

“THE ONE FOR THE MANY” THEME IN JAMES TORRANCE’S THEOLOGY

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Abstract: *The theme of the one for the many is a golden thread weaving its way through the heart of Torrance’s understanding of the Person and atoning work of Jesus Christ. Distinct from a Platonic connotation, it expresses the yearning and relentless determination of the Triune God to reclaim creation from its dysfunction and realize its true destiny in personal union and communion with the Triune God of grace. Anchored in the manifold richness of God’s outgoing love as Father, Son and Spirit, the God’s covenant relationship with Israel is decidedly marked by its commission to be the one for the many in the outworking of God’s redemptive plan. From Israel’s history we find crucially illuminating categories by which to understand the Person and priestly atoning work of the Incarnate Son of God, whose humanity is not merely the instrumental means but the vicarious venue wherein atoning grace is realized for us on our behalf, yet which includes us. The Christian life is not merely imitation of Christ but lifelong response of worship and trusting obedience in God, enabled and sanctified by participation in the One Truly Efficacious Response of Christ made for us in our place. As the One Body of Christ, the Church is called to participate in Christ’s ongoing priestly ministry in loving service to the world.*

On the occasion of James Torrance’s retirement from the theology faculty at the University of Aberdeen in the late 1980s, his B.D. students presented him with a huge and most ambitiously frosted sheet cake. Reproduced in colored icing with painstaking detail on the surface of the cake was what any theology student of Torrance would quickly recognize and refer to affectionately as “the diagram.” Such a diagram, ubiquitously present throughout his teaching, was Torrance’s attempt to depict God’s redemptive plan in terms of its triune outworking of relationship with Israel, Jesus and the Church. Inasmuch as postgraduate



students were also included in this celebration, I found myself gravitating to the table where the cake had been cut and was now being distributed. Happily ensconced in devouring my allotted piece, I turned to my esteemed mentor and asked him this question: "Professor, how are we to understand Paul's statement in Romans 12: 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated'?" I will never forget his response. Looking somewhat quizzically at me, he said simply, "You're *eating* it!" Apparently, my piece of cake was taken from the part of the diagram which dealt with Israel's elective role toward God and toward the world, expressed in lines indicating an all-important link from the one to the many.

Such an endearing memory has over the years seared home in my mind how replete this theme of the one for the many is throughout Torrance's thought. Richly embedded within it are hermeneutical clues which shed light on some of the most pivotal aspects of his theology. I would venture to say that it permeates the entire dogmatic landscape, figuring into Torrance's understanding of virtually every core doctrine of the Christian faith.

Rooted in the Outgoing Love of the Trinity

One could say with ample justification that this one for the many theme gives expression to the biblical notion of election. For Torrance, as for Barth, election is grounded in God's self-determination as the one who freely moves lovingly toward the other.¹ In this sense one can discern elective elements of the one for the many even within the Triune Being of God. For Torrance the doctrine of God has nothing to do with alien concepts of a static, impassible, Unmoved Mover, which owes more to ancient Greek thought than to the biblical witness. Rather, a trinitarian portrait of God is saturated with notions of eternally dynamic, self-giving, outgoing loving interchange among Father, Son and Spirit. Reminiscent of John Zizioulas' book *Being As Communion*, which was the subject of a postgraduate seminar of which I was a part under the tutelage of Torrance, God's Being is not triune merely as a tangential expression of how God relates externally to the world though God could be something else within his eternal being; rather, Torrance is strongly insistent, along with his brother T. F. Torrance, that what God shows himself to be in relating to the world is utterly consonant with who God is in God's uttermost Being. The relations of Father, Son and Spirit

1 I have elaborated on Barth's view of this under the heading "The Grace of Election: God's Self-determination to Be For Us" in my book *Representation and Substitution in the Atonement Theologies of Dorothee Sölle, John Macquarrie and Karl Barth* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 198–200.

are not add-ons to God's Being; rather, they *constitute* the oneness of nature shared among them. In the most intimate sense each triune member mutually indwells the others in perichoretic oneness-amidst-diversity. God exists in no other way than as this onto-relational triune reality, as God's self-revelation in Jesus reveals.²

This fundamental triune vantage point colors all of God's redemptive activity. The intratriune dynamic of Father, Son and Spirit being for the other, moving toward each other in an eternal, euphoric embrace (or, to capture the dynamism even more strongly, an eternally vibrant "dance" of love and joy, as some have termed it),³ is a suitable prelude to how Torrance construes election. To speak of election, or predestination, as Torrance sees it, is not to invoke a principle God wields by which to dispense grace to some and not to others. It neither precedes grace (i.e., as a pre-selection of who will be saved, which Christ is then assigned to execute in rescuing those elected individuals — as 5-point Calvinists might contend) nor follows grace (i.e., as a consequence of a prior human choice for God, which God foreknows and rewards with the gift of salvation — as Armenians might contend). Election *is* grace, God's gracious will in moving toward the world to reclaim us from our self-destructive ways and realize his unfathomably good purposes to set all things right that we might share in the overflow of his triune love. It is God's relentless self-determination to be *for* us, despite our mutinous defection from God.

Israel's Mission: The Particular for the Sake of the Universal

Once election is seen first and foremost as the heart and will of the one Electing God reaching out to redeem and restore the many in the sense of the *entire creation*, not merely a pre-selected subset, then we are in a position to appreciate

2 Though we might speak of the Trinity as the ontological "signature" of God's Being from all eternity, it is abundantly clear throughout the writings of both J. B. and T. F. Torrance that our *noetic* grasp of this reality is unmistakably incarnationally accessed. That is to say, it is grounded and anchored in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. The term *homoousios* (i.e. of the same substance or nature) is frequently employed to undergird the premise that since "only God knows God," our knowledge of who God is must derive solely from Jesus whose being is unequivocally *homoousios* with God and therefore fully divine. That he is at the same time and without compromise fully human (*homoousios* with us) creates our accessibility to real knowledge of God as mediated by the Spirit who unites us to him by faith.

3 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1943), 152-153.; cf. also Baxter Kruger, *The Great Dance* (Jackson, MI: Perichoresis Press, 2000).

the stratagem that underlies the various biblical expressions of the one for the many concept. God chose Israel among all nations not because God was playing favorites and did not care about any other people but so that Israel might become the particular vessel through whose relationship with God played out on the stage of history all nations might ultimately come to know God's heart and their desperate need to be reconciled with him. Understood from this context, the statement previously mentioned — "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated" — is not an expression of prejudicial preference but a condensed way of referring to God's decision to work in and through the particularity of Israel's history (the one) with the eventual goal of blessing all nations (the many). Paul's vigorous argument in the book of Galatians for the legitimacy of preaching the Gospel of grace to the Gentiles attests to the universal scope of God's mercy, embedded at the outset in the covenant promises established with Abraham.⁴

Seen in this light, God's will is not driven by two competing purposes — to extend mercy to some but withhold it from others. Rather, God's heart is singularly pitched toward rescuing, saving, restoring and renewing his entire damaged creation. It is through this lens that we come to appreciate the various manifestations of election in the history of Israel. Israel's status of being chosen by God carries with it both privilege and responsibility, summoning them to a life of holiness and witness to the world. Their calling to be God's people both conveys blessing and calls them to the mission of being the conduit of blessing to others, a light to the Gentiles — one nation charged with responsibility for witnessing to and benefiting the many.

Within Israel's history we see further expressions of election. Following the exodus event of liberation from oppression in Egypt the firstborn male offspring of every womb were set apart as belonging to the Lord. Every firstborn son was to be redeemed with a sacrificial animal as a sign of remembrance to commemorate God's mighty act of delivering his people from their distress — the one (firstborn sons) representing the redemption of the many (the people of Israel).⁵ The role of the Levites is yet another example of God's elective tactics at work. The tribe of Levi was designated as those charged with special priestly functions to facilitate the worship life of the community, anticipating the day when the true Priest, God's Son, would come. As such they did not receive the same kind of allotment of land territory in the Promised Land as the other eleven tribes of Israel, though they were granted 48 cities interspersed throughout

4 Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8: "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'"

5 Exodus 13:11-16.

Israel, precisely because their mission was to assist the many in their devotional response to God.⁶

Torrance sees the preeminent depiction of the one for the many concept within the life of Israel as focused on the role of the high priest on the Day of Atonement.⁷ Once a year the people of God would gather before the high priest, their divinely appointed representative, symbolically bringing their collective guilt and sins accumulated over the year to him in anticipation of his mediation on their behalf before God. The names of each of the twelve tribes inscribed on onyx stones inlaid on his breastplate symbolized the fact that he was acting on their behalf as their representative. The high priest would then engage in ceremonial washings, don special linen garments, and sprinkle himself with the blood of a sacrificed animal to atone for his own sins prior to discharging his ministry on behalf of the people. Two goats were brought before the priest, one to be sacrificed in atonement for the sins of the people and the other to be designated the scapegoat who would be driven into the wilderness symbolically carrying away the guilt of the people. In this ritual the high priest would lay his hands upon the animals vicariously confessing both the people's transgressions and affirming God's righteous judgment upon them. Then the priest would collect the spilled blood of the slain animal and enter the Holy of Holies, once again acting vicariously to intercede on behalf of the people, pleading with God to remember his covenant promises and petitioning for his mercy. Torrance cites Calvin's commentary on Hebrews 6:19 to underscore the notion that the high priest was not acting merely as an individual but in his representative capacity on behalf of the many. Even though it was only the high priest who appeared before the altar, the people saw the high priest's mediatory acts as *including* them: "All Israel entered in his person."⁸

Eve and "Pre-redeemed" Mary

In turning to the New Testament Torrance offers an interesting application of the one for the many theme in relation to Mary, the mother of Jesus. In striking similarity to the parallelism of Adam with Jesus in Romans 5:12–21, Torrance

6 J. B. Torrance, "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ" in T. F. Torrance, *The Incarnation*, (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press), 137.

7 James Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 56. Cf. also "The Vicarious Humanity and Priesthood of Christ in the Theology of John Calvin," unpublished paper, pp. 7–8.

8 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 49.

perceives a correlation between Eve and Mary.⁹ Through the disobedience of the first woman (Eve) death intruded; through the obedience of the second woman (Mary), who said yes to God in freely offering up her body to God for his purposes, life came through the birth of the Savior. Careful not to suggest that Mary's obedience rendered her in any way a co-redemptrix along with Jesus, Torrance nevertheless refers to Mary as the one through whom God's promises on behalf of the human race (the many) were fulfilled. God's gracious choice of her to be the mother of Jesus is met on her part with the perfect response to her election. In that response grace is conceived. She becomes the symbol of grace, the perfect paradigm of sovereign electing grace and free will comingling without diminution of divinity or compromise of human freedom. God's election of her evokes and enables the perfect response of faith. Torrance goes so far as to say that through her faithful response to God, she becomes an appropriate symbol of the Church participating in Christ predicated on the fact that she herself participates as one "pre-redeemed"¹⁰ by the blood of the Son she will birth. The contemporary song "Mary, Did You Know?"¹¹ captures this sense well. As the song imaginatively depicts Mary contemplating the wonder and magnitude of the angelic announcement that God has chosen her to bring the Savior into the world, we hear this thought-provoking lyric: "This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you."

Incarnation and the Double Movement of Grace

Of course, central to the biblical drama is God's redemptive grace manifested in the Incarnate Son of God, the supreme expression of the Triune God's search-and-rescue mission for human beings seemingly bent on self-destruction. For both Torrance brothers, the historical outworking of God's relationship with the people of Israel is not mere window-dressing, a sort of Plan A that didn't work out and therefore necessitated Plan B implemented by Jesus. As T. F. Torrance put it, it was through Israel's tumultuous relationship with God — increasingly uncomfortable as they were over time brought ever nearer to a holy God — the vital categories were forged by which the character of God, the depth of human alienation and the provisions for overcoming that alienation could be meaningfully related to the atoning mission of Jesus.¹²

9 J. B. Torrance, *Systematic Theology II* unpublished course notes — 7/17/87.

10 J. B. Torrance, "The Contribution of John Duns Scotus (c. 1265–1308) to the Theology of the Christian Church," pp.4–5. Unpublished paper.

11 Words and music by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene

12 T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1983), 16–19.

Once again, Torrance resonates with Barth in seeing election not as a mysterious decree determined on some basis apart from Christ but rather as God coming in human form as the person of Jesus to a desperately needy world. The incarnation is neither God choosing an already existing human being in whom to dwell and adopt as his intermediary nor God changing into a human being so that he is no longer God. To safeguard the undiminished divinity and uncompromised humanity of Jesus, the early Church Fathers' gravitated to the words *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*, a distinction Torrance finds most helpful. *Anhypostasia* affirms the notion that the Son of God, without ceasing to be divine, also became human, assuming the human nature of all humanity. If there were no Son of God who became incarnate, there would be no Jesus, for he is the sole Subject of Jesus' personhood. *Enhypostasia* affirms the concrete reality of Jesus' existence as a genuine human person; he is not an ideal abstraction or a docetic charade of merely appearing to be human. No, he is bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh, truly in solidarity with us.

One of the great contributions of the Torrance brothers to an understanding of Jesus' atoning mission is their solid grasp of the Nicene-Chalcedonian categories of Christ's identity as fully human and fully God not as static descriptions of Jesus' incarnate makeup but as functioning *dynamically* throughout Jesus' whole ministry. One can no more interpret Jesus' ministry as mostly divine actions and only incidentally human than one can construe Jesus' actions as primarily human — a man like us, though ahead of his time, yet one through whom God worked in powerful ways. On the contrary, from Bethlehem to Calvary to the empty tomb to his ultimate ascension into heaven, Jesus must be viewed at every stage of his existence through the dual lens of divine and human actions inseparably interwoven, as if looking through binoculars with both eyes wide open. This is where the category of representation is so useful. As fully divine, Jesus represents God to us. His words and acts are God's words and deeds addressing and engaging with us. At the same time, Jesus as fully human represents us to God — the faithful human counterpart and covenant partner of God whose entire life of faithful, trusting obedience to God perfectly fulfills that role in a way that neither Israel nor we can do.

In my teaching I find that this latter sense of Jesus' representative role — representing us to the Father — becomes difficult for many of my students to grasp. By and large, they have little problem envisioning Jesus as God-with-us, coming to exert his divine powers to extricate us from our entanglements in sin and thus fulfill the covenant promise from the side of God toward humankind: "I will be your God . . ." They might even acknowledge Jesus' humanness, largely

in terms of such mundane acts as experiencing fatigue, feelings hunger pangs such as during his 40 days in the wilderness while being tested. But what poses the real obstacle for them is grappling with the idea that Jesus' entire life of faithful, trusting obedience to the Father constitutes the covenantal response which fulfills the covenant relationship from the human side as well. The idea that Jesus' entire life, not just his death, could constitute the acceptable human response to the Father in our place and on our behalf seems utterly foreign to most of these students. Their sense of the significance of Jesus' obedient life either fixates on qualifying him for his atoning death as the sinless sacrifice for us on the Cross or defaults to some notion of Jesus serving as a moral or spiritual exemplar which we then are called to imitate. He trusts, prays, obeys, and shows loving compassion to show us how we can and ought to follow suit. His consistent lifelong self-offering to God of utter faithfulness shows us how to offer our response to God. But to speak of Jesus as doing those things *in our stead* in a way that *includes* us leaves them characteristically befuddled. Such a thought flips into a different paradigm entirely.

For Torrance, this inability to grasp what he calls the "double movement of grace"¹³ — Jesus' doubly representative actions on behalf of God toward humankind as well as on behalf of humankind toward God in fulfillment of the covenant from both sides — illustrates the glaring need to recover the continuing priesthood of Jesus which lies at the heart of the theme of one for the many.¹⁴ As we have seen earlier, this is no importation of an alien concept onto the biblical witness but arises from within the history of Israel, most clearly as it revolves around the role of the high priest in relation to the worship life of the community. On the contrary, it is far more likely that contemporary Western culture with its tendency toward hyper-individualism has contributed greatly toward skewing our grasp of corporate inclusion in biblical priestly mediation.

Jesus as the Focal Point of Electing Grace

We have seen previously that for Torrance the Gospel is anchored in the Triune Being of God, whose very Being is outgoing love that reaches out to draw in. To speak of Jesus as the self-revelation of God is to affirm that what we see throughout Jesus' ministry is who God actually is in his innermost Being, a God eminently and relentlessly self-determined to be *for* us, a God whose compassionate grace is not at loggerheads with holiness (as if to be holy requires

13 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 32.

14 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 17.

holding sinners at bay) but rather is exemplified by Jesus sidling up to them to rescue them from sin's suffocating stranglehold. As both Torrance brothers frequently have said in their writings and teaching, "there is no God behind the back of Jesus" who will turn out to be something contrary to what we see in the face of Jesus.¹⁵ Consonant with his fully divine identity, Jesus in all his words and deeds represents the heart of the Father toward us in loving pursuit to reclaim lost sinners as his own.

At the same time Jesus is the focal point of election, the Elect One in whom God's redemptive purposes at the most cosmic level find ultimate fulfillment.¹⁶ The entire book of Ephesians directs our attention squarely to the person of Jesus, repeatedly affirming that it is "*in Him* we were chosen . . . *in him* we have redemption through his blood . . . *in Christ* . . . under the *one head, even Christ*" that all things are brought to their fulfillment "which God purposed *in Christ*."¹⁷ "*In him* we may approach God with freedom and confidence."¹⁸ "*He himself* is our peace . . . God's purpose was to create *in him* one new man out of the two [Jew and Gentile]."¹⁹ "*In him* the whole building [God's people] is joined together"²⁰ to become God's holy dwelling place. Colossians sounds similar notes, adding that we were made *through him and for him*.²¹ Jesus did not merely come to show the way but to *be* the way itself, the Head of humanity, the very venue in whose humanity God would bring his restorative purposes to fruition. As Torrance, citing Calvin, never tires of reminding us, ". . . salvation is not simply through the work of Christ (*per Christum*) but is primarily given to us in his person (*in Christou*)."²²

15 The following biblical texts are frequently cited by the Torrance brothers to underscore the need to ground our knowledge of God squarely in the self-revelation of Jesus and not in some other source. Matthew 11:27: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." See also John 14:9-11: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . . I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." Also John 17:25-26: "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

16 Here again we find echoes of Barth's extended portrayal of Jesus as simultaneously the Electing God and the Elect Man, both the subject and the object of election, which reflects his similar understanding of the dynamic outworking of Jesus' fully divine, fully human identity.

17 Ephesians 1:3-11.

18 Ephesians 3:12.

19 Ephesians 2:15.

20 Ephesians 2:19-22.

21 Colossians 1:16.

22 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 28.

In probing further into Torrance's understanding of God's redemptive activity within the humanity of Jesus we can hardly miss two indispensable concepts: representation and substitution. How are we to understand the nature of Jesus as Head of humanity, the Elect One in whom God's saving grace transforms the many? Let me offer four observations.

Exclusive: The One for the Many.²³

Torrance is unequivocal on this point. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is not merely one in a long line of prophets sent by God to get his wayward people back in line. He is not merely one more moral teacher whisked in to impart illuminating insights and prod us to aspire to pursue new heights of moral rectitude. He is not merely one more priestly guru whose exceptionally well-developed God-consciousness aimed at sparking a following of like-minded spiritual devotees. Nor is his significance exhausted by the uncommon compassion he so routinely demonstrated in championing the cause of the underdog in order to inspire similar humanitarian gestures from us. He is *the* prophet, *the* teacher, *the* priest, *the* Man-for-others because he is uniquely the one in whom God in all his divinity is at the same time fully and inextricably enfleshed in our humanity. Here we behold the mystery of mysteries: *God in Person as one of us!*

By way of illustration, let me offer a brief anecdote. During a ski holiday as I was riding the chairlift to the top of a run, something happened to which I was totally oblivious at the time. It was only as I dismounted and prepared to ski down the run that a man riding in the chair behind me caught up with me and told me that he had seen a wad of money fall out of my pocket on the way up. I could have responded any number of ways to that report. I could have chosen not to believe him and gone about my business of skiing down the mountain. Or I could have thanked him for his observation but chosen to search for my lost money in a different spot than where the man had described seeing it fall because I preferred to search in a place where the light would be better. I could even have concluded that it would be silly to limit my search to just one spot when there were innumerable places where money might be found. Or I could trust the testimony of the witness to where the event actually occurred and

23 I originally formulated this fourfold interpretation in relation to Barth's theology under the heading of "The Nature of Elective Headship" in my book *Representation and Substitution in the Atonement Theologies of Dorothee Sölle, John Macquarrie and Karl Barth* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 203–220. I think it applies to Torrance's understanding of Jesus' vicarious humanity as well, which is hardly surprising in view of his having studied under Barth and been heavily impacted by Barth's thought.

let the revelation unfold there. For Torrance, God's self-revelation has earthed itself in an utterly unprecedented way in human flesh and blood as this One Person Jesus of Nazareth. The event of the incarnation of the Son of God is the singular place where not only God's self-revelation touches down into our sphere but where God's reconciling grace can begin to reach and transform us at the ontological roots of human existence.

While some contemporary ears might wince at any mention of exclusivity in regards to a Savior, Torrance is unyielding simply because he sees Jesus as not merely a man in whom God works (as a sort of divine hand inserted into the "glove" of Jesus' humanity in order to accomplish a task) but God *becoming* truly human without ceasing to be God. Jesus as *homoousios* (i.e., of the same identical nature) with the Father means that he is not just one more vessel through whom God works but God coming in Person as Jesus. The writer of the Book of Hebrews drives home the point in no uncertain terms: Jesus is better, greater, surpassing all others because nothing trumps the Incarnate God.²⁴ To what higher court could one possibly appeal that would surpass the words and deeds of God himself? Jesus alone as the Elect One is the focal point of God's elective will.²⁵ For Torrance, everything hinges on who Jesus is. If he is anything less than fully enfleshed divinity, then all bets are on for one's preferred Savior-figure du jour. No, Jesus is no mere mask portraying the impression of divine presence, fine for his day and age but relativized by other divine-like manifestations appearing in different ages or cultural contexts. He is not a divine knock-off but rather the genuine article.

In addition, Jesus' ministry correlates with the representative role of the Old Testament high priest. As mentioned earlier, every act of the high priest on the Day of Atonement had vicarious overtones. Similarly, Jesus as the Incarnate Word-made-flesh shared genuine solidarity with humankind — bone of our bones, flesh of our flesh — and could therefore represent us with utter integrity as one of us. His high priestly prayer in John 17 voiced his intentional act of sanctifying himself for his imminent sacrifice on our behalf. His baptism at the hands of John the Baptist signified his further solidarity with his people and represented

24 Hebrews portrays Jesus as superior to the angels, Moses, the Levitical priesthood, animal sacrifices, and the old covenant. Cf. also Paul's strong affirmation in Colossians 2:9: "for in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. . ." In no sense can this be understood as God choosing to inhabit the independently existing man Jesus. As stated previously, the concept of *anhypostasia* ensures that there is no Jesus apart from the Son of God taking upon himself human nature.

25 A point stressed continually by Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV.2, The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958, p. 33.

his identification with and confession of the corporate sin of Israel, even while he himself did not commit sin.²⁶ In voluntarily submitting his life to death on the Cross he was taking upon himself the mantle of the Suffering Servant who bore the sins of others, not his own.²⁷ As both Priest and sacrificial victim, Jesus both interceded for the people and presented himself as the sacrificial offering, at every point attesting to the rightness of God's judgment of sin. And finally, the Risen Christ returned to his disciples with the assurance of forgiveness and the blessings of peace through a healed, restored relationship with God. All this Jesus accomplished as the one High Priestly Representative whose actions were rendered on behalf of the many.²⁸

Inclusive: The Many in the One

Having stressed Jesus as the exclusive one for the many, the Elect One, we must qualify this by saying it is precisely this exclusivity which permits Jesus' election to be "all-inclusive."²⁹

God's election for incarnation was not merely the choice to inhabit a singular body as a private individual but to be the Head of humanity, through which the covenant relationship between humankind and God could be effected . . . The Head is meaningless without the body it implies, just as the body is lifeless without its Head.³⁰

26 Torrance extends this notion of Jesus' high priestly representation to include the notion of vicarious penitence, a concept he finds in John McLeod Campbell's classic *The Nature of the Atonement*. To those who would find it incomprehensible, to say nothing of morally unpalatable, to speak of innocent, sinless Jesus confessing the sins and guilt of others, Torrance would echo Campbell in asking who else could know the grievousness of sin but one who shares the heart of the Father and therefore, who else could offer a more worthy confession of it that corresponds to the gravity of the offense to holiness?

27 Barth refers to this as the Elect One willingly becoming "the Rejected of God." I describe his view thusly: "It is Jesus' perfect obedience in a life of utter filial faithfulness to God that qualifies him to fulfill the Father's will. As the One who corroborates the Yes of God's righteous will by sharing God's opposition to sin, Jesus repudiates sin by shouldering it in place of all others and defeating it by submitting himself to divine rejection for that vicariously borne disobedience . . . It is as One who, in the affirmation of God's positive will, undertakes to act as 'Pledge and Substitute,' [Barth's words] assuming the posture of rebellious humankind in order to come to our aid." Jeannine Graham, *Representation and Substitution in the Atonement Theologies of Dorothee Sölle, John Macquarrie and Karl Barth* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 204–205.

28 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 56.

29 Cf. Barth., *C. D. II2*, p. 117.

30 Jeannine Graham, *Representation and Substitution . . .*, 208.

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The Adam-Christ parallelism in Romans 5:11–21 is one such text in which inclusive representation is very apparent. Whereas Adam's disobedience represents the downward trajectory of the human race as it replicates similar defiance of God, Jesus (the Second Adam) reverses Adam's disastrous legacy through his life of obedience, issuing in life and justification. The contextual cues are clear: this is not merely describing the acts and consequences of two individuals but rather of two representatives, each of whose actions (the one) include repercussions for the whole human race (the many). Paul's point is hard to miss here:

For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many . . . If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore just as one's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness led to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Note how this passage highlights the atoning value of Jesus' *life* rather than just restricting it to his death. Torrance cites Irenaeus appreciatively for his concept of recapitulation, which would seem to draw support from this Romans 5 text.³¹ Jesus' atoning mission began not at Calvary but at Bethlehem. Jesus entered this world in order to inhabit our flesh and reconstruct it from the inside out, bending our rebellious wills back to God at every stage of existence and substituting his righteousness for our folly.

Another way to understand Jesus' humanity as inclusively representative of all is once again to return to the Who question, as Torrance is so fond of reminding his students. The composite witness of John 1, Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1 attests Jesus' identity as the eternal Creator Word through whom all things were created who became flesh and dwelt with us. Thus, he does not have to create a relation *de novo* with the rest of creation because he is already ontologically linked with every creature. John 1:11 tells us that he came *to his own*, those whose being derives from him as the Creator-become-also-creature.³² Paraphrasing Barth,

31 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 52.

32 Cf. T. F. Torrance, ed. and trans. *The School of Faith. Catechisms of the Reformed Church* (London: James Clark & Co., 1959), p. cxii–cxiii, who discerns a vital ontological relation between Christ on the twin fronts of his identity as the Creator Word and his status as Head of all creation: "There is thus an ontological relation between the creature and the Creator reposing upon His sheer grace . . . because He is the Creator Word who

this Creator Word-made-flesh does not encounter us as a stranger, or even a semi-stranger, but as the Creator who, by virtue of having created human existence, has the power and right mercifully to *re-create* it as well.³³

Quite frankly, these very issues propelled me across the ocean to study with James Torrance. Though I did not doubt that Jesus' atonement somehow mediated salvation and was willing to embrace it by faith, I nonetheless wondered how what happened with one man two thousand years ago could actually alter my human nature. Hearing Torrance speak often of the ontological link between Jesus' vicarious humanity and ours by virtue of who he is as the Creator Word was enormously illuminating to me. It was as if I could begin to fathom how God could, in effect, do surgery on the human nature of all persons through Jesus' vicarious humanity because it includes our own.

Preclusive: the Many Displaced by the One³⁴

At first glance this assertion might seem scandalous. It breathes substitution, which is currently taking much fire from critics. When construed in strictly penal terms, it can invite charges of "divine child abuse" — God the Father beating up on Jesus, who nobly agreed to be the "whipping boy" so that sin can be properly punished and holiness satisfied. In another sense it can be seen as dehumanizing. To paraphrase Dorothee Sölle, a prime critic of substitution, a substitute permanently replaces persons, obliterating them by treating them either as dead, useless or unavailable. It is total removal of that person by the substitute, who remains totally detached from any personal connection with the one replaced.³⁵ But once the Torrancean categories of "one for the many, many

became Man, even as the incarnate Word He still holds all men in an ontological relation to himself. That relation was not broken off with the Incarnation . . . He is not only the Head of believers but the Head of all creation and that all things visible and invisible are gathered up and cohere in Him — from which we cannot exclude a relation in being between all men and Christ." No doubt James Torrance would readily endorse his brother's insight here.

33 Jeannine Graham, *Representation and Substitution . . .*, 211.

34 I am well aware of Elmer Colyer's insistence that T. F. Torrance disavows the idea that the "*total substitutionary* character of Jesus Christ's vicarious humanity might seem to undermine or displace *our* humanity and *our* human response . . ." I wholeheartedly concur with his observation. It is decidedly not a displacement of all notions of human response but only a displacing of any posturing of the human self claiming ontological status apart from the Creator Word. See Elmer Colyer, *How To Read T. F. Torrance* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 117.

35 Jeannine Graham, *Representation and Substitution . . .*, 39–40, citing Dorothee Sölle.

in the one" are brought to bear on the subject, it becomes possible to speak of *inclusive* substitution/representation.³⁶ In reminding us that *Christus pro nobis* must precede *Christus in nobis*,³⁷ Torrance sounds a strong note of substitution by acknowledging that God has graciously come to do for us in Christ what we cannot do for ourselves. Who of us can render a perfect response of utter fidelity, love and obedience to God as is befitting our role as covenant partners of God? If Galatians 3:22 gives an accurate read on human nature as imprisoned in sin, who can escape those shackles by their own efforts? If the human condition apart from Christ is as dire as being "dead in our transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), who can enliven herself?

Yet Christ takes our place to act in our stead not to obliterate us but rather to displace our pseudo-self, the attempt to ground our lives in some independent source other than the True Source of our Being. What is precluded is the attempt to live our life as if we are not ontologically linked with the Creator Word, as if we aren't bound to the Head of humanity. To believe that Jesus has not acted in his vicarious humanity on our behalf and in our place is to embrace the lie.

Conclusive: The Many Re-placed by the One

In speaking of Jesus in substitutionary terms as the One who acts in our place, offering the perfect response to the Father in our name, it might seem to lend credence to the objection that our human response has been crowded out. But Torrance is clear that Jesus' vicarious acts do not eliminate the need for our response; rather, in doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves — i.e., making the perfect response of love and penitent submission to the verdict of guilty — we are freed from the treadmill of trying (and failing) to measure up. Jesus' response for us doesn't eliminate but rather enables and summons our response.³⁸ Both Torrance brothers allude to the paradox of Galatians 2:20: "we live, yet not we but Christ in us."³⁹ "All of grace" does not mean "nothing of humanity." Elmer Colyer captures this idea aptly:

Christ the Representative (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1967), 19–23.

36 T. F. Torrance affirms the necessity of affirming the themes of both representation and substitution, using the term "total substitution" to designate this combination of the two. (Cf. *The Mediation of Christ*, pp. 80–81.)

37 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 28, 75. Cf. T. F. Torrance, *Mediation of Christ*, p. 75.

38 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 53–54.

39 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 91. Cf. also T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, p. 98.

Just as there is not simply grudging space, but a full and glorious place, for the *human* being and *human* response of Jesus in the incarnation (no one is as fully human and personal in response to God as Jesus was), so also there is an analogous full and complete place for *our* human response within Christ's vicarious human response for us . . . [quoting T. F. Torrance] '*all of grace means all of man*, for the fullness of grace creatively includes the fullness and completeness of our human response in the equation.'⁴⁰

Resounding throughout Torrance's theology is the notion that we were made for communion with others and with the Triune God who has his being-in-communion. His words reverberate in my memory: "We are never more truly human, never more truly persons, than when we find our true being-in-communion."⁴¹ The spotlight James Torrance shines on Jesus as the one who acts on our behalf in our place — taking upon himself our fallen flesh in order to heal, restore and give it back to us — illumines God's earnest desire that we be delivered from all that dehumanizes us so that we may be *repersonalized* in him.

Torrance makes a helpful distinction between a biblical notion of the one for the many and a Platonic construal of the one and the many. In Plato's worldview, which finds expression in some Eastern ideologies today, it is not the particulars which have supreme value but only their participation (*methexis*) as imperfect, partial expressions of the One, the Ideal or Form. It is timeless, eternal, abstract universals which are all-important, not the fluctuating, temporally limited manifestations of the empirical world. This stands in stark contrast to the biblical sense of personhood, which upholds the sanctity and integrity of human beings with whom God deals in eminently personal ways. We are not simply like drops of water whose distinct identity dissipates as we merge into the ocean of Being. Jesus is not simply an "ideal embodiment of humanity," the messenger and expression of a principle; rather, his unique personhood as a particular person is absolutely germane to his mission. Torrance verges on overkill to make his point about the personalizing Person and work of God in Christ:

The New Testament is thoroughly non-dualistic about Jesus being not only a man, but the One Man, the one person in whom God has given himself personally to the world and for the world, that his purposes for all humanity might be brought to fulfillment. There is an absolute uniqueness to the person of Jesus Christ, deeply concerned for every single one of the many to bring every single one into personal union with himself, to share his personal union

40 Elmer Colyer, *How To Read T. F. Torrance* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 119.

41 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 72–73.

with the Father. Thus in Jesus Christ 'the one and the many' means at once the one for the many, the one who stands in for the many, the many represented personally in the one, the one who comes by the Spirit to each one of the many whom he loves and knows by name to say: 'It is for you, John, and for you, Mary, and for you, Peter.' Whereas the Platonic 'one and the many' is impersonal and disinterested in the particular, the biblical 'one and the many' is intensely personal.⁴²

God is not out to squelch or squash human personhood but quite the contrary, to call forth and celebrate the beauty and creativity of each person, summoning each one to discover and grow into their identity as the unique persons God has designed them to be in Christ.

Church's Mission: Called to Participate in Christ's Ministry to the World

It is clear throughout Torrance's thought that the Gospel of gracious inclusion in the vicarious humanity of Christ our Representative and Substitute, who acts on our behalf and in our place to lift us into a life of union and communion with the Triune God, is not construed merely as pertaining to the salvation of the individual believer.⁴³ Just as Israel's identity as the people of God was inextricably wrapped up in her calling to be the unique vehicle through whom God's redemptive plan would unfold as the means of drawing in all nations, so also the Church also finds its identity as the redeemed people of God called to participate in Christ's ongoing ministry to the world. Corresponding to the twofold ministry of Christ for us in representing God to humankind and humankind to God, there is a twofold ministry of the Spirit in us: a God-humanward movement of creating, revealing, renewing and gifting as well as a human-Godward movement of leading us to the Father through interceding for us and lifting us into a life of communion with God. The "vicarious priestly work of the Spirit" in us is an indispensable dimension of Christ's ongoing priestly work for us through his vicarious humanity and of our understanding of worship.⁴⁴

Called to belong to Christ necessarily involves belonging to his people as the Body of Christ; it is not an optional extra but fundamental to what it means to

42 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 51-52.

43 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 40: "From a trinitarian standpoint, God is in the business of creating community."

44 J. B. Torrance, "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ" in T. F. Torrance, *The Incarnation*, 145.

participate in Christ. Likewise, participating in Christ's mission of bearing witness to, serving and loving the world Jesus loved and served is also not optional but organically mandated. "As Christ was anointed by the Spirit in our humanity to fulfil his ministry for us, so we are united by the same Spirit to share his ministry."⁴⁵ Belonging to Christ and being summoned to mission on behalf of others are two sides of the same coin. Said differently, participating in Christ and participating with him as "co-lovers" . . . participating together in the very life of God and in his love for the world"⁴⁶ are inseparately bound. Thus Israel's commission to be a Royal Priesthood on behalf of all nations is replicated in the Church's commission as the Body of Christ, the New Israel whose Royal Priesthood reaches out to all nations. Paul's designation of Christians as ambassadors for Christ through whom God is making his appeal to the world to be reconciled in light of the reconciliation that has already taken place in Christ conveys a similar sense of identity and mission as an outgrowth of what has first been done for us in Christ.⁴⁷

Torrance sees the term "participation" as ideally suited to express the "for us" and "in us" dimension of the Gospel of grace.⁴⁸ Our identity as Christians is formed both by participating in what Christ has done for us in his inclusive humanity and by our active participation in his mission to the world. As Jürgen Moltmann so eloquently puts it,

It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way . . . The church participates in Christ's messianic mission and in the creative mission of the Spirit . . . The church participates in the uniting of men with one another, in the uniting of society with nature and in the uniting of creation with God . . . Thus the whole being of the church is marked by participation in the history of God's dealings with the world.⁴⁹

Seen in this light, the identity and commission of the Church is not something she must invent *de novo* in imitation of Christ's life of selfless service to the

45 Ibid.

46 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 94.

47 II Corinthians 5:18-20.

48 J. B. Torrance, "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ" in T. F. Torrance, *The Incarnation*, 145: "'Participation' is thus an important word. It holds together what WE do, and that in which we are given to participate — the Son's communion with the Father, and the Son's Mission from the Father to the world."

49 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 64-65.

world. Rather, it is a natural outgrowth of God's gracious embrace of us in Christ. The Church is called to join with the ongoing ministry of the Triune God in the world; it is a summons to join the moving train of God's redemptive mission to all nations — the one for the many theme reappearing this time in ecclesiological garb.

A Christological postlude . . . true to form

To conclude on a personal note, I well remember one rather dismal day during my postgraduate years in Aberdeen when I felt so overwhelmed and discouraged that I found myself staring blankly out the window for at least an hour. The next day I related that incident to Prof. Torrance. Whether or not we talked at length or just in passing, I do not recall. But what is seared into my memory was this simple exhortation, "Look away from yourself to Christ."⁵⁰ It was so telling . . . and it was enough.

50 James Torrance, *Worship . . .*, 93-94: "When we focus on the question of who, we can rejoice together *as we look away from ourselves to him* [my emphasis], that he may sanctify us and lead us together into the presence of the Holy Father." Also cf. p. 107: ". . . the Spirit lifts us out of any narcissistic preoccupation with ourselves to find our true humanity and dignity in Jesus Christ, in a life centered in others, in communion with Jesus Christ and one another, in a loving concern for the humanity of all." And still further, p. 117: "Jesus Christ is the true leader of our worship, and if we take our eyes off him we fall back on ourselves . . ."