

**THE *IMAGO DEI* AS A WORD OF GRACE IN THE THEOLOGICAL
ANTHROPOLOGY OF THOMAS F. TORRANCE**

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Abstract: *This essay demonstrates how Torrance's theological anthropology receives its method and material substance from the doctrine of grace. We will consider in order the motion of grace and the imago Dei, human hostility to grace, and finally the Trinity's response to human hostility to grace. Undaunted by human weakness, the Word of grace continues to shine forth, calling and drawing human creatures to turn from themselves and mirror the way of Christ, thus reflecting by the Spirit the glory and joy of the beloved Son of the Father.*

In my earlier work I argue that the framework which gives shape to Thomas F. Torrance's theology is found in the particular way in which he understands grace.¹ Grace is not merely "divine favor" or "getting what we don't deserve." Grace has real content, grounded in the hypostatic union and the Trinity. From the fullness of his triune life and love, God gives himself to us in Christ and the Spirit that we would become sharers in the humanity of Jesus Christ, enjoying *koinonia* with the Father through the Spirit. In short, grace is the *self*-giving of God for our salvation.

Geordie W. Ziegler, "The *Imago Dei* as a Word of Grace in the Theological Anthropology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Participatio* 9, "Theological Anthropology" (2021): 157-172. CC-by-nc-sa. #2021-GWZ-1.

Based on a careful reading of Torrance's theology, I am convinced that this intensely personal understanding of grace as inclusion and participation in the triune life and love is the interpretive key which unlocks the logic of Torrance's entire dogmatic project.

In this essay, I demonstrate how Torrance's theological anthropology receives its method and material substance from his doctrine of grace. We will consider in order the motion of grace and the *imago Dei*, human hostility to grace, and finally the Trinity's response to human hostility to grace. Undaunted by human weakness, the Word of grace continues to shine forth, calling and drawing human creatures to turn from themselves and mirror the way of Christ, thus reflecting by the Spirit the glory and joy of the beloved Son of the Father.

The Motion of Grace and the *Imago Dei*

Torrance approaches his theological anthropology through what he calls (with Barth) the "analogy of grace" (*analogia gratiae*).² This analogy is grounded essentially in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ whose existence is an ontological and relational uniting of divinity and humanity in one person. *This*, Torrance writes referring to the Incarnation, is "the central relation and union of God and Man of which every other relation must partake."³ As such, any doctrine which attempts to speak of the relation of God and humans must "be grounded entirely upon the hypostatic union as its true and only valid analogy."⁴ Through the lens of this analogy, the relation between God and humans is understood as one of faith and grace, such that the proportions of this relation are determined by "the relation of Man and God in hypostatic union in Christ Jesus."⁵

² Torrance also refers to this analogy as the "Logic of Grace" and the "Logic of Christ." See T. F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 205-222, especially pages 214 and 216. Cf. Ziegler, *Trinitarian Grace*, 42

³ Thomas F. Torrance, "The Word of God and the Nature of Man," Originally published in *Reformation Old and New: Festschrift for Karl Barth*, ed. F. W. Camfield (London: Lutterworth, 1947), 121-141. Reprinted in *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965). All references will cite *Theology in Reconstruction*, 114.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The Downward Motion of Grace

The analogy of grace, or more simply “grace,” is a dynamic relation which has a particular form and movement, both of which correspond to the hypostatic union. The hypostatic union, Torrance notes, is a *dynamic* union, a *movement*. While the Chalcedonian definition offers helpful boundaries, the image it offers is framed in static, negative terms. Torrance correctively asserts that the union is an active, uniting, personal union in which atoning union shapes the inner dynamics of the ontological reality of the hypostatic union. The form and content of grace begins here.

The form and content of grace begins with the fact that the direction of grace always moves irreversibly *downward* from Jesus Christ to humanity. “[I]t is upon this downward motion of God’s grace that the very being of man is grounded.”⁶ Torrance means this quite literally. The “being” of human beings does not receive its ground in some inherent *analogia entis* between Creator and creature. The only ontological continuity which exists between humanity and God is that which exists within the dynamic movement of the *unio hypostatica* in which God and humanity are united in Jesus Christ. This dynamic ontological relation between divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ *is* the ground of our being as creatures created *in, through, by, and for* the triune God. Jesus Christ is the ontological ground of humanity’s relation to God. It is upon this foundation that Torrance understands the biblical metaphor of the *imago Dei*.

The *imago Dei* and the Communication of Grace

Torrance finds the biblical metaphor of the *imago Dei* particularly attractive as it fits perfectly within the shape of his theology of grace.⁷ As we respond to the

⁶ Ibid., 99. Torrance refers to the dynamic movement embodied in the hypostatic union by a variety of terms: “the way of Grace;” “the Word of Grace;” “the motion of Grace,” etc.

⁷ Cf. Ibid., 102.

communication of grace in faith, fellowship with God is effected and the image of God becomes engraved upon a person.⁸

As such, the *imago Dei* effectively functions for Torrance as another way of describing the dynamics of grace among human creatures.

Within the single thought of *imago dei* there is included a two-sided relation, but it is a relation which has only one essential motion and rhythm. There is the grace of God, and man's answer to that grace. Such an answer partakes of and subsists in the essential motion of grace – for even man's answer is the work of the Holy Spirit who through the Word forms the image anew in man, and forms his lips to acknowledge that he is a child of the Father. The *imago dei* is thus the conformity of an intelligent being to the will and Word of God.⁹

While the above quote is Torrance's attempt to summarize Calvin's thought on the *imago*, it is clear that he is incorporating Calvin's approach into his own framework. The image is constituted by two sides or factors which give it an objective and a subjective basis: the *dynamic movement of divine grace*,¹⁰ and a correlative *dynamic movement of human response*.¹¹ The *objective* side of the *imago Dei* is God's beholding or regard of the human creature as his child, while the *subjective* side is the human response or answer to God's gracious decision to regard her as his child.¹²

⁸ Torrance notes that the idea of the image of God being "engraved" upon a person is Calvin's term. It is certainly possible to misuse and construe "engraved" as a metaphysically static metaphor, and Torrance would certainly reject any interpretation that was not grounded and maintained relationally.

⁹ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 80.

¹⁰ Associated terms which Torrance uses to indicate this divine movement include: Word, motion, direction, downward, and communication.

¹¹ Various terms which Torrance uses to indicate the human response include: mirror, answer, life-answer, re-live, reflexive (as in spontaneous), continuous reflection (as in mirroring), and participation.

¹² Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 105.

In Christ, the *imago Dei* is objectively and subjectively realized, for in the life of Christ, God images himself back to himself.¹³ In Jesus Christ we behold the image of God fashioned by the grace of God. The Father lovingly beholds the Son, and the incarnate Son returns the gaze of love by perfectly facing the Father, in utter dependence, obedience, and filial trust. As the Father beholds his image in the Son, the Son's joyful answer perfectly mirrors the love of the Father. Constituted in and by this relation of love and trust, Jesus Christ is the objective basis which undergirds the subjective pole of grace.

The subjective pole is the answer of faith, which Torrance describes as an *intelligent* human response.¹⁴ The subjective side of the relation "partakes of and subsists in" the objective side. Like a mirror, the response (the reflection of the image) is dependent upon a corresponding reception of the image. The image is imaged, but only as the mirror is actually facing the object being imaged.¹⁵ When the life of a human being is "an intelligent motion in answer" to the movement of divine grace, a kind of "responsible union with God" occurs, a spiritual regeneration in which all forms of self-justification and self-grounding are abandoned for a spiritual life which is beyond ourselves. In this subjective pole, the believer consciously bears witness to the Word and grace of God. A motion of faith answers the motion of grace. This is the image of God enacted in us.¹⁶

The Motion Contrary to Grace — the Destruction of the *Imago Dei*

If this is so, if faith is the essential motion which corresponds to the motion of grace,¹⁷ then lack of faith (distrust, the will-to-autonomy) is the motion

¹³ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴ Terms used by Torrance which are associated with this human response include: responsive, acknowledgement, thankfulness, consciousness of creaturely dependence, knowledge, devotion, obedience, witness, and faith.

¹⁵ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 32.

¹⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 100. Also, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 32.

¹⁷ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 82.

contradictory to grace. Sin is the inversion and repudiation of grace, the ultimate hypocrisy of the created being. Its essence is the claim that the *imago Dei* is something one can achieve by one's own efforts and thus possess. It is the irrational claim of ontological autonomy. This illusion of autonomy is "the very motion of sin."¹⁸

Torrance notes that we only know about sin because we have seen and heard the Word of grace which "carries with it a total judgment upon the natural man."¹⁹ Humans were created such that they "not only owe their origin to *grace*, and depend on *grace* from moment to moment, but cannot have any true motion except in accordance with *grace*, and within these 'barriers'."²⁰ When in our presumption we transgress the bounds of grace, the whole relation between humans and God, the *imago Dei*, is perverted into its opposite.²¹ The essence of this perversion is ingratitude and an insistence upon living from a center in ourselves.²² This ungrateful "hostility to grace" is "a sinful motion of pride and self-will."²³ While functioning in this way, contrary to grace, humans are essentially blind to knowledge of God or of his love.

Since grace is dynamic and personal, its contradiction is also dynamic and personal (or personally impersonal as the case may be). Thus, sin is not most properly an ontological state of being, but the way in which we enact our being. Sin is not passive, as in a mere absence of proper reflecting or an innocent ignorance of the law. Sin is a "positive contradiction" which "maintains itself in an active opposition."²⁴ This impersonal and active opposition involves a perversion of the whole person. Thus, as Torrance points out, while Reformed theology views "sin as

¹⁸ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 109.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁰ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 124–125.

²¹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 107.

²² *Ibid.*, 108.

²³ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁴ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 113.

properly of the mind,” the concept of “the mind” refers to the whole person.²⁵ The mind is not a location (i.e., the brain), but the entire orientation of a human being: intelligence, emotion, will, and desire. As such, the mind has “a total relation to the person” such that when the natural gift of reason becomes corrupted, the whole human nature becomes degenerate and subject to the *irrational* activity of sin. Alienated in mind from God, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not understand it.²⁶

Trinity’s Response to Human Hostility to Grace

Human hostility to God’s motion of grace does not negate the Word of grace, neither does it eradicate the presence of the Holy Spirit, nor create an ontological separation between humans and God. The Spirit of God continues to maintain the creature; the Word of God continues to call the creature to trust. However, the Word of grace is now experienced as judgment. The loving faithfulness of God’s Word of grace judges our fearful and deluded hostility to grace. Yet grace’s judgment of sin *is itself* grace. Sin is held by grace even as it is confronted with grace. The Word of grace persists relentlessly, and it is the objectivity and activity of that Living Word that constitutes the *imago Dei*. This context carries several implications.

The Creature is Held in Grace

God refuses to let humans fall back into non-being but continues to hold onto his original intention for them. The *imago Dei* does not fade away for it has its objective source and ground in Christ’s imaging relation with the Father. The light of Christ beheld by the Father shines in each and every human being. This light of

²⁵ Ibid., 107, quoting Calvin’s commentary on Rom. 2:1. Torrance does not divide the human person up into neat and separated categories. Since the human person is a whole, the perversion of sin affects the whole person – including the mind. Because the mind has “a total relation to the person” (i.e., since humans are essentially rational beings), when the natural gift of reason is corrupted human nature as a whole becomes degenerate, 117.

²⁶ Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, 119.

God's continual beholding is the human's life as a child of God, "the 'imago-light' which God intends to be in his soul."²⁷

As life, light, and love, the Word of grace continues to speak over every human being. Since the *imago Dei* itself is fundamentally a product of God's beholding the work of his grace in us, it is not tarnished or dragged down by human rebellion; rather, "it continues to hang over man as a destiny which he can realize no longer, and as a judgment upon his actual state of perversity."²⁸ God's original intention for humanity, "the law of his being," is not dropped but is maintained in spite of the Fall.²⁹

God's refusal to let us go creates the "impossible situation of the sinner in active perversity against the will of God, and yet [simultaneously] maintained in being by the mercy of God."³⁰

God continues to speak his Word and thus human beings must continue to turn toward God in response, but when we turn toward God we recognize a conflict between God and our own self-will. We discover a gap between our "is" and our "ought." From this standpoint, post-Fall, the *imago Dei* can only be interpreted in eschatological terms.³¹ The fact that the way of our being does not match the call of our being need not lead us to abandon all hope. On the contrary, it draws us deeper into grace, for grace *is* our life.

The Creature is Restored in Grace

The eschatological nature of the *imago Dei* is a function of the fact that it is not and *never was* humankind's possession. The *imago Dei* is only "possessed" by Christ. Humans are merely "the image of the image," while Christ is "the unique image-

²⁷ Ibid., 69.

²⁸ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 107.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 108.

constituting Image of God.”³² He is the *Imago Dei* in essence, for he is the Word of God. Consequently, true humanity is not discovered by examining our origins in Adam, but our destiny in Christ in whom the image of God is fully realized. “[T]he original intention of God becomes an event in man’s existence only by the Word, and the *imago* is possessed only in faith and hope until we see Christ as he is and become like him.”³³

It is at this point that the centrality of the hypostatic union, as the objectification of the Word of grace in our space-time, comes to the fore as the form and content of the subjective realization of the *imago Dei* in us. In the dynamic personal activity of his hypostatic and atoning union (that is, in the self-giving of God in the incarnation, cross, and resurrection event), he asserts himself over against our sin, and in his own person inverts our perverted order. Christ continually personalizes and humanizes the rest of humanity, inverting the perverted disorder in individual human lives correspondent to the hypostatic uniting which took place in his incarnate life. Through his self-insertion and assertion, he who is “the ground of our existence beyond our existence” also becomes “the ground of our existence within our existence.”³⁴ Through the Holy Spirit, his way becomes ours in him. In him, we are harmonized and personalized; apart from him, human nature “goes out of tune.”³⁵ The triune God is the fullness of personal being who personalizes human beings.³⁶ As Myk Habets points out, within Torrance’s theology, “the movement within the salvation of men and women is from human

³² Thomas F. Torrance, “The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition,” *Modern Theology* 4 (1988): 317.

³³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 109.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Thomas F. Torrance, “Immortality and Light,” *Religious Studies* 17 (1981): 152. Quoting Georges Florovsky.

³⁶ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Soul and Person of the Unborn Child* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1999), 18.

being, a biological fact, to human person, a moral, theological fact."³⁷ We are *persons-in-becoming*.³⁸

We have already noted that for Torrance, the human response actually "partakes of and subsists in" the essential motion of grace. By faith, we participate in the new humanity of Christ.³⁹ As such, "grace must be understood in terms of [Christ's] human as well as his divine nature."⁴⁰ Just as it is the divinity of Christ which determines the personhood of the humanity of Christ, and just as the humanity of Christ only has its existence in the personhood of the divine Son, so too our humanity has no independent existence apart from the active, sustaining, presence of the divine Trinity.⁴¹ Torrance will have nothing to do with second causes. There is no human act in which God is not also active.

In the context of faith and the human decision, Torrance explicitly and boldly articulates the analogy:

We must say then that there is a kind of hypostatic union between grace and faith, through the Holy Spirit, a kind of *communio quaedam consubstantialis*! Faith has no independent existence apart from the initiative of grace, nor is it in any sense the product of human activity working independently of the Word. It is WE who believe, and we come to believe in a personal encounter with the living Word. Faith entails a genuine human decision, but at its heart there is a divine decision, which, as it were, catches up and makes it what it is, begotten of the Holy Ghost.⁴²

³⁷ Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 55.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 45.

³⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 191.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁴¹ Torrance utilizes the terms *anhypostasia* and *enhyposstasia* to express this reality.

⁴² Thomas F. Torrance, "Predestination in Christ," *Evangelical Quarterly* 13 (1941): 130. Cf., "In, under, and with ... the human decision, there is a divine decision, apart from which the human decision has no existence at all; indeed would never have been called into being," *Theology in Reconstruction*, 131.

Encircled by the faith of Christ, our faith does not stand on its own. It subsists inside our union with the humanity of Christ. "Faith" is an intelligent echo, a conscious repetition, of the very movement of grace which was enacted in Christ, the true Image of God. Our faith in effect mirrors the faith of Christ, but the mirroring is, by definition, only by grace. That is, it takes place only as we welcome the activity of the Spirit through a dynamic relation of "total dependence."⁴³ Apart from the continual activity of the Spirit, the image of God in the world would be an ineffective and vain reflection. When kept close to God, the "empty image" becomes a "vital life."⁴⁴

By way of conclusion, I would suggest two concrete ways we participate in grace. These are two motions of being by which we can cooperate with the work of God in our lives. Dying to self by turning toward Christ, and reflecting the Trinity's glory by enjoying the belovedness of our sonship with Christ. In the way of grace, just as death precedes resurrection, so also self-abandonment to Christ as Subject and Lord opens the way to knowing the freedom and joy of the life of Christ before the Father in the Spirit.

Turning from self; Dying to live – filled with the self-emptying way of Christ

We participate in the restorative work of grace in and upon us through a corresponding movement of grace through us, that is, by a continuous turning from ourselves toward Christ. The acknowledgment of grace drags us out of our self-assertion, self-imprisonment, and blindness, and re-inverts the hostile and irrational motions of our mind and will.⁴⁵ This answer of ours is an act of the Spirit beyond the level of our nature by which the Spirit mysteriously "forms the ear to hear and the mind to understand" ... "and our hearts to submit to its yoke."⁴⁶ Cooperation with the motion of grace involves a downward or humble movement in which we follow

⁴³ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 102.

⁴⁴ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 65, in reference to Eph. 4:18.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.20-21; *Commentary on Luke* 24:45.

the way of Christ in his self-offering death. "It is only by this *mortification* that we are renewed *in the image of Christ* and the life of the Spirit."⁴⁷

We do not image the image of God by holding onto control or by saving our lives. Independent from God, the image of God in human beings is hopelessly inverted. One does not repair a mirror by mending a broken one, but by completely changing it out for a new one. Participation in grace (i.e., in Christ) requires of us a trajectory that is the very opposite of self-assertion, self-will, and self-justification. Rather than continuing our default obsession with attention, appetite, and approval, our attention is on Christ, our appetite is for his will, and we have no anxiety about being enough. Torrance explains the "human side" of this movement in this way: "when we try to know God, we must yield ourselves and our knowing to God, so that it is He who takes control, and our part is to respond to His initiative, and His movement, correspondent to His Word."⁴⁸

This "self-emptying of faith" in which we "stretch out an empty hand" combined with "the acknowledgment of thankfulness" carries us out beyond ourselves so that we depend entirely upon God's movement of grace.⁴⁹ As our mind and will are filled by their proper Object (i.e., Christ), Christ then can walk us into freedom. In this way, Jesus Christ is not only the Object of our faith and will, but also its *Subject*. As we allow Christ to be the lead-Subject of our day to day lives, the *imago Dei* is imprinted upon us and our humanity is recreated. "Not I, but Christ in me" becomes an experiential reality (e.g., Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 15:10). *How* this actually occurs cannot be scrutinized. Calvin writes, "I see that I am able; but *how* able I see not. This far only I see, that it is of God."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 145.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 115.

⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.35.

Beheld and beholding; Reflected glory — gratefully receiving the transforming belovedness of sonship

God's beholding of the creature and God's determination to remain in relation to the creature create the foundation that enables the creature to turn by grace towards God.⁵¹ God's beholding of the creature is a way of describing God's knowing and loving orientation towards and for the creature. The onto-relational nature of human personhood means that human transformation takes place in the receiving and returning of God's beholding. Ontology is not *given*; it is *caught* (personally communicated), or more properly *shared in*.⁵² The loving gaze of the Father, Son, and Spirit upon the creature has a real and transforming effect upon human beings, effectively calling and drawing them into responsive being.

As the image is a reality brought into being by God's loving beholding of the creature, it is also an image that fundamentally is perceptible only by and through the eyes of God. God beholds, knows, and loves the image which he images. The metaphor here is intentionally and inextricably relational. Because of its intrinsic relationality and practical fruitfulness, Torrance praises the brilliance of Calvin's use of the mirror metaphor:

Only while the mirror actually reflects an object does it have the image of that object. There is no such thing in Calvin's thought as an *imago* disassociated from the act of reflecting. He does use such expressions as *engrave* and *sculptured*, but only in a metaphorical sense and never dissociated from the idea of the mirror.⁵³

For Torrance, the mirror metaphor is far from passive. The *imago Dei* is verb more than noun. It calls for a continuous motion of reorientation and turning towards the proper object. The *imago* only reflects God when it faces God. "Freedom is only

⁵¹ "The image of God is basically that which God sees and fashions by His Grace." Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 43; cf., *Inst.* 3.17.6.

⁵² For a parallel argument around the metaphor of light, see Torrance, "Immortality and Light," *Religious Studies* 17 (1981): 159.

⁵³ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 36.

possible face to face with Jesus Christ.”⁵⁴ Fellowship and freedom in Christ cannot be “pocketed.” As such, grace does not heal reason.⁵⁵ “Obedience of the mind toward God” is the disciple’s ceaseless activity. God does not “fix” us so we can graduate and rise above our childlike need for grace. Just as the eye is continually dependent upon the light of the sun, so too do we need the continual grace of illumination. As human creatures take their stand in the Spirit and face the Father with the Son, they reflect God’s glory by bearing witness in their very beings to the filial purpose for which they were created. In this sense, the image “is essentially a supernatural gift grounded in grace and possessed only in faith.”⁵⁶

Life, *eternal* life, the life that knows the Father with his Son (John 17:3), is a life oriented with the Son, through the Spirit, toward the light of the Father’s face. Such a life of dependence is supremely characterized by joy. This possibility sets humanity apart from the rest of creation.⁵⁷ Human beings have been graced with the unique ability to enjoy their relation with God “in a conscious and intelligent fashion.”⁵⁸ “Intelligent,” “conscious” “enjoyment” of our dependent relation on God arises from a posture of ceaseless listening and knowing how radically we are known and loved. We “give ear to the Word”; we know ourselves to be called into being by God; and we know that God has set his love upon us in order to assume us into the divine fellowship as children of the heavenly Father.

⁵⁴ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 123.

⁵⁵ Torrance, *Calvin’s Doctrine of Man*, 173.

⁵⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 105.

⁵⁷ Torrance approaches his discussion of the image by noting Calvin’s fondness for Paul’s statement in Acts 17:28 that as humans “we live and move and have our being in God.” Calvin identifies three gradations of human existence: “being” (which applies to all creation), “motion or animation” (which applies to all living creatures), and “life” (which is strictly associated with humans). Calvin suggests that this “higher life in God” which is uniquely proper to humans is “peculiarly matched to grace.” He goes on to describe this higher life (or spiritual life) in terms of *light*, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). This life which brings light is correlated with the Word of God, the communication of which brings understanding, and to which humans must respond. *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

Such hearing and knowing that we are known and loved is only retained and nurtured by gratitude: "by a continuous thankful acknowledgment of this gracious calling of God," where no independence of life is presumed in themselves, but all is received as "the pure gift of God."⁵⁹ This is the way we experience the truth of our life as children of the Father.⁶⁰ Our "true life" is, in essence, "grateful sonship."⁶¹

This re-creation does not take place in a single day, nor does it ever reach a terminus. No matter how mature or how long one has walked the path of faith, we remain dependent upon God's light. The "not I, but Christ in me" of St. Paul is a spiritual discipline.⁶² We must "wear the glasses of the Word all the time ... continually transcending our judgments."⁶³ If faith is to function in a motion corresponding to the motion of grace, just as God's grace is unceasing and continuous in its constancy, so too our motion of faith toward God is exercised by a continuous step-by-step dependence.

Concluding Remarks

In this essay, we have been attending to the way Torrance understands the constitution of human beings as participants in grace. The shape of grace, rooted in the Incarnation and grounded in the heart of God, sets the dynamic, yet consistent, framework which encompasses all the insanity and beauty of our human existence. The constancy of grace is interrupted neither by human hostility nor by divine judgment upon sin, for God's judgment is itself grace in motion and the Father, Son, and Spirit never cease to be the love that they are.

In Torrance's theological tool kit, the *imago Dei* expresses the reality of grace with boldness and clarity and so enhances our insight into the mystery of God's relentless love for human beings. The concept of the *imago Dei* gives powerful

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., "In that responsive motion alone does man find his true life and destiny."

⁶¹ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 70.

⁶² Cf. 2 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 1:16; 2:20; Col. 1:27-29; 1 Tim. 1:16.

⁶³ Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, 174.

expression to Torrance's understanding of the onto-relational constitution of human creatures, and provides a fruitful metaphor for how we can intelligently and consciously participate in grace and so enjoy the incredible gift of sharing in the Son's relation with the Father in the Spirit.

In this short sketch, I have also demonstrated the way the analogy of grace, grounded as it is in the person of Jesus Christ, provides the fundamental form and content for Torrance's exposition of the *imago Dei* within his theological anthropology. My argument has been that, for Torrance, this christological-grounded methodology is the case with all doctrines that have to do with the relation between God and creatures. In the words of Torrance himself, it is "in the relation of the deity to the humanity in Jesus Christ that we are to look [for] ... the interior logic" which guides the whole of dogmatics.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Torrance, *Predestination in Christ*, 127.