

WRESTLING WITH AN ANGEL:

T. F. Torrance's Reception of Edward Irving Reappraised

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Abstract: *Since the publication of my previous research on T. F. Torrance's reception of the pneumatologically-oriented Christology of Edward Irving, new data have emerged to challenge the account I gave. This essay evaluates the fresh evidence and sets it in context, then identifies several points of continuity and discontinuity between Torrance and Irving. At issue is not merely a correct reading of the past but also the present and future development of Christology and pneumatology. Consequently, the final section of the essay suggests implications of my findings for the subjective and practical correlates of Torrancean theology, as well as defending the viability of my prior proposal for moving toward resolution in the debate over "fallenness" Christology.*

But it was only when I studied Karl Barth's account of [Christ's assumption of fallen human nature] that its truth broke in upon my mind in a quite unforgettable way. I refer to that section in the *Church Dogmatics* 1.2 where Barth expounded the mystery of the virgin birth. Overwhelmed by the immense significance of what our Lord had done all for our sakes and in our place, I fell to the ground on my knees trembling in awe and wonder at the sheer miracle of God's grace in the birth, life, and passion of Jesus — the miracle that foul, wicked,

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depraved humanity twisted in upon itself, had been appropriated from us by the Son of God and been cleansed, changed, redeemed, and sanctified in him.¹

So reminisced T. F. Torrance about his experience when, as a student in Basel in 1937–1938, he read §15.2–3 of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*.² (The English translation would have to await his own supervision in later years.) In this passage, not only did he encounter Barth's exposition of a "fallenness" Christology, but also his appeal to several nineteenth-century precursors of this view, among them a fellow Scot: Edward Irving (1792–1834). Barth drew his information on Irving from a source familiar to Torrance, his own beloved, recently-deceased Edinburgh teacher Hugh Ross Mackintosh (1870–1936).³ Irving was an innovative, controversial thinker who advocated not only "fallenness" Christology (for which he was excommunicated by the Church of Scotland) but also kenoticism, Spirit Christology, the charismata, and millennialism. Torrance adopted and adapted much of Barth's theology. What, though, of his reception of Irving?

My previously-published research gave the following answer:⁴ Despite Barth's use of Mackintosh to commend Irving, Mackintosh's own account is critical of Irving's Christology. Torrance showed his debts to both Mackintosh and Barth when, in his 1938–1939 Auburn Seminary lectures, he embraced Barth's "fallenness" Christology while distancing himself from Irving. Torrance specifically objected to Irving's "almost ... Ebionite" view that Christ's human nature remained *morally corrupt* (not just *physically corruptible*) throughout his earthly life and that his sinlessness was only due to the Holy Spirit's indwelling rather than to the

¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster and Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 441–442.

² Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 45.

³ Barth, *CD I/2*, 154, cites H. R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1931), 277. For Torrance's reminiscences on Mackintosh, see T. F. Torrance, "Appreciation: Hugh Ross Mackintosh Theologian of the Cross" in H. R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, ed. T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 71–94. (This brief work of Mackintosh's is a précis of his larger work cited by Barth.)

⁴ E. Jerome Van Kuiken, *Christ's Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy: Fallen or Not?* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 32–40, 43, 75.

sanctifying effect of the hypostatic union itself.⁵ In Torrance's later years, he never again mentioned Irving — not in his Edinburgh lectures,⁶ nor in his volume on the history of Scottish theology,⁷ nor in his other writings. The closest he came was in 1984, in a reply to an editorial that chided Irving and Barth for their "fallenness" Christology. Torrance's letter to the editor names neither man, instead appealing to the Greek Fathers and Calvin to assert:

While our Lord was linked through His mother to "the genetic stream of the race", he was altogether sinless, having neither actual nor inherent sin of any kind.... [I]n the very act of taking our fallen Adamic nature the Son of God redeemed, renewed and sanctified it AT THE SAME TIME.... The only human nature which our Lord HAD, therefore, was utterly pure and sinless. His humanity was not some new *creatio ex nihilo*, or some kind of neutral humanity quite foreign to us. No, it was *our* Adamic nature, *our* "flesh of sin", which *in assuming he healed and purified*. That is the important interlocking of the continuity and discontinuity in both the Virgin Birth and in the Crucifixion and Resurrection.⁸

So ran my account of Torrance's reception of Irving. In point of fact, however, I had overlooked a pair of post-Auburn references by Torrance to Irving: one direct, one indirect.⁹ In what follows, I examine this fresh evidence and reappraise Torrance's reception of Irving in light of it. At issue is not merely a

⁵ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 121–123 (quotation from 121).

⁶ Now published as Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster and Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008) and Torrance, *Atonement*.

⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, "Christ's human nature," *The Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland* (May 1984), 114 (capitalization and italics his; I have removed paragraph breaks). The editorial to which he replies is [Donald Macleod], "Did Christ have a fallen human nature?," *Monthly Record* (March 1984), 51–53. Thanks to Donald Macleod for copies of both his editorial and Torrance's letter.

⁹ Thanks to Richard McIntosh for calling my attention to these references and for sharing an audio file of Torrance's BBC interview (on which see below).

correct reading of the past but also the present and future development of Christology and pneumatology.¹⁰

The Angel and the Footnote

Seven months after the publication of Torrance's letter, the BBC broadcast excerpts from an interview with him as part of a radio documentary on the life of Edward Irving. The broadcast was titled "Angel of Regent Square," an allusion to Irving's being dubbed "angel" by his Regent Square, London parishioners on the model of the Apocalypse's angels of the churches (Revelation 2-3, with "angels" interpreted here as human rather than heavenly ministers). In the interview, Torrance contrasts Irving with his contemporaries, who insisted on Christ's unfallen humanity:

Irving was the one who was the true theologian. His doctrine was that Christ, the Son of God, in becoming man, took human nature from the Virgin Mary, who was a sinner like all other human beings, so that he took the flesh of sin — he took fallen human nature on him. Of course, Irving held that Jesus Christ in his human nature was holy and perfectly sinless.... For Irving, the Son of God penetrated into the depths of our human being to get at guilt and sin from the inner depths of our humanity.... And he worked it out in such a way that it came to its climax in the cross.¹¹

Here Torrance contradicts his earlier judgment of Irving. At Auburn, he had insisted that "we are to think of Christ's flesh as perfectly and completely sinless in his own nature, and not simply in virtue of the Spirit as Irving puts it."¹² Now he claims that "Irving held that Jesus Christ in his human nature was holy and perfectly sinless" — that is, that Irving's view agrees with Torrance's. Torrance goes on to describe Irving as seeking to retrieve the Christology of the Greek Fathers whom Torrance

¹⁰ This essay will not address eschatology. Torrance's amillennialism sharply contrasts with Irving's premillennialism, although both men shared an interest in the Jewish people.

¹¹ "Angel of Regent Square," written and researched by Andrew Walker, BBC Radio 4 (Dec. 1, 1984), 16:52-17:22, 30:20-30:44.

¹² Torrance, *Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, 122.

so esteemed.¹³ As for Irving's proto-Pentecostalism, Torrance comments that it arose from his faith in "a living God" who was present and active among believers, coupled with Irving's "Romantic personality."¹⁴

In addition to this direct mention of Irving in 1984, there is an indirect reference to him buried in a footnote of Torrance's volume *The Trinitarian Faith*, published in 1988 as an expanded version of lectures given in 1981.¹⁵ Here Torrance concludes his discussion of Athanasius' doctrine that Christ assumed and sanctified sinful human nature with a citation of two pages from a book by Scottish charismatic theologian Thomas Smail.¹⁶ That book as a whole promotes a synthesis of charismatic experience with Reformed theology, especially Christology, with Irving repeatedly presented as an exemplar.¹⁷ On the pages cited by Torrance, Smail affirms both that Christ is "entirely without sin" and that "he enters completely into the situation of sinners, and is in every respect exposed to every external and internal pressure that comes against them."¹⁸ Smail then appeals for

¹³ "Angel," 17:38–18:05.

¹⁴ Ibid., 18:06–19:00. "Romantic" here nods to Irving's proclivity toward his era's Romanticism, including his discipleship to S. T. Coleridge. See, e.g., Peter Elliott, "Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis" (PhD thesis, Murdoch University, 2010), <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/2996/> and Nicholas John Cuthbert Tucker, "In Search of the Romantic Christ: The Origins of Edward Irving's Theology of Incarnation" (PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2018), <http://hdl.handle.net/1893/27283>.

¹⁵ On the origins of *Trinitarian Faith's* content, see Myk Habets, "'The Essence of Evangelical Theology': Critical Introduction to Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*," in Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church*, second edition (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), viii, as well as Torrance's own comments on pp. 1–2.

¹⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 162 n.53, citing Thomas A. Smail, *Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 67–68.

¹⁷ See Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 39–40, 68, 74, 76–77, 92–93.

¹⁸ Ibid., 67.

support to Barth, Irving, and Torrance himself, as well as “all the impressive array of authorities mustered by Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour*.”¹⁹

In short, during the 1980s Torrance communicated approval of Irving directly in a radio interview and indirectly through a letter to an editor and a footnote in *Trinitarian Faith*. This evidence bears further contextualization: before his retirement from Edinburgh University in 1979, T. F. Torrance would assign his pupils to summarize Barth’s *CD I/2*, §15 — the very passage on “fallenness” Christology that had so moved him as a student, and the single passage in all the *Church Dogmatics* that cites Irving.²⁰ Students also took a course in Scottish theological history under T. F.’s brother J. B., who devoted a full lecture to Irving’s doctrines of the Incarnation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.²¹ J. B. likewise promoted Irving in print and by supervising doctoral theses that sought to demonstrate the consonance of Irving’s Christology with that of the Greek Fathers, the Reformers, and T. F.²² The Torrance brothers’ efforts thus combined to

¹⁹ Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 68, 75 n.4 (quotation from latter). The reference is to Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Human Nature of Christ in Relation to Original Sin, with Special Reference to its Soteriological Significance* (London: Epworth, 1962). Johnson surveys eighteen proponents of “fallenness” Christology from Barth, Torrance, and others in the twentieth century back through the nineteenth-century precursors claimed by Barth in *CD I/2*, 154–155 and at last to a seventeenth-century pioneer of the modern “fallenness” position, the mystic Antionette Bourignon (137–185). Johnson finds patristic precedent for this view in Gregories Nazianzen and Nyssen (129–132).

²⁰ Bruce Ritchie, *T. F. Torrance in Recollection and Reappraisal* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021), 167.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 223. Wherever I refer simply to “Torrance,” T. F. is in view.

²² James B. Torrance, “The Vicarious Humanity of Christ,” in Thomas F. Torrance, ed., *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed A.D. 381* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), 141, refers positively to Irving alongside Barth. J. B. supervised the following doctoral theses at the University of Aberdeen: Jacob Jamani Nantomah, “Jesus the God-Man: The Doctrine of the Incarnation in Edward Irving in the Light of the Teaching of the Church Fathers and Its Relevance for a Twentieth Century African Context” (1982); Kang Phee Seng (P. S. Kang), “The Concept of the Vicarious Humanity of Christ in the Theology of Thomas Forsyth Torrance” (1983), which covers Irving on pp. 261–262, 273; David William Dorries, “Nineteenth Century British Christological Controversy, Centring upon Edward Irving’s Doctrine of Christ’s Human Nature” (1987), published as David W. Dorries, *Edward Irving’s Incarnational Christology* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon, 2002). J. B. also served as general editor of The Devotional Library series, including Graham McFarlane, *Edward Irving: The Trinitarian Face of God* (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1996).

rehabilitate Irving. The early misgivings that T. F. had displayed in his Auburn lectures would seem long gone — or were they?

Flattening Fallenness, Cautious of Charismata

In assessing Torrance's reception of *any* historical figure, one must bear in mind his oft-noted "tendency ... to flatten the historical details of theological debate and development, which inclines towards Torrance reading history as a vast account of his own theological positions."²³ One example germane to this essay is the later Torrance's linking of H. R. Mackintosh with "fallenness" Christology when in fact Mackintosh was its critic.²⁴ Another example appears in the same passage in *Trinitarian Faith* that footnotes Smail: as evidence of patristic "fallenness" Christology, Torrance writes, "Thus Athanasius could say that 'the whole Christ became a curse for us.'"²⁵ In its original context, however, Athanasius is *denying* that the whole Christ became a curse, just as the Logos did not become wholly flesh: "We do not conceive the whole Word Himself to be flesh, but to have put on flesh ... we do not simply [i.e. simplistically] conceive this, that the whole Christ has become a curse and sin, but that He has taken on Him the curse."²⁶ A final example occurs in Torrance's *Scottish Theology*, in which he renders Thomas Boston's statement that Christ assumed human nature "with all its sinless infirmities" as "with all its *sinful* infirmities."²⁷

Torrance's flattening tendency makes it plausible that he later obscured the distinctions that he had made at Auburn between his own and Irving's thought in the interest of claiming a fellow countryman (and one with Barth's imprimatur!) for

²³ Habets, "Essence," xiii–xvii, xxii–xxiv (quotation from xiii, where Habets is summarizing a concern of David Ford's); for (partial) rebuttals, see xv–xvii, xxiii–xxiv.

²⁴ Van Kuiken, *Christ's Humanity*, 72–79. Not only was Mackintosh himself critical of Irving's Christology, but he served as faculty advisor to the similarly critical Paul Ewing Davies, "An Examination of the Views of Edward Irving concerning The Person and Work of Jesus Christ" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1928).

²⁵ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 161, quoting Athanasius, *C. Ar.* 2.47.

²⁶ Athanasius, *C. Ar.* 2.47 (*NPNF*² 4:374).

²⁷ Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 210 (emphasis mine). Cf. Thomas Boston, *Works* 1:402, www.digitalpuritan.net.

the cause of “fallenness” Christology. If so, then Torrance’s preparation in 2001 of his Auburn lectures for publication would have reminded him of his differences with Irving.²⁸ On the other hand, Torrance himself moved beyond at least one of his early views. At Auburn he is unwilling to speak of Christ as assuming original sin; in his Edinburgh lectures, though, he does.²⁹ Perhaps Torrance likewise came to see his initial impression of Irving as mistaken.

There are some hints, though, that even in his later years, Torrance continued to harbor scruples about at least the pneumatological aspect of Irving’s theology. During the BBC interview, when Torrance speaks of Irving’s faith in a charismatically active “living God,” he echoes his previously-published evaluation of Pentecostalism as “a recovery of belief in *God*, not some remote inactive deity, but the mighty living God who acts.” Yet that publication had gone on to critique the “Pentecostalist concentration upon phenomena” and human experience to the eclipsing of God’s “transcendent reality.”³⁰ Elsewhere Torrance argues that, while God remains free to work miracles, “there is no appointed *programme* of anything like ‘faith healing’ or miraculous activity of a kindred sort.” The usual “miraculous signs” that God grants the Church are the sacraments.³¹ This reserve explains why *Trinitarian Faith* only cites Smail’s Irving-indebted *Reflected Glory* once, on Christology — never on pneumatology or ecclesiology. It also explains why, when comparing the Torrance brothers’ coverage of Scottish theological history, we find much overlap in content with one striking difference: J. B.’s lecture on Irving’s Christology and pneumatology has no parallel in T. F.’s *Scottish Theology*, which

²⁸ Torrance, *Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, ii–iii, notes that in preparing the Auburn lectures for publication, he has “tidied them up here and there, and sometimes a little rewriting had to be done” (ii). He describes these lectures (in a delightful rhyme) as “rather rough-hewn and jejune” (ii) but makes no explicit disavowals of their content. He only clarifies the lectures’ gender-exclusive language (ii–iii).

²⁹ Compare Torrance, *Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, 122, 124–125, with Torrance, *Atonement*, 440. See Van Kuiken, *Christ’s Humanity*, 38.

³⁰ Thomas F. Torrance, “The Church in the New Era of Scientific and Cosmological Change,” in Ray S. Anderson, ed., *Theological Foundations for Ministry: Selected Readings for a Theology of the Church in Ministry* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 774–776 (emphasis Torrance’s).

³¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 149–150 (emphasis his).

breathes nary a word about Irving. And while devoting a full chapter to Irving's friend John McLeod Campbell, including a commendation of Campbell's "fallenness" Christology, T. F. makes no mention of the outbreak of charismata that accompanied Campbell's ministry and that Irving took as confirming his own Christology.³²

Whatever Torrance may have thought of Irving's views, however intentionally or unconsciously he inclined toward or against them, the question remains: How close were the two Scots' positions? To answer this question, we must go beyond Torrance's comments on Irving and compare their Christologies for ourselves. What we find is both continuity and discontinuity.

Caledonian Convergences

Irving's and Torrance's Christologies overlap at several points.³³ First, both of them distinguish between Christ's human nature as considered in isolation from his person and Christ's human nature as considered in union with his person. The former is "sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3); the latter, sinless. Irving explains,

Whether Christ's flesh is to be called *sinful* or *sinless*, ... both words are necessary to express its true character; sinful as he took it and had to deal with until the resurrection, sinless as he made it to become by

³² As recorded in Smail, *Reflected Glory*, 74.

³³ For the following comparisons and contrasts, I draw primarily on Torrance's Edinburgh lectures (due to their representative character and comprehensiveness; see Robert T. Walker, Editor's Foreword to Torrance, *Incarnation*, xi-xii) and on Irving's later writings. For a detailed argument against Dorries, *Edward Irving's Incarnational Christology*, and Elliott, "Edward Irving," that Irving's theology shifted considerably over the course of his ministry, see Tucker, "In Search of the Romantic Christ." I must respectfully dissent from the theory that Irving taught two conflicting Christologies, as proposed by Mark Rayburn Patterson, "Designing the Last Days: Edward Irving, The Albury Circle, and the Theology of *The Morning Watch*" (PhD thesis, King's College, London, 2001), <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/2928020/DX217304.pdf>. Patterson distinguishes between Irving's "Chalcedonian" Christology, in which Christ assumes fallen human nature, and Irving's "Docetic" millenarian Christology with its glorified Christ. Yet even Patterson admits that the ancient church would not have labeled such a view "Docetic" (154). His proposal presents as contradictory what orthodox Christology ever has held as complementary: Christ's state of humiliation and his state of exaltation. (The claim that premillennialism is Docetic surely would have surprised the anti-gnostic, pro-millennial Irenaeus of Lyons, as well as those church fathers who rejected "chiliasm" as too carnal an eschatology!) As for Irving's Chalcedonianism, see below.

taking it and holding it; sinful inasmuch as it is consubstantial with our flesh; sinless as it is his, in his person and by his person retained.³⁴

While Irving stresses the distinction of the terms *substance/nature* and *person*, Torrance employs the *anhypostasia-enhypostasia* couplet: anhypostatically, "God the Son ... became one with us in the continuity of our adamic and fallen existence in such a way as to make contact with us in the very roots of our sinning being"; yet enhypostatically, he "was not himself a sinner.... [He] did not himself repeat our 'original sin' but vanquished it, and broke its continuity within our human nature."³⁵

Second, in his very conception in Mary's womb, Christ's human nature became fully holy. According to Irving,

The substance of our Lord's human nature being a part of [Mary's] sinful substance, needed sanctification, and received it wholly and completely in the conception. And the sanctification which it received was not partial or incomplete, but wholly and perfectly received; *wholly* in respect to its totality, flesh, as well as soul, will, as well as reason, desires, affections, members, every thing which goes to complete human nature; *perfectly* as to degree, holy in no conventional sense, but really holy, holy as God is holy.³⁶

Compare Torrance: "[O]ur very existence is involved in original sin — but the birth of Jesus was a birth of the holy Son into that condition which far from acquiescing in its sin, resists it, sanctifying what sin had corrupted, and uniting it again to the purity of God."³⁷ Or as his letter to the editor emphatically stated: "[I]n the very act

³⁴ Edward Irving, *Christ's Holiness in Flesh, the Form, Fountain Head, and Assurance to Us of Holiness in Flesh* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1831), 93; see also Edward Irving, *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature* (London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1830), vii: "[W]henever I attribute sinful properties and dispositions and inclinations to our Lord's human nature, I am speaking of it considered as apart from Him, in itself."

³⁵ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 231–232. (Note: This and all further references to *Incarnation* refer to Torrance's published Edinburgh lectures, not to the volume he edited on the Nicene Creed.)

³⁶ Irving, *Christ's Holiness*, 78.

³⁷ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 100.

of taking our fallen Adamic nature the Son of God redeemed, renewed and sanctified it AT THE SAME TIME."³⁸

Third, this sanctification of sinful human nature is dynamic across the whole of Christ's earthly career. His human nature's hallowing *in utero* did not produce an immutable, stagnant sanctity; rather, it initiated a continuous conversion of sinful flesh into sinlessness that culminated at Calvary. This conversion is completed in every moment — there is no *gradual* replacement of sinfulness with holiness — but requires to be renewed every subsequent moment. Thus Irving writes of "Christ who, through his flesh, doth receive the gathering streams of all corruption, ... and yet is not overwhelmed with them, though sorely grieved, but ever as they come hath power to convert them into streams of living waters." Elsewhere he compares Christ's flesh to an animal bound on an altar for sacrifice: in this way, Christ kept his flesh's inclination toward sin in a state of impotence and remained utterly holy in his humanity.³⁹

For his part, Torrance traces the rising "intensity of battle within the person of Christ" from his childhood struggles to advance in wisdom and grace (Luke 2:52) to the agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha.⁴⁰ Throughout "the days of his flesh" (Hebrews 5:7), Christ "condemned sin in it; he overcame its temptations, resisted its downward drag in alienation from God, and converted it back in himself to obedience toward God, thus sanctifying it."⁴¹ Torrance's capitalized wording in his letter to the editor, therefore, must be interpreted dynamically rather than statically: when he writes, "The only human nature which our Lord HAD, therefore,

³⁸ Torrance, "Christ's human nature," 114.

³⁹ Irving, *Christ's Holiness*, 28 (quotation from this page), 37–44. On p. 91 he denies the proposition that "our Lord took our sinful nature, and by laborious operation upon it, was able *at length* to present it holy" (emphasis mine). See also Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine*, 66–67, where he seeks to distance himself from Bourignon's heresy that Christ's flesh *remained* sinfully corrupt.

⁴⁰ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 106–107 (quotation from this page), 110–119. Rather than translating the *proekopten* of Luke 2:52 with the generic "grew," Torrance echoes Barth, *CD I/2*, 158, who draws on its etymology of beating out metal blow by blow.

⁴¹ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 205; cf. Torrance, *Atonement*, 69–70, 163, 216. For further on this "downward drag," see Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 56–57, with its echoes of Athanasius, *Inc.* 4–10.

was utterly pure and sinless," the "HAD" indicates the condition *into which Christ was continuously bringing* his human nature.⁴²

Fourth, Christ's life of holiness in the flesh of sin was from first to last a life lived by the Holy Spirit. Irving never tires of repeating that it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ counteracted the law of sin in his flesh.⁴³ While Torrance places less accent on this point, he does rehearse the Spirit's role in Christ's birth, baptism, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection.⁴⁴

Fifth, Christ bore the sin of the world both *ontologically*, by being incarnate in fallen flesh, and *relationally*, through his sinless sympathy toward sinners.⁴⁵ Irving asks,

What made him capable of gathering within his heart the sins of all men? His holiness, his perfection of holy manhood.... Christ though Son of God was a perfect man, and therefore perfectly one with every other man; and every man's sin was his in the experience and feeling of it, just because he was himself holy and sinless. God was well pleased with him therefore, because thereby he felt as God intended man to feel, unity of substance with all other men, notwithstanding the distinctness of their personality.... There is not *my* flesh and *thy* flesh, but FLESH; there is not *my* reason and *thy* reason, but REASON.... The most holy man is the greatest sin-confessor; and a perfectly holy man,

⁴² See Torrance, *Incarnation*, 201: "But if it is our fallen humanity that [Christ] sinlessly assumed, in order to heal and sanctify it, not only through the act of assumption, but through a life of perfect obedience and a death in sacrifice, then we cannot state the doctrine of the hypostatic union statically but must state it *dynamically*, in terms of the whole course of Christ's life and obedience, from his birth to his resurrection" (emphasis his).

⁴³ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine*, vii–viii, 1, 3–4, 67; *Christ's Holiness*, 8–10, 38–39, 42; and throughout Edward Irving, *The Day of Pentecost, Or, The Baptism with the Holy Ghost* (London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1831).

⁴⁴ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 125, 135–37.

⁴⁵ Torrance thinks these two together as "onto-relations." See Gary W. Deddo, "The Importance of the Personal in the Onto-relational Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," in Paul D. Molnar and Myk Habets, eds., *T&T Clark Handbook of Thomas F. Torrance* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 143–160.

that is Christ, is the confessor of all sin.⁴⁶

Torrance likewise describes Christ's career from Jordan's banks to Calvary's hill as "enact[ing] in human flesh and human life, in his sinless solidarity with sinful man, the will of God to be one with man and to gather men and women into the heart of God." He was "pouring himself out in compassion and self-giving" even though his very compassion exposed the sin of others' hearts and aroused their hostility toward him.⁴⁷ He confessed our sin not only in word but in the whole action of his life and death.⁴⁸ He carried our fallen flesh through death into resurrection, and bore our rational mind in lifelong vicarious repentance (i.e. *metanoia*: change of mind) even into the hell of its ultimate alienation — *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* — and out again into reconciliation with God.⁴⁹

Finally, Christ makes atonement by reconciling sinful human nature with God in himself through his life, death, and resurrection. Atonement is thus ontological, not merely forensic. Furthermore, its scope is unlimited, taking in all who share the same human nature as Christ assumed. The doctrine of universal salvation, though, remains false. On these points, too, Irving and Torrance concur.⁵⁰

These half-dozen lines of consensus demark considerable common ground between Irving and Torrance on Christology. Yet their shared views do not tell the whole story. We turn now to probe their christological differences.

Chalcedonian Divergences

Ninety-nine years and ten months after Irving's tragic death in December 1834, young Torrance began his Bachelor of Divinity studies at New College, Edinburgh.

⁴⁶ Irving, *Christ's Holiness*, 61–62 (capitalization his).

⁴⁷ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 106–113, 132–138, 142–156 (quotations from 107 and 112, respectively); *Atonement*, 151–152.

⁴⁸ Torrance, *Atonement*, 88–91.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 209–242, 437–447.

⁵⁰ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine*, 88–95; Gavin Carlyle, ed., *The Collected Works of Edward Irving* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1864) 5:151–153, 164; Torrance, *Atonement*, esp. chs. 3–6.

There he met H. R. Mackintosh.⁵¹ Although Mackintosh was a critic of Irving, the two had something in common: a kenotic Christology. Mackintosh found fault with the two-natures Christology enshrined in the Definition of Chalcedon and held that in the Incarnation, Christ had “transposed” his divine attributes into “the form of concentrated potency rather than of full actuality.”⁵² For his own part, Irving seems to have been less than fully familiar with Chalcedon.⁵³ Although he detects in his opponents the heresies of Nestorianism and Eutychianism,⁵⁴ which Chalcedon ruled out, his own kenoticism runs afoul of the Chalcedonian claim that in Christ deity and humanity were united “without change” to *the divine nature*, not just to the human nature. Irving describes his understanding of kenosis in language that anticipates Mackintosh: the Incarnation was “the Son’s work of concentrating and humbling himself within the limited powers of a human will,” earthly knowledge,

⁵¹ McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 24 (who dates Torrance’s entry into New College to October 1934), 29–33.

⁵² H. R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, second edition (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913; repr. 1920), 292–300 (critique of Chalcedon), 463–507 (kenoticism; quotations from 477). In Torrance, “Appreciation,” 80–81, we encounter another example of his flattening tendency when he claims that Mackintosh eschewed “metaphysical speculation” about kenosis. Mackintosh, *Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, vii–viii, explicitly describes his kenotic material as “more or less speculative” and involving a “metaphysic of faith.”

⁵³ In *Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine*, 33–37, Irving consults the Three Creeds (Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian) but not the Definition of Chalcedon. In his anonymously-published *The Opinions Circulating Concerning Our Lord’s Human Nature, Tried by the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1830), 23, he remarks on the WCF’s line that Christ was “yet without sin” that this stipulation does not appear in the Three Creeds “because it never entered the mind of the primitive Church, that any one could suppose or assert a sinful substance to be taken into the divinity.” This stipulation, he says, was only introduced during the Reformation. Irving is oblivious to the fact that *Chalcedon* employed the line “without sin” (drawn from Hebrews 4:15). (For Irving’s admission of authorship of *Opinions Circulating*, see his *Christ’s Holiness*, xv–xvi.) Chalcedon — including its “without sin” — is discussed and quoted in an anonymous article, “On the Human Nature of Christ,” *The Morning Watch* (London: James Nisbet, 1830) vol. 1, 76, 82. Although Irving contributed to this journal, and although I, along with others, had previously taken him as this article’s author (see my *Christ’s Humanity*, 20, 183–188), his authorship of it has been effectively challenged now by Tucker, “In Search of the Romantic Christ,” 158–160 (a mild correction: Tucker incorrectly labels “we” and “our” language as “second person plural” rather than first person plural).

⁵⁴ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine*, 28, 44–45.

bodily presence, and creaturely ability so that he could no longer act beyond their confines.⁵⁵

By contrast, Torrance constructively affirms Chalcedon and denies kenoticism. Already at Auburn, he obliquely critiqued Mackintosh, stating that “the idea of a ‘kenosis’ or ‘emptying’ of attributes, or even a condensation or concentration into essence-form of the Divine capacities or properties, is irrelevant to the situation.”⁵⁶ By the time of his Edinburgh lectures and his forays into the dialogue between the natural and theological sciences, he could appeal to a “relational” rather than “receptacle” notion of space to support the traditional patristic and Reformed stance that the Son’s divine nature suffered no diminution when he became flesh.⁵⁷

Irving’s kenoticism contributes to a distinction-driven account of the Trinity’s action in Christ’s career. Neither his sinlessness nor his supernatural knowledge and deeds were due to the Son’s own divine power, which remained quiescent across his earthly life. The hypostatic union itself did not sanctify his flesh, for that would imply a Monophysite mixing together of deity and humanity. Rather, in his virginal conception, the Holy Spirit alone sanctified the nature assumed from his mother so that it existed in a regenerate condition. Thereafter, his divine personhood manifested itself in the perfect faith he ever expressed within his humanity. By that faith he wielded the Spirit’s enablement as a man — not as God — to maintain lifelong sinlessness. At his baptism the Spirit empowered him to do miracles and access heavenly wisdom, and at the same time he was indwelt by his Father. The Spirit’s empowering and the Father’s indwelling lasted until Gethsemane, at which time the Father and the Spirit withdrew so that the Son experienced his sufferings and death alone. Then the Spirit returned to raise him from the dead and exalt him

⁵⁵ Irving, *Day of Pentecost*, 70 (quotation from this page), 74–75, 62, 64–65. For further on Irving’s kenoticism, see Dorries, *Edward Irving’s Incarnational Christology*, 88–97.

⁵⁶ Torrance, *Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, 108–115 (quotation from 112).

⁵⁷ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 74–76 (kenosis), 199–210 (Chalcedon), 216–221 (the so-called *Extra Calvinisticum* and notions of space); cf. Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

to the Father's glory.⁵⁸ Irving's mentor Coleridge fretted that such a partitive account amounted to tritheism.⁵⁹

Underlying Irving's kenoticism-*cum*-Spirit Christology is a "contrastive/competitive" metaphysic in which God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and Christ's humanity each have individual "places" and powers that exist on the same metaphysical plane and that must be coordinated in a zero-sum game of give and take. This outlook stands starkly at odds with that of the premodern church, not least Chalcedon.⁶⁰ Irving was a nineteenth-century heir to the seventeenth century's "domestication of transcendence" that broke from previous generations by treating God as but one object among others in the universe.⁶¹

Torrance, on the other hand, benefitted from the Barthian revolution in theology that regained God's wholly-otherness, as well as the Einsteinian revolution in natural science that replaced atomistic analysis with field theory.⁶² Thus his trinitarianism refreshes patristic doctrines of divine simplicity,⁶³ noncontrastive transcendence, immutability, mutual indwelling (*perichoresis*), and inseparable

⁵⁸ Irving, *Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine*, vii–viii, 1–4, 31; *Christ's Holiness*, 8–10, 38–42; *Day of Pentecost*, 16–20, 26–29, 64–71, 74–76, 90.

⁵⁹ Elliott, "Edward Irving," 146, 149–150, 160, citing H. J. Jackson and G. Whalley, eds., *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Marginalia* (London: Routledge, 1992) vol. 3, 17, 41–43, and Carl Woodring, ed., *Table Talk* (London: Routledge, 1990) vol. 1, 127–128, respectively.

⁶⁰ Chris E. W. Green, "Why Did God Become a Man of the Spirit? Toward a Wesleyan Pentecostal Spirit-Christology," in Jason E. Vickers and Jerome Van Kuiken, gen. eds., *Methodist Christology: From the Wesleys to the Twenty-First Century* (Nashville: Wesley's Foundery Books, 2020), 179–191 (quotation from 179). Green detects this metaphysical presupposition in multiple contemporary Spirit Christologies.

⁶¹ William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

⁶² On the latter's relation to Torrance's thought, see Ritchie, *T. F. Torrance*, 7, 86–89.

⁶³ Although divine simplicity has no entry in the index of Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, second edition (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), pp. 130, 236 briefly affirm the doctrine. Steve Holmes has argued that Torrance typically uses the *homoousion* to do the same work as the doctrine of divine simplicity. See Stephen R. Holmes, "Simplicity in Fourth-century Nicene Theology and T. F. Torrance's *Homoousion*," keynote presentation to the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship annual meeting, Nov. 19, 2021, available at <https://tftorrance.org/meetings/>. Cf. Sang Hoon Lee, "The Doctrine of Divine Simplicity in T.F. Torrance's Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 23.2 (2021), 198–214; doi:10.1111/ijst.12478.

operations (patterned prepositionally: all things are *from* the Father, *through* the Son, *in* the Spirit). Everything the Incarnate Son does and suffers — including enduring crucifixion — he does and suffers divinely as well as humanly, in such full communion of being and act with the Father and the Spirit as to avoid any tritheistic division of labor.⁶⁴ When he is born as an infant, he simultaneously reigns on heaven's throne. If he receives the Holy Spirit as a man, he does so out of the eternal communion with the Spirit that he enjoys as God. While the Father raises him from the dead, he also has authority to take up his own life again.⁶⁵ Far from seeing the Incarnation as a kenotic hiatus from the Son's habitual divine actions and relations, Torrance interprets it through a Chalcedonian prism as the paradigm for understanding the general relationship between God and the cosmos.⁶⁶

Irving's expositions of his doctrines of Christ and the Spirit had an intensely pastoral intent: to motivate his parishioners to live up to the full benefits offered by the gospel. At the ecclesiastical trial that ended with his excommunication, Irving expressed this point eloquently, exclaiming, "This is no question of scholastic theology. I speak for the sanctification of men. I wish my flock to be holy; and, unless the Lord Jesus has contended with sin, as they are commanded to do, how can they be holy when they follow Him? Can I ask the people to do or suffer more than He did?"⁶⁷ In his writings, Irving holds Christ up as an example for Christians to follow — and not simply in sinlessness within sinful flesh.⁶⁸ The anointing of the Spirit that enabled Christ as a mortal man to resist sin also gifted him to perform miracles and speak prophetic truth. All those who are baptized with the same Spirit

⁶⁴ Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, esp. 161, 196–199, 215–216, and the whole of ch. 9. Torrance explicitly states that Christ was "crucified in unbroken oneness with the Father and the Spirit" and applauds Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God* for recognizing this truth, then adds, "but his somewhat tritheistic understanding of the unity, rather than the oneness, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in spite of what he intends, damages this insight" (247, incl. n.39).

⁶⁵ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 216–219, 125; *Atonement*, 213–218, respectively.

⁶⁶ Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 220–221, thereby setting the stage for his discussions of providence (221–234) and divine immutability and impassibility (235–256).

⁶⁷ Irving's defense at his trial (Mar. 13, 1833), in [Margaret] Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, second revised edition (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862) vol. 2, 346.

⁶⁸ Christ as an example for Christians' sanctification is the theme of Irving, *Christ's Holiness*.

should imitate all Christ's deeds and words, including his miracle working and "perpetual infallibility of thought, speech, and behaviour"!⁶⁹ Once again, the contrastive metaphysic is at play in a univocal account of the relationship between Christ and Christians: because both occupy the same plane of being, with no recourse to Christ's divine nature to give him any special advantage, his experience *can* and so *ought to* be entirely imitable by us.

Torrance's noncontrastive metaphysic delivers a different understanding of the relationship of believers to their Savior. In an article published two years after Auburn, Torrance draws parallels between the christological heresies excluded by Chalcedon and their cognate anthropological or soteriological heresies. Thus Docetism, for instance, compares to theological determinism by undermining the reality of human agency in Christ and Christians, respectively. Likewise, Nestorianism and synergism both falsely posit a divine-human roughly equal partnership. The correlate to anthropocentric Ebionism is Pelagianism.⁷⁰ Since Torrance at Auburn had scored Irving's Christology as "almost ... Ebionite," the corollary would be that Irving's expectations of the Christian life overstress believers' capability and responsibility to wield the Spirit's power to achieve sinlessness, miracles, and infallibility. Already above we noted Torrance's nervousness about the charismata and his denial of the normativity of wonderworking. So too would he eschew any claims of Christian sinlessness or infallibility, for the whole Christian life is one of moral and mental repentance.⁷¹ Rather than focusing on our own spiritual efforts or experiences (even those we most attribute to the Holy Spirit's activity), Torrance urges us to keep our attention on Christ's radically substitutionary-representative role: in his vicarious humanity, he fully embodies not only God's gracious initiative toward us but our response to God. We find sinlessness, infallibility, and miraculous power in him, not in ourselves. Certainly, the Spirit actualizes Christ's benefits within us, but not insofar as we imitate Christ as an external exemplar to be perfectly copied; instead, we

⁶⁹ This is the burden of Irving, *Day of Pentecost* (quotation from 54; on the following page, Irving rejects the exclusivity of papal infallibility: the gift of infallibility is for all Christians).

⁷⁰ Thomas F. Torrance, "Predestination in Christ," *Evangelical Quarterly* 13 (1941), 129–131.

⁷¹ For an extended exploration of intellectual repentance and believers' fallible yet genuine sharing in the "mind of Christ," see the epilogue to Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–447.

participate in Christ as internally incorporated — with all our shortcomings — into his already-perfected life.⁷²

In sum, Torrance's later statements about Irving are more positive than his initial assessment at Auburn, accenting the numerous points of agreement between their Christologies. Nevertheless, young Torrance's Auburn complaint at Irving's bracketing off of Christ's divine nature from both his humanity and the Holy Spirit flags up enduring metaphysical differences between the two theologians. The final section of this essay will suggest some implications of our findings for constructive theological work.

Theology in Spirited Reconstruction

Mary Campbell of Gareloch, Scotland, was an invalid who encountered the teaching of Irving and his associates. Irving describes its effect on her:

She came to see ... that all the works of Christ were done by the man anointed with the Holy Ghost, and not by the God mixing himself up with the man.... [A]nd the end of the whole mystery of his incarnation is to shew unto mortal men what every one of them, through faith in his name, shall be able to perform.... She straitway argued, if Jesus as a man in my nature thus spake and thus performed mighty works by the Holy Ghost, which he even promiseth to me, then ought I in the same nature, by the same Spirit, to do likewise "the works which he did, and greater works than these."⁷³

On March 28, 1830, she spoke in tongues and, soon after, forsook her sickbed. So began a charismatic revival of prophecy, tongues, and healings in western Scotland that by the following year had spread south to Irving's own London church.⁷⁴ Mary

⁷² Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, second edition (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmer & Howard, 1992), ch. 4, gives a pithy synopsis of this point. See also Christian D. Kettler, "'Jesus Christ is Our Human Response to God': Divine and Human Agency in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *T&T Clark Handbook of Thomas F. Torrance*, 207–221.

⁷³ Dorries, *Edward Irving's Incarnational Christology*, 45, quoting Edward Irving, "Facts Connected With Recent Manifestations of Spiritual Gifts," *Fraser's Magazine* (Jan. 1832), 757.

⁷⁴ Patterson, "Designing the Last Days," 175–181.

Campbell's testimonial captures the twin-sided attraction of Irving's doctrine of Christ: on the one hand, comfort that he has become just like us in our weakness; on the other hand, encouragement that we can become just like him in his power.

If a positive feature of Irving's view is its existential relevance and a negative is its almost-Ebionism, then Torrance's teaching reverses these polarities with its robustly Chalcedonian Christology and its "pneumatological Docetism." Simeon Zahl uses this phrase to describe the "*complacency with theological abstractions*" in Torrance's theology, which expounds at length the objective doctrinal content of the Christian faith but says next to nothing about the Spirit-enabled experiential outworking of these doctrines. Zahl insists that good theology has "affective salience" — it impacts how we feel and live.⁷⁵

In responding to Zahl, let us start with a caveat: Asking how a doctrine makes us feel or behave is insufficient to determine its truth-value. Consider Mary Campbell's experience, which she and her friends, Irving himself, and some present-day Pentecostals have seen as confirming Irving's doctrine. Yet 1830 also saw an American named Joseph Smith establish the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Early Mormonism, too, featured glossolalia and prophecy,⁷⁶ plus a "fallenness" Christology coupled with a full-bloomed tritheism (indeed, polytheism) beyond anything Coleridge scented in Irving.⁷⁷ Additionally, that same year French visionary Catherine Labouré received visitations from the Blessed Virgin that launched the nineteenth-century "Age of Mary" and the dogma of the

⁷⁵ Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); quotations from pp. 99, 70 (emphasis his), and 4, respectively.

⁷⁶ Tucker, "In Search of the Romantic Christ," 32–34, notes several parallels between Irvingism and Mormonism, as well as another, slightly later American development: Adventism.

⁷⁷ Brigham Young, "Attention and Reflection Necessary to An Increase of Knowledge — Self-Control — Unity of the Godhead and of the People of God," discourse delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, Nov. 29, 1857, available at *Journal of Discourses* vol. 6, 93–101, <http://jod.mrm.org/6/93>. Note Young's univocal treatment of unity among believers and within the Trinity. Cf. Terryl L. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel. Vol. 1, The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), chs. 8–16, 21.

Immaculate Conception — a dogma antithetical to Irving’s Christology,⁷⁸ yet one later confirmed by visions and healings at Lourdes.⁷⁹ Marianism, Mormonism, and Irvingism each could appeal to supporting supernatural phenomena that excited emotion and motivated piety, and each still has affective salience for millions of adherents,⁸⁰ but the three movements hold apparently incompatible doctrines.⁸¹

While it is not the case that whatever has affective salience is sound doctrine, the converse surely is true: whatever is sound doctrine has affective salience. If “the unassumed is the unhealed,” then the gospel implicates us holistically. Here further context from Torrance could moderate Zahl’s criticism. Recall the quotation at the head of this essay. Barth’s “fallenness” Christology had profound affective salience for young Torrance when first he read of it: “Overwhelmed ..., I fell to the ground on my knees trembling in awe and wonder.”⁸² In assigning the same passage to his own students, presumably he hoped they would feel likewise. Torrance’s teaching itself has had a similar effect on some:

Often in my study of Torrance’s work I have found myself on my knees *coram deo* lost in wonder, praise and thanksgiving to the glorious Triune God, overwhelmed by the power and grandeur of the Gospel. I find myself personally, spiritually and theologically transformed.⁸³

⁷⁸ Carlyle, *Collected Works* vol. 1, 589; Irving, *Christ’s Holiness*, 78. Torrance, too, presents it as diametrically opposed to his Christology: see Torrance, “Christ’s human nature,” 114.

⁷⁹ See the introduction to Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Penguin, 1999).

⁸⁰ Tucker, “In Search of the Romantic Christ,” 6, notes that an offshoot of the Catholic Apostolic Church that formed out of Irving’s ministry now has over ten million members.

⁸¹ Note, though, that Roman Catholic charismatic Thomas G. Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), attempts to affirm both a “fallenness” Christology and the Immaculate Conception. Likewise, Stephen H. Webb sought in multiple books to bridge the divide between Mormonism and non-LDS Christianity, especially his own Catholicism.

⁸² This testimonial appears in Torrance’s experientially-rich epilogue to *Atonement*, 441–442. Zahl ignores this material while mining *Atonement* for theological abstractions: see *Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*, 96, 98–99.

⁸³ Elmer M. Colyer, untitled recollection, *Participatio* 1 (2009), 18, <https://tftorrance.org/journal/v1/participatio-2009-v1-04-Colyer-15-19.pdf>.

.. .

It was clear that while academic, hugely stimulating and informative, [Torrance's] lectures did not separate mind and heart, or intellect and faith. The short prayer at the beginning of the class, when "TFT" closed his eyes really tightly ... was invariably a beautiful and succinct summary of the whole lecture.⁸⁴

Zahl misses counterevidence from the works of Torrance's from which he lifts damning abstractions. For instance, he showcases a quotation from *Trinitarian Faith's* foreword to illustrate Torrance's dearth of specifics on how the Trinity impacts Christian life individually and corporately.⁸⁵ Yet the immediate context of the line Zahl quotes is a discussion in affectively-charged language of how the Holy Spirit "confronts us with the ineffability and sublime majesty of God ... and acts upon us in a quiet and gentle self-effacing way" so that "we are brought near to God and are given to share in his divine life, light and love." Torrance then specifies that this sharing means membership in the church, which is characterized by the Nicene marks of unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity.⁸⁶ In the chapter that this section of the foreword previews, Torrance promotes the following affects, actions, and agents: "reverence for the Holy Scriptures"; exemplary church fathers who were "deeply moved" by God's "unrestricted majesty"; prayer and worship; preserving "the bond of peace" by avoiding heresies and schisms and by holding the church in "awe and veneration" rather than contempt; being "directed away from ourselves" toward Christ in baptism; declining to dishonor God through rebaptism; church leaders as servants, not sovereigns; evangelism of all people in all places; and loss of fear of death through hope in the "triumphant reality" of resurrection.⁸⁷ All this comes near the end of a book whose first chapter, "Faith and Godliness," sets the tone for the rest. Earlier in the foreword from which Zahl selectively quotes, Torrance had summarized this first chapter's theme: the

⁸⁴ Walker, Editor's Foreword to Torrance, *Incarnation*, [x]. See Torrance, *Atonement*, 451, for fragments of two such prayers.

⁸⁵ Zahl, *Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*, 71–72, quoting Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 9.

⁸⁶ Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 9–10.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 247, 249–251, 273, 282, 284–300.

importance of reverence, worship, “passionate commitment,” and “listening obedience” for doing theology rightly.⁸⁸ Affects and praxis are not wholly absent from Torrance’s thought, but they need more scholarly attention.⁸⁹

Whatever nuance Zahl’s rebuke requires, though, even Torrance’s sympathizers often admit his imbalance and seek to redress it.⁹⁰ For instance, Christian Kettler has explored the relationship of Christ’s vicarious humanity to the affects of faith, doubt, joy, despair, and love.⁹¹ Alister McGrath has supplemented Torrance’s theology of objective space and time with a theology of subjectively meaningful *place* and *history*.⁹² Others’ efforts have the additional benefit of narrowing the gap between Torrance and Irving. Thomas Noble from the Wesleyan tradition and Alexandra Radcliff from the Pentecostal-charismatic tradition have

⁸⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁹ For recent steps toward that goal, see E. Jerome Van Kuiken, “‘Not I, but Christ’: Thomas F. Torrance on the Christian Life” and Myk Habets, “*Theologia Is Eusebeia*: Thomas F. Torrance’s Church Homiletics,” *T&T Clark Handbook of Thomas F. Torrance*, 243–257, 259–276, respectively; Kevin J. Navarro, *Trinitarian Doxology: T. F. and J. B. Torrance’s Theology of Worship as Participation by the Spirit in the Son’s Communion with the Father* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020); Joseph H. Sherrard, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian: The Ascended Christ and the Ministry of the Church*, New Explorations in Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021).

⁹⁰ For documentation, see Van Kuiken, “‘Not I,’” 253, 256–257; cf. Sherrard, *T. F. Torrance as Missional Theologian*, 189, 221–225.

⁹¹ Christian D. Kettler, *The God Who Believes: Faith, Doubt, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2005); *The God Who Rejoices: Joy, Despair, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010); *The God Who Loves and is Loved: The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Response of Love* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020).

⁹² Alister McGrath, “Place, history and incarnation: On the subjective aspects of christology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 75.2 (2022), 137–147; <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930622000278>. McGrath accepts Zahl’s critique of Torrance and seeks to supplement Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969, 1997) by attending to the land and history of Israel. McGrath is correct that Torrance’s book neglects these. Yet the sequel, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, does reflect on Israel’s history and literature (ch. 1) as well as the key events in Christ’s personal history (chs. 2–8). Likewise, Torrance’s Edinburgh lectures locate *Space, Time and Incarnation’s* material within extensive coverage of Christ’s personal history and its background in Israel’s history: see Torrance, *Incarnation*, 216–221, within the context of the lectures as a whole.

offered christologically-rooted optimistic accounts of subjective sanctification.⁹³ “Evangelical Calvinist” Myk Habets has contributed to the flourishing field of Spirit Christology.⁹⁴ Such efforts incorporate into Torrancean theology Irving’s motifs of Christian holiness, the charismata, and Christ’s reliance on the Spirit without succumbing to a contrastive/competitive metaphysic and its leanings toward Ebionism, tritheism, and Pelagianism.⁹⁵

Lastly, given how this essay has revised my former study of Torrance’s reception of Irving, does that study’s constructive proposal now need revision, too? My proposal aimed to bring a measure of resolution to the christological debate between “fallenness” and “unfallenness” partisans by unearthing the fourfold common ground shared by many of them beneath terminological differences: 1. Humanity outside of Christ exists under all the effects of the Fall, both moral (original sin) and amoral (temptation, suffering, mortality).⁹⁶ 2. At Christ’s conception, his human nature was freed from the power of sin. 3. Throughout Christ’s life on earth, he suffered the amoral effects of the Fall but 4. not its moral effects, for he remained wholly sinless.⁹⁷

⁹³ Thomas A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013); Alexandra S. Radcliff, *The Claim of Humanity in Christ: Salvation and Sanctification in the Theology of T. F. and J. B. Torrance*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 222 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016). One also might list Thomas Smail as synthesizing Torrancean and Pentecostal-charismatic elements, though he has been faulted for misunderstanding Torrance. See the analyses of Smail’s *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), 109–112 in Christian D. Kettler, *The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 139–141, and Marty Folsom’s article in this volume of *Participatio*.

⁹⁴ E.g., Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 129 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010); “The Fallen Humanity of Christ: A Pneumatological Clarification of the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance,” *Participatio* 5 (2015), 18–44. For a recent state-of-the-field survey, see Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., *T&T Clark Introduction to Spirit Christology* (London: T&T Clark, 2022).

⁹⁵ Note again the plea of Green, “Why Did God,” for a noncontrastive Spirit Christology.

⁹⁶ These latter are “amoral” in the sense that they do not automatically determine the moral state of the one experiencing them (to be tempted or feel pain is distinct from sinning).

⁹⁷ Van Kuiken, *Christ’s Humanity*, 165–166. The numbered points above reflect the more recent version of my proposal put forward in Jerome Van Kuiken, “Sinless Savior in Fallen Flesh? Toward Clarifying and Closing the Debate,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 64.2 (2021), 327–340; see 339.

I believe that the possibility of consensus between the two camps still stands provided they are open to a *dynamic* reading of Points 2–4. That is, as described earlier, Christ’s conception may be seen as initiating a lifelong continuous conversion of his human nature from vicarious sinfulness to sinlessness that culminated in his death and resurrection. Such a reading fits well with Barth’s actualism,⁹⁸ which Torrance echoes and Irving foreshadows. It clarifies the continuity Torrance finds between himself and prior Scottish theologians — even adherents of the Westminster tradition.⁹⁹ It coheres with evangelicals’ traditional emphasis on Calvary rather than Bethlehem as the crux of God’s dealing with sin through Christ.¹⁰⁰ May it evoke in those who embrace it the same doxological response as Torrance’s at Basel! And may Irving, the “Angel of Regent Square,” remind us in a chastened manner of the Spirit’s role in Points 2–4 and their implications for Christian living. If so, then both Torrance’s and our own wrestling with him will end in a blessing.

⁹⁸ George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30–32.

⁹⁹ That is, Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, interprets their Christologies from within his dynamic frame of reference.

¹⁰⁰ See the analysis and proposal put forth by Ritchie, *T. F. Torrance*.