They understood their words

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[26] "Deposit," 14; and *Reconstruction*, 135-36.

[27] *Reality*, 91, 92.

[28] See Torrance's lengthy article, "The Deposit of Faith," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983): 1-28.

to be revelatory in a secondary sense to God's own acts in Israel and personally in Jesus Christ.

Crucially, this core carries within it the worshipful response of the Apostles who shared in the responsive mind of Christ to God the Father in the power of the Spirit. That response is designated faith or belief in this God. The faith or belief of the church then is directed through the Apostolic *kerygma* to terminate on the reality of the God who is revealed thereby. The object of faith and worship is not the verbal statements, but the reality they mean, the Personal Subject to which they refer. That Real Subject is the One behind the two-fold economy of the revelatory acts. And that Real Subject is not absent, but is present to us, from the Father through the Son and in the Spirit so that we may respond in the Spirit, through the Son and to the Father.[29] The Deposit of Faith was recognized as the living, ontologically grounded core of the Apostolic witness and writings.

So the New Testament Scriptures were received as the "Apostolic tradition" or "Apostolic foundation" of the church which was comprised of the revelation and proclamation of the reconciliation that God himself promised to Israel and had now fulfilled in Christ. That proclamation included with it the grounds for persons making the appropriate response of repentance and faith and so which gave rise to the faithful worship of the Church.

The Apostolic Tradition, Scripture and Our Knowledge and Faith in God

It is at this point that Torrance must acknowledge a crucial distinction, one that can be misconstrued if the larger context of Torrance's exposition of the entire economy of revelation is not taken into account. The revelation of God, fulfilled in person in Christ and handed on through the Apostolic foundation, aimed at a repentant belief or faith that results in a life of worship. Such worship in the life of the church is the manifestation of the fact that the revelation has reached its God-initiated and intended purpose.

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[29] *Ground and Grammar*, 161.

Consequently, we must say, argues Torrance, that the only true object of our knowledge and so of our faith, our belief, is the God revealed in Jesus Christ. The writings of the Apostles themselves cannot be the proper objects of faith in the same way that God himself is. The Apostles themselves, and so their writings, point beyond their own message to the realities to which they refer.[30] That is, our knowledge of God and response of faithful worship to God "repose" or "terminate on" its ultimate and ontological source, namely, on God the Father through God the Son and not on the Apostolic writings themselves, the NT Scriptures.[31]

The church does not worship the Bible. If it did it would be guilty of idolatry.[32] The church does not believe that the Bible will raise us up on the last day. The church does not proclaim that the Bible gave up its life on the Cross to redeem us from sin and guilt and death. We cannot say, then, that we believe in the Bible in the same way that we believe in God, Father, Son and Spirit. If our words and understanding are to be true to the nature and ordering of the realities involved in the economy of revelation, then we must both distinguish and properly relate the Living Word of God to the Written Word of God. The Bible is not divine and so knowledge of it, in and of itself, is not knowledge of God, even if it has a unique, indispensable and unsurpassable place in God's economy. Scripture is not a proper object of our worship even if our worship, on this side of God's self-revelation, would never arise without the Apostolic foundation.

Jesus himself warned of the danger of not acknowledging the ontological and epistemological differentiation between Scripture and himself. He warns the Jewish leaders that they can never find eternal life in Scripture if they reject him, for Scripture directs them beyond itself to him (John 5:29-40). In the mind of Jesus the purpose of Scripture is to direct them to the one and only ontological source of eternal life. Treating Scripture as the object of faith and salvation, displacing Jesus himself, amounts to the misuse of Scripture contrary to God's intentions. But even more seriously, such misuse misses eternal life itself. Jesus identified himself as

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[30] *Reality*, 96.

[31] *Reality*, 71.

[32] Technically, bibliolatry.

being the resurrection and life for us. Scripture directs us to him, not primarily to itself.

Either identifying the Living Word with Written Word or separating them have a significant, and in Torrance's view, damaging, effect on how we interpret Scripture and in turn how we understand the nature of doctrinal formulations. But when properly distinguished and related there can be no legitimate way to dismiss the divinely appointed place of Scripture since, for Torrance, in the order of our knowing and being reconciled to God, Scripture with Christ as its cornerstone, is essential. So, for instance, he says, "the church must always turn to the Holy Scripture as the immediate source and norm of all revealed knowledge of God and of his saving purpose in Jesus Christ."[33] There are scores of other passages where Torrance unambiguously declares the same thing. How could he say anything else given the place of Scripture in the economy of God's revelation and reconciliation?

So, given the economy of God's self-revelation, how ought we to approach Scripture as the believing church? The short answer is, for Torrance, that we must have a *realist approach* with matching assumptions.[34] This would mean working with the basic assumption that the statements of Scripture are pointers, signs, signifiers of realities which transcend and are independent of the statements themselves. And furthermore, that the meaning of biblical statements is determined by the realities to which they refer. And finally, since these realities are the Creator God and the acts of God in history, most importantly the acts of incarnate Son of God, we should assume we have been given access to that Personal Reality by means of Scripture and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

A realist approach, whether in biblical or theological study, will include methods of inquiry that account for Scripture's particular function and purpose as

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[33] *Divine Meaning*, 5. See also "in this embodied form 'the Faith once for all delivered to the saints' constituted the regulative basis for all explicit formulation of Christian truth, doctrine and belief in the deepening understanding of the church . . . ," "The Deposit of Faith", 3. ". . . the unalterable foundation laid for it by Christ in himself and his Apostles." *Ibid*., 5; and *Space, Time and Resurrection,* "Without all that the Scriptures in the saving purpose of God have come to embody, we would not be able to know God or to have intelligible communion with him within our continuing human and historical existence", 12-13.

[34] See *Reality*, 58-61, for a more complete discussion of realism.

an Apostolic word in relation to the written prophetic word of Israel and its fulfillment in the Incarnate Living Word.[35] We are given Scripture that we might be reconciled and worship according to the "truth as it is in Jesus" who is the self-revelation of God and who authorized the Apostolic foundation with Christ himself as its orienting cornerstone, the Deposit of Faith, given to and recognized by the early church. Whatever methods and assumptions made by the disciplines of biblical or theological studies must cohere with the nature of Scripture which provides for us actual, real knowledge of God and uniquely contributes to actual, real reconciliation, fellowship, communion with the Living God. They must be congruent with the message and assume the reality of the Object to be known and worshipped on the basis of that message and its meaning — the personal reality to which Scripture refers.

The Early Church Case Study of the Realist Approach

What does a realist approach look like? The early church was caught up in having to sort out the relationships between Scripture, its proper interpretation and faithful theological expression. Torrance has found that, in particular, Athanasius' and others engagement with Arianism and the eventual resolution in the Creed of Nicea provide a very useful case study. It demonstrates how, on the basis of the Apostolic teaching, the early church actually came to generate certain key theological formulations and clarified and summarized its faith in creedal statements.

In particular, Torrance traced out how Athanasius paid very careful attention to the thought of Arius and others who, on the basis of their interpretation of Scripture, came to regard Jesus as a creature, a creation of God. Athanasius was not only concerned with the conclusions reached but actually delved into how exactly Arius and his supporters reached their conclusions. As it turns out, certain fundamental assumptions (ultimate beliefs) were determinative for their interpretive methods which, then, in turn led to their theological conclusions.[36]

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[35] *Reality*, 109ff.

[36] See *Divine Meaning*, chapters 7 and 8.

Athanasius was concerned that our knowledge of God be expressed accurately (Grk., *akribeia*, Lat., *scientia*, precise, accurate or demonstrable knowledge) and accused Arius' thinking of being inaccurate, ungodly, rationalizing, mythological (*mythologein*) and finally, idolatrous.

The reason Athanasius brought up such serious charges was that the Arians[37] were thinking of God as if God was a creature and interpreting Scripture as if God (Father and Son) had a relationship of the same sort as human creatures have even though they affirmed that God the Father was not a created being. By making human father-son relationships the norm or criteria for interpreting biblical language of father and son, they concluded that "there was a time when the son was not" and so regarded Jesus as being a creature, one made by God, not eternal as God (the Father) was. The biblical statements were interpreted as if human relations were the normative reality. Since for humans there is a time when fathers were not fathers and they had no son, therefore the biblical statement means the same thing.

Creaturely logic, which perfectly applies to creatures, was used to interpret biblical language about God, without any accounting of the fact that in reality the God of the Bible is not a creature. So any relations God has, such as the Father begetting the Son, cannot simply be interpreted in creaturely ways. The biblical texts are to be interpreted according to the reality to which they refer or intend. The Arian assumption and method of interpreting Scripture was incongruent with, even contrary to, what was revealed in the economy of Scripture. The God revealed in Scripture is not in reality a creature and cannot be known truly or normatively (theologically) in terms of categories that apply to creatures but not to God. How they were attempting to understand the God revealed in Scripture was not ordered by the nature of the God they were attempting to understand. The interpretation of the biblical statements and the theological conclusion made on that basis were

[37] Athanasius's critique not only applied to Arius but to the whole range of those who offered various amendments of Arius's particular understanding but still, in the end, refused to accept the meaning held forth at Nicaea (325) and reached its full articulation in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. See T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* for his rehearsal of the early church controversy.

incongruent with the nature of the realities being revealed concerning who God was and was revealed to be in Jesus Christ.

In fact, Athanasius noted, such thinking is ungodly, thinking of God as if God were a creature. And that, of course, is idolatrous and so cannot contribute to the knowledge of God, but rather obscures it. It is also mythological thinking, since it takes human realities and projects them onto God, understanding God in terms of human ways, creating God in our own image. Such do not express the intentions and results of divine revelation but rather project ordinary knowledge concerning creatures. The Arians failed to grasp the very nature of revelation as it unfolded in God's economy. They did not allow the nature of the object to determine how they should know it nor to determine how to interpret the biblical witness to that object, namely, the eternal Father and Son.

Finally, the Arian approach meant that there was not and could not be any real knowledge of God himself, but only myths, symbols, figures, analogies controlled by human reality and experience. If Jesus was a creature, and not one with the Father in being, act and relationship, then we have no self-revelation and no self-giving of God himself. Our knowledge of God then, could not terminate or repose on God, but only on human words and concepts generated out of ourselves with Jesus simply being one of us.

Why was this matter of so little concern to Arius and close followers? Athanasius discerned that operating behind such exegetical method and theological formulation was a more ultimate belief. Arian teachers were convinced of a cosmological and epistemological dualism which ruled out from the start any possibility of real, direct action of the Creator God within creation itself and any real knowledge of God in and of himself. The reality of God was assumed to be inaccessible to human creatures. No revelation of the reality was possible.

It was this presupposition that determined the Arian hermeneutical approach to Scripture, one alien to the Apostolic mind and foundation. Given their dualistic assumptions, mythological projection and creaturely rationalizations were the only possibility. No deposit of faith could be given the church by God. And consequently, no personal union of God with humanity as in the incarnation could even be

contemplated since such an event in reality would serve as a total disconfirmation of their dualistic assumptions. It was this unshakable ultimate belief that drove their hermeneutics and required them to affirm the identity of Jesus as being *heteroousios* (of utterly different kind of being) or *homoiousios* (of a similar kind of being) and to deny absolutely that Jesus could possibly be *homoousios* (of one and the same kind of being) as was God the Father.

The deliberations regarding the relation of the Father and Son were just one example of many to come. The church had to sort out how best to interpret Scripture and affirm the truth of the Apostolic *kerygma* by means of doctrinal formulation. And they had to do so without making their own dogmatic statement objects of ultimate faith. Athanasius and others following in his footsteps led the way by showing how to keep biblical interpretation and doctrinal formulations within the boundary of God's economy of revelation and reconciliation. Operating within such a realism, the church could then continue to share in the faithful witness of the Apostolic mind to Christ himself and so participate in the right worship of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit as articulated in the Nicene Creed.

The lessons to be learned

If our biblical and theological studies have anything to do with the knowledge of and reconciliation to the God of the Bible in actuality and reality and not just notionally and cognitively, then we in our contemporary situation have much to learn from the early church to guide and correct how we approach our exegetical and dogmatic tasks. For according to Torrance's lights, the same dualistic cosmological and epistemological assumptions continue to undermine the practice of these disciplines. For the assumptions we bring to these disciplines will have a powerful effect on what possible range of conclusions/understandings might be drawn from them, upon how they are thought to be related to each other and what they can offer the life and worship of the church.[38]

If it is assumed that God cannot be known in any direct way and that there is no normative or definitive economy of revelation and reconciliation then theology

[38] *Reconstruction*, 142.

can be nothing more than philosophical reflection on various competing conceptions, images, symbols that correspond to our current understandings of our creaturely existence. The ground of these understandings will be confidence in our rational abilities, or our psychological, sociological, mystical or religious experience. And, of course, there is no way to adjudicate between which objects of creaturely study are most apt to confirm or deny the existence of God or provide a basis upon which logical inferences to God are warranted.[39]

God, by definition then, cannot be an object of knowledge within that human and creaturely normed frame. Given that constriction, whatever results might be forthcoming from such theology can only call for the church reinterpreting its Scriptures and the history of its life and worship in a way that reduces it all to mythology at best. Faith can only be regarded as a self-generated personal, private, psychological state of mind, not a response to a personal and objective reality that has forged a contact with us in and through the economy of revelation that extends down to us today in continuity with the Apostolic mind and foundation. God, if there is a God, must remain unknown and at a deistic distance while we merely conjecture. In effect there can be no such thing as dogmatic theology or theological science since it is assumed that there is no access to any actual theological reality. Theological statements then can have no reality to which they need to answer. They can only answer to other theological statements or systems or narratives, etc.

Some may then want to eschew theology and trust solely in authoritative Scripture, for surely there we can know God; after all God has provided it to us. However, if the discipline of the interpretation of Scripture has been infiltrated by such ancient and modern dualistic assumptions, then exegesis will fare no better than dogmatics. For in this case, argues Torrance, the only objects available for actual study are the statements, concepts and experiences of human beings that at best refer to a relatively absent God who cannot be known in any direct personal and real way.[40]

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[39] It seems to me that even the "properly basic" assumptions of Reformed epistemology must hang in ontological mid-air given such parameters.

[40] *Reality*, 80.

Even invoking the Holy Spirit will help little since under dualistic constraints the Spirit must be confined at best to the subjective aspects of human knowing while the object to which the Spirit opens us up to know remains merely the human testimony of the writers of Scripture who may have thought that Jesus was one in being and act with Father. The real objects of study then must devolve into the thoughts or psychological states of the biblical writers, or the veracity of the history of apostolic succession, or, given the socio-political, economic, intellectual climate of the early church, pursuit of the question of what thoughts the Apostles and Jesus himself could plausibly have had.

We might come to know something of the words, ideas, concepts and convictions of the biblical writers, but dualistic assumptions rule out the Apostolic mind sharing in the very mind of Christ who has real direct knowledge of God. And we certainly cannot think we can have access to the realities to which Scripture refers since, for all practical purposes, the reality at hand is simply the statements found in the Bible itself. At best we might gain ideas about God that are comparable to the biblical writers. But still, the only objects directly available to our faith are the words and concepts and narratives of the Bible. With those words and concepts in mind we may go on and logically infer truths about a God we suppose exists. But, in the end, we can have only truths of statement found in the Bible, and not the truths of being, not contact with the reality that transcends the words to which they refer.[41] We may possibly know something about God, but cannot not know God in a real way, a way that involves real personal and actual reconciliation and hope for redemption.

If such non-realist ultimate belief and dualistic assumptions control the starting points of our theological study and exegetical methods, then faith must be left at the door and even the biblical scholar, much less the theologian, must become a hypothetical unbeliever, standing outside of worship, prayer and devotion at least for the moment. For faith must be regarded as an unwanted and distorting presupposition that gets in the way of discerning *for ourselves*, on the basis of creaturely data available to us, whether we ought to have faith. Biblical studies then

[41] *Reality*, 65-69.

is forced to take place on some kind of purported neutral ground (which arguably is a fiction itself) located outside the church.

Biblical studies then become not a means, at least not a direct means, to build up the faith of the church or to enrich its worship. At best it might aspire to clear the way for the church to justify its faith and devotion on some basis established outside the church. Biblical studies must become our attempts to make sense of Scripture, find meaning for ourselves, since within a non-realist frame Scripture cannot give us access to the reality to which the prophetic and apostolic authors referred — that is, to the source and the meaning of their writings. We may have access in some measure to the statements of the biblical authors but we cannot have contact with any extra textual reality to which they pointed, to the meaningful referent of their words.

When addressing the various kinds of diversity (of emphasis, context, literary form, language, sources, certain inconsistencies, ambiguities) that a strictly logico-historico-grammatico analysis of Scripture uncovers, the discipline itself will be able to muster few if any resources for resisting utter fragmentation, since the real unity in the truth of God embodied in Jesus and shared in by the Apostles cannot serve as an essential part of the practice of the discipline.[42] And doing so might, on the part of many, even be regarded as the imposition of theology upon biblical studies! We must, in that case, discover for ourselves the unity of the Bible if we assume we can't have access, at least within the discipline, to the ontological unity we affirm in other contexts, such as when we worship or pray to or obey the one and only God revealed in Jesus Christ.

And finally, if a dualism is assumed in biblical studies then there will be no established norm or center or qualitatively distinct reality that orients our interpretation of Scripture, for in that frame Jesus Christ as depicted in the Bible by its various authors may or may not be granted any special status. There will be no reason to regard him as the interpretive key of all of Scripture since for the sake of our "neutral" methods we cannot assume that he is the Logos of all things, including Scripture. If there is to be any synthesis after analysis of the texts, then

[42] *Reality*, 106.

some hermeneutical mechanism constructed by the interpreters or dogmaticians must be found and brought into the mix. However, even then the unified meaning of Scripture will consist in the meaning of what we bring to it, not what we find through it, if Scripture has any meaning at all, that is, reference beyond itself.[43]

Of course, there will arise the challenge not only of interpreting individual texts but of knowing what value/meaning to assign the various authors (or literary units) of Scripture. When analysis brings to light differences between the various (purported?) authors or sources of the Scriptural text on what basis do we interrelate the Synoptics and John, Jesus and Paul and Peter and James and the woman[?] who wrote Hebrews? What sense will we make of various literary units of Scripture including the connection between the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, or the subunits of the Pentateuch and Isaiah? Given the genre of Jonah, what sense can we make of this narrative? In every case access to any objective ontological [real] interpretive center is ruled out. We will have to bring our own preferred interpretive center to the task if any synthesis is to occur after analysis.[44] Of course, any center suggested will be contested by those promulgating a preferred rival. In fact, the very purpose of the interpretation of texts will be up for grabs. Methodological chaos will have ensued.

We will all (individually or corporately) have to find our own meanings in the texts and generate our own responses to them since non-realist dualistic presuppositions and the methods engendered by them do not allow for the possibility that the Written Word directs us beyond itself to the ontologically distinct Living Word who constitutes the personal reality and the unity of all of Scripture, and so serves as the interpretive center of it all.

In order to help sort out some of these exegetical conundrums some may want to borrow from theology (if this can be allowed within the discipline) a doctrine of Scripture that will include a list of its attributes such as authority, majesty, infallibility or inerrancy. But if, compelled by dualist assumptions embedded in the discipline, such doctrinal descriptions are permitted to refer only

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[43] *Reality*, 80-83.

[44] *Reality*, 115.

to Scripture itself and so proscribing any real and actual connection to the Living Word himself, little help will be found.[45] Inevitably, irresolvable arguments will ensue about what those theological terms mean, how they apply to Scripture, what implications there are for interpretation, and which interpretations are then acceptable. Such debates can never be resolved because all solutions proposed within the dualistic/deistic framework will still just refer to the words on the page (syntactics) and the meanings they have relative to themselves and to their social-cultural, religious and intellectually conditioned contexts such as we can discern. There will be little if anything within the discipline itself to prevent self-projections and self-justifications from gaining the upper hand in prescribing the meaning of Scripture and the proper responses to it. For Scripture itself cannot, in this frame, provide either of these to us since it is assumed to be unable to actually refer us to the Reality beyond itself, giving us knowledge of God as we receive God's reconciliation.

Prospects for Biblical Studies and Dogmatic Theology

The survey above presents a dismal picture for any hope of gaining knowledge of the realities to which the biblical texts ostensibly refer us. But does it not merely describe the general current state of affairs? Do not our seminaries and churches, not to mention universities, all too often exhibit exactly these characteristics? If so, perhaps Torrance has indeed, put his finger on something. And in that case, then his offer of a correction, ought to be carefully looked at.

Torrance's agenda is to expose the employment of non-realist ultimate beliefs and the dualist epistemologies where ever they prevail in both dogmatic theology and biblical studies and encourage those engaged in these disciplines to throw off the attendant dualistic assumptions and those methods (or aspects of them) that essentially trade in them. This would be a matter, as Torrance notes, of repentance and of faith in the Living God.[46] This would amount to working within the disciplines as believing participants in the continuing economic unfolding of God's own ministry of revelation and reconciliation first in the church and, in turn, beyond.

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[45] *Reality*, 97, 109.

[46] *Reality*, 102.

Essential to this paradigm shift would be the maintenance of a receptive attitude to the message of the Apostolic witness. The shift would involve discerning and taking on their assumptions and purposes while submitting to and sharing in their response to the reality of the God they met and knew in Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior. It would constitute finding the most fitting intellectual tools available, consistent with the nature of Scripture as real revelation, that could contribute to a careful and accurate listening to the Apostolic human words and interpreting them in a way that assumed the Living Word of God was the ultimate reality and object of study and the Living ontological unity of Scripture. Founded on faith in the faithfulness of God to accomplish his purpose through his divinely appointed economy, the goal and aim of such study would be reception of the knowledge of God himself and life in reconciled response of communion with God.

In this way, Torrance believes, biblical studies and theological studies may very well be reconciled and serve together hand in hand while still offering distinct but overlapping and coordinated service, contributing to the doxology of the Triune God of the Church of Jesus Christ, Lord of all.

READING THE DECALOGUE IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

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The "Ten Commandments," so-called, are commonly read as a set of moral or legal principles that can be abstracted from the history of Israel while still retaining their moral force. I will suggest in this paper, however, that the isolation of the commandments from Israel's story of divine deliverance and liberation distorts the character and meaning of the text. The proper setting for the reading of the Decalogue, and indeed for the reading of Scripture as a whole, is the lived life of the community of faith. It is done best when it us guided by the liturgical life of the people of God. That liturgical life is itself a narration and enactment of Scripture's story. It is a story that is understood only to the extent that it is also lived. The decalogue in Exodus 20 will serve as a case study for this proposal.

I propose in this paper to demonstrate the necessity and the fruitfulness of reading Scripture within the life of the community of faith. The approach I will take belongs within the realm of "theological interpretation of Scripture." Theological interpretation of Scripture is undertaken under the conviction that whatever else we might have to say about the texts gathered together in the Christian Bible they are also and primarily an instrument of God's self-communication. Beginning in the nineteenth century and through much of the twentieth it was commonly supposed in the Western academy that the reading of biblical texts is best done without reliance on the commitments of religious faith, be they Jewish or Christian in character. In an approach sometimes referred to as methodological naturalism, the biblical texts were to be treated solely as the products of human culture and any

suggestion that God was involved in their production, transmission and reception was to be set aside. That God was involved in their formation and might be further involved in their reception within communities of faith as the Christian doctrine of inspiration proposes is a theological claim that was thought to have no place in the realm of objective, scholarly inquiry into the nature and meaning of the texts. Similarly, the collection of biblical texts into a canon of Scripture thought to be authoritative for Christian faith and life was thus considered to be of no hermeneutical significance.

Theological Hermeneutics

Advocates of the theological interpretation of Scripture have begun to push back against the assumptions briefly outlined here. They argue that whatever we may say about the historical and cultural circumstances that led to the text's production, the Bible is also a medium through which the voice of God may be heard. Theological hermeneutics accords with the view of Scripture espoused by Thomas Torrance. "Holy Scripture is assumed by Christ," Torrance writes, "to be his instrument in conveying revelation and reconciliation . . ."[1] This conviction is commonly expressed through the claim that the Bible is the Word of God and is to be read, therefore, with an interest in what God might be saying to us. This interest, furthermore, is not secondary but primary. That means, first, that the fruits yielded by the range of critical methods developed within biblical studies are of value to the Jewish and Christian communities of faith from which the texts emerged only insofar as they help those communities to attend faithfully and obediently to the God whose Word Scripture is. It also means that methodological naturalism — the effort to read the texts as if God were not involved — is an approach that is alien to the texts themselves. Torrance describes the reading of Scripture thus: "true hearing of the Word of God coming to us through the human words of the Bible *which is faithful to those words* can take place effectively only within the sphere of reconciliation to God."[2]

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[1] Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 138.

[2] Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 142.

The claims I have made here belong of course within the realm of dogmatic confession. That is to say, they are statements of the church's faith, of what the church takes to be true. They find their epistemic ground not in some independently conducted inquiry but in the continuing tradition of divine encounter and witness that is the church's life. A defense of that claim lies beyond the scope of this paper[3] but I hope that the argument that follows might demonstrate the fruitfulness of reading Scripture from within the framework of the church's faith. That framework of faith necessarily extends to the faith and continuing life of Israel, especially when reading what Christians call the Old Testament.

Theological hermeneutics is guided first and foremost by the liturgical life of the people of God. That liturgical life is itself a narration and enactment, we might say, of Scripture's story. It is a story that is understood only to the extent that it is also lived. It is important to note here that wherever the story Scripture tells is lived by the community called into being for that purpose, the Holy Spirit is at work. The living of that story, and so also our understanding of it, takes shape in virtue of the Spirit's guidance and enabling power. As hinted at above, the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture applies not only to the formation of the biblical texts but, wherever communities of faith are drawn to share in the story unfolded in those texts, it applies also to their reception.

Reading the Decalogue

Enough for now of dogmatic foundations. Let me try to demonstrate how the reading of Scripture from within the community of faith might proceed, taking as a case study Exodus 20:1-17. This and the parallel text in Deuteronomy 5:6-21 is commonly, but somewhat misleadingly, referred to as the Ten Commandments. We do better, however, to speak of the "ten words," thus more accurately translating the Hebrew *`aseret ha-devarim* (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13, 10:4) or the Septuagint Greek, *deka logoi*. To speak of these ten words as the Ten Commandments sets them into a legal frame that distorts their character and

[3] For a more substantial exploration of the point, see, for example, Robert W. Jenson, "Hermeneutics and the Life of the Church," in Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds. *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 89-105.

obscures their fundamental purpose.[4] The fault is made worse when, as is often done, they are presented as if they can stand alone as a set of moral principles without the first word, and so be abstracted from the story of God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. It is that deliverance, that liberating action of God to which the first word testifies that is the hermeneutical key to the nine words that follow. In making this judgement, I am following the Jewish Talmud which presents as the first word: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery . . ." (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6). The Christian churches, by unfortunate contrast, have mostly omitted that first word in their presentations of the "Ten Commandments." Luther provides a particularly egregious example in arguing that while,

> Gentiles are just as duty-bound as the Jews to keep the first commandment, so that we have no other gods than the only God . . . we Gentiles have no use and can have no use for the phrase with which [Moses] modifies this commandment and which applies solely to the Jews, namely, "who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." For if I were to approach God and say, "Oh Lord God, who brought me out of Egypt, out of the exile," etc., then I would be like a sow entering a synagogue for God never performed such a work for me. God would punish me as a liar.[5]

Luther is correct of course in claiming that he was never a slave in Egypt, but in shearing the commandments from their narrative setting he distorts the character of the commandments themselves. They become for him an instance of natural

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[4] The point is supported by George Knight who writes, "The word 'decalogue' means 'Ten Words.' The word 'commandments' does not occur here. We have ten statements, ten fiats, from out of the mystery and awe of the storm on the mountain. We approach the 'Ten Commandments' wrongly if we separate them from this context, regard them as timeless utterances, and seek to apply them to the life of all mankind." George A. F. Knight, *Theology as Narration: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 134.

[5] Martin Luther, *The Christian in Society IV,* trans. Martin H. Bertram in Luther's Works, vol. 47 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 90.

law,[6] a set of moral principles, the validity of which, he argues, was recognized long before Moses and indeed before Abraham.[7] Israel's particular circumstances are therefore deemed to be of no hermeneutical value in interpreting the commandments.[8]

We do better, I think, to follow the guidance of commentators like Terrence Fretheim who explains at length in his commentary on the book of Exodus that the narrative setting is crucial to the understanding of the law. "God's exodus redemption," Fretheim explains, "remains the constitutive event for Israel and continues to be actualized as such in Israel's worship." Fretheim thus concludes, "The law remains forever grounded in those constitutive events."[9] Christopher Seitz likewise observes that "these laws are generated out of divine compassion, linked to the deliverance out of Egypt. Law is gift here, born out of God's saving and identifying purpose."[10]

The hermeneutical significance of Israel's deliverance from bondage is simply this: far from imposing a range of legal constraints upon Israel, who, let us recall, have just been liberated from bondage, the commandments delineate what free life

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[6] On which see, Philip Turner, "The Ten Commandments in the Church in a Postmodern World," in Carl E. Braaten and Christopher R. Seitz, eds. *I am the Lord Your God: Christian Reflections on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 3-17, especially 6-11. It might be argued that Romans 2:14-15 supports Luther's identification of the Ten Commandments as an instance of natural law. There is no doubt that Gentiles, in this case, can recognize and abide by at least those moral injunctions contained in the second table of the commandments. My point, however, is that the Decalogue taken as a whole cannot be understood in terms of natural law. The injunctions of the first table are surely beyond the understanding of those who do not know "the Lord your God."

[7] To the claim that the commandments, particularly the first four, may be characterized as natural law, Christopher Seitz offers a forceful rebuttal: "If we think these are natural laws, we have probably not just misheard them but domesticated them as well." Christopher R. Seitz, "The Ten Commandments: Positive and Natural Law and the Covenants Old and New – Christian Use of the Decalogue and Moral Law," in Carl E. Braaten and Christopher R. Seitz, eds. *I am the Lord Your God: Christian Reflections on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 18-37, 21.

[8] See Luther, *The Christian in Society*, 89.

[9] Terrence E. Fretheim, *Exodus, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 204.

[10] Seitz, "The Ten Commandments," 29.

looks like.[11] Rightly understood, they are "not repressive but emancipatory."[12] The logic is straightforward: "You shall have no other gods before me." Why? It is because other gods will enslave you once again. Whether it be the idols fashioned with gold or stone as sometimes tempted Israel, or, in our own time, the gods of fashion, wealth, celebrity and status, homage paid to these gods plunges people back into bondage.

"You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not covet . . . ." The same logic continues to be applied. I have set you free, says the Lord. Such actions as these will enslave you once more. It is thus for the sake of Israel's freedom that the commandments are given. As George Knight again observes, the commandments "are addressed to a nation that has just been rescued from slavery. Thus *they are to be seen as constituent elements in the life of a free people* whom God has willed into being."[13] Terrence Fretheim echoes the point:

> The activity of God in redeeming Israel *from bondage* means that the law and the service to God and world it entails is not understood to be another form of bondage. The law is a gift of a redeeming God, and a particular redemptive act is seen as undergirding and informing the law, not the other way around. Those who are given the law are already God's people. Hence the law is not understood as a means of salvation but as instruction regarding the shape such a redeemed life is to take in one's everyday affairs.[14]

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[11] Walter Brueggemann thus advises that, "It is important not to stress the command structure of Sinai without appreciating the emancipatory impulse of Yahweh. Conversely, it is impossible to appreciate the emancipatory impulse of Yahweh, operative in the Exodus narrative, without paying close attention to the command structure of Sinai." Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 183.

[12] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 200.

[13] Knight, *Theology as Narration*, 134. My emphasis.

[14] Fretheim, *Exodus*, 224. See also, Abraham Heschel, "Religion and Law," in Fritz A. Rothschild, ed. *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism. From the Writings of Abraham J. Heschel* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 155-61, 155.

Attentiveness to the narrative context of the Decalogue, as advocated here by Knight and Fretheim, is not the preserve of theological interpreters of Scripture alone, but reading the text theologically, from within the liturgical life of the community of faith makes a substantial difference. The contrasting approach of Calum Carmichael, Professor of Comparative Literature at Cornell University and contributor to the *Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, illustrates the point. Carmichael observes that "until recently scholars examined the legal material in the Pentateuch separate from the narrative histories in which it is embedded." That view, Carmichael continues, "has undergone a radical change and much recent research focuses especially on how each genre might relate to the other."[15] Carmichael's own efforts to attend to the narrative setting, however, maintain the "scholarly" commitment to methodological naturalism and so yield a reading of the Decalogue very different from the one I am offering here. Despite there being no reference in Exodus 19-20 to the biblical story of Cain and Abel or to their parents Adam and Eve, Carmichael proposes that it is this primeval story that constitutes the narrative setting of the Decalogue. The story of God's deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt is mentioned only in passing in Carmichael's exposition while God is generally referred to in impersonal terms simply as "the deity." This "scholarly" distance from the working out of Israel's faith and covenant relationship with YHWH leads Carmichael to propose that, "the supernatural aura surrounding the giving of the Decalogue is patently an attempt to lend authority to its contents." He continues: "we have the typical reaching out to higher forces by those with power in order to sanction control over those they rule."[16] The Decalogue is thus interpreted in terms of a political power play while the possibility of God's real involvement in the story as deliverer of Israel from bondage and giver of the law warrants no consideration whatsoever.

In marked contrast to Carmichael's approach, I suggested in my introductory remarks, that theological interpretation of Scripture is guided first and foremost by the liturgical life of the people of God. That liturgical life is itself a narration and

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[15] Calum Carmichael, "Law and Narrative in the Pentateuch," in *Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 321-34, 321.

[16] Carmichael, "Law and Narrative in the Pentateuch," 330.

enactment of Scripture's story. It is a story that is understood only to the extent that it is also lived. So it turns out to be for Israel, for the people to whom the commandments were given. The liturgical narration and enactment of Israel's deliverance from bondage takes place, above all, in the annual celebration of the Passover. As told in Exodus 12, the Passover ordinance was established by the Lord's directive. Following detailed instructions of the preparations to be made for the escape from Egypt, the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance" (Ex 12:14). The divine injunction to remember this day is crucial because the Exodus establishes a new identity for Israel. They are a people whom God has delivered from bondage. Through the Exodus, Israel learns who the Lord is – the one who delivers them from bondage – but they also learn who they are, a people set free to live in covenant relationship with Yahweh.

The Passover liturgy, the Haggadah, does not function for Jews simply as an inspiring story from the past. It is their story now, the story in which they belong and which continues in the present day. It is the story of divine deliverance and liberation, of God's love and mercy and faithfulness, not only to their ancestors, but also to them. It is the story of Jewish identity; it defines who they are! Thus an old rabbinic saying from the Haggadah reads, "In every generation every person should feel as though they themselves had gone forth from Egypt." The point is reiterated later in the Haggadah: "Not only our ancestors alone did the Holy One redeem, but us as well along with them, as it is written, 'And he freed us from Egypt so as to take us and give us the land which he swore to our ancestors.'" (Deuteronomy 6:23).

Throughout the liturgy, from the questions asked by the children about the various foods to be eaten in the Passover meal, and through the *maggid* in which the events of the Exodus are narrated and commentary is made upon their meaning, the guiding theme is the words of Exodus 13:8, "You shall tell your child on that day 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.'"

In response to the questions asked by the children: "Why does this night differ from all other nights?; why on this night only unleavened bread?; why on this

night only bitter herbs?; why on this night do we dip [the herbs] twice?, why on this night do we all recline?," the master of the seder and all the celebrants respond:

> We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord our God brought us forth from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And if the Holy One, blessed be he, had not brought our forefathers forth from Egypt, then we, our children and our children's children would still be Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt.[17]

Note the identification of the present generation with Israel's forebears: "*We* were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord our God brought *us* forth from there." Jewish children are learning and adults are being reminded of who they are. They are a people whom Yahweh has delivered from bondage. That must never be forgotten.

This is the narrative context in which the "Ten Commandments," or the ten words are set. In liturgical confirmation of the point, the sequence of readings in the synagogue for the seven days of Passover begins with Exodus 12, the story of the Passover itself, and is followed by Exodus 20 the giving of the commandments to Moses. The narrative context is crucial to the interpretation of the commandments because, as I have argued, the ten words set forth what freedom entails.

Christian Participation in Israel's Story

We must consider now what significance this has for Christians? Does this Passover tradition, and its hermeneutical significance for the reading of the Decalogue, not give some credence to the point made by Luther? "We Gentiles," said Luther, "have no use . . . for the phrase with which [Moses] modifies [the first] commandment and which applies solely to the Jews, namely, 'who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'" The Decalogue is set within a story that is unique to Israel. What has that to do with non-Jews? Well, it would have very little

[17] *The Passover Haggadah*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1953), 25, 27.

to do with non-Jews were it not for the fact that shortly before his death and resurrection, on the day of unleavened bread, Jesus sent the disciples to prepare the Passover meal.

> When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:14-20)

Through this enactment and reinterpretation of Israel's story of divine deliverance, Jesus draws those who would be his disciples into Israel's story, now brought to fulfillment so Christians believe, in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The God who delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt is at work again in the person of Jesus, undertaking for Gentiles too now the work of liberation, establishing a new identity for them, and introducing a new life of freedom for those who choose to follow him.[18]

In confirmation of the point, Luke's version of the Passover meal which I have quoted above is followed immediately by the dispute among the disciples about which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves." (Luke 22: 25-26) We have seen this pattern before. The divine declaration of deliverance from

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[18] Thomas Torrance rightly observes, therefore, that "there cannot be a Christian Church independent of Israel, for Gentiles may belong to the one people of God only by incorporation into the commonwealth of Israel through the Mediatorship of Christ Jesus . . ." See Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1976), 26.

bondage, and the enactment of that story in the Passover meal, is followed by instructions about what the new life looks like. In Exodus 20, "You shall have no other gods before me," and so on; in Luke, you shall have no one in authority over you, nor shall you lord it over others, rather "the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves." This is what freedom looks like. This is what the new life looks like that follows upon the divine work of liberation.

Servant leadership and the worship of no gods other than the God made known through Israel are "laws" that may be approved of in principle outside the Jewish and Christian communities of faith, but unless one knows oneself to have been delivered from bondage, unless one remembers that the Lord your God has set *you* free, the imperative to participate in the new pattern of life described in the Decalogue and in Jesus' teaching has little force. It is the narrative context recalled and celebrated liturgically week by week by the community of faith that is the S*itz im Leben* within which the divine command is best understood, and within which obedience to that command makes sense.

Jesus and the Law

That the law given to Israel is to be understood first and foremost as a specification of the conditions of freedom is apparent in Jesus' application of the law. We can take the fourth commandment as exemplary here:

> Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work — you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

It is notable here that the sabbath commandment as rendered in Exodus 20 finds its basis in God's creative work but since redemption and deliverance from bondage involves re-creation, the reestablishment of the life that God intended from the

beginning, there is consistency in the narrative of God's dealings with Israel. The Deuteronomic version of the sabbath command, therefore, appropriately invokes the Exodus as the basis for the command: "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15). The sabbath is essentially about freedom, of course. You will not be shackled to your work, says the Lord. You shall have rest from your labour. The commandment applies, not only to Israel, but equally to slaves, to alien residents in your town, and even to livestock. Just as the blessing promised to Abraham is to extend eventually to all the families of the earth, so the sabbath rest that God provides is not confined to Israel alone.

The sabbath command provides an especially poignant instance of how the interpretation of Scripture can go awry. When the first word of the Decalogue is forgotten, the word of grace and liberation, a deadening legalism can set in which undermines the very purpose for which the law is given. The example of Jesus is especially salutary here. Several incidents in the gospels reveal Jesus taking an attitude to the sabbath that some found objectionable. According to Mark 2:23-28, Jesus was unperturbed by his disciples picking grain on the sabbath, presumably because they were hungry. "The sabbath," he explains, "was made for humankind not humankind for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). In further justification of his relaxed attitude Jesus reminds the Pharisees of the time when David and his companions were hungry, entered the house of God, and ate the bread of the presence. Feeding the hungry apparently accords more closely with the intent of the law than the legalistic scruples of the protesting Pharisees.

The gospels record two incidents in which Jesus healed on the sabbath and in which he was again chastised by those who were concerned to uphold the law as they (mis)understood it. In Luke 13, and parallel passages, Jesus heals a woman bent over in pain, and in Luke 6, again with parallels in Matthew and Mark, Jesus heals on the sabbath a man with a withered arm. The healing of those wracked with pain and disease is a clear instance of the release from bondage and the life of freedom that the law is intended to secure. That a woman bent over in pain for eighteen years, for example, should be released from her bondage is appropriately

understood as a fulfillment of the sabbath command rather than as a violation of the law. As Jesus himself explains when questioning those who objected, "ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" (Luke 13:16). In the healing of the man with a withered arm, Jesus again engages the Pharisees on how best to interpret the law. "Jesus said to them, 'I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?'" (Luke 6:9). The point is clear; the sabbath command is directed towards salvation and freedom from bondage. So too do all the commandments specify the conditions of freedom and new life. It is deeply ironic therefore that the commandments have so often been perceived as a constraint upon freedom and an impediment to the realization of the self as a liberated and autonomous individual. Like the commandments themselves, freedom and the realization of true selfhood look very different from within the story Scripture tells.

Jesus' declaration that the sabbath is made for humankind, for the sake of liberation and new life, reveals an attitude that appears also in his teaching, notably in the sermon on the mount where several times Jesus says, you have heard that it was said, but I say to you: "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgement.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement . . ." (Matthew 5:21-22). This is not an abrogation but an intensification of the law, and a widening of its scope. Jesus recognizes that not just murder but also anger against a brother or sister will plunge as back into the kind of constrained and fearful existence from which God sets his people free.

Both the words and the deeds of Jesus reveal that he is about the same work as his Father (John 5:19-21), delivering into newness of life those who are variously enslaved by disease, social isolation, constricting legalism, sin, and so on. Walter Brueggemann thus observes that "the narratives of Jesus' powerful transformative acts (miracles) are in effect enactments of exodus . . ."[19] It is in this way, through the realization of the conditions of freedom set out in the Decalogue, that Jesus truly fulfills the law (Matthew 5:17).

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[19] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 179.

Conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate here a hermeneutic situated in the life of the people of God, situated, that is, within the life of that community of people who gather week by week to hear afresh the narrative of Scripture and who find themselves, precisely on account of God's liberating work among them, to be participants in the story that Scripture tells. Their reading of Scripture takes place within a pattern of liturgical life through which Israel remembers that the Lord their God brought them out of slavery in Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and through which Christians remember that Jesus sat once at a Passover meal, took bread and broke it and said, "this is my body, which is given for you." He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:19-20). By this means Jesus draws those who would be his disciples into Israel's story and makes them to be participants in the divine economy through which God is at work bringing to fulfillment his promise that the creature shall have life and have it in abundance. The ten words specify for both communities what free life looks like and are aptly summed up in the two commandments to "love God the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-9). Anything else is not freedom but bondage.

That the law can be summed up in the commands to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself reveals that the law is not well understood in terms of legal constraint but rather as encouragement to freedom and creativity. Abraham Heschel explains that,

> The law, stiff with formality, is *a cry for creativity*; a call for nobility concealed in the form of commandments. It is not designed to be a yoke, a curb, a strait jacket for human action. Above all, the Torah asks for *love: thou shalt love thy God; thou shalt love thy neighbour.* All observance is training in the art of love . . . . The end of our readiness to obey is the ability to love. The law is given to be cherished, not merely to be complied with.[20]

[20] Heschel, "Law and Life," 162. Italics original.

It is not a fool-proof method, this hermeneutic that I have outlined. Participation in the liturgy and in the life of faith does not guarantee that our reading of Scripture will always issue in reliable apprehension of the Word of the Lord. The distortion of our hearing that is produced by sin, or simply by the fact that we are as yet apprentices in faith, requires that we must return week after week, to confess our inattention, to seek forgiveness, and to be reminded once more of the story Scripture tells.[21] The central message of that story is that God is at work in the world through Word and Spirit, precisely in order to set us free from the things that have enslaved us and to realize in full his promise of blessing for all the families of the earth.

[21] Again at this point I find myself in agreement with Thomas Torrance who writes, "The Word of God summons us to listen to it not as though we know already what it has to say, not as though it only confirms what we have already said to ourselves, but to listen in such a way that we are lifted outside of ourselves and hear what only God can say to us. How can we do that except in repentance? To listen and deny ourselves, to listen and to repent of what we want to make the Bible say, to listen in such a way as to let the Bible speak against ourselves, that is to listen indeed to the Word of God." Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 142.

SHATTERING ITSELF AGAINST THE COVENANT:

Reading Judges 2:20-22 with Thomas F. Torrance

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This article seeks to read Judges 2:20-22 in light of T. F. Torrance's contributions to theology. In this pericope, the Lord directly charges Israel for their unfaithfulness and punishes them by refusing to drive out the nations in order to "test them" and thereby expose their sin and need for atonement. Torrance's understanding of Israel's vital role in the history of redemption and Christ's fulfillment of that role in his mediating work of incarnation and atonement greatly contribute to the church's interpretation of this pivotal passage in the introduction of the book of Judges.

Thomas F. Torrance argues that an attempt to understand God's glorious plan of redemption without the conceptual "tools" of knowing Israel's history is futile. God created a context for people to understand sin, salvation, and God's love for his people and for all of creation, and the study of the literary and historical contexts of Old Testament is one of the conceptual tools necessary for understanding Christ's incarnation and atonement.[1] Biblical scholars likewise need the conceptual tools of systematic theology (among other disciplines) in order to rightly interpret the Bible. It will be the aim of this article to study Judges 2:20-22 in light of T. F. Torrance's theology.

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[1] Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 41.

Barry G. Webb describes Judges 2:20-22 as "the climax of the second part of the introduction, and to the introduction as a whole."[2] It summarizes the key question of the book of Judges (Why did Israel not fully possess the land?) and offers the answer (Because of their relentless apostasy).[3] Underlying both question and answer is the unrelenting love and holiness of their covenant God, "keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7). Judges 2:20-22 records the Lord's rebuke of Israel for breaking his covenant and desiring to be like the idolatrous nations in her midst. His rebuke consists of an indictment of Israel's sin (v. 20), the consequence of her sin (v. 21), and the motive for the Lord's choice of punishment (v. 22). These three movements in the pericope will guide the discussion of this article.

> 20So the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he said, "Because this nation has transgressed my covenant, which I commanded their ancestors, and they have not listened to my voice [indictment],
>
> 21I myself will no longer drive out a man from before them from the nations, which Joshua left when he died [consequence]
>
> 22in order to test Israel by them, whether or not they will keep the way of the Lord, to walk in them just as their ancestors kept them [motivation]."[4]

We know from the preceding context (vv. 11-19) that Israel's specific transgression was apostasy. She chose the idols of her enemies over the God who loved her. The consequence for Israel's sin fits the crime: The Lord will no longer drive out those enemy nations. The purpose of this judgment, however, reflects God's grace in the form of testing Israel and teaching her to be a dependent covenant partner. The book of Judges is composed of well-known cycles, outlined in Judges 2:11-19 and

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[2] Webb, *The Book of Judges*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 33.

[3] Ibid., 34.

[4] All translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

fleshed out in the judges narratives: the people of Israel sin, the Lord hands them over to the oppression of their enemies, they cry out for deliverance, and the Lord raises a deliverer to save them, only for Israel to return full circle to the apostasy that began the cycle.[5] This pattern of apostasy, judgment, and deliverance is not unique to the book of Judges, but can be traced from the time of the exodus until the culmination in the exile.[6]

The fact that this repeated cycle continued through Israel's history is particularly important because the book of Judges was written looking back at this period, from the perspective that had witnessed even more of Israel's covenant failures. Scholars disagree over the authorship and compositional history of the book. Some conservatives maintain the rabbinic tradition that Samuel was the author (*B. Bat*. 14b). Trent C. Butler opts for a time during Rehoboam, in the tenth century BC.[7] Daniel I. Block contends that the book of Judges was most likely written during the "long, spiritually ruinous reign of Manasseh," in the first half of the seventh century BC.[8] Most scholars follow and refine Martin Noth's view of the Deuteronomistic History, that a single, mid-sixth century BC editor (the Deuteronomist) worked from an early version of Deuteronomy to edit Joshua,

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[5] Most commentators note that this repetitive cycle is also a downward spiral wherein Israel's sin and the sin of her representative judge gets progressively worse. This is highlighted by the breakdown of the cycle elements; each cycle contains fewer components until in the final cycle (the Samson cycle) when even Israel's cry for deliverance is absent — Israel has become complacent under enemy oppression.

[6] J. Clinton McCann, *Judges*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 3.

[7] Butler, *Judges*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), vol. 8, lxxiv.

[8] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), vol. 6, 66.

Judges, Samuel, and Kings as an explanation for the exile.[9] At the very least, explanatory notes, such as the reference to the exile in Judges 18:30 ("until the day of the captivity of the land") suggests that the final form of the book took shape after the exile.[10]

That the book of Judges was most likely written after the monarchy had proven itself incapable of securing Israel's faithfulness is significant for understanding the purpose of the book. Block is right to argue that the book of Judges, at least in its final, canonical form, is not foremost an apology for the monarchy. While Israel's political and spiritual fragmentation was certainly an underlying problem (to be solved in part with the Davidic covenant[11]), the primary

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[9] Noth's theory was first published in *Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten-Gesellschaft*, Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse 18 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1943), and influenced English-speaking scholars long before its translation into English in 1981 as *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15: Sheffield; JSOT, 1981). For a discussion of Noth's influence on the understanding of the compositional history of the book of Judges, see M. A. O'Brien, "Judges and The Deuteronomistic History," in *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, ed. S. L. McKenzie and M. P. Graham, JSOTSup 182 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) and, more recently, the edited volume by Udo Rüterswörden, *Martin Noth — Aus der Sicht der HeutiGenesis Forschung*, Biblisch-Theologische Studien 58 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 2004).

J. Clinton McCann is more interested in the canonical context of the book, its prophetic function, and the interpretive context of its final form, which he strongly contends was borne out of the exilic community's search for a reason for their predicament, *Judges*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), see especially 1-25.

[10] Additional such notes that point to a time far later than the events described include Judges 1:11, 23; 3:1-2; 19:10; 20:27-28, Block*, Judges, Ruth*, 64.

[11] Avraham Gileadi helpfully explains that the Davidic covenant put the responsibility of individual Israelites on their representative king: "After the conquest of Canaan when Israel's loyalty to YHWH lapsed, YHWH's protection of his people also lapsed . . . . But the Davidic covenant did away with the necessity that all Israel — to a man — maintain loyalty to YHWH in order to merit his protection. In the analogy of suzerain-vassal relationships, David's designation as YHWH's 'son' and 'firstborn' (2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:6-7; 89:27) legitimized him as Israel's representative," "The Davidic Covenant: A Theological Basis for Corporate Protection," In *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 160.

While this arrangement sometimes worked in Israel's favor, it sometimes did not, as Israel and Judah's histories of apostate kings illustrates.

problem in the book of Judges is Israel's "Canaanization," their apostasy.[12] The refrain "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his/her own eyes" (17:6; 21:25) does not mean that things would have been better with a king, since kings were largely responsible for leading Israel into apostasy, into what was right in the kings' own eyes. Block argues, "Israel did not need kings to lead them into idolatry, since the people did it on their own."[13] Rather, the reference to Israel's lack of a king is most likely a chronological statement, i.e., "During the pre-monarchian period." If anything, the author or editor is emphasizing Israel's lack of obedience to their heavenly King. This means that the book of Judges is primarily about Israel's need for atonement, not their need for an earthly king. It is primarily about their persistent sin and God's reaction to it.[14]

The vantage point of the exile and post exile is also significant in interpreting the book of Judges because it is most likely during this time that the book received its final form.[15] The covenant curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, which Israel had only tasted in part before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC, had now been fulfilled. God had meted out his judgment upon his own people, and yet they remained his covenant people by virtue of his steadfast love. An even more

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[12] According to Block, "The theme of the book is the Canaanization of Israelite society during the period of the settlement," *Judges, Ruth*, 58. Elsewhere, Block attributes Israel's apostasy in part to the lack of centralized authority, maintaining that the primary concern is Israel's faithlessness: "It is not the tracing of Israel's *political evolution*, but the recounting of her *spiritual devolution*. He has exposed the total Canaanization of Israelite society [emphasis original]," "The Period of the Judges: Religious Disintegration under Tribal Rule," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration*, 48.

[13] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 483. The partial refrain "in those days there was no king in Israel" in Judges 18:1 and 19:1 further support the chronological (and structural) function of the refrain.

[14] Another indication that Judges was not written primarily as an apology for a king is the presentation of kingship throughout the book. Canaanite kings are emphatically referred to as "king" (for example, Eglon is referred to as "king" five times in the short narrative in Judges 3:12-19) giving kingship a negative connotation. Moreover, Gideon's superficially-pious refusal of kingship is undermined by his king-like actions. His brutal retribution towards Succoth and Penuel (Judges 8:4-17) is more akin to the unrighteous kingships of the Canaanites. He also violates the Deuteronomic laws for an Israelite king in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 by acquiring many wives (Judges 8:29) and leading the people into idolatry (Judges 8:27) rather than keeping the Law.

[15] McCann, 11.

vivid theological vantage point has been granted to God's people today. Whereas the exilic community stood in Babylonian or Persian dust wondering how the hopes of the prophets could be fulfilled amongst a sinful people who had lost its status as a nation, the people of the new covenant stand on dust around the world, knowing and rejoicing from whence their salvation has come, namely Israel fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. If the final editors of the book of Judges viewed Israel's tumultuous relationship with Yahweh through the lens of a repeated cycle of sin, judgment, and salvation, we view that relationship through the lens of the gospel, through that same cycle worked out once and for all in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With that interpretive context in view, let us now focus our lenses on the divine rebuke in Judges 2:20-22, looking at Israel's sin, its consequences, and God's warrant for judgment.

Israel's Sin: Shattering Itself against the covenant (Judges 2:20)

Torrance often used the imagery of "shattering" or "dashing" to describe Israel's active disobedience against God and his grace, as well as the result of his subsequent judgment.[16] God gave Israel his Word, his grace, his covenant, and his love, but the more that He gave and the closer that he came, the harder Israel pushed back in defiance. Torrance explains this paradoxical opposition:

> The astonishing thing here is that the more God gave himself to his people, the more he forced this people to be what it was in its sin and self-will, to be in truth what it actually was, a rebel. The very self-

[16] For example, Israel "shattered itself on the unswerving persistence of the divine purpose of love" (*Incarnation*, 47; "Israel of God: Israel and the Incarnation," *Interpretation* 10/3 (1956): 308), "shattered itself on the cross" (*Incarnation*, 49; "Israel of God," 310), and "broke themselves again and again upon the word of God, dashing themselves against the covenant in which he had laid hold of them and help them in unswerving love" (*Incarnation*, 42); and "shattering itself against the mercies of the covenant" ("Israel of God," 318).

Karl Barth, Torrance's mentor, uses similar language of Israel being "wrecked" by virtue of their unique relationship to Yahweh, which he calls "the historical greatness and tragedy of Israel." Barth further argues that Israel's wreckage is nonetheless her determination; though she continually wrecked herself on the covenant, her status as God's people is "indestructible," *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, III.4, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 319.

> giving of God in holy love not only revealed Israel's sin, but intensified it; it intensified the enmity between Israel and Jahweh and intensified the contradiction between Jahweh and Israel.[17]

God's covenantal love exposed and even exacerbated Israel's sin, but to what end? Did not God desire his people to be holy as he is holy (Exodus 19:6; Leviticus 19:2)? Did he not desire their love and worship (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:5; Josh 22:5)? And did he not need a faithful people who would be his instrument to reach the ends of the world with his salvation (Genesis 12:3; 28:14; Isaiah 42:6)? Yes, yes, and yes. Just as Jesus made it clear that his mission was to the needy, to those who recognized their sin and their need for a savior (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31), so also Israel needed to recognize her sin and her need for God. Yahweh had come not for those who thought that they were already righteous, but for the needy. Only then would Israel fully love the Lord, only then would she share his holiness, and only then could she be an ambassador for God's saving grace.[18]

Israel's sin takes many forms throughout the Old Testament, from her perpetual lack of trust through the wilderness (Exodus 16; Numbers 11) to her idolatry (Exodus 32) to her rebellion and inner-fighting (Numbers 14). The sin highlighted in the book of Judges is idolatry, or more precisely apostasy, which is arguably worse because it is specifically the turning away of previously loyal subjects. The cycles of sin and deliverance brought Israel to her spiritual nadir, represented in the horrors of Judges 19-21 and fundamentally in her rejection of God's grace.

Judges 2:20 introduces the direct divine discourse with "the anger of the Lord burned against Israel," which is little surprise after the description of their

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[17] "Israel of God," 309.

[18] Karl Barth also believed that God's people could not help but transgress God's law until they recognize their guilt, their need for forgiveness, and that the only means of universal salvation is through the incarnation and atonement of Jesus Christ, who represents all transgressors and yet redeems them with his perfect obedience, *Church Dogmatics, III.4 The Doctrine of Creation*, 232-234.

continual relapse into apostasy (2:11-13, 17, 19).[19] Israel worshipped a holy God whose righteousness and goodness were false attributes apart from his justice and anger towards sin. The Lord's accusation against Israel in v. 20 gives two, parallel reasons for his kindled anger. First, Israel has transgressed his covenant, or disobeyed the rules of their relationship. Second, they have not listened to the Lord's voice. This poetic way of emphasizing Israel's disobedience adds a personal flavor to Israel's unfaithfulness, the intimacy that God grants his people through the gracious gifting of his revelation has been rejected by an ungrateful people.[20]

Another aspect of this indictment is also very relational. The relative clause, "which I commanded their ancestors" in v. 20c reminds the reader that Israel's relationship with the Lord during this transitional period is no isolated event in history. The phrase "your ancestors" (or literally, "your fathers") is used throughout chapter 2 in order to underline the contrast between the generation of the judges and the faithful generations of their ancestors. It occurs first in Judges 2:1, in a similar rebuke from the angel of the Lord, who reminds this sinful generation that the Lord promised the land of Canaan to Israel's ancestors and that the covenant he made with them was permanent: "I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you.'" The phrase "your ancestors" is used four more times (2:10, 12, 17, 19) before it is used as a mild inclusion in vv. 20 and 22, making the contrast between

[19] It is even questionable whether or not Israel's "cries" for deliverance (e.g., Judges 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6-7; and even 10:10) were cries of genuine repentance or just cries of distress. See Block (*Judges, Ruth*, 346-347) who interprets even Israel's cry of confession in Judges 10:10 as "purely utilitarian and manipulative," as well as the more detailed analysis by JoAnna Hoyt, "Reassessing Repentance in Judges," *BibSac* 169 (2012): 143-158.

[20] The collocation *šāmĕʿû lĕqôlî* ("listen to my voice") is a common idiom for obeying someone, and is frequently used in parallel with commands of obedience (e.g., Deuteronomy 27:10; 28:45). However, the personal and intense nature of hearing the almighty God's voice should not be diminished in the idiom. Consider, for example, Israel's terror in Deuteronomy 4-5 (esp. Deuteronomy 5:24-29) when God spoke to them directly. That kind of immanence from the God of the universe struck fear and reverence into the hearts of his people, as it should today, K. T. Aitken, "שמע," *NIDOTTE*, vol. 4, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 175-181.

faithful generations and unfaithful generations a theological lens through which to read this short pericope.[21]

But if the Israelites were not imitating their faithful ancestors, who *were* they imitating? Even though their status as a nation had been ratified at Sinai, Torrance notes that Israel is typically referred to as "the people of Israel,"[22] literally "the children of Israel" (*bĕnê-yiśrāʾēl*) in Judges (and Joshua).[23] Israel was called foremost to be a people of God, a community of faithful worshippers. Their status as a nation was a resultant blessing of that covenant relationship (Genesis 12:2; 18:18; 46:3). However, Israel's hallmark sin during this period was her desire to emulate the surrounding pagan nations rather than her ancestors. For Yahweh to refer to Israel in v. 20 as "this nation"[24] rather than "my people" or even "this people" is a direct and condemning comparison with the "nations" of v. 21, whom the Lord will no longer be driving out from the land.[25] Ironically, and tragically, Israel will get precisely what she wants: to be like the other nations. And, of course, by getting what she wants, she will risk losing what she needs, i.e., the faith that binds her to Yahweh.

How could this happen? How could Israel forsake the God who just two generations prior had dramatically rescued his people from slavery in Egypt and who had revealed his power and glory again and again in the conquest of Canaan? Israel would have envied the tangible nature of pagan idols and their claim to

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[21] Of course, as we have already noted, not every generation was characteristically faithful, as the generation of Moses is a case in point, even though they were the generation who first received the law. God is clearly referring only to the faithful ancestors in previous generations, most notably the generation of Joshua, whose faithfulness is contrasted with the following generation in 2:7-10.

[22] The word typically translated as "people" (*ʿam*) is rarely used in collocation with "Israel."

[23] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 51; *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 346.

[24] Several English translations, such as the ESV, KJV and NRS, miss this implicit charge by rendering *gôy* ("nation") as "people." Likewise, the Targum uses *ʿam* ("people"), Willem F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, Oudtestamentische Studiën 36 (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1995), 366.

[25] *Atonement*, 346.

"specialization" over separate areas of life; Baal was responsible for the fertility of the land and Astarte claimed responsibility for the fertility of the female womb.[26] However, Torrance gets to the root of Israel's sin. When Adam and Eve transgressed the Lord's command in the Garden of Eden, they did so — at least in part — in an effort to be like God (Genesis 3:5-6).[27] Here again we meet with tragic irony: in their efforts to be more like God, rather than more dependent on him in their creaturely otherness, the bond between God and humanity was broken. Not only did sin break the bond between God and humanity, but also the bond between Adam and Eve (individuals in general) and even the bond within themselves, leaving humanity isolated and in constant effort towards "re-socialisation," often through sinful means.[28] Torrance describes the root and consequence of sin saying, "It is a double story. On one side it is the atomisation of mankind, for the internal rupture results in individualisation and conflict. On the other it is the story of human attempts at re-socialisation."[29] Just like when humanity tried to create their own bonds in order to build a city and a tower in the plains of Shinar in order to make a name for themselves and remain united (Genesis 11:1-9), so also Israel attempted to create their own bonds during the generation of the Judges by becoming like the nations surrounding them. And just as God thwarted the people Genesis 11 in order to protect them from their own pride and independence, so also God judged the generations of the judges in order to both intensify their sin and to make them dependent and faithful.

The generations of the judges were defined by these broken bonds and Israel's sinful attempts at restoring them. The refrain "everyone did what was right

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[26] For a helpful introduction to these prominent Canaanite deities, see Daniel Block, *Judges*, in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. 2: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. John Walton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 120.

[27] John Calvin is probably correct to qualify that "unfaithfulness" in general was "the root of the Fall" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. XX, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 245) but the motive for their unfaithfulness clearly seems to be their desire to be like God (as the serpent said in Genesis 3:5) and to be wise (as Eve desired in Genesis 3:6).

[28] *Incarnation*, 38.

[29] *Incarnation*, 39.

in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25), the lack of centralized worship or governance, and the individualization that currents throughout the book are direct results of Israel's sin and in total opposition to what it means to be humans made in God's image and in covenant with him. Israel's only attempts at unification are with the enemy and their gods, or in a unified effort to nearly exterminate an entire tribe (Judges 21:3, 6) and apply the holy war that they were commanded to wage on the Canaanites on one of their own cities (Judges 21:10-11)! Again, the reader is not surprised that "the anger of the Lord burned against Israel" (Judges 2:20a).

The Consequences of Israel's Sin: Shattering Itself against the covenant (Judges 2:21)

God promised that he would not break his covenant with Israel (Judges 2:1), but the blessings of the covenant, including their peace and safety in the land, were dependent on Israel's obedience. The blessings and curses of the covenant are detailed in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. While the Israelites tasted the covenant blessings when Joshua led them into the promised land, their disobedience brought a foretaste of the covenant curses during the period of the judges.[30]

In Judges 2:21, the Lord reveals his punishment for Israel's apostasy: he will no longer drive out the inhabitants of the land whom Joshua left for succeeding Israelites to complete the task. As the angel of the Lord mentioned at the end of the first introduction to the book (Judges 1:1-2:5), God has changed his plan and will no longer be ridding the land of Israel's enemies and their tempting idolatry (2:3). The reference in Judges 2:21 to Joshua is natural in this section of backtrack and overlap starting in Judges 2:6, but it also serves as a reminder of Joshua's warning in Josh 23:13, repeated here with very similar terms, though with added

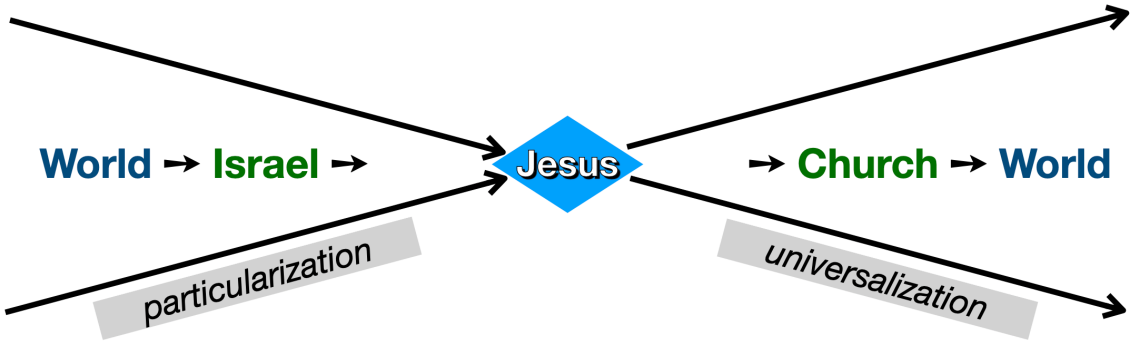
[30] Although the full force of the covenant curses awaited the destruction of Jerusalem and exile in 587 BC, foretastes of the curses are seen clearly in Judges: Israel's enemies will steal their crops (Leviticus 26:16; Deuteronomy 28:30 33; c.f., Judges 6:4); their fiancés will be taken by another (Deuteronomy 28:30; c.f., Judges 14:20) God will use their enemies to defeat them (Leviticus 26:17; throughout Judges); their enemies will rule over them (Leviticus 26:17; throughout Judges); wild beasts will destroy the land and people (Leviticus 26:22; c.f., Judges 14:5); and their roads will be deserted (Leviticus 26:22; Judges 5:6).

emphasis. Joshua had warned his own generation that if they conformed to the ways of the remaining pagan nations, rather than the love and command of Yahweh, then "the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you." God relates the fulfillment of that warning emphatically in Judges 2:21, emphasizing the Lord's action (literally, "On my part, I myself will no longer") as well as the fact that he will no longer drive out even one man from the Canaanites (literally, "drive out a man from before them, from the nations"). Of course, God is true to his word. Every victory that the Lord secures in the book of Judges is a victory of deliverance from foreign oppression, not a victory of conquest. His aid is defensive, not offensive.

We have noted the irony of this punishment, that Israel is essentially getting what they think they want. Perhaps even more ironically, God's punishment not only fits the crime, but it even intensifies the crime. Israel will grow increasingly sinful as the book progresses and as the history of the settlement period unfolds. This type of punishment seems counter-intuitive to the short-sighted. Personally, if I had a teenaged child who snuck out of the protection and wisdom of my house and care after curfew in order to hang out with friends who were a poor and dangerous influence on her, the last punishment that I would give would be to stop interfering with her poor friendship choices or allow her to move out of my house! Fortunately, God is not short-sighted, and fortunately my analogy is imperfect. Again, Torrance's theology of Israel and her relationship to Yahweh is important. God had a dual-purpose for Israel, both to allow her to become the rebel she was naturally-inclined to be, thus allowing her to break herself down again and again until she recognized her need, and also to shape her as a potter shapes clay, picking up the broken, now-malleable clay to create vessels in need of redemption, and vessels prepared for righteousness.

Moreover, how do we reconcile Israel's punishment (and the command to drive out the Canaanites in the first place!) with God's universalistic plan of blessing all of the families of the earth through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3)? Torrance's view of particularization helps to elucidate the relationship between the particularization in Israel's election and covenant relationship and the universalization of his redemptive plan. God chose the nation of Israel to mediate

his covenant to the world. Their failure in mediating that covenant resulted in the foreordained plan of God himself becoming Israel in the flesh and reconciling the sin of Israel to a holy God, thereby making salvation possible for all sinners. This movement can be illustrated by the following:



According to Torrance, God's plan was particular in its instrumentality through one people, Israel, but universal in its goal:

> This movement was paradoxical in character — the more particular it became, the more universal it also became; the deeper the bond between God and man was driven into the human existence of Israel, the closer redemption made contact with creation; the more intimately Israel was tied to the one and only God, the God of all, the more the activity of grace broke through the limitations of national Israel and reached out to all the world.[31]

This particularization must be seen through representation as well. God chose Israel to represent humanity in both their sinfulness and their faithfulness. Israel ultimately failed in her calling as faithful covenant partners, prompting God to take the responsibility upon himself by becoming man, becoming Israel incarnate, thereby representing Israel in all its sin and need for atonement, and also Israel's role as a faithful mediator of God's covenant.

[31] "The Israel of God," 311-312.

Recognizing that Israel was given the land, not by virtue of her own merit, but by virtue of God's promises to Israel's patriarchs and the sins of the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 9:5-6), and that Israel was chosen as an instrument of God's universal plan of salvation to anyone of any nation who would believe in the saving grace of God, partially explains why God first charged Israel to drive out the Canaanites. His punishment of leaving the Canaanites in the land was not a mercy to them, that they might witness the covenant faithfulness of God's people, but a part of his grander, more complex plan. By leaving the enemy nations in the land, God was making it that much easier for Israel to reject him, and rejection is a crucial part of redemption.

According to Torrance, atonement has two components: cleansing of sin (which requires sacrifice) and reconciliation (which requires rejection of the unholy).[32] According to Torrance, this rejection was necessary in order to fulfill God's plan of universal redemption: Israel would necessarily reject the ultimate manifestation of God's grace, Jesus Christ. Torrance explains,

> Israel was elected also to reject the Messiah. If the covenant partnership of Israel with God meant not only that the conflict of Israel with God became intensified but was carried to its supreme point in the fulfilment of the Covenant, then Israel under God could do no other than refuse the Messiah. And, as Peter announced on the day of Pentecost, that is precisely what God had intended, in his determination to deal with our sin at the point of its ultimate denial of the saving will of God.[33]

Just as Israel rejected and cast out the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:10), so also Israel would many years later reject and cast out their Savior, who would thereby bear the penalty for Israel's guilt by being rejected by his own people (Isaiah 53:3).[34] In so doing, Israel would be rejecting herself, because Jesus was the representation of all that Israel was supposed to be. God

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[32] *Incarnation*, 52.

[33] *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 34.

[34] *The Mediation of Christ*, 36.

was shaping Israel to be the rejected and the rejecter so that all of the families of the earth could finally be saved. Far from being the arbitrary recipient of God's gracious favor, she was the instrument of God's universal salvation. Far from overlooking all of Israel's sin in his commands for Israel to drive out the Canaanites, God was intensifying Israel's sin for the salvation of the Gentiles.

God's Motivation for Judgment: Shattering Itself against the covenant (Judges 2:22)

God's final statement in this passage is his motivation for not driving out the Canaanites. In the previous section, we noted how God's refusal to drive out Israel's enemies fits into the canonical picture of God's plan of redemption for all sinners, including the Gentiles. In v. 22, God gives Israel a reason that is particular to their circumstances, but which contributes to our theology of his covenant relations with all of his beloved. God wanted to test Israel, and this test would demonstrate to Israel their own faithfulness or failure to uphold the commands of the covenant.[35] We will first examine the semantic use of "test" in this passage, and then look at Torrance's contributions to the concept of divine testing.

The idea of "testing" can be misleading to modern readers who generally associate testing as a means for the tester to determine the validity or capability of the object. The verb *nāsâ* ("to test") can be used this way in the Old Testament, but when God is the subject of the testing, it is often used as a means of measuring the obedience,[36] though not for the sake of God's knowledge (since surely he already

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[35] A few verses later, in 3:2, the text seems to say that God left the nations for a different reason. The Hebrew syntax is difficult, but the JPS Tanakh translation probably offers the best sense: "so that succeeding generations of Israelites might be made to experience war — but only those who had not known the former wars." Judges 3:4 is parallel to Judges 2:22, that the testing for the sake of demonstrating Israel's loyalty or disloyalty. The function of Judges 3:2 is most likely a literary backtrack. The nations were originally left so that the generation immediately following Joshua (who were children during the wars of conquest) could experience warfare and the obedience it represented. Now, two generations after Joshua, God was leaving the nations in order to test Israel's faithfulness. For an excellent discussion of the interpretative options, see Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 159-162.

[36] Terry L. Brensinger, "נסה," *NIDOTTE*, vol. 3, 112.

knows Israel's hearts!) but for the sake of his people. In other words, even in judgment, and even in testing, God is doing something for Israel. But what is he doing? When used in the Piel with the prepositional phrase "by them" (*bām*) as it does in Judges 2:22, it can carry the idea of "to train by means of."[37] God used the presence of the Canaanites as a training ground for Israel's faithfulness. This aspect of training, or teaching, is also used in Deuteronomy 8:2 with very similar language and syntax: "And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you and test you to know what is in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not." That same context makes it clear that the testing his people's faithfulness is for the sake of their future, for the sake of ultimate blessing: "in order to humble you and in order to test you, so that he can do you good in your future" (Deuteronomy 8:16). These positive aspects of testing, training and a good future, are illustrations of the dual realities of punishment and mercy that run throughout the book of Judges and throughout the history of Israel.

Torrance exposits another passage on divine testing that helps to elucidate the testing in the book of Judges. Perhaps the most famous testing in the Old Testament is the story of the Akedah ("binding") of Isaac in Genesis 22:1-19. Torrance explains that there are two ways to be reconciled to God: (1) humanity trying their best to do so, which results in failure every time, or (2) God providing the sacrifice for them. God's testing (Genesis 22:1) in this passage was for the sake of Abraham, and the test did more than prove Abraham's faithfulness (Genesis 22:12, 16-17), and it even did more than show that God himself would provide the substitute sacrifice (Genesis 22:13-14) and that faithfulness was rewarded with covenant blessings (Genesis 22:16-17). Through this test, God showed Abraham that even his best was not enough to reconcile sinners with a holy God. God would have to give his best, his only son, his very self. Salvation belongs to God alone (Revelation 7:10); sinners can only receive it with faithfulness and thanksgiving.

Centuries after the testing of Abraham, God's testing of Israel again taught them a crucial lesson: they were, in fact, unable to "keep the way of the Lord"

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[37] Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT), 2 vol. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 702.

(Judges 2:22). Left to their own sinful will, they sought reconciliation and blessing through false gods and ineffectual means. They were in desperate need, not of a king to lead them in righteousness (the history of the monarchy and divided kingdom proves that kings more often led God's people astray!) but of their divine king to provide the atonement needed to reconcile them to their covenant God. The "testing" throughout the generation of the judges served to teach God's people of their need for God's saving grace.

Thus, this testing had more to do with demonstrating truths to Israel than determining their faithfulness. In Genesis 22, God knew that Abraham would be faithful in his offering of Isaac, but God's purpose was primarily to demonstrate to Abraham that even his best was not good enough for reconciliation; God had to provide the sacrifice. Likewise, Israel's testing during the settlement period was not so much to determine if they would remain faithful to Yahweh, but to demonstrate that they would not, that they were naturally inclined towards apostasy and, yet, God was naturally inclined towards faithfulness and mercy. Testing both exposed Israel's sin and refined them, making the elect more faithful and the non-elect more of what they were: apostates.

Whether we distinguish between the two groups or two reactions to God's presence as the elect and the non-elect, or more generally as the faithful remnant and the unfaithful, there are clearly two groups of people throughout Israel's history: those who listen to God's voice, obey his commandments, and trust in him, and those who rebel against his will and fall deeper and deeper into sin's grasp. In fact, the boundaries of these groups are fluid, since the same individual can move from one group to another. Solomon began his rule as a wise and faithful king, but ended his life as an apostate; whereas Paul persecuted the followers of Christ only to become Jesus' greatest missionary to the Gentiles. Of course, God desires that all sinners would turn from rejecting God's grace to accepting it in obedience and faith (1 Timothy 2:4). According to Torrance, Jesus' disciples illustrate this turn most dramatically. They rejected him, allowing him to go to the cross, but then they remembered that Passover meal and Christ's teachings and understood his passion. According to Torrance,

It was their sin, their betrayal, their shame, their unworthiness, which

> became in the inexplicable love of God the material he laid hold of and turned into the bond that bound them to the crucified Messiah, to the salvation and love of God for ever.[38]

Thus, the essential truth that binds together these opposing responses to God's grace is Christ's incarnation and atonement. In his incarnation, Jesus came in the "likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3)"; he represented Israel at its worst, at the point where the unfaithful among them had come to reject even the ultimate offer of God's grace: the life of his own son. Through his atonement, Jesus bore of the guilt and the penalty for sin (either of the world or of the faithful, depending on one's view) and secured new life through his victorious resurrection for anyone who recognizes their need and dependence on him.

Conclusion: Christ Shattering Himself for the sake of the Covenant

Interpreting Judges 2:20-22 alongside Torrance's theology has enriched our reading of the text, and of the book as a whole, in several important ways. First, Torrance helps explain the deep-seated nature of Israel's persistent apostasy, that sinners by nature reject God's grace. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, we can only reject God's grace and, yet, Israel's rejection of God's grace was part of God's grand plan of redemption. Second, Torrance elucidates the relationship between Israel and the Canaanites, and ultimately between Israel and world, that Israel's mediating role was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the ultimate manifestation of Israel, bearing the guilt of her sin in his perfectly faithful flesh. Third, Torrance offers a nuanced understanding of divine testing, that it demonstrates to God's people their need for a Savior.

While focusing on the sin of Israel and its place in God's redemptive plan, are we saying that Israel's role is finished? Did they play their tragic part of rejecting God's grace and are now only casualties of a spiritual war? Just as the disciples, and Saul of Tarsus, turned from rejecting the Messiah to accepting him, so also faithful Israel remains God's first love and remains an essential part of God's plan of redemption. As Paul himself wrote to the Romans, salvation, glory, honor, and

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[38] *The Mediation of Christ*, 34.

peace are for "the Jew first and also the Greek" (Romans 1:16; 2:10). Torrance's own words about Israel's vital place in God's redeeming grace are a fitting place to conclude:

> [I]t was in the bearing of that very sin that reconciliation was driven into the depth of Israel's being and nailed there in such a way that Israel has been bound to God for ever within the embrace of his reconciling love incarnate in Jesus Christ. That is why the vicarious mission of Israel in the mediation of reconciliation to mankind did not cease with the death and resurrection of Christ but continues to have an essential place throughout all history in the reconciliation of the world to God.[39]

[39] *The Mediation of Christ*, 34-35.

T. F. TORRANCE'S UNAPOLOGETIC THEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS AND JESUS' BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

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Abstract: *At the heart of T. F. Torrance's theology is a pattern of exchange — in the incarnation, the Son of God takes what is ours only to make what is his ours. This pattern of exchange also frames Torrance's biblical exegesis, of which Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of Mark is a prime example. He interprets Jesus' baptism as a clear indication of his assumption of fallen flesh and vicarious repentance. This reading goes well beyond what biblical commentators think the passage intends. The distance between Torrance's theological interpretation and a historical-critical reading of Jesus' baptism raises two questions that this essay shall address. First, what is the basis for Torrance's hermeneutic? Second, does his unapologetic theological approach help us to grasp the meaning of Jesus' Baptism? I will argue that Torrance's unapologetic theological reading of Jesus' baptism illumines the Markan Christology implicit in the Gospel's narrative.*

Introduction

At the heart of the theology of T. F. Torrance stands the pattern of exchange: the Son of God's descent to take what is ours only to make what is his ours by his ascent to the Father. This pattern hinges on the idea that Word assumes not just flesh in the abstract but our flesh as it is — fallen, alienated, and in rebellion against its Lord and Creator. The incarnation therefore describes the gracious condescension of the Son of God into human existence under divine judgment and

the godforsakenness epitomized in the psalmist's cry, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*."[1] For Torrance, this mystery of the incarnation is revealed in the baptism of repentance in which Christ

> took the divine judgement into his mind and innermost being, acquiescing in it, accepting it willingly, and at the same time offering himself willingly to the Father. In this way he entered into the depths of judgement and sorrow for our sin in a way we never can do. And he wrought out in our human nature and in our human soul complete agreement with the Father in his righteous condemnation of our sin, his grief and sorrow over our rebellion and alienation. In vicarious penitence and sorrow for the sin of mankind, Christ met and responded to the judgement and vexation of the Father, absorbing it into his own being.[2]

The mystery of the incarnation includes the vicarious and atoning nature of Christ's entire life as he assumes our sinful flesh and exchanges it for his righteous humanity in his messianic mission.

This pattern of exchange lies at the center of Torrance's theology because he believes that it is the structural logic of the Bible itself. This is evident in his biblical exegesis of Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of Mark. Torrance sees the Old Testament logic of exchange in the motifs of Israel as God's chosen, beloved son and as God's servant applied to Jesus. These identify him as "the Son of the Father who is sent on his mission as the suffering servant in fulfillment of God's covenant will."[3] The servant songs of Deutero-Isaiah (40-55) are reconfigured around Jesus as "the Son of Man" so that the meaning of "ransom for many" is universalized as "ransom for all."[4] Furthermore, Christ's mission as the suffering servant begins in baptism

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[1] Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 61.

[2] Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 70.

[3] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 69.

[4] Ibid., 69; Thomas F. Torrance, "The Sacrament of Baptism," in *Conflict and Agreement in the Church* Volume Two (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960), 107-8.

through his ontological solidarity with sinners, assuming fallen flesh under divine judgment. His obedience in our place and on our behalf begins in the banks of the Jordan, far before he enters the shadow of Gethsemane or treads the stony road to Golgotha. Torrance draws this connection from the apparent linking of Jesus' baptism to the giving of his life as a ransom for the many in Mark 10:35-45. Commenting on the phrase "the baptism with which he is being baptized" in 10:39, Torrance notes that Jesus' passion is something he undergoes in the "continuous present."[5] He draws the implication that Christ

> was solemnly and lawfully consecrated at his baptism, into that passion that he was thrust right away in his temptations when he was tempted to evade the cross but in which he chose the way of suffering and shame for our sakes. And so, all through his obedient life until the garden of Gethsemane and the prayer wrung out of him there with strong crying and tears, 'Not my will but thine be done,' it was finally in that passion that he fulfilled the rule of the suffering servant and sealed it with his blood on the cross.[6]

The atoning work of Christ on the cross touches every aspect of our life because in the incarnation the Son of God assumed fallen humanity into oneness with himself as he lived in obedient communion with the Father. By connecting Jesus' baptism with his crucifixion, the Gospel of Mark highlights the Son of God's descent into the utter alienation of fallen humanity, taking our place to share with us his righteous humanity. He takes our inability to repent and exchanges it for *his* repentance. He takes our disobedience and exchanges it for *his* obedience. He takes our

[5] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 70.

[6] Ibid., 70. Torrance also sees the language of descent and ascent of Old Testament liturgy in the New Testament's presentation of baptism (ibid., 76).

unfaithfulness and gives us *his* faithfulness instead. He takes our unrighteousness and gives his *righteousness*.[7]

While Torrance interprets Jesus' baptism as a clear indication of his assumption of fallen flesh, recent biblical commentators do not even broach the idea. The main question at hand is not whether the Son assumed fallen flesh but whether early Christians were embarrassed about the fact that their sinless savior underwent a ritual for the cleansing of sinners.[8] Morna Hooker's solution to this dilemma reveals the predilection of commentators to prefer historical reconstruction over christological reflection:

> It is unnecessary, and indeed unwarranted, to explain the baptism of Jesus, as some modern commentators have done, as a vicarious act of repentance, or an identification with sinners. If John's baptism was intended to be for the New Age, the rite which gathered together a holy people of God who affirmed in this act of committal that they

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[7] George Hunsinger captures the "dimension of depth" that the vicarious humanity gives to Torrance's account of baptism as a sacrament. This dimension of depth refers to the objective reality and power of Christ's vicarious humanity, grounded in the hypostatic union with the Son, and of Christ's finished work into which the believer is united; 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 & Littlefeld Publishers, 2001), 139-160. As Torrance states, baptism "must be interpreted in coherence with the whole Gospel of the incarnation, in a dimension of depth going back to the saving work of God in Jesus Christ, and as grounded so objectively in that work that it has no content, reality or power apart from it"; 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), 83.

[8] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 200),164. There is some discussion about whether the baptism indicates Jesus' own act of repentance, his formal solidarity with the people, or his leadership of a movement. For example, C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 52. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 67. Morna Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 2001), 44. William L. Lane argues that Jesus offers vicarious repentance as the "one true Israelite"; *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), 56. But Francis J. Maloney judges that Jesus' baptism is a matter of historical memory and as such cannot "bear the weight of speculation"; *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 36.

> were ready for his coming, then it was natural for Jesus to associate himself with this movement, and to join those who by baptism showed that they looked for the coming Kingdom of God.[9]

Rather than entertain the possibility of a christological statement, Hooker seeks a plausible historical reason for why we find Jesus standing in the row of sinners in the Jordan River. If there is a primary christological riddle to be solved, it appears to be the latent adoptionism in the allusion to the sonship language of Psalm 2:7.[10] According to many commentators, Mark presents Jesus' baptism as a clandestine coronation of the messiah in the Davidic line, in which his true identity is momentarily glimpsed but will remain veiled until his crucifixion.[11] In sum, assumptions about the development of doctrine or the historical origin of the story direct the reader's attention.

Torrance is, of course, aware that his reading diverges from historical-critical interpretations here in this passage (and elsewhere). He writes, "I make no apology, therefore, for trying to interpret the Bible in the light of the logos of God's self-revelation which it conveys."[12] For Torrance, one must begin with the reality of God's divine being and action in the world in order to perform a truly historically sensitive and informed reading of Scripture. He thus claims, "So far as the biblical texts are concerned, this calls for an unashamed theological exegesis and interpretation of them, if only to control our historico-critical research so that it may be properly objective."[13] Torrance makes no apology for reading Scripture in light of the revelation it conveys, because this is in fact the only way to grasp its meaning. In short, without an explicit theological approach to biblical interpretation, the meaning of Scripture is mangled by methodologically excluding divine action and being in history.

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[9] Hooker, *St. Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 2001), 44.

[10] Marcus, *Mark*, 160.

[11] Ibid., 166.

[12] T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 5.

[13] Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 42.

This divide between Torrance's theological interpretation and a historical-critical reading of Jesus' baptism raises two questions that this essay shall address. First, what is the basis for Torrance's hermeneutic? Second, does his unapologetic theological approach help us to read Mark's account of Jesus' Baptism? To put the question plainly, has Torrance discerned the meaning of the text or has he projected his theology into the text by emphasizing the assumption of fallen flesh and vicarious repentance? In order to answer these questions, we must first reckon with the way in which Torrance's Christology informs his doctrine of Scripture, and then consider his critiques of the operative dualism between the theological and historical in the practice of biblical studies. This will enable us to appreciate his description of theological interpretation as "depth-exegesis." Finally, we shall consider the ways in which Torrance's unapologetic theological reading of Jesus' baptism illumines the Markan Christology implicit in the Gospel's narrative.

The Nature of Scripture and the Reality of Christ

Torrance's hermeneutic is the result of his decision to subordinate the task of biblical interpretation to the reality of God's being and action in the world in Jesus Christ. According to Torrance, the biblical texts must be understood as conditioned by the reality of God's self-revelation in space and time, both in God's dealings with Israel and in Christ. It is after all these first order claims about God's activity that form the basis for Scripture's authority as that which mediates divine revelation to us. Scripture's authority thus rests not on the biblical texts themselves but on the revealing and reconciling God to which they witness.[14] The words of Scripture "bear witness to what is other than and beyond themselves and which is true, if it is true, apart from them."[15] Scripture's ontology is fundamentally semiotic — it points beyond itself to the reality of God, to the One whose being and action undergird and enfold the words of Scripture. The interpreter must always be cognizant of this distinction between *signum* and *res*, so as not to collapse the two. This distinction is

[14] As Torrance states, biblical texts are revelatory "not because of what they are in themselves but because of the divine revelation mediated in and through them" (*Reality and Evangelical Theology*, 95).

[15] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 6.

maintained by properly subordinating Scripture to the divine reality and not vice versa.

Torrance's well-known commitment to the scientific nature of the knowledge of God drives his concern to map the ontological structures of the biblical witness. Objective knowledge requires the object under study to shape the very structure of human thought.[16] A scientific approach to knowledge, then, is a mode of inquiry that is determined by its object. In the case of the Bible, the object under consideration is ultimately that to which the words of Scripture bear witness. Therefore, biblical interpretation takes its *ratio* from the divine action and being that Scripture seeks to mediate, rather than treating Scripture as though it were just another literary product of its time and place. The unique ontology of Scripture requires a distinctively theological method of interpretation.

Not only does Scripture point beyond itself to its grounding and goal of Christ, but it does so with an innate intelligibility grounded in the Word made flesh. In virtue of the Creator's incarnation, God's self-revelation is "an intelligible, articulate revealing of God by God whom we are enabled to apprehend through the creative power of his Word addressed to us, yet a revealing of God by God which is actualized within the conditions of our creaturely existence and therefore within the medium of our human thought and speech."[17] According to Torrance, the assumption of creaturely reality establishes the conditions for the communication of God's identity to human beings. In the hypostatic union, "space and time provide the rational medium within which God makes Himself present and known to us, and our knowledge of Him may be grounded objectively in God's own transcendent rationality."[18] As a result, Scripture does indeed reveal God intelligibly and objectively, even as God's identity transcends our creaturely comprehension. To put the matter another way, the incarnation establishes the ontological conditions for epistemic access to God's identity through the biblical witness.

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[16] T. F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 9.

[17] Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology*, 85.

[18] Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 24.

Torrance's account of the ontological relation of Scripture includes another movement — revelation is not only given by God but also as received by humans through God. As God reveals himself in Jesus Christ, he also provides the faithful human response to God as the fully human one. God "reveals himself to us, not only from without or from above, in the advent of his Son as the incarnate Savior among us, but also from below, in a movement of his Spirit in which through his presence within us he meets himself from our end, thereby bringing us within the circle of his knowing of himself and his revealing of himself through himself."[19] Torrance insists that since God's self-revelation comes through the incarnation, revelation and reconciliation are inseparable. The Son's assumption of human nature includes our human nature in his unbroken fellowship with the Father and transforms it. The hypostatic union between God and humanity in Christ structures reality so that divine revelation "already includes a true and appropriate and fully human response as part of its achievement for us and to us and in us."[20] Reconciliation penetrates the ontological structures of the divine-human relation such that revelation occurs within the movement of God toward humanity in Christ and — just as important — within the movement of humanity in Christ toward God.

This way of delineating the objective and subjective sides of knowledge of God within the divine economy plays out in Torrance's strong account of the production of the biblical texts as themselves under the controlling force of reconciliation. He writes that the apostles (those who are united to Christ within the sphere of reconciling revelation),

> provide us with the divinely appointed, the divinely prepared, and there the normative realization and actualization of revelation and reconciliation . . . . In other words, it is the point of view of the Apostles which is the point of view which Christ means us to have of him. Their point of view is the point of view of those who have been forgiven and reconciled by Christ, the specifically Christian point of

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[19] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*, 2d ed. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 32.

[20] Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1996), 131.

> view. And as such it is the divinely guided and inspired point of view from within the perspective of redeemed sinners, providing us with the definite and normative pattern of response to revelation and reconciliation which God himself has willed and constituted in the Church.[21]

Christ and the Spirit enfold the apostles, who, though finite and fallible, have their words shaped and converted to become Holy Scripture. Torrance continues, "The revelation of God objectively given and subjectively realized in the Person and work of Christ now through the Spirit subjectively takes shape in the mind of the apologetic Church in final form."[22] As John Webster observes, Torrance offers very little description of the "textual culture" of Scripture — that is, of "how texts are produced, disseminated and appropriated."[23] This is no doubt a weakness of his. Nevertheless, Torrance's view that the divine reality of Christ dictates the formation of the biblical text has exegetical implications. This can be seen in his handling of the motif of the "Messianic Secret" in the Gospel of Mark.

The trope of the "Messianic Secret" was made famous at the beginning of the 20th century by William Wrede. According to Wrede, the key to understanding the Gospel of Mark is the secret messianic identity of Jesus, which he initially discloses but then repeatedly censures until his identity is laid bare in the crucifixion.[24] Torrance considers this gradual unfolding of Jesus' identity to be a byproduct of the proper mystery of his identity as the Word made fallen flesh. It is "the ultimate mystery of the blood of Christ, the blood of God incarnate, a holy and infinite

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[21] Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*,136.

[22] Ibid., 137.

[23] John Webster, "T. F. Torrance on Scripture," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65, no. 1 (2012): 60. Webster continues, "This may suggest that the promised integration of Word and words, *res* and *signum*, has not been fully achieved . . . . It is not simply that Torrance's work as a whole is exegetically light, but that so firm is his conception of the ostensive nature of scripture that he does not linger over the textual sign, fearing, no doubt, that this may arrest the movement of hermeneutical intelligence in pressing through to the *res"* (60). For a similar critique, see Darren Sarisky, "T. F. Torrance on Biblical Interpretation," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 3 (2009): 342.

[24] William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (Cambridge and London: James Clarke & Co. LTD, 1971).

mystery which is more to be adored than expressed."[25] Faced with revealing the infinite mystery of atonement, Jesus must slowly initiate his followers into his enigmatic mission to reach Golgotha. Torrance emphasizes Jesus' self-revelation of his identity as a demonstration of his authority:

> On the one hand (as the evangelists make clear) he exercised a sovereign control over all his *acts*, and bringing even the reactions of people against him under the mastery of his purpose, refused to come to the supreme purpose of his life, "to give his life a ransom for many," until the hour of God arrived. On the other hand he restrained his *words* revealing this purpose and communicated them only as the pattern of his mission began to unfold in its actual course, making his words and acts proceed *pari passu* in the one mission of revelation and reconciliation.[26]

Notice that Jesus remains sovereign over the perception of his identity even as he must accommodate himself to his hearers by slowly coordinating his words and acts. Consequently, Jesus' disciples and, in turn, the writers of Scripture bear witness to his identity with a unified theological and historical retelling of his life, death, and resurrection. Positioning the interplay between the writers of Scripture and Christ's reconciling revelation allows Torrance to see the Messianic Secret as a witness to the incomprehensible mystery of the atoning death of the Son of God.

Contrast this unitary vision of the objective and subjective dimensions of revelation with the wedge Wrede drives between the historical and theological. By challenging the fundamental assumption about the literary nature of the Gospel of Mark, he pushed biblical scholars to invert their exegetical approach in light of the nature of the Messianic Secret.[27] Instead of a kernel of historical truth encased in the elaboration of the miraculous and theological, we find only the doctrinal view of

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[25] Torrance, *Atonement*, 2.

[26] Ibid., 5. Torrance continues, "Jesus deliberately reiterated what he had to say, for he had something very definite and important to communicate to them, though clearly they shrank from receiving it" (ibid., 6).

[27] Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 129.

the community interpolated into a historical setting.[28] For example, the inability of the disciples to grasp the meaning hidden in Jesus' parables does not represent his actual relationship with the disciples; instead, the disciples are a literary device employed by Mark to convey the community's epistemological conviction that revelation happens in retrospect of the resurrection.[29] But Wrede does not intend to cede the historian's control of the meaning of the Gospel narratives over to the church and its theologians. Discerning the dogmatic construal of Jesus remains fundamentally a historical task because "the community could not have a picture of him that fell short of their own interests in matters of faith."[30] The theological — in contrast to the historical — nature of the Gospel emerges as the historian reconstructs the Markan community and its dogmatic convictions about the identity of Jesus that it wished to enshrine in the sacred text. As a result, "Markan Christology" becomes a circumlocution for the historical reconstruction of the Markan community and its aspirations to cement their traditions in the Gospel. In Torrance's view, this exegetical approach conforms the text to a host of metaphysical and historical assumptions rather than allowing the divine action and being in the history of Christ to determine one's hermeneutic.

Unapologetic Theological Interpretation as "Depth-Exegesis"

According to Torrance, God's triune self-revelation requires an approach to reading the Bible that can account for the undergirding reality of the Word made flesh to which Scripture points. He calls this method "depth-exegesis," an approach he learned from his teacher William Manson.[31] The name signifies the hermeneutical

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[28] Ibid., 90-91.

[29] Ibid., 103. The standard historical-critical approaches of Wrede's day sought to understand the Gospel narrative as historical or psychological presentations. But Wrede argued that Mark must be treated as a presentation of Jesus primarily motivated by dogmatic and theological conviction. Wrede's literary-theological approach better accounted for the Messianic Secret than any historical or psychological explanation for the disciples' inability to understand Jesus' rather straightforward parables.

[30] Ibid., 89.

[31] Thomas F. Torrance, "Introduction," in William Manson, *Jesus and the Christian*, ed. with introduction by Thomas F. Torrance (London: James Clarke; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 9.

goal — to penetrate below the "surface" of the text to the divine reality to which it bears witness. This interpretive method is grounded in the ontological underpinning of Scripture, in the unique revelation of the Triune God in Jesus of Nazareth. In this way, "depth-exegesis" is properly scientific, conforming its mode of study to the nature of Scripture as a witness to the revealing and reconciling reality of the Triune God.[32] Torrance's method has three interrelated facets.[33] (1) The interpreter must have his or her habit of thought determined by the deep inner-logic that unites the entire corpus of Scripture. (2) The text under consideration must be read in light of the whole of the New Testament's coherent pattern of the revealing and reconciling *ratio* of the Trinity so evident in the trinitarian logic of Christ's descent and ascent.[34] (3) Depth-exegesis sees the historical and theological components of Scripture as unified by the "intrinsic intelligibility given them by divine revelation, and within the field of God's objective self-communication in Jesus Christ."[35]

The full depth of Scripture's meaning can be reached only when one's reading strategy comports with the reality of Christ as fully God and fully human.[36] Therefore, Scripture must be interpreted "in the light of the epistemic and ontological relation between the historical Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son, and God the Father."[37] The "unbroken relation in being and act between the Son and Father"[38] in the person of Christ means that historical investigation of Jesus cannot proceed as though he were just another figure in history among many others. In other words, the reality of Christ as a "predicate of the Son or Word of God" demands a different method than the one that governs historical-critical study of

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[32] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 37.

[33] See ibid., 37-50.

[34] Ibid., 43. Torrance argues that the New Testament does not simply provide a smattering of information that must be pieced together to form the doctrine of the Trinity; rather the very structure of thought reflects an intrinsic Trinitarian logic.

[35] Ibid., 43.

[36] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 30.

[37] Torrance, The Christian Doctrine of God, 48.

[38] Ibid., 49.

the Bible.[39] Historical-critical approaches are incommensurate with the biblical narrative because biblical logic depends on categories that defy the range of concepts available to the historian. The historian is thus faced with two alternatives: either shoehorn Jesus into pre-existing categories or adopt the New Testament's witness to the theological metaphysic internal to the biblical narrative. Torrance writes, "The key to this theological interpretation of the New Testament is found in the New Testament itself, in the way in which its presentation of the historical Jesus and its presentation of the risen Jesus are empirically and conceptually integrated with each other under the divine authority (ἐξουσία) of his self-identifying and self-authenticating reality as the incarnate Lord."[40] The Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are indivisible on account of the ontological reality of God's union with creaturely reality in Christ. This indivisibility is intrinsic to Jesus, the divine-human subject, whose unique human history remains unintelligible apart from his divinity as the incarnate Son.[41]

The dual fact of Jesus Christ as true God and true human means that Jesus is open to historical investigation. Rather than providing a substitute for historical and literary study, Torrance's theological exegesis demands greater historical and literary analysis of a given text precisely because of the ontology of the incarnation to which interpretation is subordinated. The doctrine of the hypostatic union provides the conceptual space to speak of divine agency in the world through Christ in non-competitive terms. This gives a metaphysical basis for the unified account of the theological, historical, and literary elements in Scripture. Torrance's appreciation for Manson's "depth-exegesis" in the first place largely stems from his ability to draw together the theological, historical, and literary layers of the New Testament. The key to Manson's success is a method "in which the literary forms are interpreted in their historical actuality, without divorce either from the spiritual realities to which they refer us or form the prophetic religion and culture stemming

[39] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 27; see also Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 230.

[40] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 44.

[41] Thomas F. Torrance, "The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church," in *The Scottish Journal of Theology* 7 (1954): 251.

from the Old Testament to which they go back."[42] According to Torrance, Manson's exemplary method exhibits five commitments: (1) sensitivity to the reception history of texts; (2) recognition of the Old Testament as providing intelligibility to the New; (3) attention to the genre of New Testament writings as confessional theological documents; (4) appreciation of Jesus' founding of the church on a radical break with existing social, cultural, and moral norms; and (5) emphasis on the impress of divine action in Christ and the Spirit upon the early Christian communities.[43] These same five commitments also characterize Torrance's theological interpretation.[44]

Torrance's Critique of Historical-Critical Interpretation

We now turn to examine Torrance's critique of historical-critical exegesis in order to set the contours of his approach in relief. As we shall see, the principal difference between Torrance's depth-exegesis and historical-critical interpretation is metaphysical. Torrance argues that when the reality of God and God's self-revelation are not taken into account, "the Bible is treated, and interpreted, in such

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[42] Torrance, "Introduction," 10.

[43] Ibid., 10-14.

[44] Torrance's biblical theology came under heavy fire in James Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). Barr critiques Torrance for what Webster calls "illegitimate correlations of grammar and forms of thought; deriving meaning from etymological sequence; allowing theological judgements or undisciplined associations across the biblical corpus to determine semantic matters; [and] scant attention to language use" ("T. F. Torrance on Scripture," 52). Torrance accepted that he was wrong about some of his use of vocabulary (he had leaned on Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* for his definition of some biblical words), including his use of the Old Testament for interpreting the New; Thomas F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry* (Edinburgh, New York: T&T Clark, 1999), x. But he refused to accept that Barr's criticisms posed any real challenge to his biblical interpretation. Torrance thus re-published *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry* in its original form, stating, "It is not surprising that by denigrating the objective reference of biblical language that Barr should find so many biblical theologians 'obscure,' for he fails by his conflation of semantics with syntactics to deal faithfully with their language in accordance with their intention with using it" (*Royal Priesthood*, x-xi.). Webster succinctly describes the real source of disagreement: "What Barr did not grasp was that the engine of Torrance's word studies was a theology of biblical language as a sign of revelation, possessed of a depth by virtue of its relation to the realities to which it testifies and not simply terminating in its syntactic surface" ("T. F. Torrance on Scripture," 52).

a way as to bracket off the surface text and the phenomenal events it may describe from the objective, intelligible depth of God's active self-revelation." Historical-critical methods cannot access the depth and richness of biblical texts because they ignore the ontological reality that undergirds them and to which they gesture. This approach is "predetermined by uncritical epistemological assumptions" about its own metaphysic, which, in turn, precludes the kind of hermeneutic necessary to penetrate beneath the surface of a text to mine it for its full meaning.[45] Unless the historical and literary nature of a text is articulated with reference to the basic ontological reality of God's union with creaturely being, our understanding of the nature of history itself is distorted. According to Torrance, modern day biblical interpretation remains hamstrung by its unreflective methodological naturalism.

Torrance's many critiques of various biblical interpreters boil down to a single charge — a dualistic split between the theological and the historical.[46] He sees the bifurcation of the theological and historical as evidence of severing the Bible from its "deep roots in divine revelation." Without this ontological relation, the historical and theological lose "the consistent substructure that holds them conceptually and meaningfully together."[47] This substructure, as we have seen, refers to the objective and subjective sides of revelation that are grounded in Christ's reconciling union with humanity.[48] Elsewhere, Torrance can state the problem in terms of adherence to a scientifically outdated "receptacle notion" of space and time, which cannot conceive of a noncompetitive account of God and the world. The dualism between history and theology arises from excising the "message of the Christian Gospel from any essential relation to the structures of space and time."[49] True exegesis must be theological in nature because a theological ontology is internal to the material

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[45] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 3.

[46] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 48.

[47] Ibid., 35.

[48] For an account of Torrance's notion of dualism, see Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*, Great Theologians (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 39-43. As Molnar rightly argues, Torrance finds in the Nicene notion of *homoousion* an analogy for overcoming dualistic thinking and properly ordering the relation between divine and human being and action (ibid., 54-58).

[49] Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, v.

content and grammar of the incarnation, in which God stands in unique relation to creation. The incarnation and resurrection "form the basic framework in the interaction of God with mankind in space and time, within which the whole Gospel is to be interpreted and understood."[50] This is the requisite conceptual apparatus to describe the movement of the Son of God in history.

According to Torrance, when the divine economy becomes extraneous to the definition of Scripture, the consciousness of the early worshipping community becomes the *de facto* defining reality and object of study of the biblical text.[51] Here, the production of Scripture is conceptualized within the dichotomy of history and theology. This same dualism then reinforces the way in which Scripture is to be interpreted. Scripture, it is thought, re-presents the Jesus of history through the eyes of faith in a theological work of literature. Where biblical scholars see a hermeneutic that is attentive to the historical, social, cultural, and psychological ingredients of a biblical text, Torrance detects a counterfeit construal of history, cordoned off from divine action. This metaphysical framework seals off the divine economy from the historical conditions out of which it arose, and thus imposes on the Bible an alien account of the way the world is.[52] In one of Torrance's more polemical statements, he avers, "The real Jesus of history is the Christ who cannot be separated from his saving acts, for his person and his work are one, Christ clothed with his gospel of saving grace. The so-called Jesus of history shorn of theological truth is an abstraction invented by a pseudo-scientific method."[53] Despite his strong criticisms, Torrance believes that historical-critical investigation remains essential to the task of interpretation. His complaint is that the historical critical method simply fails to account for history *qua* history because its epistemology presupposes both an unscientific and a-theological view of reality.

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[50] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 20.

[51] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 36.

[52] Ibid., 36.

[53] Thomas F. Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today: The Gospel and Scientific Thinking* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 9.

Torrance's view is not unlike the one espoused by Robert Jenson in his distinction between the "Jesus of history" and the "historian's Jesus."[54] Jenson notes that the question "who is Jesus?" is a question of identity — that is, of what enables "identity with myself across time."[55] Answering this question is no simple matter. A definition of identity is not self-evident and always requires a venture into the realm of ontology and metaphysics. Jenson frames the dilemma for the biblical interpreter this way: "You cannot accurately pick out Jesus of Nazareth without in fact simultaneously picking out the second person of the Trinity, and you cannot accurately pick out the second person of the Trinity without in fact simultaneously picking out Jesus of Nazareth." This forces a decision upon us: "Unless we are willing to reject the historic teaching of the church at its very heart, we must obey the rule: when we ask about the identity of Jesus, historical and systematic questions cannot be separated."[56] Jenson thus concludes that the church's dogma is a "necessary hermeneutical principle of historical reading, because it describes the true ontology of historical being."[57]

Like Jenson, Torrance believes that rendering a true historical account of Jesus requires dogmatic concepts that entail a theological metaphysic. Both think so because Jesus is not just another instance of a human being as such but rather the incarnate Son of God. But, as we have seen, Torrance also extends this logic to his doctrine of Scripture. His objection to the intrinsic bifurcation of theology and history in biblical interpretation rests on two interrelated claims. First, Christ's encounter with his disciples and the apostles results in the "reorganization of the human consciousness," in which the divine-human reality of Christ is objectively apprehended.[58] Moreover, the "revelation of God objectively given and subjectively realized in the Person and work of Christ now through the Spirit subjectively takes

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[54] Robert Jenson, "Identity, Jesus, Exegesis," in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 48.

[55] Jenson, "Identity, Jesus, Exegesis," 44.

[56] Ibid., 47.

[57] Ibid., 50.

[58] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 42.

shape in the mind of the apologetic Church in final form."[59] Second, Torrance argues that form criticism continues to operate with a pseudo-scientific epistemology that is philosophically untenable. It is simply not the case that "the basic data of science are gained from direct observations without any theoretical or interpretive ingredients."[60] Therefore, the theological elements of Scripture are not merely *a priori* reflections on the otherwise conceptually unfiltered observations of the Jesus of history. While the philosophy of science has progressed, historical critical methods remain in the thrall of a now defunct epistemology. Unless the divine-human reality of Christ is assumed, biblical interpretation will stop short of rightly apprehending its fullness.

Here, we must be careful not to misunderstand Torrance's unapologetically theological reading. He does not simply begin with theological commitments and then find those commitments confirmed in his reading of the Bible. Torrance does admit that his approach is an "essentially circular procedure," but every coherent system entails circularity.[61] He writes,

> What we are concerned with here is the proper circularity inherent in any coherent system operating with ultimate axioms or belief which cannot be derived or justified from any other ground than that which they themselves constitute . . . [W]hen we are concerned with a conceptual system or framework of thought which includes among its constitutive axioms one or more ultimates, for which, in the nature of the case, there is no higher and wider system with reference to which they can be proved, then we cannot but operate with a complete circularity of the conceptual system.[62]

There is no way of verifying either the metaphysical naturalism undergirding the interpretive practices of biblical studies or the theological metaphysics guiding Torrance's work, for both are ultimate beliefs for which no appeals to independent

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[59] Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology*, 137.

[60] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 8.

[61] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 15

[62] Ibid., 15.

verification can be made. Torrance reminds us that this same phenomenon exists in biblical studies as it does in the field of physics. The belief in the "laws of logic" and the belief that there is order in the universe are necessary presuppositions for the intelligibility of the discipline. Neither the demonstration of the laws of logic nor the proof of order are possible without assuming and employing the very thing it seeks to affirm.[63] This is not unique to physics; it is simply a basic feature of human knowing.[64]

Torrance's Theological Interpretation and Markan Christology

We are now able to appreciate the sophistication of Torrance's theological exegesis of Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of Mark. The method of Torrance's exegesis corresponds to the theological logic of Jesus Christ as the divine-human subject united to the Person of the Son. This ultimate belief constitutes the very intelligibility of reality. It is a theological metaphysic at odds with historical-critical approaches to the Bible, which are not any less metaphysically neutral or epistemically circular than an unapologetic theological approach. The advantage of Torrance's approach is that his method seeks to adopt the thought-forms given in the Bible rather than impose an alien, secular metaphysic.[65] As we have seen, even the concept of "history" is metaphysically loaded and thus not adequate to guide our study of Jesus. If theological categories form the rational structure of Scripture, then only a theological approach can hope (but not guarantee) to exegete the intrinsic logic of the Bible. In what follows, we will trace the convergences between Torrance's theological interpretation and Markan Christology.

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[63] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 16.

[64] Torrance argues that circularity is not unique to theological claims. He asserts that "how ideas are related to the realities we experience and apprehend cannot be specified in any area of human knowledge, let alone the knowledge of faith, for this is a relation of an ontological kind which by its very nature eludes, and therefore vanishes in the face of, analytical explication and formalization; yet it is in and through that very relation that we can attain general knowledge of the realities concerned" (*Space, Time and Resurrection*, 11).

[65] Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology*, 40-41.

Torrance's deployment of christological categories to understand Jesus' baptism coheres with the Gospel of Mark's primary purpose of to present the identity of Jesus. According to Joel Marcus, the very first verse clearly sets the agenda for the entire Gospel by declaring "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" and is then reinforced by continuous "who" and "what" questions posed about the identity of Jesus (Mark 1:24, 27; 2:7; 4:35-41; 5:7; 6:2; 8:4; 8:24-33; 11:28; 14:61; 15:2).[66] The hinge of Mark's narrative is Jesus' question to Peter — "But you, who do you say I am?" (8:29) — and his response that the Son of Man must suffer and die and rise from the dead (8:31). As the Roman centurion watches the final breath of life leave the crucified Jesus, he declares, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (15:28). Both of these pronouncements correspond to the opening line of the Gospel: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Despite these clear declarations of who Jesus is, his identity remains shrouded in mystery throughout the Gospel. Although Wrede's thesis has largely been debunked, his chief insight that Jesus' identity cannot be fully revealed until his death (and resurrection) continues to have purchase among modern day scholars.[67] This coincides with another mystery internal to the logic of Mark's narrative: Jesus has a divine identity as the embodied presence of the God of Israel and yet he suffers and is tempted as he prays in Gethsemane and unleashes his cry of dereliction on the cross.

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[66] Joel Marcus, "Identity and Ambiguity in Markan Christology," in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 132-136. On whether the title "Son of God" is part of the original text, see Marcus, Mark, 141.

[67] Marcus himself believes that this "ambiguity probably reflects the tradition-history of Mark's Gospel: it is likely that Jesus' distress in Gethsemane and his cry of dereliction are historical memories (who would have invented them?), whereas the passion predictions, at least in their present form, are products of the early church" ("Identity and Ambiguity," 141.) He reasons that if Jesus had really predicted his death and resurrection to his disciples, they wouldn't have been caught so off-guard when the events occurred. Richard Hays notes that Wrede's thesis does not succeed at the narrative level. It contorts the basic narrative of Mark since "most of Jesus' injunctions to silence have nothing to do with the title 'Messiah' or with expectations connected to it"; *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Baylor, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 45. In short, Wrede's attempt to merge the Jesus of history with the Jesus of faith in the trope of the Messianic Secret fails on literary grounds.

This mysterious tension in Jesus' identity is introduced in his baptism. In this covert coronation, the heavens are ripped open, the Spirit descends, and voice from heaven declares, "This is my beloved son, with you I am well pleased" (1:10-11). The heavenly declaration weds Davidic kingly sonship (Psalm 2) with the suffering servant (Isaiah 42), possibly under the shared theme of covenant.[68] The baptismal setting itself creates the tension, without naming it directly. Jesus, the anointed divine Son who is elected as righteous sufferer is positioned in the place of an unrighteous sinner. Mark connects the baptism scene to the wilderness testing by having Jesus "immediately" (εὐθύς) driven into temptation before he can even catch his breath. This suggests that, as the Servant, Jesus suffers as the one who stands in the place of the sinner as a formal representative, as it were, but as one who is really able to be tempted as a human. This tension is exacerbated by Jesus' anguish in Gethsemane as he prays for God to take his cup before aligning his will with the Father's. If we methodically bracket out the distinction between divine and human natures, then the narrative breaks down. If Jesus is not human, his hard-won obedience is simply a performance; if Jesus is not divine, then he really is a sinner.[69] But neither option can account for the complexity of Mark's Gospel. Torrance's claim that Jesus has assumed fallen flesh is an attempt to do justice to this complexity by making explicit what is implicit in Mark's narrative. But even if Torrance goes beyond what Mark implies, he does so by reading Mark with the rest

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[68] Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 121-123. Mark has piled on so many allusions and echoes from Israel's Scriptures that commentators are unsure of how to order properly all of the images to render the intended mosaic. Like Watts, Hays sees the Son and the Servant fused in Jesus (*Echoes of Scripture*, 48). However, Hooker does not see "any basis for the common assumption that Jesus is here shown as accepting the mission of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Even if we accept the tenuous link with Isa. 42.1, there is no hint whatever in Mark 1.11 of the later passage from that book, and no reason to suppose that Mark saw any connection between them" (*St Mark*, 248). Her position is the minority view.

[69] Jenson has argued for a similar logic internal to the narrative of Jesus' temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane in "Identity, Jesus, Exegesis," 52-53. Marcus also recognizes that this dilemma is innate to the Gospel narrative, but instead of reaching for theological categories he frames the problem as close to Mark's idiom as possible. The aporia is thus between "the all-knowing seer" and the cry of dereliction ("Identity and Ambiguity," 140-146). For an account for the necessity of the ontology of Jesus as the incarnate Son to uphold the intelligibility of the biblical narrative, see Jonathan Lett, "Narrative and Metaphysical Ambition: On Being 'In Christ,'" *Modern Theology* 33, no. 4 (2017): 618-639.

of the biblical cannon. Since Scripture gestures beyond itself to the reality of Christ, who transcends the closed boundaries of discrete books, Mark's witness works in concert with the witnesses of Philippians 2:5-11 and the Book of Hebrews.

Torrance also reads Mark within the reality of God's history with Israel. Although Torrance deploys the conceptual tools of the hypostatic union and a "two natures" Christology, his exegesis is driven by his reading of the Old Testament. In fact, these "cognitive instruments" are put in service of articulating the reality of articulating the servant-son of deutero-Isaiah fulfilling God's covenant will for Israel as the embodied presence of the God of Israel in Jesus of Nazareth.[70] Torrance's emphasis on the ontology of the incarnation leads him to foreground the centrality of Israel and the Old Testament for a proper understanding of the New. There is an essential relation between Israel and Christ because the Son of God has assumed Jewish flesh as one under the covenant and, as Torrance insists, "to this very day Jesus remains a Jew while still the eternal Son of God."[71] For this reason, "the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the Jews are all bound up inseparably together, so that when at last God came into the world he came as a Jew."[72] Torrance emphasizes that the covenantal history of Israel into which Christ is born is imbued with deeply revelatory significance. This is so because God always reveals himself within the contingency and particularity entailed by space and time. Torrance writes,

> Divine revelation did not just bear upon the life and culture of Israel in some tangential fashion, rippling the surface of its moral and religious consciousness, but penetrated into the innermost centre of Israel and involved itself in the concrete actuality and locality of its existence in time and space, so that in its articulated form as human word it struck home to Israel with incisive definiteness and specificity.[73]

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[70] Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 17.

[71] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 43.

[72] Ibid., 43.

[73] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 15.

The significance of this belief extends beyond the claim that the incarnation and God's dealings with Israel are two sites of God's reconciling revelation. Instead, God's revelation in and through Israel serves to form their social, cultural, religious, and intellectual life to be particularly primed for the fullness of divine revelation to arrive in the incarnation. In fact, Israel is elected for the purpose of one day bearing the Son of God — to be the "womb for the incarnation of his Word and a matrix of appropriate forms of thought and speech for the reception of his revelation in a final and definitive form."[74] If divine revelation has prepared the very structures of Israel's social, cultural, political, and religious life for the incarnation, then the New Testament must be read in its native setting, the history of Israel and its Scriptures.[75] Therefore, Christ must be understood in the terms instantiated by God's revealing encounters with Israel, without abstracting these biblical thought-forms from their particular context "in revelation."[76]

Torrance draws on the logic of the suffering servant to supply the vicarious and substitutionary pattern of exchange that Christ initiates in his baptism. As we have seen, Jesus enters into ontological solidarity with estranged and fallen humanity by taking the place of the condemned sinner, including assuming fallen human nature. Mark's depiction of a truly human Jesus beset by weakness and temptation fits with this claim. While the vicarious nature of his life is only hinted at by the allusion to the servant song of Isaiah 42 in his baptism, Jesus' explanation of his baptism — that he will "give his life as a ransom for many" — reveals its fundamental vicarious character (Mark 10:45). This is the hermeneutical key by which Torrance unlocks the full theological import of Jesus' baptism. It explicitly links his beginning to his end as chosen son and suffering servant. The divine

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[74] Torrance, *Evangelical Theology and Reality*, 87. This conviction can also be seen in Torrance's coordination of the revelation of the Old and New Testaments as, respectively, the "*verbum incarnandum*" (word requiring to be incarnate) and the "*verbum incarnatum*" (word incarnate); *Incarnation*, 45. According to Torrance, "If in the divine purpose, the incarnation came at a particular point in time, in the history of Israel, it was clearly of design: it is at this point in the context of history of Israel that Jesus is to be understood. If we are to be faithful to the witness of scripture we cannot but start in the same way" (ibid., 37-38).

[75] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 41.

[76] Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 144.

identity of Jesus is revealed as he stands condemned with sinners and as he dies as one abandoned to sin.

Mark's Gospel appears to be constructed on the logic of the vicarious and substitutionary life of Jesus, but what about the grammar of exchange? Again, Torrance uses Jesus' dialogue with his disciples about his baptism and passion in Mark 10:38-45 to capture the full meaning of Jesus' baptism. When James and John ask to sit at the right and left of Jesus in his glory, he responds, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink, and to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" James and John disagree. "We are able," they protest. Jesus replies, "The cup that I drink you will drink. And with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized. But, to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom yet has been prepared" (10:38-40). Torrance's sermon on Mark 10:32 for the 1981 Warfield Lectures at Princeton Seminary displays the grammar of exchange and the hermeneutical work it can do for a theological interpretation of scripture. Because this sermon is unpublished, I quote from it at length here:

> Think of the baptism of Jesus. John the Baptist was baptizing sinners *eis metanoian*, into repentance, into judgement and amendment of life. And then came Jesus and stood in the row of penitence, asking to be baptized as one of them. John was aghast but Jesus insisted. It was a vicarious baptism. He was baptized as a sinner, baptized into repentance. It was not his own repentance into which Jesus was baptized but ours, for his baptism was on our behalf. He was baptized with us in such a way that he made baptism--his baptism--as Calvin puts it, common between himself and us. He united himself with us in order that working from within our failures and weaknesses he might make what is ours his and give us what is his.
>
> And baptism signified the way in which he fulfilled his ministry and lived his whole life, and so, Mark tells us, 'Jesus said, "I have a baptism with which I am being baptized."' A daily continuous baptism. His sharing our condition, the condition of which we ought to repent, in order to unite himself to us and thus to unite us to himself . . .

> For the baptism was Jesus' baptism into their condition, and it was because he made their sinful condition his own that they could share his baptism and his cup. He made it possible because he united himself completely to what they are and gave them that union . . .
>
> Jesus had laid hold of them in their sin and shame in all their betrayal, and he had used that as the very instrument by which to bind them to him forever, and to bind himself to them forever. It was for sinners he died, and therefore it is by our sin that he binds himself to us and us to himself. And he died to take our place, taking all our sin and shame upon himself and thus constituted the disciples and us one body with him. Now that is a bond that nothing can break. No unfaithfulness, no shame, no betrayal on our part can break it because it is a bond forged out of the very sins and failure and sin and guilt and shame of mankind. A bond made with them in their sin and failure and in spite of it. That is the breath-taking mystery of our union with Christ . . .
>
> Even our unrepenting repentance. Even our twisted distorted faith. Even our unworthy prayers and devotion. All that Jesus takes on himself, he drinks to the full, shares it to the full with us. And the last bitter drink, far from letting it divide us from him, he makes it precisely into what binds us to him.[77]

Conclusion

Torrance's exegesis highlights the relationship between doctrine and biblical interpretation. He unapologetically reads Scripture through the lens of the doctrine of the incarnation. This theological hermeneutic enables, rather than hinders, him to capture the Christology at the center of Mark's Gospel. The intelligibility of Mark's narrative structure depends on the logic of Christ's two natures to tell us who Jesus Christ is. Torrance's interpretation draws heavily on dogma, such as the doctrines of *anhypostasia*, *enhypostasia*, and *communicato idiomatum*. But he is careful not to transpose Scripture into dogmatic categories. Instead, his theological metaphysic

[77] Thomas F. Torrance, "Sermon on Mark 10:32," *The Theology of Nature* (Warfield Lectures, Princeton Theological Seminary Media Archive, 1981).

funds a hermeneutical procedure that engenders an elegant and simple interpretation, as we see in his sermon from the Warfield Lectures. Ultimately, his exegesis terminates in first order claims about God's being and activity to bring salvation in Christ through the pattern of substitution and exchange. This is the dimension of depth that characterizes Scripture and awaits those who will allow their approach to be determined by the reality that undergirds it and to which it points, Jesus Christ.

PAULINE ADOPTION AND T. F. TORRANCE'S DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

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The particularity of the incarnation and resurrection forms the basis for the ongoing particularity of the redeemed of the church, while simultaneously eradicating the binary categories that inscribe hierarchies in the old age. As a metaphor, adoption confirms the continuity of personal identity in this way, which results in dignification of the embodied particularity of individuals in Christ.

In his short work, *When Christ Comes and Comes Again*, T. F. Torrance is emphatic in his exposition of the *individuality* of Jesus. Here he states, "It is not with God in general that we have to do in the Christian faith, but with the personal God who comes in this particular individual, Jesus, so that in and through Jesus we are each summoned to meet with God individually, and to hear from Him the Word of His Love."[1] Torrance then goes further in claiming that Jesus not only came as an individual to individuals in the incarnation, but this same *individual* Jesus will come again, and "each one of us will have to meet Him individually face to face."[2] In both *When Christ Comes and Comes Again* and in his longer work*, Incarnation*, Torrance is primarily concerned with the link between Christ's incarnation and soteriology. Yet the shape of his doctrine of the incarnation raises important questions regarding the nature of a redeemed individual *qua individual*. Is Christ's individuality and

[1] T. F. Torrance, *When Christ Comes and Comes Again* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 36.

[2] Ibid.

particularity a model and a basis for the ongoing particularity of those in Christ? Or does Christ's individuality supplant the individuality of the redeemed thereby eradicating their individual differences? Further, can Torrance's doctrine of the incarnation provide a way through the exegetical maze of metaphors in Galatians 3:28–4:7, which itself has recently become a hotly debated portion of the Pauline corpus in regard to Paul's anthropology?[3]

Two dominant streams of Pauline studies take very different tacks for interpreting Paul's assertion that there is no longer "Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female" (Galatians 3:28). First, interpreters within the "Apocalyptic School," which tends to emphasize the discontinuity of this present age and the age to come, argue for the eradication of the binaries that characterize the old age. However, some within the apocalyptic school also, as I will show below, seem to argue for an eradication of the self. In contrast, interpreters within the "Paul within Judaism School" read Galatians 3:28 as an affirmation of Paul's insistence on pneumatic transformation. This emphasis, as I will argue below, reifies the binaries of the old age, particularly in regard to ethnicity, and also seemingly eradicates marks of differentiation in the age to come. I contend that Paul's adoption metaphor in Galatians 4 provides us with a third way forward, because this metaphor stubbornly insists on the persistence of the self/subject as a differentiated individual while simultaneously undermining the binary hierarchies Paul includes in Galatians 3:28. Moreover, the nascent Christology of Paul's creedal language in Galatians 4:4–5 affirms Christ's particular identity, and holds up Christ's particularity as both the means for, and the model of, the deliverance and dignification of embodied and particular individuals who have received adoption *in Christ*. Paul thus does not envisage reifying existing hierarchies in service of protecting the Jewishness of Jesus, nor does he envisage the obliteration of the marks of individuality and differentiation. Instead, the particularity of Christ's flesh dignifies the multitude of particularities and individual differences expressed by

[3] Research on the nature and impact of metaphor is flourishing in a range of scholarly disciplines, but particularly in cognitive linguistics. For an overview of this research see Raymond Gibbs Jr., ed. *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For cognitive approaches to metaphor see also George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), idem. *Metaphors We Live By*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

those who are adopted in Christ. In the age of the Spirit then, marks of individuality will no longer be bound by hierarchical binary structures, but instead these marks will participate in a "symphony of difference"[4] wherein individuality and differentiation is expressed in familial and interdependent bonds.

Adoption as the Key to a Mediating View

In a recent article, John Barclay has helpfully suggested that the self's identity in Christ is "a form of identity that is radically contingent on the creative action of God."[5] Barclay grounds his assertion in his exegesis of Paul's use of *huiothesia* (adoption) in Galatians and in Romans. In Barclay's view, through "adoption they [those in Christ] do not develop a natural or inherent sonship status but receive it through a divine initiative that is beyond their control and outside their choice."[6] Barclay further states that "being an adopted child of God is not a higher identity on the same scale [as ethnicity, class, gender], but an identity of a different sort, which reconfigures the significance of those other identities but does not erase them."[7] The crux of Barclay's argument is his insistence that the God-given identity brought about through adoption is qualitatively different from the ethnic, religious, or gendered categories mentioned in Galatians 3:28, because "to be a child of God is to be suspended from a divine decision."[8] Thus for Barclay, divine kinship in Paul is relentlessly theological.

Barclay gives an elegant solution for how universal and particular identities can co-exist non-competitively in the body of Christ in the present age, but I would like to press his argument further. Barclay's exegesis of the *huiothesia* metaphors rightly underscores their capacity to gift a new identity to an adopted son. However,

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[4] J. Kameron Carter used this term in a personal conversation about Pauline anthropology, and I am indebted to his articulation of a covenantal reading of Christ's flesh in the reading of Galatians 3–4 I present below; see his *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: OUP, 2008).

[5] John Barclay, "An Identity Received From God: The Theological Configuration of Paul's Kinship Discourse," *Early Christianity* 8, no. 3 (2017): 356.

[6] Ibid., 367.

[7] Ibid., 370.

[8] Ibid., 368.

these metaphors also contain an interesting dialectic of continuity and discontinuity that might shed further light on the nature of the self who passes from slavery in this present evil age into sonship in the age to come, which Barclay's article does not treat. As an eschatological act, the implications of adoption must be considered alongside resurrection, which for Paul is an embodied and particular existence beyond the binaries of Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female. Significantly, Paul places adoption and redemption of the body side by side in Romans 8:23, which strongly suggests that adoption and resurrection should be considered together. Thus it is not only necessary to countenance universality and particularity as they are currently experienced in Christ, but also to consider if and how individual and embodied particularity persists in the age to come, or following Torrance, "when Christ comes again."

As a metaphor, adoption (*huiothesia*) is well-suited to underscoring the continuity of the self who passes from the present evil age into the age of the Spirit, and to eradicating Paul's binary categories. The practice of adoption that Paul would have known presupposes both relational discontinuity and the persistence of personal identity. Paul's use of *huiothesia* in Galatians 4:5 is trading on the Roman practice of adoption, which enabled fathers to create sons by decree rather than by circumstance or birth.[9] In the Roman Empire, adoption accomplished the legal transfer of a son from one family to another. As far as the law was concerned, an adopted son was a stranger to his natural family so long as he remained in his adoption. An adopted son also became, in the eyes of Roman law, a full and rightful heir to the inheritance of the father, and any of the son's previous debts were cancelled. Thus the practice of adoption rests on strong notions of relational discontinuity, and it likewise assumes that adoption is an effective tool for creating new relational bonds between the adoptive father and his adopted son.

However, this picture of clear-cut discontinuity is slightly complicated by other extant evidence regarding adoption in the Roman world. First, adoption most often occurred between two adult men, so although legally a son experienced discontinuity, adoption most certainly did not entail an eradication of his "old"

[9] For a fuller discussion of the Roman practice of adoption, see Erin M. Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

personhood, nor did he become an entirely "new person" in his adoption.[10] Significantly, funerary inscriptions of adopted sons record *both* their adopted lineage and their biological lineage.[11] The presence of both lineages strongly suggests that the adopted son defined himself in relation to both his biological family and his adoptive family; he did not, and indeed existentially could not, discard his former self. Thus adoption presumes the continuity of the selfhood of the son who undergoes adoption. A son by adoption is able to remember and articulate that he once was a son of *X* but is no longer, and is now a son of *Y*. Yet in both sentences, the subject "he" persists and is, without a doubt, the same person.

Importantly, the relational discontinuity brought about through adoption does not result in the annihilation of the self, but instead results in the self's transformation through the more complex and hybrid narrative forged by his adoption.[12] This hybrid and multivalent narrative has much in common with the "I" in Paul's statements in Galatians 2 who has been crucified with Christ, who no longer lives, and yet also lives by the faithfulness of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). The multi-layered, complex narrative of the "I-yet-no-longer-I" is the result of the persistence of the self despite the self's relational discontinuity with sin and the law (Galatians 2:19), and this same self's experience of new relational bonds with Christ (2:20–21).

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[10] *Pace* Barclay who argues, "There was nothing "fictive" about adoption: the legal procedure *created* a new person in the sense that from henceforth the adopted son was in every respect the son and heir of the father" ("An Identity Received From God," 363, emph. orig.). Barclay is right to say that adoption created new kinship ties, but he goes too far in claiming that the legal procedure *creates* a new person. The language of "creation" is misleading, and disregards the continuity of selfhood in the adopted son.

[11] For examples of Greek and Roman epigraphical evidence of adoption see Mario Serge, *Iscrizioni di Cos* (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2007), no. 854; Peter Herrmann, *New Documents from Lydia* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 31-32, 64; Marie-France Auzépy, "Campagne de prospection 2007 de la mission Marmara," *Anatolia Antiqua* 15 (2007): 342-43; Hasan Malay, and Marijana Ricl, "Some Funerary Inscriptions from Lydia," *EA* 39 (2006): 71 no. 45; Klaus Hallof, ed., *Inscriptiones Chii et Sami cum Corassiis Icarique* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), no. 837, 838; Christiane Kunst, *Römische Adoption: Zur Strategie einer Familienorganisation* (Frankfurter althistorische Beiträge 10, Hennef: Marthe Clauss, 2005), 253-57.

[12] See also Barclay's argument that the multiple identities are non-competitive because they are qualitatively different ("An Identity Received From God," 370-372).

Although Paul undoubtedly evokes the Roman practice of adoption in Galatians 4:5,[13] there are important differences between Paul's evocation of *huiothesia* in the text and the practice itself. First, unlike in Roman custom which traditionally marked a son's attainment of maturity at *Liberalia* and bestowed upon him the *toga virilis*,[14] in Galatians 4 the Father *appoints* the time of majority (4:2). The Father also sends the Son on a mission to make more sons, which in a human practice of adoption would have been nonsensical, since the point of adoption was to secure a single heir to whom a *paterfamilias* would pass his *patria potestas.* Furthermore, Paul's analogy begins with an underage natural-born heir, and then in a shocking turn this heir receives "adoption" by the Father.[15] Of course, a natural son has no need of adoption, which makes Paul's inclusion of *huiothesia* all the more surprising. In the text, the sons' adoption is secured by the Father sending his Son who was born of a woman, and under Torah in order to redeem those enslaved to the "elemental forces of the world" (Galatians 4:3). So although Paul's analogy begins with an underage son, in the end the sons are, in fact, slaves who require emancipation rather than maturity.

In its context, these oddities in Paul's analogy in Galatians 4:1–7 underscore the sharp division between two eras: the age of minority in this present, evil age (Galatians 1:4), and the age of emancipation (Galatians 4:4–5). The sharp juxtaposition of these two eras highlights the prerogative of the Father to bring

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[13] *Pace* James M. Scott who sees a solely Jewish framework for adoption in Galatians 4:5 (*Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus* [WUNT II 48, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992]). For a detailed critique of Scott's argument, see Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans,* 112–147.

[14] See John F. Miller, "Ovid's Liberalia," in *Ovid's Fasti: Historical Readings at Its Bimillennium*, ed. Geraldine Herbert-Brown (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 199–224.

[15] Though Scott has argued that the underage heir is a veiled exilic reference, there are numerous difficulties with this solution. First, the "heirs" in verse 29 undoubtedly reference Paul's gentile audience and it is unlikely that there is a shift in referent from 3:29 to 4:1. Second, although Scott has attempted to identify the *epitropoi* and the *oikonomoi* with the Egyptian slave masters, the more likely resonance is with figures in a Roman household. Third, although it is possible that there is a shift in referent between "those under the law/ we (Jews) who receive adoption," and "since you are sons," it is unlikely since Paul's whole point seems to revolve around the gentiles receiving Abrahamic lineage apart from ethnicity, which is precisely what adoption does. For a fuller discussion, see Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans*, 156–162.

about the adoption of believers through the mission of the Son. However, although there is certainly discontinuity between the ages, Galatians 4 also emphasizes continuity in the determinative actions of the Father who brings the sons from one state (slavery) to another (sonship) in Christ. The prominent dialectic of continuity and discontinuity in the analogy comes to a head in "adoption," which, in a single metaphor, contains Paul's entire eschatological scheme that underlies his discourse regarding Abraham's seed in Galatians 3:1–4:7. The adoption metaphor draws attention to the qualitative difference between the two ages, and it sharply underscores that the Galatian believers have been "rescued from the present evil age" where the binaries of Jew/Greek, Slave/Free, and Male/Female structure existence in a series of hierarchical relationships (Galatians 3:28). However, adoption also points beyond the temporal discontinuity to an overarching and eternal continuity of identity.

Pauline Anthropology: Two Current and Divergent Streams

In regard to Galatians 3:28, a verse fraught with implications for theological anthropology, there are two major streams of Pauline scholarship that can be fruitfully brought into conversation with Torrance's doctrine of the incarnation: the Apocalyptic School,[16] and the Paul within Judaism School.[17] The Apocalyptic School and the Paul within Judaism School have likewise reached very different conclusions regarding the function of Paul's adoption metaphor in Galatians 4:1–7, and these conclusions are inextricably linked to their exegesis of Paul's binary categories in Galatians 3:28. After briefly examining several treatments of this passage, I will put Paul's adoption metaphor in conversation with Torrance's doctrine of the incarnation

[16] See, e.g., Susan Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017); Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds., *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016); Douglas Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians,* AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

[17] See, e.g., Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: OUP, 2018); Paula Fredricksen, *Paul the Pagan's Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *"If Sons, Then Heirs": A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: OUP, 2007).

in order to draw out some further implications about the nature of the eschatological community Paul envisions in Galatians 3:28.

If, as I have argued above, adoption presupposes the persistence of the self and also presupposes relational discontinuity, how then should we speak of individuals who have received adoption in Christ? My argument will thus proceed as follows: first, I will argue that neither the Apocalyptic School nor the Paul within Judaism School adequately account for the continuity between Christ's incarnate body "according to the flesh" and his resurrected body (Romans 1:3–4; Philippians 2:6–11; 1 Corinthians 15:45–49), and therefore also do not sufficiently account for the persistence of embodied individuals and their distinctive identities in Paul's age of the Spirit. Second, I will argue that Torrance's insistence on Christ's own particularity in the eschaton provides a model for articulating the ongoing embodied particularity of those who have received adoption *in Christ*. Third, I will argue that an anthropology and ecclesiology consistent with Paul's Christology must embrace, dignify, and celebrate particularity in a way that undermines rather than re-inscribes the binary hierarchies of this present age.

Sharp Discontinuity according to the Apocalyptic School

In keeping with their emphasis on the radical discontinuity between the present age and the age to come, interpreters in the Apocalyptic School likewise tend to emphasize the discontinuity that a person "in Christ" has with her former identity. Though articulated in various nuances, interpreters in the Apocalyptic School broadly agree that in some sense, an individual's previous identity ceases to exist, and instead is replaced or supplanted with Christ's own identity. For example, in his commentary on Galatians 3:28, Martinus De Boer remarks that in Christ "the ethnic/religious/cultural distinction between Jew and Gentile (just as the social distinction between slave and free person, and the sexual distinction between male and female) gives way to what amounts to a new humanity, defined by Christ."[18] Even more colorfully, J. Louis Martyn remarks of Paul's inclusion of Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female in Galatians 3:28, "to pronounce the nonexistence of these opposites is to announce nothing less than the end of the cosmos." Martyn

[18] Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: WJK, 2011), 244.

continues by arguing that "in Christ," religious, social, and sexual pairs of opposites are not replaced by equality, but rather by a newly created unity. . . . [P]ersons who were Jews and persons who were gentiles have been made into a new unity that is so fundamentally and irreducibly identified with Christ himself as to cause Paul to use the masculine form of the word 'one.' Members of the church are not one *thing;* they are one *person*."[19] Thus for Martyn, in Christ believers have been "stripped of their old identity" and have acquired "a new identity that lies beyond ethnic, social, and sexual distinctions."[20] This, to be sure, is a very different reading of the passage than Barclay's model of reconfiguration, though one could argue that Martyn's conclusions more directly reflect Paul's stark insistence that the binary marks of the old age (Galatians 3:28) have come to an end.

As seen above, Martyn's exegesis of this passage, which has been foundational for interpreters in the Apocalyptic School, is predicated upon a sharp and definitive break between the present evil age and the age to come; the nonexistence of the binaries signals the *end* of the cosmos. Moreover, Martyn's view also seems to suggest that the self's ontology is bound up in the binaries of the present evil age, which imbues the categories of Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female with ontic significance.[21] If it is the case, as Martyn argues, that the categories are "non-existent," then the individuals who populated those categories likewise cease to exist, and new individuals are created "in Christ." For Martyn, the only identity that remains in Christ is Christ's own identity. Ethnicity, social position, and gender, are all peeled off like old clothes upon entering the waters of baptism (Galatians 3:27), and the believers emerge re-clothed with Christ himself. Thus, at

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[19] J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 377.

[20] Ibid., 374.

[21] On the problem with ascribing ontological value to race, see Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, 157–193. Carter critiques Cone for being beholden to "ontological blackness," which "is the tendency toward racial reification," and "makes race . . . the exhaustive principle of identity." Rather than reproducing the "aberrant theology of modern racial reasoning," Carter wishes to go beyond Cone in order to identify "what makes whiteness a *theological problem* (ibid., 159, emph. mine). In doing so, Carter denies race an ontological status, which makes his theological account particularly well-suited to examining Paul's similar denial of race's ontic status in Galatians 3:28.

least in his exegesis of Galatians 3:28, it is unclear how, if at all, Martyn envisages the individuation of believers in Christ.

Although it is clear that Paul envisages radical changes "in Christ," especially in regard to reimagining social, ethnic, and gender hierarchies, the appearance of *huiothesia* (adoption to sonship) in Galatians 4:5 does not naturally imply the "stripping" or eradication of the self and the creation of an entirely "new person" who is radically discontinuous with the old self of the present age. Instead, as I will show below, the adoption metaphor is better understood as pointing to a transformation that is analogous to Christ's own in his humiliated and glorified state. In adoption (*huiothesia*), there is continuity and persistence of the "I" who undergoes this transformation. Thus, in my view, Martyn's reading of Galatians 3:28 throws the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. His insistence on sharp discontinuity and new creation brings to light an important Pauline motif; however, it is not the *self* that is eradicated and reconstituted, but rather it is the binaries of the old age in which the self participates and by which the self is oppressed and enslaved that are, as Martyn observes, pronounced to be "non-existent." Instead of obliterating the particularity of the self, as I will argue below, individuation and particularity in Christ are multiplied rather than reduced, which simultaneously undermines the hierarchical binaries Paul lists in Galatians 3:28 that characterize this present age.

Sharp Discontinuity according to the Paul within Judaism School

In an altogether different stream of Pauline interpretation, there has been a recent trend toward interpreting Paul's use of the Abrahamic blessing in Galatians 3 as pointing to Paul's belief that the reception of the Spirit brings about a substantive, ontological change in his gentile believers because Paul's conception of *pneuma* is substantive.[22] Though the arguments from this stream of Pauline studies differ

[22] This stream of Pauline interpretation is heavily influenced by Stoic conceptions of *pneuma*, especially as explained in the foundational work of Troels Engberg-Pedersen: *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000). This line of reasoning has subsequently been picked up by Johnson Hodge (*If Sons, Then Heirs*), and Thiessen (*Paul and the Gentile Problem*).

dramatically in their subject and substance, they too underscore a sharp discontinuity between the fleshly identities of Paul's gentile believers, and their transformed spiritual bodies in the resurrection. This line of interpretation reifies the binary categories of Galatians 3:28, particularly in regard to ethnicity, because the primary concern is to underscore that this transformation is something needed by *gentile* flesh rather than by *all* flesh.

It is increasingly common to hear interpreters within this stream of Pauline studies speak of the reception of the Spirit as the basis for a qualitative change in the post-mortem bodies of gentile believers. Representative of this line of thinking, Matthew Theissen argues that the post-mortem existence shared by those who are Abraham's seed entails "astralization or angelification or even deification."[23] Thiessen further states, "Paul understands the promises to Abraham and to his seed to mean that they would become like the stars in a qualitative sense. . . . [T]his promise requires that they would become divine or semi-divine beings like the angels."[24] Despite the concern of scholars in this stream of Pauline studies to preserving the distinct ethnic identities of Jews and gentiles, these distinct ethnic identities are only ever discussed in terms of gentile inclusion in the lineage of Abraham.[25] According to this line of reasoning, ethnically Jewish flesh has no need for transformation in order to be included Abraham's lineage.

Moreover, interpreters in this stream of Pauline studies do not discuss the persistence (or non-persistence) of ethnic identity in the post-resurrection body. Indeed, in Thiessen's work the astral bodies of the resurrection are only described in terms of their indestructibility and their star-like substance. So it could be that this sort of account of the resurrected body is compatible with the persistence of the embodied self and marks of particularity, but the interpreters pursuing this line of argument do not consider the question. Indeed, the emphasis on the

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[23] Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, 160.

[24] Ibid., 155.

[25] Barclay makes a similar observation about Caroline Johnson Hodge's work: "The whole point of Pauline theology . . . is not to erase or deny ethnicity, but to reformulate gentile ethnicity in Christ as a form of aggregation or affiliation to Israel, and at the same time to affirm the superiority of Jewish ethnicity, which remains unaffected by the gentile-focused work of Christ" ("An Identity Received From God," 356).

transformation of flesh leads to a sort of post-resurrection "whitewashing" or, more accurately, "star-washing" of bodies that ultimately demeans rather than dignifies gentile flesh, and by extension, belittles the particular, embodied existence of all selves who receive the Spirit in Christ.[26] Thus although scholars in this school rightly emphasize the ongoing importance of the Jewishness of Jesus (and of Paul), the shape of their arguments regarding the transformation of gentile flesh essentializes and reifies ethnic and religious hierarchies rather than dismantling them.[27]

The Shape of Christ's Incarnational Particularity

The Incarnate and Resurrected Body of Christ in Paul's Letters

In both the Apocalyptic School and the Paul within Judaism School of Pauline interpretation, eschatology rightly plays a prominent role in the exegesis of key passages. However, neither school looks specifically to Christ's own eschatological humanity as the foundation for the eschatological humanity of the believers who receive adoption (Galatians 4:5), and neither school considers how Christ, as an embodied and particular person, interacts with the binary categories in Galatians 3:28. Here then, re-centering the discussion on Torrance's observations regarding *Christ's* incarnate and resurrected body will provide further clarification of the nature of the eschatological bodies of those who have received adoption in Christ,

[26] Hodge and Buell would likely agree that the hierarchical structure is problematic and demeaning to gentile flesh. While they insist that Paul's use of ethnic language ultimately rank gentiles and Jews in a hierarchical structure, they likewise recognize that this construal is not ideal, "insofar as it structurally subordinates one ethnoracial group to another." Instead, Hodge and Buell argue that those wishing to combat racism should emphasize "the fluidity and messiness of ethnoracial categories" in Paul ("The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *JBL* 123, no. 2 (2004): 251).

[27] This, I note, is not an unintended consequence, but rather something interpreters within this stream of Pauline studies recognize as a necessary, if somewhat lamentable, component of their interpretation. For example, Hodge and Buell assert, "we read Paul as preserving not simply ethnic differences within Israel but also power differences among its members," and further assert, "We read Paul as structuring the relations between Judeans and gentiles hierarchically" ("The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *JBL* 123, no. 2 (2004): 249–250).

and also then on the eschatological self's relationship to the binaries in Galatians 3:28.

It is clear from reading Paul's descriptions of the resurrected Christ that Christ's eschatological body is not devoid of marks of his earthly particularity. Indeed, his particularity and individuality persist from his incarnation through to his resurrection and ascension. As Torrance argues, it is precisely the incarnate Jesus who is raised and who will come again.[28] Torrance's descriptions of Christ jibe well with key Pauline texts that describe Christ's glorified body. For example, Paul portrays Christ's crucifixion as positively related to his exaltation (e.g. Galatians 6:17; Philippians 2:5–11; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 15:3–4, 38–39, 42–54; 2 Corinthians 13:3–4). Thus Paul can preach "Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:18), and also declare that it was on account of Jesus' death on a cross that God "exalted him beyond measure" (Philippians 2:9). Moreover, there is at least some indication that Jesus' marks of crucifixion persist in his resurrected body (Galatians 6:17; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4). If Christ's distinguishing marks persist into his resurrected state, is Christ's particular identity as a Jew from Nazareth, which is to say his identity as an embodied and particular individual, a necessary part of what it meant for Christ to be human and to *remain* human in his exalted state? If so, are analogous marks of individuality likewise necessary and present for all redeemed humans?

At this point, the question of the persistence of individual identity could well launch this discussion into the realm of metaphysics, but Paul is not dealing with Christ's humanity in the abstractions of either current or ancient discussions of metaphysics.[29] Paul's anthropology is not conceptual, it is concrete; what it means to be human is both revealed by and grounded in the person of Jesus. Thus a

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[28] Torrance, *When Christ Comes and Comes Again*, 25-26.

[29] On this point, see also Bruce McCormack's distillation of Barth's Christocentric anthropology. McCormack observes, "if, in order to speak of God in His otherness, we first speak of something else — be it cosmology (as in the ancient world) or anthropology (as in the modern world) — we are doing "metaphysics." . . . [T]he problem with metaphysics in either the ancient or the modern form is that it cannot yield knowledge of the true God (i.e., the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ)" ("Why Should Theology Be Christocentric?: Christology and Metaphysics in Paul Tillich and Karl Barth," *Weslyan Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 64).

Pauline anthropology must derive its definition of what it means to be human directly and solely from Christ's own humanity. In Romans 5, Paul calls Adam the *túpos* of Jesus, the one to come (Romans 5:14). The Greek word *túpos* is best understood here to refer to Adam, who is modeled or patterned after Christ, and Christ is, as Barth says, "the *norm* of *all* anthropology."[30] Barth continues his exegesis of Romans 5:14 by arguing that

> Man's essential and original nature is to be found, therefore, not in Adam but in Christ. In Adam we can only find it prefigured. Adam can therefore be interpreted only in the light of Christ and not the other way around.[31]

This comports well with Paul's similar sentiments in 1 Corinthians 15, which emphasizes the priority of Christ as the "man from heaven" who sets the pattern for the nature of resurrected bodies (1 Corinthians 15:45–49). Thus Paul's theological anthropology begins with Christ rather than with Adam, since Adam's humanity is patterned after Christ (Romans 5:14). It is in Christ's own humanity that true humanity is fully and eschatologically revealed for what it will be in the age to come. Paul makes the shape of eschatological humanity clear when he describes believers as formed from the pattern of Christ in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:45–49). Thus Christ, who in the *kenosis* becomes in the incarnation fully human, and remains fully human in his death, resurrection, ascension, and Second Coming (Philippians 2:6–11), is the pattern of eschatological humanity to which those in Christ will be conformed, and this must be borne in mind when considering the place of the binaries in Galatians 3:28 in Paul's anthropology. If Paul sees Christ's humanity as the pattern for those in Christ, what then are the implications for Pauline anthropology for Christ being, as Torrance claims, an *individual*? Indeed, what features of Christ's embodied existence persist from his pre- to post-resurrected and ascended human existence, and how do these features fit with the binaries Paul mentions in 3:28?

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[30] Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam*, trans. T. A. Smail (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 14 (emph. orig).

[31] Ibid., 17.

Torrance's "Individual Christ" and the Ramifications for "Individuals" in Christ

Not only is Torrance concerned to clearly affirm that the incarnate Jesus is the self-same Jesus who will come again, Torrance also insists that Christ be understood as an *individual.*[32] I note here that Torrance is not concerned to give a philosophical defense of personhood, or indeed even of what he means when he speaks of Christ as an "individual."[33] However, Torrance does make several statements within the course of his explication of the incarnation that point toward his assumption that Jesus' individual and particular, *embodied* identity is a *necessary* entailment of his incarnation. In his consideration of the meaning of flesh, Torrance states that Jesus "became a particular man . . . that is the way he became flesh, by becoming one particular man."[34] Moreover, Torrance's explanation of Jesus as a particular man includes Jesus' religious and covenantal (ethnic) identity.[35] In his discussion of Jesus' identification with Israel, Torrance states, "When at last God came into the world he came as a Jew."[36] Torrance goes on to explain that the *egeneto sarx* (the word became flesh) is a "*completed event*" that has taken place "once and for all," but is "also a historical event, a dynamic event, a real happening in the time of this world which is coincident with the whole historical life of Jesus."[37] Torrance understands the *egeneto sarx* as forever joining together the historical moment of the incarnation with the eternal plane of existence, with the result that the entirety of Jesus' life, from his birth to his resurrection "is also

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[32] Torrance, *When Christ Comes and Comes Again*, 36.

[33] T. F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 50–52.

[34] Ibid., 61.

[35] I include "ethnic" here reluctantly, since theologians working in theologies of race are right to problematize the notion of Jesus having "ethnic" or "racial" flesh. Jesus' identity as a Jew is better understood as a covenantal identity, which simultaneously picks out a particular people group while undermining notions of racial hierarchies since Israel's identity is theological, not ethnic, and furthermore, ethnic identity has no ontological status; see Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, 11–36.

[36] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 43.

[37] Ibid., 67.

happening with in the eternal Word."[38] Moreover, through Jesus we who are contingent historical beings are now capable of being "in communion with the eternal."[39] It is key for Torrance that the eternal Word has been joined with the *historical* Jesus, which is to say the *particular* Jesus. Thus Torrance affirms that Jesus the eternal Word not only *became* flesh, but *remains* enfleshed in his particularity in his exaltation. In Torrance's view, Jesus was not merely born a Jew, but "to this very day Jesus remains a Jew while still the eternal Son of God."[40]

Before applying Torrance's insights regarding the significance of Jesus' particularity to Galatians 3–4, it is necessary to further clarify the terms "individual" and "particularity" as they refer to Jesus, and thus by extension, how they apply to those in Christ. We have seen above that for Paul, Jesus is the *túpos* after which eschatological humanity is patterned. As Torrance observes, in the incarnation as it is described in Galatians 4:4–5, the eternal Son enters into humanity as he is born of a woman; he is enfleshed and embodied. Moreover, other Pauline texts show that Jesus remains an embodied human in his resurrection and exaltation (1 Corinthians 15:45–49; Philippians 2:7–11). If then, for Paul, Jesus is a human par excellence, then for Paul it follows that to be human necessarily entails embodiment.[41] Human particularity follows necessarily from embodiment in Paul.[42] If Paul's anthropology is embodied, then, as Torrance notes, it is also particular. The human called "Jesus" is this particular human (with this particular body), and not that other human (or that

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 43.

[41] In several places Paul seems to envision a disembodied intermediate state (e.g., 2 Cor 5:1–10; Phil 1:20–25), but the language he uses to describe such a state as temporary and, in some sense, "unnatural" or "incomplete." A person without a body is "unclothed" shows that human personhood is retained without a body, but it likewise indicates that the body is not an incidental or accidental feature of human personhood (2 Cor 5:4–5). Significantly, in Philippians 2, Paul's statement that Jesus "took the form of a human" meant embodiment (Phil 2:7).

[42] Though I note here that the Son is "particular" (i.e., differentiated) prior to his embodiment in the incarnation. Thus prior to the incarnation, particularity existed in the Godhead apart from embodiment, but this divine particularity of the processions is not identical to the embodied particularity proper to Jesus' humanity in the incarnation.

body). Jesus's incarnate body had distinguishable features, and the exalted body of Jesus retains at least some of these distinguishable features (e.g., Jesus is still described in masculine terms, and he still bears the marks of his crucifixion). If Jesus is, to use Torrance's descriptor, an "individual" who was and remains embodied and particular in his exaltation, then we must conclude that both embodiment and particularity are, in fact, proper to Jesus' human nature in the eschaton. If they are proper to Jesus' eschatological humanity, then they are also proper to eschatological persons *in Christ*.

Taking a cue from Torrance's doctrine of the incarnation, a close examination of Galatians 3:28 within its larger framework of 3:15–4:7 will show that Jesus's own particularity in his humanity is properly understood as affirming and dignifying the particularity of all individuals. Just as Jesus retains his human particularity in his post-resurrection and ascension state, so too does redemption in Christ dignify the individual *qua* individual who receives adoption from the Father. In a way analogous to Christ's own exaltation, the community depicted in Galatians 3:28–4:7 has experienced a transformation that *dignifies* individual, particular, and embodied persons within the community of Galatian believers while simultaneously undermining the binaries of ethnic, social, and gender hierarchies that Paul lists in Galatians 3:28. However, this claim needs to be further explained and defended, and further clarification is also required for how "the self" is constituted in Paul. Then it must be further shown that the metaphors Paul uses to depict the believers' life in Christ in Galatians 3:28–4:7 likewise uphold their ongoing individuality and particularity.

The Pauline Self as an Individual in Relation

There is some danger in conflating Torrance's proper insistence on Christ's particularity with Western notions of a bounded self, which is a notion that is foreign to Pauline concept of a person. Thus it is necessary to clarify the Pauline concept of the "self," which, if it is to be truly Pauline, must apply to both Jesus *and* to those in Christ. In her work on Pauline anthropology, Susan Eastman defends the notion that for Paul there is no "bounded self," which is to say that a "self" is always in relation to other "selves." For Paul, Eastman argues, "the self is a self-in-relation-

to-another."[43] Nevertheless, Eastman's treatment the "self" clearly portrays humans as individual, particular persons (who are in relation to other individual, particular persons). Eastman eloquently stated that a person is "one for whom Christ has died," which contains both an element of individuality ("one") while simultaneously emphasizing the relatedness of this "one" to Christ.

This necessarily raises the question of Jesus's own self as "self-in-relation." For Paul, Jesus's personhood is most often described in terms of his mission. Jesus is the sent Son who came to redeem humanity (Galatians 4:4–5), and the Son who was in very nature God and took on human likeness (Philippians 2:6–7). Each of these Pauline formulations present Jesus' assumption of humanity as a purposeful, relational movement of the divine into the sphere of human existence in order to bring about redemption (Galatians 4:4–5) and reconciliation (Romans 5:10–11), both of which are inherently relational terms. It is beyond the scope of the argument here to delve into the divine relations between persons *in se*,[44] but it suffices to say here that Jesus' *humanity* is irreducibly relational in Pauline thought. In Romans 5 Paul describes the reconciliation of sinners taking place through the death of Christ, which is to say that even his death is relationally effectual. Furthermore, Jesus is described as the "firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29)," which likewise entails that Christ's resurrected and embodied self is still a self-in-relation with those in Christ (i.e., the many brothers and sisters).

If the self is constituted in relation to others, then it is likewise possible to conceive of the human self's historical particularity as a series of instantiations of that relational identity. Eastman's self thus can be understood as not only constituted by his or her relations to other individual "selves," but also to a particular time, place, social group(s), culture(s), and myriad other possible relations. Due to the change in relations that the self undergoes in Christ, Eastman's concept of the self understandably tends to emphasize elements of

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[43] Susan Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 7.

[44] On this point see Wesley Hill, *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), and Matthew Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God and the Spirit in the New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

discontinuity of the human self-in-relation-to-sin vs. the self-in-relation-to-Christ. Likewise, Eastman downplays the continuity of the self who undergoes this transformation. However, a close examination of Christ's own identity and particularity that persists from his humiliation to exaltation adds an element of richness to Eastman's account that fleshes out the elements of continuity in the self "for whom Christ died." The same Jesus who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh was also raised and appointed the Son of God in Power (Romans 1:3–4). Jesus's old "self" is not completely extinguished in death, nor is his resurrected body an entirely new "self." Yet the task still remains to give an account of Jesus' ongoing particularity as an embodied individual human that is not grounded in the binary categories of this present evil age, and it is precisely here where Paul's language of adoption provides a way forward.

The Adoption Metaphor: Affirming the Eschatological and Ecclesiological Particularity of Those in Christ

Thus far I have argued that the Pauline adoption metaphor rests on assumptions of continuity of the self and of relational discontinuity, and that these presumptions must be considered when determining how the eschatological self relates to Paul's binary categories in Galatians 3:28. I have further argued that Torrance's doctrine of the incarnation provides a helpful lens through which to understand Paul's explication of Christ's eschatological humanity as *individual, particular, and embodied*. I have further suggested that Christ's humanity is, as Eastman rightly argues, always and irreducibly a self-in-relation. In the incarnation, Christ puts on the particularity of human flesh, and in so doing he brings about the possibility of all flesh in its multitude of particularities becoming selves-in-relation to God in Christ. The final step in my argument is thus to flesh out how Paul's eschatological vision of embodied humanity dignifies rather than erases the multitude of particularities in the age to come.

As I argued above, Christ's humanity is the model for the eschatological humanity of believers. Torrance winsomely remarks, "Christ is the *way* in which we are loved and elected." In its context, Torrance intends this statement to refer to

the mode of salvation, but I submit that Christ's own humanity is the *model* for how we are loved and elected as embodied and particular individuals. In Christ, our individuality reaches its fullest expression. Just as Jesus retains his marks of individuality in his eschatological body, so too in our eschatological bodies are we loved and known in our individual particularity.

Significantly, in Galatians 3:28, Paul writes "there is no longer," rather than "you are no longer." What has come to an end, then, is not an individual, but rather is the whole system of hierarchical binaries that governed the present evil age. The eradication of these binaries emphatically does not entail that persons become indistinguishable from one another, or that their individual differences are eradicated. As Carter argues, "bodies signify differently in his body."[45] The hierarchical binaries of the present age rank and signify bodies through othering and exclusion. But in taking on human, particular flesh (Galatians 4:4), Jesus enters into communion with his creation. His individuality does not supplant their individuality; instead, through adoption, individuals are known in the fullness of their particularity, which is only possible when the essentializing binary categories of the old age are pronounced "non-existent" in the age to come. As Torrance claims, "the movement was paradoxical in character — the more particular it became, the more universal it also became."[46] Having been set free from these binaries, individual particularity is able to come to its fullest expression as individuals are known fully apart from these essentializing categories. Being fully known by God (Galatians 4:8), the children of God can harmoniously and interdependently relate to one another as brothers and sisters within the *Familia Dei*.

Finally, just as Christ's own incarnational particularity restored communion between God and humans, Paul's vision of eschatological humanity insists individual particularity is necessary for communion within the body of Christ. In Paul's use of body metaphors in 1 Corinthians 12, and Romans 12, Paul suggests that members of the body of Christ are not truly whole without the other members — that is, because they are one body, Christ's own body, the different particularities between

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[45] Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, 366.

[46] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 51.

members become mutually constitutive rather than incommensurable. Indeed, as selves-in-relation to one another in Christ's body, those who have received adoption in Christ participate in the individual differences between members because, as selves-in-relation, these differences penetrate to the very core of their sense of self. In this sense it is proper for Paul to say that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male and female," since these binary categories cease to be meaningful ways to speak of selves-in-relation who share in the individual particularity of all other selves.

So then, by entering into embodied particularity, Christ affirms the particularity of each and every individual. Every person, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, whether male and female, is "one for whom Christ died." This statement dignifies every individual's particularity, because it is precisely in this particularity that Christ loved them and gave himself up for them, and precisely in this particularity that they are brought by adoption into the family of God.

AN ESSAY-REVIEW

of Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle, eds.,
The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies
(Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009)

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Much of the discussion of the Pauline expression pistis Christou *has been polarized between the options of "faith in Christ" as a personal act of the believer at the beginning of the Christian life, and the "faith of Christ" as a model of Christian discipleship. This polarization is evident in the collection of essays edited by Michael Bird and Preston Sprinkle,* The Faith of Christ *(Hendrickson, 2009). In the course of interacting with the contents of the essays in this volume, we will attempt to break the impasse by suggestion that "the faith of Christ" is an expression Paul uses to describe what happens in Christian liturgy, as Jesus the High Priest leads the congregation to the throne of grace in public worship. The faith of Christ is literally the way confident access to the presence of the Father is opened up to the mystical body of believers.*

The Greek expression *pistis Christou* has been the source of a great deal of discussion in the theological literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This 2009 volume marks a major collection of scholarly input on the linguistic and conceptual issues at stake in the varied interpretations of the phrase, with an emphasis on the Pauline data. Here we intend to summarize and interact with the volume, and note (at the end) how the insights of Thomas F. Torrance may help in bringing about a resolution. Allow me to state from the outset what it appears to

me is missing in the equation. In my judgment, theological scholarship has too often failed to appreciate the ecclesiological context of the New Testament literature, and in particular the cultic setting of the reading and appropriation of the New Testament books. Scholars tend to ask questions of New Testament phrases and expressions from within their abstract world of concepts and ideas, extracted from the concrete context of liturgical worship which shapes the language of the sacred biblical texts. I believe the handling of the phrase *pistis Christou* to be exhibit A in the illustration of this problem. How I think this all works will become evident as I interact with the contents of this scholarly contribution to the *pistis Christou* discussion. But allow me to simply state up front that I believe Paul uses the expression *pistis Christou* (and its derivatives) specifically to refer to the "faith" which draws worshippers to the throne of God's gracious presence through the confidence which their mystical union with Christ provides, as their Great High Priest in heaven. I contend that it is neither identical to Christ's historical "faith" in God during his mortal life, nor is it exactly to be understood as a reference to the "faithfulness" of Jesus Christ as Messiah in contrast with Israel (though that is all true); rather *pistis Christou* is a supply of confidence which is given by Christ to believers, and exercised among those in the gathered congregation who approach God through the merits of their heavenly mediator, husband and head of the body.[1]

This book on the *pistis Christou* debate has (after an introductory chapter) five sections: 1) Background of the debate; 2) Pauline texts where the key expression is employed; 3) an analysis of different hermeneutical approaches; 4) a consideration of the non-Pauline evidence; 5) historical and theological reflections. Let us begin with the first three chapters, which introduce the background to this debate.

[1] See Hebrews 4:16; 6:19-20; 7:25; 9:13-14; 10:1-2, 19-25.

Michael Bird, "Introduction: Problems and Prospects for a New Testament Debate"[2]

Bird's introductory chapter basically sets the stage for the volume, showing why this issue has aroused such intense interest from the fields of biblical scholarship and theology. He notes the wide-ranging implications of the two contrasting translations of *pistis Christou*. The objective genitive ("faith in Christ") makes the gospel message one which centers on the "act of placing one's faith in Jesus," whereas the subjective genitive ("faith of Christ") depicts Christianity as the call to "join the church that lives out in a concentric pattern the faith that Jesus displayed" (p. 3). In other words, what is at stake here is "nothing less than the very architecture of the Christ-event and the nature of the summons to faith and the life of discipleship that flows from it" (p. 2). Bird notes that this debate impinges on "a whole constellation of issues about the nature of salvation, the person and work of Christ, the contents of faith, the character of the church, and even Bible translations" (p. 3).

I certainly agree that the "character of the church" is at stake in this debate, but I'm not sure that Bird fully grasps what is being lost in the back and forth of the polarities. What is constantly assumed in the literature is that the issue is either "faith in Christ" as a human act which initially brings one into the sphere of redemption, or the "faith of Christ" as the finished, saving work of the historical Jesus on our behalf, which provides the paradigm and new impetus for Christian behavior.

But what if it is neither of these exactly? What if by the "faith of Christ" Paul and other early Christian writers have in view the weekly faith of the community itself, which comes to its concrete realization in the act of cultic worship, in which the earthly members are drawn to the Father and spiritually nourished by their Great High Priest? In other words, perhaps we should think of the "church" and its "faith" less as an abstract concept and more as the performance of a liturgical

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[2] Michael F. Bird, "Introduction: Problems and Prospects for a New Testament Debate," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 1-14.

script, a service in a temple setting, in which Christ himself is always the priestly mediator of the Church's elevation into the heavenly sphere by the faith which he supplies to his justified though sinful body.[3]

Debbie Hunn, "Debating the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Twentieth-Century Scholarship"[4]

Hunn's chapter is essentially a literature-review on the subject of *pistis Christou*. Thus it is mostly a summary of what various scholars have had to say, with little independent contribution of her own. However, Hunn's own perspective does leak out from time to time. For example, she chides Thomas Torrance twice in what is mostly a detached summary of the scholarship. First she faults him for the illegitimate transfer of theological concepts into biblical vocabulary, with his argument that *pistis* in the New Testament, given its association with *dikaiosune* in the Pauline literature especially, has as its backdrop the Hebrew idea of the demonstration of God's faithfulness to His people. Hence, "faith" is always grounded upon something "active," upon an "efficacious reality, the reality of God in covenant relationship" (p. 16). Hunn describes this approach as a "faulty path" (p. 17). Secondly she rejects Torrance's suggestion that *pistis Christou* is a "polarized expression" which simultaneously embraces both the divine faithfulness and the human response that faithfulness elicits in one linguistic reality (p. 25). Again she complains that this amounts to "overloading a phrase with theology," which then "overloads the reader's mind as well" (p. 25).

So while Hunn does not come to any firm conclusions of her own as to whether this expression should be read as a subjective or objective genitive, she does express confidence that importing theological constructs onto the biblical grammar will only impede scholarly progress. Apparently Torrance is a prime

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[3] See the prayer of Psalm 143:1-2: "Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous" (NKJV). All Bible translations here are NKJV unless otherwise indicated.

[4] Debbie Hunn, "Debating the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Twentieth-Century Scholarship," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 15-32.

example of this unhelpful tendency. In point of fact, we will suggest, more careful attention to Torrance's highlighting of the religious backdrop of God's commitment to the fulfillment of his covenant, could have saved biblical scholars from the blind spots that have created the present impasse of many decades. For (to borrow Torrance's phraseology) the "efficacious reality of God in covenant relationship" is precisely, for Paul and other early Christian writers, what was enacted in the saving mission of the Son of God, and this efficacious reality (which the Law of Moses could only bear witness to) is the sum and substance of Christianity, as concretely realized in the cultic "service" of religious worship "in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6).

Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, "Πίστις with a Preposition and Genitive Modifier: Lexical, Semantic, and Syntactic Considerations in the πίστις Χριστοῦ Discussion"[5]

Porter and Pitts come down firmly on the objective genitive side ("faith in Christ"). Their approach is structured by four steps (p. 36): 1) a discussion of "the role of lexical semantics in sense disambiguation"; 2) offering "a description of the Greek case system"; 3) reframing the debate "in terms of lexis and case"; 4) analysis and results. According to these scholars, much of the analysis found in the literature wrongly assumes that "the selection of a case form determines the lexical meaning of its head term" (p. 36). Rather, linguistically, the function of the genitive is to *restrict* the meaning of the head term, in this case *pistis* (p. 36). They then offer a description of the Greek case system to further substantiate the point (pp. 38-46). What one must *not* do is predetermine what "kind" of genitive is employed in these phrases, and after that seek to determine the lexical usage of *pistis* (whether "faith" or "faithfulness").

In section three Porter and Pitts discuss lexis and case (pp. 47-8), for it is necessary first and foremost to "disambiguate" the meaning of *pistis*, before

[5] Stanley E. Porter, ""Πίστις with a Preposition and Genitive Modifier: Lexical, Semantic, and Syntactic Considerations in the πίστις Χριστοῦ Discussion," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 33-56.

proceeding further with the discussion of the genitive. This then brings them to their fourth section, which involves an analysis of the construction under consideration in the disputed verses, involving "a prepositional specifier with πίστις as the head term and a nominal modifier" (p. 49). Their most important observation regarding the articular use of *pistis* is "that what may be called an ethical usage ('faithfulness') is not present when the preposition is used with an intervening article modifying the head term" (p. 49). They further argue that when "a connection with an individual needs to be established, an article is typically employed to establish a referential connection" (p. 50). And they conclude that every time the noun *pistis* occurs in the New Testament "as an anarthrous head term preceded by a prepositional specifier, it has an abstract function unrelated (possessively) to an explicit participant in the discourse" (p. 51). In short, they see little linguistic evidence for the subjective genitive reading of *pistis Christou*.

Leaving aside the lexical question of faith and faithfulness as translations of *pistis* (and the related matter as to whether "faith" in the register of biblical language already entails the idea of commitment to the object of trust in view), let us assume that Porter and Pitts have safely established "faith" as the approximate meaning of the term *pistis*. There are nonetheless some problems with their analysis. First, they sidestep Philippians 3:9 with an inadequate discussion (p. 50) — a verse which employs διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ ("through the faith of Christ") — asserting that if it is not abstract (simply "faith" without a possessive modifier) then it is "arguably" doctrinal (as in "the faith" which is believed). While they say this is arguable they offer no argument to that effect.

What if it is neither abstract nor doctrinal? The resulting translation of Philippians 3:9 might then be something like: "and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (AKJV). This translation has been offered by the Authorized King James Version for centuries. There is no reason then, to presume that the lack of an article with *pistis* means we must choose only between abstract or doctrinal meanings.

Second, they also sidestep Romans 4:16 (p. 50), which says, "so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also

to those who are of the faith of Abraham" (ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβράαμ). Although (as Porter and Pitts point out) this construction occurs with a proper name form which is not declined, the name "Abraham" still functions here as a genitive modifier of the head noun *pistis*. Even if understood as possessive it is still alluding to the exercise of Abraham's faith in Genesis, and thus is not only intended to show the possession of this faith, but also identifying Abraham as the one who exercised that faith which he possessed (cf. Genesis 15:6). This opens the door to taking similar anarthrous uses of *pistis* with "Christ" or "Jesus Christ" likewise as subjective genitives. This would include the disputed occurrences of *pistis Christou* in Galatians 2:16; 3:22; Romans 3:22, 26.

Third, Porter and Pitts are too cavalier in their handling of Ephesians 3:17, assigning it an abstract meaning (p. 49). Here *pistis* is used with the article: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (διὰ τῆς πίστεως). What has become of their principle then, that in the use of *pistis*, when "a connection with an individual needs to be established, an article is typically employed to establish a referential connection" (p. 50)? Would a referential connection to Christ not be an obvious application of this rule? One of the uses of the article which they identify is "to help connect faith to a particular participant" (p. 50). Paul is speaking of how Christ dwells in the hearts of the congregation during public worship, as the assumed setting of verse 18 makes clear: "with all the saints" (my translation, cf. AKJV). In other words, Christ dwells in the hearts of the worshipping congregation by the faith which God supplies to the church as the body of Christ (simultaneously head and members), not by a humanly effected faith in Christ which is offered up to God in worship.

This serves to connect the thought of verse 17 with the previous statement: "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Yes, this is the (received) faith of the congregation, but it is also simultaneously the gift of faith which comes from the supply of Christ's indwelling presence in his mystical body. This also provides a nice parallel with the later thought of verse 19: "and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" (my

translation, γνῶναί τε τὴν ὑπερΒάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ), which also contains a subjective genitive.

If we can understand that in the cultic setting of worship there is granted to the body a knowledge of the love of Christ, why then can the body not also receive from their living head the faith of Christ whereby they have access to God in the first place? This also helps us to understand rightly the imagery of Ephesians 3:12: "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (AKJV). That the setting here is again the corporate worship of the Christian body is made clear by the immediate context of verse 10: "to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church."[6]

Before moving on, it is worth noting that Porter and Pitts do not seem to consider this alternative reading. They do say that most of those who opt for the translation "faith of Christ" do not "want to suggest that Paul thought a person was justified in some way by Christ's exercise of faith" (p. 51). I for one would indeed suggest that "in some way" to be the proper understanding of Paul's usage of *pistis Christou*, for it is precisely Christ's confident access to the presence of the Father (enacted in the weekly liturgy) which brings salvation to us, as the work of our Great High Priest who sympathizes with our weakness and reconciles us to God by the faith He supplies to His mystical body.

In addition to Ephesians 3:17, it may be instructive to look at other articular uses of *pistis* to which Porter and Pitts assign an abstract meaning (p. 49). In Colossians 2:12 we read: "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Here being "raised" with Christ is said to occur "through faith" (διὰ τῆς πίστεως). But through whose faith? It is certainly not the faith of the believer alone, for Paul says that this faith brings the newly raised believers up from the metaphorical grave "with Him" (συνηγέρθητε), which is to say that it is by the power of Christ's resurrection that the believers themselves are made alive. But if the new Christians come up out of the grave, not alone, but only with Christ, is Christ then not also the source of that faith whereby the two parties come out of

[6] Cf. also the later references to "the whole family in heaven and earth" (v. 15) and "glory in the church" (v. 21).

the grave together? If Christ is the source of the faith which is exercised by the believers in union with Him in their resurrection to new life, then this would also make Christ the efficient cause of the faith of those believers. The faith of the resurrected believers which is first concretely expressed in the sacrament of baptism is simultaneously the faith of Christ as well, for he is the head and they the members of the "body" which comes out of the grave.

Another articular use of *pistis* to which Porter and Pitts assign an abstract meaning is Acts 3:16. But this usage is explicitly not a mere abstract "faith"! The very faith whereby the lame man was healed is said to be "the faith which comes through Him" (ἡ πίστις ἡ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ). The verse reads in full: "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." This explicitly identifies the faith whereby believers on earth enjoy the benefits of salvation to be simultaneously the faith which is supplied by Jesus from heaven.

The next four chapters of the volume deal in a focused manner with the Pauline evidence.

Douglas A. Campbell, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Romans 3:22"[7]

Campbell's chapter develops a detailed argument based on Romans 3:22 and Paul's understanding of Habakkuk 2:4b as a messianic proof-text. Campbell sees "fidelity" as the basic meaning of *pistis* in these debated contexts (p. 62), and he sees the gospel as the revelation of Christ's fidelity to the Father which then elicits a faithful response from the believer (p. 68). This is all fully in keeping with Pauline theology. One will find in this chapter a stimulating discussion of the issues, especially as it relates to Paul's use of the expression ἐκ πίστεως, for Campbell believes this functions as kind of shorthand for the Habakkuk reference (p. 58).

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[7] Douglas A. Campbell, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Romans 3:22," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 57-72.

I might wish to nuance a couple of things differently, for thus far I am not quite convinced Paul uses the term *pistis* to speak of "fidelity" in any of these disputed texts (though I think the related ideas of commitment and fidelity are already entailed in the notion of trust). Nor am I ready to see Habakkuk 2:4 as a messianic proof-text in quite the way he sees it, though I do think he is on to something.

Campbell makes the excellent point that according to Romans 1:17 the righteousness of God is revealed by faith. How then can this refer to the believing response of the Christian? As he puts it: "The gospel, when preached, makes God's saving act in Christ known or 'visible.' And 'faith' then responds to that prior disclosure as an act of affirmation, and not the act of disclosure itself" (p. 68 italics original). This seems to me to be a crucial point that is frequently overlooked in these discussions. So if I may respond to this insight and apply it to my own paradigm, I would only adjust the argument in the following manner.

Romans 1:17 reads as follows: "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith (ἐκ πίστεως) to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" But whose "faith" is revealed to faith? It is interesting that Paul apparently sees two parties in Habbakuk 2:4. One party is the source of faith, and one party is the recipient of faith: "from faith to faith." But are there two parties in Habakkuk 2:4? When the verse is read in its original setting there certainly are: "Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith." The just shall live by "his" faith! This introduces the other party assumed in the Pauline exegesis, by whose faith the just shall live; and this must be where Paul gets the idea of "from faith to faith."[8] Although Habakkuk does not identify this source of faith for the justified, it is no doubt related to the hope of the preceding verse: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habbakuk 2:3). The source of life and justification (Jesus the Messiah) will arrive (cf. Hebrews

[8] Why then does Paul not include "his" in the citation of Habakkuk 2:4? Probably because of the ambiguity involved (cf. LXX), for "his" could also mean God's "faithfulness," whereas Paul is reading it as a reference to the Messiah's "faith" as the basis of justification and life for the Christian.

10:37), but in the meantime those who "wait" for that day must themselves patiently exercise faith that the vision will be fulfilled (cf. Hebrews 10:38-39).[9]

So in short, whereas Campbell sees in the language of Habakkuk 2:4 a reference to the Messiah as the "righteous one" who is resurrected because of his fidelity to God, I see a reference to the justification of the believer, by the work of the Messiah who puts his trust in God, whose unbreakable trust in God is somehow also the means whereby sinners can be justified and gain access to the Father. This sounds a lot like Isaiah 53:11: "By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities."

Despite these minor differences, I certainly agree that Habakkuk 2:4b, and Paul's citation of it, is crucial to understanding Romans 3:21-22: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference" (AKJV).

R. Barry Matlock, "Saving Faith: The Rhetoric and Semantics of πίστις in Paul"[10]

In Matlock's essay we get another detailed defense of the objective genitive reading of *pistis Christou* ("faith in Christ"). Matlock focuses on four texts: Philippians 3:9; Romans 3:22; Galatians 3:22; and Galatians 2:16.

His first discussion centers on Philippians 3:9 (pp. 75-8). He rightly notes the contrast Paul makes between "my own righteousness" and that which is "from God" at the beginning and end of the verse (p. 76). However, not only does he miss the fact that Paul seems to be thinking in terms of the source of righteousness more than the means of obtaining it, he also misses the role that the "faith of Christ"

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[9] Note how in Hebrews 10:37-39 — directly citing Habakkuk 2:3-4 — drawing back to destruction is equivalent to abandoning the congregational worship (10:25), which entails drawing near to God through the flesh and blood of Jesus "in full assurance of faith" (10:19-22).

[10] Barry Matlock, "Saving Faith: The Rhetoric and Semantics of πίστις in Paul," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 73-90.

plays in the central lines; for just as God's righteousness is to be preferred to Paul's own righteousness, so also the benefit which comes from the faith of Christ is to be preferred to that which comes from the Mosaic Law: "and may be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (my translation). In other words, the faith of Christ is the means whereby God supplies to the believer a righteousness which improves on whatever the Law can offer. There are two alternative sources of righteousness then, that which Jews still seek to find in the Law and the Temple, and that which Christians now enjoy through the faith of Christ and his body the church. It must be granted to Matlock though, that the faith of believers is in view at the end of the verse, when it says that this righteousness is bestowed by God "on the basis of faith." So how can the faith of Christ be simultaneously both Christ's own faith and also the basis upon which God offers righteousness to the believer?

Paul explains this at the beginning of the verse: "and may be found in him." To be "in Christ" is to be his mystical body, and in that body whatever belongs to the head belongs to the members, and is shared with the members in their experience of union with him. This happens in a setting which is superior to that of the Mosaic Law, for the setting of the Law and the experience of its saving benefits was the old Jerusalem Temple, whereas the setting for the experience of the benefits of the New Covenant is the new Christian liturgy, whereby we (the members) become one with Christ (the head) in the performance of his heavenly approach to the Father: "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3), "through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand" (Romans 5:2). For God has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6), "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of Him" (Ephesians 3:12, my translation).

Paul in many places assumes the simultaneous action of head and members in the performance of Christian worship, "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). And again: "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one

body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12).[11] And again: "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Matlock also highlights the connection between Philippians 3:9-10 and 1:29 (p. 78), noting the juxtaposition of faith and suffering in both passages; but I do not see how this helps the objective genitive reading of *pistis Christou*. Surely 3:9-10 speaks of knowing Christ, not simply as one knows an external object of faith, but as a participant in his mystical life: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (3:10). To "know him" in verse 10 is to participate in his suffering, death and resurrection to new life. Would this not indicate that verse 9 likewise has in view a participation in his faith as the means whereby we can be accepted in the presence of God?[12] In other words, we have the boldness to approach the Father because of our union with Christ our advocate who is Himself entirely acceptable to the Father. This is what it means to be "righteous" or blameless before God, or justified (cf. Ephesians 1:3-4).

Next Matlock discusses Romans 3:22 (pp. 79-81). In his discussion of this verse, Matlock highlights verbal and conceptual parallels with Romans 1:16-17 and 10:11 to support the objective genitive reading ("by faith in Jesus Christ"). There is indeed no doubt that each one of these texts assumes the faith of believers. But we have already seen that in Romans 1:16-17, Paul actually sees two parties exercising faith, and he draws this out of Habakkuk 2:4b. The just do live by faith, though not a faith of their own performance, but a faith which they receive as a gift from above in union with Christ. The just shall indeed live by "his" faith (Habbakuk 2:4). As for Romans 10:11, it certainly does speak of believing on Christ. But the

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[11] Note how "Christ" stands here for the whole body, head and members together. This provides an exact parallel for "the faith of Christ" enacted in Christian worship.

[12] Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:8-13, where Paul concludes with, "And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak."

question is, where does this come from, and how does Paul use the expression *pistis Christou* to get at that idea? Here we would do well to pay attention to the surrounding context, especially Romans 10:8, which says that the "word of faith" resides in the heart of those who confess the Lord Jesus, and 10:17, which says that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

In order to understand this language, we must back up to 10:4-8, which says that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (10:4). This means that Christ is the true source of the believer's righteousness. How this righteousness is received is spelled out in verses 5-8 which contrast righteousness by "doing" (v. 5), with righteousness by "believing" from the heart (vv. 6-8). It is the word of faith, residing in the heart (v. 8), which causes men to confess with the mouth, and call on the name of the Lord (vv. 9-13). It is the word of God in the heart which causes hearing and faith (v. 17). Clearly, the original form of that word of God in the setting of Deuteronomy 30, from which Paul's OT citations in verses 6-8 are taken, was the Law of Moses. What then is the new covenant expression of the word of God for the Christian? Paul answers that question by his glosses in verses 6-7 — the new covenant word from God which elicits faith from us by abiding in the heart is Christ himself. It is Christ who trusts and approaches the altar of God in heaven with complete confidence and perfect vision, and he supplies this confidence before the Father with the weak, living members of his body on earth, so that they in union with him can now "call upon the name of the Lord" (10:13).[13]

But before moving on we should return to Romans 3:22. Paul says that the righteousness of God is witnessed by the Law and the Prophets (3:21); "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (AKJV italics added). This is a close parallel with Paul's expression "from faith to faith" in 1:17, which as we have seen is based on the notion of the faith of Jesus Christ being the justification and means of life for those who receive faith from him. His faith brings faith to them, or to put it the other way, their faith is the faith they received from him. The way Paul puts it in Romans 3:26 is, "that

[13] It should go without saying that "calling on the name" is a liturgical act in the Bible. Cf. Psalm 116:12-17.

He might be just and the justifier of the believer by the faith of Jesus" (my translation).[14]

Matlock then discusses two verses in Galatians. First is Galatians 3:22: "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) might be given to them that believe" (AKJV). Unfortunately, the discussion is sidetracked by Matlock's rebuttal of Hays' claim that the book of Genesis does not talk about "faith in Christ," and so that cannot have been Paul's meaning here. I will not dispute the point, as I think Matlock wins an easy though trivial victory (pp. 81-3). Genesis was surely understood by Paul to address the topic of faith in Christ. But what of the verse itself? The first thing which should be noticed is that Galatians 3:22 assumes the same structure we have seen in Romans 3:22 and Romans 1:17. That is to say, it assumes that there are two parties involved, each of whom exercises faith, one of whom receives that faith from the other: again "from faith to faith." The faith of Jesus Christ is also the faith of believers as members of his mystical body. Secondly, we should note that the next two verses speak of two eras: "But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:23-24).

This is crucial — "before faith came." Faith is not something first done by believers. Faith comes first to us and is revealed to us. But what does Paul mean by the "coming" of faith? This will surely answer for us what Paul means in the previous verse by the "faith of Jesus Christ" in verse 22. It is crucial that Paul says it is only by being brought to Christ by the tutor of the Law that we can be "justified by faith"!

The faith of Jesus Christ in Galatians 3:22 is simply the liturgy or public worship of the New Covenant, no longer regulated by the tutor of the Mosaic Law, but now regulated by the Spirit of God in the mystical liturgy of the body of Christ. How do we know this is what Paul is speaking about? Apart from the obvious fact that much of the Sinai Covenant (which Paul surely has in mind in 3:23) was

[14] I translate "the believer" here because the justified person in view is plainly the believer in light of verse 25 ("through faith").

devoted to regulating worship (Exodus 25 – Leviticus 16), we have the fact that this faith is now said, with the coming of the blessing of Abraham (3:14), to be newly "revealed" (3:23). The Law was a tutor to bring us to Christ, but now this new faith has been revealed to us (3:23-24). With the passing away of the old covenant, and with it the priestly code of Exodus and Leviticus, what would desperately need to be revealed to God's people in its place? Clearly the newly acceptable form of worship, which of course gathered around the core of the Lord's Supper ritual instituted by Christ on the night of his betrayal (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The old covenant form of worship pointed ahead to Christ as a tutor, but the new covenant form of worship receives its Eucharistic shape from the priestly work of Christ. Nor do we need to infer this only, for regulations pertaining to acceptable worship provide the explicit subject matter of the following chapter. The worship of the old covenant was an administration of childish slavery, superseded by the superior service of the new covenant (Galatians 4:1, 7). The church and its new and heavenly administration of God's covenant has freed God's people from the bondage of the old covenant forms of worship (4:1-5; 4:21-5:1). "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years" (4:9-10). So as far as the argument of Galatians is concerned, the "faith" of Jesus Christ is (we might say) the logic of Christian worship, in which we have access to the Father through the performance of the memorial of his sacrifice, which is the blood of the new and better covenant (1 Corinthians 11:25; Romans 5:1-2; 12:1-2).

The final text discussed by Matlock is Galatians 2:16 (pp. 83-6). Matlock makes much of the contrast between the "works of the law" and "faith in Jesus Christ" which he sees as key to the logic of the argument. After all, is not trusting in Jesus Christ the exact opposite of performing the works required by the Mosaic law for one's justification? I would understand the logic of Galatians 2:16 somewhat differently. First of all, the expression "works of the law" does not naturally set up a contrast between what a person does versus whom a person believes. The plural "works" (not "work" importantly) suggests that we are speaking here of a set of rituals, a performance which is found in the law of Moses; this priestly performance

was also a way of life which the Law set before Israel and demanded of her.[15] The most natural contrast to that would be, not believing in Christ, but whatever Christ now sets forth as his new expectation of his church, in place of the Law — which is at the same time the sharing and priestly performance of his "faith" through the mystical body of Christ in the presence of God the Father: "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). Do this now, instead of performing the rituals of the Mosaic law. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The most startling contrast between the "works of the Law" and the "faith of Jesus Christ" is lost in the traditional debate between objective and subjective genitive. For Paul is contrasting the rituals given by Moses ("works of the Law") under the terms of the Sinai covenant which Israel was obligated to perform in order to maintain her place as a holy priesthood, with the living and present action of Jesus Christ in the midst of the Christian congregation, whereby he as our Great High Priest, by his promise and presence, mediates between us and God and brings his mystical body (head and members) into the very presence of God the Father in the performance of Christian worship. This liturgical act is the "faith of Jesus Christ" in Galatians 2:16: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (AKJV).

It is also crucial to note the flow of thought here. After insisting that "a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ," he then adds, "we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." Paul could not have been more clear that

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[15] In other words, the "works of the Law" are the set of rituals which the Sinai covenant delivered to Israel to perform in order that she might be a holy priesthood in the world. The "faith of Jesus Christ" would then be, not simply a set of rituals for the church to perform, but the heavenly action of Jesus Christ in the world to fulfill in the church what the old rituals could only anticipate. For Paul, the "works of the Law" could never bring salvation, but were only types that pointed the elect in Israel to faith in Christ, whereas the "faith of Jesus Christ" is the liturgical fulfillment of what the Law pointed to, thus making our salvation a reality. See further Paul L. Owen, "The 'Works of the Law' in Romans and Galatians: A New Defense of the Subjective Genitive," *JBL* 126/3 (2007): 553-77.

being justified by the faith of Christ is something which is made possible by believing in Jesus Christ. If the "faith of Christ" were to be translated "faith in Christ" here, we have an obvious and redundant tautology. In that case we would have instead expected simply, "we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by Christ." As it is, the addition of the words "faith of" makes it clear that there are two notions in mind here. The believer puts his or her trust in Jesus Christ in order that the "faith" of Christ (something distinct from and prior to the believer's own faith) might now be of personal benefit for justification. To summarize, in terms of the Pauline gospel, we put our own weak and imperfect trust in Jesus Christ in order that his perfect faith before the Father, as our mediator and head, might carry us with him into the heavenly realms, as members of his mystical body.

Paul Foster, "Πίστις Χριστοῦ Terminology in Philippians and Ephesians"[16]

Foster's study (pp. 91-109) focuses on Philippians 3:9 and Ephesians 3:12. In his discussion of the Philippians passage,[17] he offers a carefully balanced summary of arguments in favor of both subjective and objective genitive readings. While admitting that the evidence is evenly balanced, Foster leans toward the subjective genitive (p. 100), in light of the parallel constructions in Romans 3:3 and 4:16 (p. 94), and the fact that in the 24 or so cases in Paul's writings where the noun *pistis* is followed by a name or pronoun, reference is always made to the faith of the individual involved (p. 96).

Foster also has a helpful discussion of Ephesians 3:12, which is too often overlooked in these debates: "in whom we have the boldness and access in confidence through τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ." While Foster is uncertain of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians, he still sees this text as relevant insofar as it may illumine

[16] Paul Foster, "Πίστις Χριστοῦ Terminology in Philippians and Ephesians," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 91-110.

[17] "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9 AKJV).

the reception and understanding of the Pauline language on the part of his earliest followers (p. 103). His study provides a helpful discussion of the surrounding context of the verse, noting the use of participatory language (pp. 103-04), the emphasis on the Christian believer's access to God through the sacrifice of Christ (pp. 105-06), and the point that the faith in view is explicitly said in Ephesians 2:8 to be God's gift and not a human action (pp. 106-07)! Such considerations again push Foster in the direction of the subjective genitive reading (p. 107).

I will take one point of departure from this excellent essay. Foster sees in Ephesians 3:12 "a subjective genitive which denotes Christ's act of faithful obedience in undergoing a death that enables previously alienated Gentiles to have access to God" (p. 107). I would say rather that we have here a subjective genitive which denotes Christ's act of approach to the Father on our behalf, whereby the church has access to God in the public performance of Christian worship. This shift of focus from the historical work of Christ on earth to the present work of Christ in the congregation (and simultaneously in heaven) better accounts for numerous details of Paul's language in the surrounding context: 1) the reference in verse 10 to the "manifold wisdom of God" which is put on display "by the church"; 2) the fact that verse 12 itself is speaking of the believers' present access to God through Christ (and not the past work of Christ which made it possible); 3) the fact that verses 14-15 presume the corporate worship of "the whole family in heaven and earth" (which would include Christ and all the saints); 4) the reference in verses 16-17, not to what Christ did in the past, but to the present indwelling of Christ in the midst of the church ("that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"); 5) the reference to comprehending the love of Christ "with all the saints" in verses 18-19; and 6) verse 21 which concludes this section with "to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever."

Richard H. Bell, "Faith in Christ: Some Exegetical and Theological Reflections on Philippians 3:9 and Ephesians 3:12"[18]

Richard Bell's essay looks at the same two verses from the opposite side of the debate (pp. 111-25). In reference to Philippians 3:9, in addition to the presumed contrast between a human righteousness based on Law and God's gift of righteousness through faith in Christ (which begs the question as to the nature of the language entailed), Bell has three additional arguments for the objective genitive (p. 114): 1) the parallel with the knowledge of Christ in verse 8; 2) the anaphoric use of the article with "faith" at the end of verse 9; 3) the "striking parallel" with Philippians 1:29. Let us consider each of these in turn.

First of all, does the reference to the "knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" in verse 8 indicate that we should understand verse 9 as a reference to faith in Christ? This would all depend on what sort of knowledge is entailed here. If the knowledge is to be understood as a matter of intellect and cognitive content, then perhaps; but Paul does not seem to use "knowledge" here to speak of cognitive content (parallel to "faith in Christ"). A glance ahead to verse 10 shows that the "knowledge" entailed is the experiential knowledge of mystical union which grants participation in the reality of Christ: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." It is not so much a matter of knowledge "of" Christ as "knowing Christ," or as he puts it at the end of verse 8 and continuing into verse 9, "that I may gain Christ and be found in Him." The setting of Christian worship is precisely where God finds the believer "in Christ," as Paul said at the beginning of this passage: "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (3:3). The liturgical setting of this text points to the "faith of Christ" as the means whereby one might be found acceptable in the presence of God with the confidence that comes with being "found in Him."

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[18] Richard H. Bell, "Faith in Christ: Some Exegetical and Theological Reflections on Philippians 3:9 and Ephesians 3:12," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 111-128.

What about the "righteousness which is from God by faith" at the end of verse 9? This is perfectly understandable in light of the fact that one must believe in order to be found "in Christ Jesus" (v. 3) or "in him" (v. 9), so as to offer acceptable worship to God. To trust in Christ's access to the Father for one's own access to God is precisely what it means to have "faith," and that faith is performed through the church's worship in the gathered assembly. So the reference to the believer's faith is entirely understandable in this context, and it is actually the subjective genitive reading which avoids reducing this to a tautology. And in that light, the anaphoric use of the article with "faith" at the end of the verse (ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει) is also entirely understandable, since the faith of the believers (the members) is also the faith of Christ (the head), who together approach God as a mystical body in the liturgical act of the church.

Philippians 1:29, it does conjoin faith and suffering in much the same pattern as 3:9-10, but just as both passages speak of participation in Christ's sufferings, so we should understand both passages to reference participation in Christ's faith. Believing in Christ is the performance of the act of coming to God through the faith he supplies, and not through the rituals of the Law, or the worthiness of one's own efforts and merit. None of the other points made by Bell in response to the subjective genitive reading (pp. 116-17) overthrow the argument being made here.

As for Ephesians 3:12 (pp. 120-24), Bell again argues for the objective genitive reading, but his strategy is mainly one of default. If it can be demonstrated that the context of the verse is not dealing with the faithfulness of Christ as demonstrated historically through his death on the cross (as argued by some defenders of the subjective genitive) then the objective genitive is the presumed winner of the contest. But Bell shows no sensitivity to the liturgical setting of the passage, as seen in the surrounding context of verses 10, 14-15, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21 —not to mention the disputed verse 12 itself! Therefore, it never occurs to him that it is actually through participation in the faith of Christ, or the faith of his mystical body, that we have "boldness and access with confidence" to the presence of God in public worship.

Whereas thus far the chapters have addressed detailed questions of Pauline exegesis and theology, the remaining three sections of this volume deal with

broader issues of interpretation, and texts outside the Pauline corpus. The remainder of this essay will thus be of a more generally interactive and summative flavor. Chapters 8-11 fit under the heading of "Mediating Proposals and Fresh Approaches." This section includes essays by Mark Seifrid[19], Francis Watson[20], Preston Sprinkle[21] and Ardel Caneday.[22]

Seifrid's essay is full of wonderful insights, and I see his position as very close to what is being argued here, when he says that, "in the expression 'faith of Christ' Paul speaks of Christ as the source and author of faith" (p. 146, italics added). He also says: "For the Apostle, to believe in Jesus Christ is not first to act, but rather to be acted upon by God in his work in Jesus Christ. It is to know that our faith is the work of another" (p. 146). However, in his essay Seifrid mainly applies this understanding to the kerygmatic dynamic of preaching and the verbal summons to faith (pp. 131, 132, 134, 135, 136, 140, 142, 144, 145). He comes very close to what I have tried to articulate when he speaks of Christ "communicating himself" by means of faith (p. 132), and of how faith is "created and sustained by the concrete promises of salvation given to them" (p. 140). He is also entirely correct in noting the importance of the resurrection in the saving work of Christ (p. 141), for it is the resurrected Christ (not the historical Jesus of the past) who is now the source and author of Christian faith. I would only wish to see

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[19] Mark A. Seifrid, "The Faith of Christ," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 129-146.

[20] Francis Watson, "By Faith (of Christ): An Exegetical Dilemma and its Scriptural Solution," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 147-164.

[21] Preston M. Sprinkle, "πίστις Χριστοῦ as an Eschatological Event," in*The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 165-184.

[22] Ardel B. Caneday, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ as a Theme in Paul's Theology of Galatians," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 185-208.

these insights teased out further by putting such notions in the concrete setting of the ritual performance of Christian liturgy.[23]

Francis Watson's chapter (pp. 147-63) is largely an attempt to drive the subjective genitive reading off the battlefield by establishing that Habakkuk 2:4b is the scriptural source of Paul's expression ἐκ πίστεως, and that Paul does not interpret this passage as a Messianic prophecy of the resurrection of the Righteous One, but rather as a statement that "the one who is righteous by faith will live" (p. 162). Thus Habakkuk provides the basis for Paul's understanding of justification by faith in Christ, not a basis for understanding Christ as the resurrected one whose faithfulness to God is the source of salvation. Watson's view still does not account for how Paul gets the idea of Christ as the source of our faith from Habakkuk 2:4 ("from faith to faith"). It is clear enough that the verse speaks of faith, but from whence does Paul get the notion of the "faith" of the church arising from the "faith" of another ("from faith to faith")? We have suggested that the wording of Habakkuk in the original text could have provided Paul with this insight ("the just shall live by his faith").

Preston Sprinkle's chapter puts forward the idea of *pistis Christou* as a kind of shorthand for what he calls an "eschatological event" (pp. 165-84). He summarizes a body of overlooked secondary literature in English, German and Japanese (!) which has proposed readings of *pistis Christou* which do not fit neatly into the objective/subjective polarity (pp. 167-74), and then suggests that the most plausible of these options involve seeing *pistis Christou* either as the Christ-event which is the "content of the gospel," or "the preached gospel" itself as the message about the Christ-event (p. 175). He briefly mentions the possibility that Paul may have used the expression to refer to the church as "the sphere of salvation created by the gospel" (not too far from my proposal), but thinks this option is unlikely (p. 175). He then offers a reading of two passages in Galatians (3:2-5; 3:22-26) which

[23] It is not clear to me, for example, that Seifrid fully grasps the fact that the "visual and demonstrative" (p. 141) elements of Romans 3:21, 25-26 do not *only* refer to the death and resurrection of Christ as events of the past, nor are these visual elements adequately conveyed through the verbal proclamation of the gospel only; but rather they are put on display weekly through the performance of the Eucharistic liturgy: "*to demonstrate* at the present time his righteousness" (Romans 3:26).

employ "faith" terminology, to showcase some combination of the first two "mediating" proposals (pp. 176-80). He briefly suggests that some of the early Church Fathers can be understood along similar lines (pp. 180-82), before finally hinting at the end of his essay that he may not be convinced of the view he has been defending after all, and urging that further study be dedicated to these issues (pp. 183-84).

My comments here will have to be brief: 1) It would seem clear that Galatians 3:2-5 is not speaking of "faith" merely as the proclaimed gospel message, or even as the content of that message, since 3:1 brings up the visual portrayal of the gospel, and verse 5 speaks of the constant supply of the Spirit and ongoing miracles among them (i.e., among the worshipping congregations). Such language evokes more of a regular performance or liturgy of the faith, than a message based upon the abstract faith of an "event" of the past. 2) While on its own, "faith" in Galatians 3:22-26 could easily be understood either of the content of the gospel, or of the liturgical performance of the gospel, the fact that the law of Moses prescribed a ritual performance which served as a tutorial until the coming of Christ, certainly pushes us in the direction of the coming of "faith" as a new liturgical performance. The subsequent context of chapter 4 only confirms this suspicion as it continues the argument, with its references to religious "service" (v. 8), calendrical questions (v. 10), and the contrast between the two covenants (v. 24). For these reasons I am not persuaded that "faith" or *pistis Christou* in Galatians refers essentially to the Christ-event as the content of the gospel Paul preached.

Ardel Caneday's essay (pp. 185-205), "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ as a Theme in Paul's Theology in Galatians," has a straightforward reading of *pistis Christou*, which is determined by his understanding of the term "faith" in Galatians as in certain contexts a "metonymy for Christ's faithfulness, answering Israel's unfaithfulness, in his substitutionary role of redeeming us from Torah's curse" (p. 203). While admirable in its elegance and simplicity, this suggestion is hampered both by the lexically unlikely gloss of "faithfulness" for *pistis* in these debated verses, as well as his tunnel vision which focuses on the redemptive work of Christ as a past event (pp. 197, 200, 201, 202, 203), rather than a ritual performance in the concrete setting of ongoing Christian worship.

One strength of this essay is that Caneday pays more attention to Galatians 2:20 (p. 197) than do any of the other essays in this collection. In fact, surprisingly, none of the other chapters give this verse more than a passing reference: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (AKJV). Not only does this verse help us to see how "faith" can simultaneously be the faith of Christ and the believer ("Christ lives in me"), but it also shows that Paul thinks of the "faith of the Son of God" not only as something which avails at the point of conversion to introduce the lost sinner to the realm of faith, but also as an ongoing experience in the life of the believer ("the life which I now live"). While Christ's sacrifice on the cross is indeed an "event" of the past, his life in the believer(s) is an ongoing reality which finds ritual performance in the weekly worship of the mystical body in replacement of the rituals of the Mosaic Law (cf. Galatians 3:1, 5).

The final two sections of the book contain discussions of *pistis Christou* in the wider New Testament witness (chapters 12-15), and a couple of final essays dealing with the Church Fathers and Karl Barth (chapters 16-17). Included in these pages are discussions of the Synoptics and Acts (pp. 209-22), the Gospel of John (pp. 223-37), James 2:1 (pp. 239-57) and the Book of Revelation (pp. 259-74). Mark Elliott's chapter on the Church Fathers (pp. 277-89) inadvertently reminds us that closer attention to liturgical setting on the part of scholars may shed more light on the Patristic material — as it is evident that Ignatius at least (pp. 281-82) was thinking in terms of the performance of ritual worship when speaking of the "faith of Christ." And I very much doubt that Ignatius was alone in this regard among the early Fathers. But we must draw this discussion to a close.

Conclusion

We suggested at the outset of this essay that Thomas F. Torrance may come through and save the day, with his virtually unparalleled theological vision and biblical clarity. And indeed, in light of the preceding discussion, we would now like to bring this essay to a close with some quotes which serve as evidence that

Torrance would wholeheartedly agree with our suggestions about the "faith of Christ" and the public performance of the gospel in the liturgy of Christian worship:

> In the New Testament gospel Christ's faith, his obedience, his knowledge are the foundation of my faith, obedience and knowledge, so that my faith, obedience and knowledge are objectively controlled by his. Similarly, in the preaching of the early church, in the *kērygma*, *it is Jesus Christ and his obedience which shapes and controls the presentation and preaching of the church*.[24]
>
> Christ becomes high priest through maintaining his Sonship faithfully in our existence of sin and weakness. By living out the life of the Son of God within our humanity through his faithfulness, through his suffering obedience *and intercession*, he becomes our high priest.[25]
>
> The resurrection and ascension, however, do not mean that Christ's priestly sacrifice and oblation of himself are over and done with, but rather that in their once and for all completion they are taken up eternally into the life of God, and remain prevalent, efficacious, valid, abidingly real . . . . Christ is spoken of also as himself the *leitourgos*, the leader of the heavenly worship and chief executive as it were, in the heavenly kingdom.[26]
>
> We cannot consider this properly without taking into account the vicarious life of Jesus in obedience and prayer, and the fact that the

[24] Thomas Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 28 italics added. In other words, it is the perfect obedience of Jesus and His acceptance before God, which makes the gospel "good news," and the basis of our reconciliation to the Father.

[25] Thomas Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 79 italics added. Christ's intercession in heaven is the presentation of the fruits and merits of his perfect life and sacrifice to the Father, which is the only basis upon which sinners can now be reconciled to God in his holiness.

[26] Torrance, *Atonement*, 273. Christ as our "worship leader" now grants sinners on earth access to the Father, as the accomplished perfection of his incarnate obedience draws us with the confidence of His body to the throne of God in heaven, through the mystery of congregational union with our spiritual head in the liturgy.

whole existence of the incarnate Son was both the fulfilled intervention of God among man and the fulfilled response of man toward God, in filial obedience, faith, trust, love, worship, prayer and praise.[27]

If he were only our representative before God, he would represent us in *our* prayer and worship and would be, so to speak, their instrument. But as substitute as well as representative, he acts in our place and offers worship and prayer which we could not offer, yet offers them in such a vicarious way that while made in our stead and on our behalf they are made to issue out of our human nature to the Father as our own worship and prayer to God. We worship the Father not in our own name, nor in the significance of our own prayer and worship, but solely in Christ's name who has so identified himself with us as to make his prayer and worship ours, so really ours that we appear before God with Christ as our one true prayer and our only worship.[28]

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[27] Torrance, *Atonement*, 274. Christ's worship of the Father is simply the presentation of the perfect and only sacrifice of his earthly life, and thus the fidelity of the historical Messiah to the Father while on earth *is integrally connected* to the heavenly liturgy as the very substance of what is now offered up on our behalf as intercession, in compensation for the sins of the earthly body who approach the throne of grace.

[28] Torrance, *Atonement*, 275 italics original. The liturgy of the still sinful body on earth is only acceptable to the Father because it is now (in the act of congregational worship) united to the flesh and blood sacrifice of the Mediator on our behalf, with whom as bride to husband, we are already "one flesh" and one body.