

EDITORIAL

Myk Habets, Ph.D.
(Otago University)
Senior Lecturer in Theology
Head of Theology
Laidlaw College, New Zealand

mhabets@laidlaw.ac.nz

Geordie Ziegler, Ph.D.
(King's College, University of Aberdeen)
Field Staff, Imago Christi
Novo Missions, Inc.
Camas, WA USA

gwziegler@gmail.com

What does it mean to be human, in light of Christ and what he has done, is doing, and will do for us? These are questions theology must answer. A variety of answers are given across the Christian tradition. Based upon a reading of Romans 5 (and other texts) we have to first say that being human is about Christ more than it is about you and me. What it means to be human does not start with looking at you, or me, or any other human, or even all humans that have ever existed. That is not the Christian way. Rather, it starts with looking at Jesus Christ, the one true human. Christ did not just save us in a narrow vacuum; he came and showed us what it looks like to be a real human person. In short, *Christ* is what it means to be human: we find our identity in him.

Humans are created in a special sense, as Genesis 1:27 makes clear, but because the *imago Dei* is ultimately centered in Christ — he is the true Image of God — only in Christ can other humans be fully *personal*. Further, Christ is central to creation as a whole, not simply to humanity. Christ came to reconcile *all things* to God. Others speak of this as the *Great Exchange*, whereby Christ takes our poverty and gives us his riches. He takes our lowly place to give us his exalted place. And as C. S. Lewis reminds us, this is *glorious*. But great glory comes with great

Myk Habets and Geordie W. Ziegler, "Editorial," *Participatio* 9, "Theological Anthropology" (2021): 1-6.
CC-by-nc-sa. #2021-MH-GWZ-1.

responsibility, something Lewis called the *weight of glory*. In 1942 Lewis preached a sermon in which he said:

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship ... There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal ... But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit — immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.¹

Thomas F. Torrance would have agreed with Lewis on this point. Considering this, our calling as humans reconciled to God and as those being conformed to the image of Christ is to live as *priests* — priests of creation: those who represent the people and all the cosmos to God. As priests of all creation, our job is to intercede for others, to represent them, to stand in for them. And that compels us into activism of all stripes, into advocacy work, ethics, politics, and prayer. As priests of creation under the weight of glory, it is our responsibility to pray for those who can't or won't, to intercede for the vulnerable and oppressed, and to lead others in prayers of praise, petition, thanksgiving, and worship to the triune God of grace and glory. At this time, amidst the significant needs of our world, may we intercede more, pray more, and be agents of reconciliation even more.

Recent attention has been paid to the theological anthropology of Thomas F. Torrance, especially two monographs, one published in 2021 and another in 2022. Hakbong Kim's work brings Torrance's theology into dialogue with social trinitarianism, highlighting the ways in which Torrance's theology is practical and has a robust theological anthropology, but it is *not* a species of social trinitarianism.² Kim pays close attention to what Torrance means by onto-relational concepts of persons, both divine and human. Jürgen Moltmann, John Zizioulas, and Miroslav Volf come in for special attention vis-a vis the theology of Torrance. Kim

¹ Clive S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," in *Screwtape Proposes a Toast and Other Pieces* (London: Fontana, 1965), 109.

² Hakbong Kim, *Person, Personhood, and the Humanity of Christ: Christocentric Anthropology and Ethics in Thomas F. Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2021).

finds Torrance's theology more creedal, orthodox, and practical than the social trinitarians. Kim also examines the implications of theological anthropology for Torrance, pressing into ethical issues that Torrance raises such as gender egalitarianism, sexual ethics, abortion and medical ethics, and environmental ethics. Beyond these christologically-focused issues, Kim's work briefly considers Torrance's ecclesiology and how his anthropology is worked out in that sphere. While Kim ultimately finds Torrance's work suggestive and foundational, it does not yet do the wider and deeper work a practical theology has to do. Kim calls for others to take up that mantle and build on Torrance's foundational work.

The more comprehensive work on Torrance's theological anthropology comes from Chris Woznicki.³ Torrance's theology was some of the most trinitarian and christological of the modern era. He adapted a scientific theological method and applied that to a range of theological loci and produced a vast amount of stunning theological work across a range of topics. Early secondary work on Torrance was focused on his interaction with science and dualisms, the next wave of work looked at his theological methodology. Only more recently have monographs appeared that have looked at specific theological topics. Anthropology has not been dealt with in a sustained published monograph (although there are some theses) until Kim's work. Torrance's christological anthropology is both traditional and unique at the same time and warrants close study and wide publicity. Woznicki's monograph does well to touch on a lacuna in secondary work on Torrance. Additionally, Woznicki goes beyond Torrance and answers the question as to where the trajectory of his thought may have taken him, given more recent advances in the areas of anthropology, science, philosophy, and morality.

Woznicki assumes that there is not a developed theological anthropology in Torrance's corpus. We think that is possibly an overstatement. Torrance hardly ever collects his thoughts on a topic into one comprehensive and coherent place — the doctrine of the Trinity would be one of a few exceptions, with his two works *The Trinitarian Faith* and *The Christian Doctrine of God*. Much of Torrance's anthropology is "disguised" as Christology, to the point where it is not untrue to say that

³ Christopher G. Woznicki, *T. F. Torrance's Christological Anthropology: Discerning Humanity in Christ* (London: Routledge: 2022).

Christology *is* Torrance's anthropology: in Christ's ascension humanity is ascended, Christ's exercise of his will now is the definition of what a human free will looks like, and so forth. So, to suggest there is a lack of developed anthropology in Torrance is a stretch. It is there, but it is disparate and hidden in Christology. We do fully agree with Woznicki, however, in that bringing his anthropology together into a coherent and comprehensive form and then interrogating it for its promise is useful and important. Bringing that work into dialogue with recent treatments of anthropology and related fields is important too. What is under-developed in Torrance's work is the ontological status of humanity. It seems that Torrance holds to a Platonic-like ideal form of humanity (what Woznicki calls an *abstract universal*), which Christ assumes at the Incarnation, and this in part explains his rejection of all forms of nominalism. That has not been sufficiently appreciated, discussed, or developed. Woznicki's work alerts us to many of these themes and charts a certain response to them along analytic lines.

This special volume of *Participatio* continues the dialogue initiated by Kim and Woznicki, and others before them who have touched on Torrance's theological anthropology. Key themes such as Christology and the Trinity are integrated with practical issues. Creator and creation are kept in view as Torrance's holistic theology is brought to bear upon issues having to do with what it means to be human and what it means to be human at this point in time. It is hoped that the work of Kim, Woznicki, and the contributions to this volume will stimulate more interest in Torrance's theological anthropology and will inspire more critically reflective theological work on the issues facing humanity today.

In the opening essay, David W. Torrance offers a brother's reflections on the life and influence of Thomas F. Torrance. A biographical reflection from one who knew him intimately is a fitting way for a volume on Torrance's anthropology to begin.

Hakbong Kim contributes an essay to this volume which explores some of the key characteristics of Torrance's theological anthropology. After a historical review of the Greek, Roman, and Hebrew conceptions of what it means to be human, Kim displays the way Torrance's anthropology is grounded in "the relational imago Dei" and the concept of "the personalising person of Christ." Kim closes his essay with

an exposition of Torrance's onto-relational understanding of humanity as persons in relation, arguing that Torrance's anthropology is thoroughly relation-centered, christocentric, and trinitarian.

Daniel Cameron's essay focuses on Torrance's argument that Jesus' assumption of a fallen human nature in the Incarnation is essential to the recreation and personalization of our humanity. Cameron seeks to bring clarity to an often-muddled debate by carefully defining the language involved: what is the nature of our sin problem? what does it mean for Jesus to assume a fallen human nature? Once this important groundwork is laid, Cameron goes on to show how Torrance's framework brings together Incarnation and Atonement in such a way that a real recreation of our humanity is effected through a personalizing union with Christ.

Marty Folsom's essay on Torrance and personalism seeks to distinguish Torrance's project from historical forms of personalism while at the same time showing the ways in which Torrance drew upon the scientific and philosophical insights of John Macmurray and Michael Polanyi. Folsom then suggests a way forward for a trinitarian, scientific, personalistic anthropology, grounded in Jesus Christ as the "Personalising Person." Such a dynamic, relational, and christologically centered anthropology is a rich resource for the flourishing of the church and the world.

Gary Deddo offers an essay that shows the continuity and development of Torrance's thought in one of his most astute interpreters as it has to do with anthropology, namely, Ray Anderson of Fuller Theological Seminary. In Anderson's work, which draws explicitly upon Torrance's theological anthropology, we see a critical response to many of the real-life and practical issues facing Christians in the modern West. Torrance was often accused of not having a practical theology; Deddo shows how, in the hands of his interpreters, his work is loaded with practical theological insight.

The essay by Paul Metzger extends the discussion initiated by Deddo into racial reconciliation. By adopting insights from Torrance's responses to anti-Semitism and Apartheid, Metzger brings Torrance's theological anthropology into

dialogue with contemporary racial issues, especially insights offered by theological social commentators such as James Cone and Willie Jennings. As with other contributors, Torrance's notion of Christ as the humanizing human and the personalizing person come to the fore in Metzger's work.

Closing out the volume is the work of Geordie Ziegler who continues to elaborate on his thesis that grace is the scaffolding concept for Torrance's theology, including a theological anthropology. Clarifying what Torrance means by the analogy of grace, Ziegler adds his voice to that of others in this volume who see in Torrance's theological anthropology resources for a practical theology that can address some of the pressing issues facing Christians today. The concept of the *imago Dei* finds a central place in this discussion as a christological and eschatological concept that is more of a verb than it is noun.

Torrance's theological anthropology is comprehensive and profound, and as the contributors to this volume highlight, his work can be helpfully retrieved and reappropriated today in diverse contexts. It is hoped that the essays in this volume stimulate further work on Torrance's anthropology and the implications this has for a wider and deeper conversation at the intersection of theology and public discourse.