

THE BODY OF CHRIST ANALOGY IN T. F. TORRANCE'S ECUMENICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

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Abstract: *T. F. Torrance, in the midst of early modern ecumenical dialogue, presented an ecclesial ontology robustly informed and determined by Christological categories. This is nowhere more evident than in his interpretation of the biblical image of the church as the "body of Christ." In contrast to mystical interpretations of the image, Torrance argues that the "body of Christ" should be understood as an incarnational analogy. Christ's humanity, resurrected and ascended, is the "essence" of the church. The church becomes what it already is in Christ by conforming to the newness of his humanity. In this way, Torrance constructs a powerful Protestant and ecumenical account of the church's being-in-becoming. The uniqueness and ecumenical purchase of Torrance's proposal are here demonstrated.*

Prior to the 1950s, ecumenical dialogue on the doctrine of the church was largely constituted by exercises in comparative ecclesiology. Such discussions bore fruit. In the "rough and tumble of ecumenical encounter," many theologians and church leaders listened at length for the first time to perspectives from traditions different to their own. In 1948, William Manson recruited the young theologian T. F. Torrance "for the work of Inter-Church Relations," and involved him "both in the Presbyterian-Anglican conversations and in the Faith and Order discussions of the World Council of Churches." For Torrance, this was a life-changing experience. His encounter with other traditions impressed upon him the idea that he was "wearing powerful Presbyterian spectacles" which had distorted his reading of both Scripture and historic theological works.¹

Despite such benefits, the comparative approach to ecclesiology could hardly

1 T. F. Torrance, "Thomas Ayton's 'The Original Constitution of the Christian Church,'" in *Reformation and Revolution*, ed. Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1967), 274-75.

bring about doctrinal unity. The gulf between *listening* and actual doctrinal *agreement* was keenly felt by all involved. In preparation for the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Lund, Sweden (1948), a theological commission chaired by Gustaf Aulén was appointed to study "the Universal Church in God's Design." Notable members of the commission included Georges Florovsky and Torrance's *doktorvater* Karl Barth. Comparative ecclesiology had revealed great divides between churches and between traditions. The commission felt that the greatest of these was "the difference between 'Catholic' and 'Protestant'" schools of thought. "The emphasis usually called 'Catholic' contains a primary insistence upon the visible continuity of the Church in the apostolic succession of the episcopate. The one usually called 'Protestant' primarily emphasizes the initiative of the Word of God and the response of faith, focused in the doctrine of justification *sola fide*."²

Each side of the *Catholic-Protestant* divide tended to favor a particular biblical image for the church. John Robert Nelson maps the fault lines of this divide as follows:

The Christians of the "Catholic" style (Roman, Anglican, and others) gave primary attention to the organic nature of the Church, as a living unity, a body. They saw the Church as a continuing, comprehensive community, into which infants were born and baptized, within which members were regularly and frequently nourished by Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist, and over which the bishops and priests as representatives of Christ and the apostles ruled with a pastoral and priestly power. Distinct from these were the Christians of "Protestant" style, who thought of the Church as the people of God, called together for His service, and freely responding in the confession of faith and acceptance of the covenant.³

The body of Christ image was highly favored in the papers prepared by the aforementioned commission. Karl Barth's contribution stands as a notable exception, favoring instead a depiction of the church as an "event" of divine

2 "Report of Section I," in Oliver S. Tomkins, *The Universal Church in God's Design* (New York, Harper Brothers, 1948), 205.

3 John Robert Nelson, "Toward an Ecumenical Ecclesiology," *Theological Studies* 31.4 (1970), 650. See also Carl E. Braaten, *Mother Church: Ecclesiology and Ecumenism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 28-9. Many Reformed theologians favor the *populus Dei* image "partly because of its comprehensive reference, uniting O.T. and N.T. believers," and partly because of the historic development of "the reformed doctrine of the covenant." Edmund Clowney, "Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church: A Hermeneutical Deepening of Ecclesiology," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1984), 80.

summons.⁴ His piece is characterized by the prayerful hope and expectation that God is acting to unite the church in the ecumenical movement.

Torrance expressed some dissatisfaction with the Amsterdam reports. While many viewed the Catholic-Protestant divide simply as a tug-of-war between ecclesiologies of “event” and “continuity,” Torrance perceived in this tension a failure on both sides to properly work out the interrelation between Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. He appreciated aspects of Barth’s paper, but felt it should be balanced by an account of the objective incorporation of the church into Christ’s humanity, which “does not come out strongly enough in his essay.”⁵ Indeed, one must “take with full candour and seriousness the teaching of the New Testament that the Church is the Body of Christ,” Torrance argued, for “the deepest difference between ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ theology in regard to the church is to be found *here*, in the insistence that the Church, her life in the tensions of history, her growth toward Fullness, are to be understood *exclusively* in terms of Christology.”⁶ What is meant by this insistence? How does the image of the body of Christ specify the relation between ecclesiology and Christology? To answer these questions, we must first examine the manner in which Torrance’s ecclesiology is both *critically realist* and *Christologically corrective*.

Christological Correction

I

In his ecumenical writings, Torrance is consistently adamant that “we must take in earnest the work of Christological correction of the form and order of the Church.”⁷ *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum Verbi Dei*. The Word is not a domesticated abstract principle or figurehead which the community may deploy to rally or restructure itself. Rather, the Word is the Son of God, the *personal* and *creative* Word, who brings the church into being and sanctifies it through free self-giving love. For Torrance, Christological correction is not a mere reordering or reorganization of ecclesial thought around a particularly useful but benign *leitmotif*. It is, rather, the active exercise of the lordship of Christ

4 Karl Barth, “The Church – the Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ,” in Tomkins, *The Universal Church in God’s Design*, 67-76.

5 T. F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church, Vol. 1: Order and Disorder* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996), 210.

6 *CAC1*, 63. Emphasis mine.

7 *Ibid.*, 81. For similar statements on the corrective task of dogmatics, see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1, ed. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 4.

over his people, to which the community must respond in joyous submission. Theology is thus not merely to be Christ-centered but Christ-ruled, keeping in view Christ's continued acting presence among his people through the power of the Holy Spirit. "In the very act of our knowing Christ he is the master, we are the mastered."⁸

For Torrance, the principle of ecclesial reformation must be given a dimension of depth reaching back into the reality of Christ's incarnate existence. He argues that the Son assumed our fallen human nature, healing and "correcting" it over the course of his life. Our humanity has already been made new in Christ, and through the work of the Spirit this reality is actualized in our subjective experience in space and time. The Christological correction of the church belongs to this continuing event of actualization, the breaking in of the eschatological "not yet" into the historical "already." As such, this work is not ecclesiological self-correction. The church participates in Christ's already completed work of correction.

If the church seeks unity, it is to be found in Christ. In sanctifying and correcting our humanity, Christ has reconciled human beings to God and to one another. In order to bring about this reconciliation, Christ had to enter into our enmity with one another and endure it in love, even unto death on a cross. The church, if it is to participate in the unity secured in Christ, must participate in the cruciform shape of his life and ministry, characterized by love and charity even to the point of death to self-assertion and death to its own dogmatic formulations. Yet this death is never blind compromise, but always seeks newness of life in Christ, and finds in him the living Truth which has reordered human thinking and willing toward God.

The central activity of ecclesial reformation is simply *hearing*. Through the Holy Spirit, in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, Christ still speaks. The church's posture before this teaching is one of patient and expectant receptivity. Torrance explains that in Hebrew thought, "the emphasis falls upon hearing [the] Word, letting it speak to us out of itself, and upon the obedience of the mind in response to it. The principle involved here can be spoken of as knowledge of an object in accordance with its nature."⁹ In other words, this is knowledge which is determined *kata phusin* (κατὰ φύσιν, "according to the known object's nature or reality") in contradistinction to knowledge which is poetic or thetic, determined *kata thesin* (κατὰ θέσιν, "according to arbitrary convention").¹⁰ In a kataphysical

8 T. F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Paternoster, Milton Keynes UK, 2008), 2.

9 T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM, 1965), 170.

10 T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 1991), 51; cf. *Reconstruction*, 48.

theological method the hearer adopts a posture of openness, eager to reform his thought and fully repent in light of the authoritative truth of the self-revealing object (God in Christ).¹¹ Activity, not passivity, is requisite—but this is the activity of ecclesial self-denial and obedience, not self-assertion.

Torrance's method of inquiry into ecclesiology, as into all other spheres of theology, is that of *critical realism*.¹² It is *realism* because the object known is other to or outside of the knower. It is *critical* because knowledge of the object is determined by the object itself.¹³ Thus, in theology, our knowledge of God is properly determined not by our own speculative projection, but by the reality of God himself as revealed in Jesus Christ. This determination is *dialogical*, for it occurs amidst the holy conversation between God and his people. The Word teaches, and the community responds in obedience and worship.

What of ecclesiology? Even the church's knowledge of *itself* must be characterized by this dialogical critical realism, for the true form of the church lies outside its most proximate or empirical manifestation: "Christ clothed with His Gospel is the essence of the Church."¹⁴ Indeed, "Christ is the Church," although "it cannot be said that the Church is Christ, for Christ is infinitely more than the Church, although in his grace he will not be without it."¹⁵ Thus, in his speaking to the church and his presence in its midst, Christ reveals what the church is to be, and conforms it to the image of his body. Even the God-church dialogical relation itself finds its essence in Christ, who "is both the embodiment of God's Word to man, and the embodiment of man's obedient Word to God.

11 *Reconstruction*, 170.

12 P. Mark Achtemeier, "The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T. F. Torrance," *SJT* 47.3 (August 1994), 355-74.

13 See the discussions of "critical realism" in N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 35-36; Paul La Montagne, *Barth and Rationality: Critical Realism in Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 14-18.

14 *CAC1*, 107.

15 T. F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert Walker (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 362; "Report of the Theological Commission on Christ and the Church (European Section)," in *Faith and Order Findings: The Report to the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, ed. Paul Minear (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1963), 47. Torrance argues that this realist ecclesiology, grounded in the doctrine of the incarnation, is crucial for understanding the visible church aright as the body of Christ in history: "For Nicene ecclesiology the focus of attention was on the incorporation of believers into the Body of Christ on the ground of the reconciliation with God which he had accomplished in and through his bodily death and resurrection. . . . Any failure to grasp the implications of this Nicene theology for a realist and unitary doctrine of the Church opened the door for the identification of the real Church with a spiritualized timeless and spaceless magnitude." *TF*, 276.

Within the dialogue of the divine-human life of Jesus, as the self-giving of God to man and the obedience of the Son to the Father, Revelation is both given and received, and as such is essentially historical and personal in nature."¹⁶ Even further, the task of Christological correction or reformation finds its essential pattern in Christ, who assumed our fallen humanity and healed (corrected) it over the course of his earthly ministry. Thus, the necessity of ecclesial reformation is pressed upon the church by the very reality of Christ's humanity. Far from being the unique habit of one particular tradition, reformation is fundamental to all faithful Christian traditions.

The deep internal relation between correction and reunification in Christ accounts for the essentially Protestant character of the ecumenical movement, Torrance argues. "This diverse ecumenical movement stems from the Reformation itself, and represents the delayed-action effect of the Church's attempt in the sixteenth century to realize the evangelical unity and universality of the Catholic Church through renewal and reformation on its apostolic basis, [though] ultimately it is rooted beyond the Reformation in the spiritual and evangelical intention of the Church throughout the centuries to embody the distinctively Christian way of life in the world in forms appropriate to the original foundation of the Church in Jesus Christ."¹⁷ In other words, the Reformation historically modelled Christological correction, but the impulse that brought it to life may be traced further back to the very apostolic roots of Christianity. The Reformers sought to reclaim and reconstruct biblical and patristic modes of thought and action.

At the same time, Torrance argues, the Reformation incited a rejection of static modes of thought pervasive in medieval scholasticism. "The whole movement of the Reformation may well be regarded as a Christological criticism of the notions of Church, Ministry, and Sacraments as they had developed through the Dark and Middle Ages in strange detachment from the high Christology of Nicaea and Chalcedon. The time has come to undertake this task again, and to set forth in truly dogmatic form the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ."¹⁸ That may be regarded as the official *mission statement* of Torrance's

16 T. F. Torrance, *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), lxvi.

17 T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 40. John T. McNeill echoes this view: "Living Calvinism has always reached beyond its existing ecclesiastical status, seeking union and intercommunion. . . . The Calvinist element in Protestantism has taken a prominent part in the twentieth-century ecumenical advance." *The History and Character of Calvinism* (Oxford: OUP, 1954), 438. For an extended treatment of this history, see 374-89, as well as John T. McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism: The Ecumenical Spirit and Its Persistent Expression* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964).

18 CAC1, 230.

ecclesiological writings, the core thesis by which they are bound and to which they are ordered. His aim, in the legacy of the Reformers, is to “[make] central and predominant the classical faith of the Catholic Church in Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity, and [to carry] out a Christological correction of the empirical Catholic Church,” bringing “the whole area of applied salvation . . . into line with Christ and his Gospel.”¹⁹ This is not an inherently schismatic move, but rather an attempt to unify the church around the truth of Christ.

In his concept of Christological correction, Torrance weds the two emphases of the Protestant and Catholic ecumenical camps, while at the same time turning common understandings of these emphases on their heads. Yes, Torrance affirms with the Protestants, the congregation of the church is an *event* of divine summons and reformation. Yet this is an event of *incorporation* which corresponds to and actualizes in our subjective experience the benefits of the Christological event of *incarnation*. In the incarnation Christ took upon himself our human nature and transformed it with sanctifying power. He has already incorporated us into himself in the incarnation, but through the Holy Spirit this incorporation is actualized in our subjective experience and we *become* what we already *are* in him. We become his body, the body of the new humanity. Christ is the church, and its formation is an event in *his body*, and an event in our experience insofar as we become his body through the unitive power of the Holy Spirit. People and body, event and continuity, already and not yet – these concepts are united in the person of Jesus Christ, and thus so in Torrance’s Christological ecclesiology.

If Christology is determinative in this way, however, the event of ecclesial congregation cannot be viewed as merely a free social gathering of like-minded religious folk, and the continuity of the church catholic cannot be viewed simply in institutional or juridical terms. The event is the Christ-event, made present through the Spirit. The church’s continuity is in the incarnation, in which Christ has forever united himself to our humanity, and our humanity to him and to one another in his body. Views of the church as a mere socio-religious phenomenon on the one hand, or as an *alter Christus* or extension of the incarnation on the other, simply will not do. The body and the event are Christ’s, and the church partakes and participates in his life in a real but secondary way. The church never usurps Christ’s place, or contributes anything new to his finished work.

¹⁹ *Reconciliation*, 44; cf. T. F. Torrance, “The Orthodox Church in Great Britain,” *Participatio* 4 (2013), 334.

II

The incarnation is central to Torrance's concept of ecclesial reformation. Accordingly, the Christological concepts of the *hypostatic union* and the *ἁπομόσισιον* both heavily determine the shape of Torrance's ecclesiology. "The doctrine of the hypostatic union, insofar as it is a faithful expression of the 'form of Christ,' can be deployed as a servant-category in the Christological correction of other doctrines such as the doctrine of the Sacraments. In such deployment it must be clearly and fully acknowledged that there is to be found in these other doctrines only a subsidiary reflexion of the 'form of Christ,' and that subsidiary reflexion consists in obedience and conformity to Christ, and is in no sense a transference of 'the hypostatic union' from the doctrine of the unique Person of Christ Himself to other areas of Christian teaching."²⁰ In other words, Torrance wishes to deploy the hypostatic union in ecclesiology without disrupting its *sui generis* character in Christology. He attempts to accomplish this by way of analogy. An analogical relation is one neither of pure identity nor of pure difference, but "something of likeness and something of difference *proportionaliter*."²¹ The church's sacramental relation to Christ is characterized by a kind of hypostatic logic without functioning as a second incarnation or reduplication of Christ's finished work.

Christ *is* the church, its essence embodied.²² The church in history bears a *realist* relation to his ascended body, such that the meaning of its subjective life is determined and reconstructed by his objective fullness. This allows for the analogical application of Christological conceptualities to ecclesiology. The corporate image indicates a unitive relation which "must be thought out in terms of the hypostatic union of the two natures in one Person, and indeed of the terms *inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter* of the Chalcedonian formula."²³ Even the notion of analogy itself bears this incarnational character, for it is only in the union of Christ's divinity and humanity that human conceptualities are filled with divine meaning (becoming meaning-filled or *meaningful*) and our analogies are given upward reference to the being of God. The result is that Christology is given a centripetal force, pulling our thought into its domain *through* derivative doctrines like ecclesiology. If Christ constitutes the wholeness of ecclesial reality, then our thinking about the church must always be thrown upwards to contemplation of his humanity.

20 *SOF*, lxii.

21 *CAC1*, 246.

22 *Atonement*, 362.

23 *CAC1*, 231.

As Christ's redemptive consubstantiality with our humanity is actualized in the life of the church, "the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ" is also "hinged" upon the concept of *ὁμοούσιον*. The church is "the unique 'place' where access to the Father through the Son [is] grounded in space and time among the nations of mankind."²⁴ Just as Christ, in his consubstantial relation to the Father, is the Apostle of God "in the absolute sense (Heb. 3.1)," so the church, in its consubstantial relation to Christ's humanity, serves apostolically as the body of Christ, albeit in such a transparent way that its own being "retreat[s] into the background."²⁵ The revelation of God in Christ thus becomes "earthed in the Church as the Body of Christ" and "rooted in humanity. The Apostolate expressly formed and shaped for this purpose is the human end of the incarnational revelation."²⁶ The twelve apostles "are the hinges between the incarnational Revelation objectively given in Christ, and the unfolding of that once and for all in the mind of the Church as the Body of Christ."²⁷

It is worth noting that here both pneumatology and ecclesiology share common themes in Torrance's thought. The Holy Spirit is *ὁμοούσιος* with the Father and Son. He is thus also the Apostle of Christ "in such a way that He does not draw attention to Himself or speak of His own Person, but speaks only of Christ."²⁸ Through his apostolic Spirit "Christ Himself dwells in the midst of the apostles, leading them into all truth and making them in a unique sense stewards of the mysteries of God and able ministers of His Spirit (1 Cor. 4.1). It is on the foundation of this oneness between Christ and His apostles that the whole Church is built up and grows up into Christ the Head as one Body with Him."²⁹

In other words, through the apostolic Spirit the church becomes an apostolic body witnessing spiritually to the resurrected humanity of Jesus Christ. The church takes on the self-effacing character of the Spirit who gives it life. Pneumatology and ecclesiology share a kind of transparency to Christology, for that Word which both Spirit and church communicate in witness is Christ himself. Thus Torrance can say of pneumatology: "the doctrine of the Spirit has Christology for its content . . . so that the doctrine of the Spirit is really Christology . . . applied

24 *TF*, 278.

25 T. F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry* (London: T&T Clark, 1993), 26; cf. *TF*, 286.

26 Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, 27.

27 *Ibid.*, 28.

28 *CAC1*, 40.

29 T. F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church, Vol II: The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 85-86.

to the Church as the Body of Christ."³⁰ Similarly, he elsewhere remarks: "the doctrine of the church as the Body of Christ is part of Christology . . . we must learn to make the Christological reference paramount in all our thinking and understanding of the Church."³¹

As Christ is the essence of the church, it has no independent, meaningful existence apart from him. The church is *anhypostasia* in Christ, a fact "which insists on an eschatological relation between the Church and Christ in terms of His mighty acts for and in the Church."³² That affirmation underscores the actualist aspect of Torrance's ecclesiology: the church exists by an *event* of divine action. Of course, this action is specifically the *Christ-event* – "the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ."³³ Just as Christ's humanity is *more real* than our own, so the same is true of his *history* and his *time*.³⁴

In Christ there is a hypostatic union between eternity and time, such that his history is "new" history. Fallen time is oriented toward death, decay, and corruption. Yet Christ assumes this fallen time and heals it by uniting it with the fullness of eternity.³⁵ He "has redeemed our humanity from vanity and our time from illusion, establishing Himself in the fullness of His Humanity and in the fullness of His time as the reality of our humanity and the reality of our time. This historical Jesus is no longer merely 'historical' in the sense that He belongs to history that irreversibly flows away into the past forever, but within that history He is superior historical reality as actual and live happening in the continuous present."³⁶ The act which sustains the being of the church is thus not sporadic or occasionalist. It is an event which does not fall into the past, time which is anchored in the fullness of eternity. The ecclesial-event is simply the actualization of the Christ-event in space and time.

On the other hand, the church is also *anhypostasia* in Christ, which means that it is given real existence and continuity, Christologically determined. By "real," of course, Torrance means Christ's fullness of reality. The church is "an ontological reality," but ecclesial ontology rests in Christ, "wholly dependent upon Him."³⁷

30 *RP*, 25.

31 *CAC1*, 93, 107.

32 *CAC1*, 248.

33 *CAC2*, 156.

34 T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1976), 88-89; *RP*, 50; *CAC1*, 213.

35 *Incarnation*, 334-36.

36 *RP*, 57.

37 *CAC1*, 248.

Whereas *anhypostasia* indicates the eschatological and apocalyptic dimension of the church as the Christ-event breaking into history, *enhypostasia* indicates the teleological dimension of the church whereby it is gradually filled up to fullness with his supremely real reality. If the church is only considered anhypostatically, "we rob the Church of its ground in the Person of Christ and demolish the understanding of it as His Body." If it is only considered enhypostatically, then "we tend to entertain the false conception of the Church as a *Christus prolongatus* or an extension of the Incarnation."³⁸ It is clear that Torrance is here issuing a Christological correction to both sides of the aforementioned Protestant-Catholic ecumenical divide. Ecclesiologies which exclusively emphasize "event" are purely anhypostatic; ecclesiologies which exclusively emphasize "continuity" are purely enhypostatic. The ecclesiological purchase of Torrance's use of the an/en-hypostasia couplet is that a relation-in-distinction is demarcated between Christ and his church, such that the latter cannot exist apart from the former, yet nonetheless is given real and full existence *in* the former.

The an/en-hypostasia couplet further manifests the gravitational pull that Torrance's Christology exerts upon his ecclesiology. Our humanity has been emptied of meaning by sin, because sin causes us to reject the ontologically constitutive relationship we were created to have with the Triune God. By assuming our humanity and reconciling it to God, Christ has filled our humanity with meaning once again. That is why Christ's humanity has "archetypal significance for human beings. It is in Jesus himself that we discern what the basic structure of humanity is and ought to be."³⁹ When we are incorporated into Christ's humanity, our empty humanity is filled with the fullness of his personal meaning.

Just as Christ is the archetypal man, he is also the essence of the church. The church does not find its identity and meaning in its own structures and institutions, but in Christ. This is supremely indicated in the body of Christ image, and is the theological basis for Torrance's import of Christological conceptualities into ecclesiology. Even the fact that the an/enhypostasia couplet can be applied to ecclesiology at all is a product of the church being filled with Christological meaningfulness. This means that the visible church is essentially self-effacing and eccentric, pointing away to the center of its life in the ascended Lord. "The Church can only be the *Vicar* of Christ not by substituting itself in Christ's place

38 Ibid., 249.

39 T. F. Torrance, "The Soul and Person in Theological Perspective," in *Religion, Reason and the Self: Essays in Honour of Hywel D. Lewis*, ed. by Stewart D. Sutherland, T. A. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1982), 115.

but by letting Christ substitute himself in the place of the Church."⁴⁰ This is Torrance's solution to ecumenical divisions. He does not assert one tradition over against another, but exhorts all traditions to reform as Christ's body in the self-revealing presence of the incarnate Lord.

Incarnational Analogy

The New Testament weaves a tapestry of piquant images to describe the reality of the church. Paul S. Minear's book *Images of the Church in the New Testament* – which remains the most extensive study of the topic to date – lists ninety-six unique figures.⁴¹ Preponderant images include "the people of God," "the bride of Christ," "the temple of the Holy Spirit," and "the adopted children of God." In Torrance's estimation, however, "the most significant of them is [the] expression the Body of Christ, because it is more inclusive than any of the others, provided that we understand it aright. . . . It is only when we allow the other analogies and images to play their part in opening up and enriching this concept of the Body that it can serve its purpose in declaring the nature of the Church."⁴² What does Torrance mean when he states that this image is "more inclusive?" He explains: "the term 'Body' is of particular importance because it can be applied to Christ and to His Church. That is not true of all the images."⁴³ This dual applicability accentuates the ontological *union* between Christ and his church. The other images largely emphasize *distinctions* between Christ and the church, and are thus deemed "poorer" though "not . . . unimportant."⁴⁴ Their function is to complement an appropriate understanding of the body analogy, not to replace or surmount it.

The corporate image is remarkably complex in Torrance's thought, drawing together a host of ideas and relations, many of which are of Christological

40 *CAC1*, 252.

41 Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 1960), 268-69. This book arose out of Minear's research on behalf of the Theological Commission on Christ and the Church, formed during the Third World Conference on Faith and Order in Lund (1952). Elsewhere, Minear summarizes the nature of these images by observing that "all the metaphors applied to the Ecclesia stress [its] communal aspect," and "each of the metaphors points to Christ as the source of solidarity." *Eyes of Faith* (St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1966), 116-17.

42 *CAC1*, 105. The corporate image is the nucleus around which the other images "orbit," 230.

43 *Ibid.*, 105.

44 *Ibid.*, 105-06.

provenance. It can be difficult to hold together in view the various adjectives which attend the corporate image in his thought - *somatic, spiritual, sacramental, mysterious, analogous, representative, ostensive*, among others - as well as their respective nuances of meaning. Here the term *incarnational* will provide some welcome assistance. To be clear - this is not a term which Torrance tends to use in conjunction with the corporate image. Nonetheless, it seems the most apposite. If this term is allowed to govern all the rest, it procures from them a measure of definitional clarity. This occurs because, for Torrance, many of those terms find their origin in the doctrine of the incarnation itself, and are only applied to ecclesiology in a secondary and derivative sense.

Indeed, Torrance claims that the corporate image is "the most deeply Christological" of all the New Testament ecclesial images, and for *that* reason it "is of especial importance."⁴⁵ That assertion indicates a certain *asymmetry* to the image's *dual applicability*. Christ and the church are not consolidated in a relation of μέθεξις to an overarching ideal or mystical reality called "the body." Rather, the essence of the ecclesial body is Christ's own incarnate existence. The participation of the church in him is personal and onto-relational, that of κοινωνία. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ's embodied reality becomes that of the church. Thus, the corporate image "directs us at once to Christ Himself in such a way that we have to lay the emphasis upon 'of Christ' and not upon 'Body.'"⁴⁶ To speak of the church as the body of Christ is not to refer to an external relation, but one which resides *in him, in the incarnation*.

The most direct connections between the corporate image and the incarnation feature in Torrance's early writings. At the age of twenty-five he briefly took up a teaching post at Auburn Theological Seminary (1938-39). In one of his Auburn Christology lectures on the doctrine of the ascension, Torrance describes the corporate image as an indication that the church "is as it were the visible 'incarnation' of Christ on earth in lieu of his very Self."⁴⁷ He tends to avoid such direct rhetoric in his later writings, primarily to obviate any misinterpretation which would suggest that he deems the church to be an extension of the incarnation. Nevertheless, the affirmation that the image is an incarnational analogy is retained throughout his work. For example, in *Royal Priesthood* (1955), Torrance writes that "the Word assumed a unique form in history in the Incarnate Son" - a careful reminder that the church is not "the continuation . . .

45 *Atonement*, 363. For more reflection on the Christological content of the image, see *Reconciliation*, 68.

46 *CAC1*, 106.

47 T. F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 194.

of Christ nor of the Incarnation" - yet, in and through the apostolic tradition that Word "assumes still a temporal and worldly form in the Church, begetting the Church in the course of history as the Body of Christ."⁴⁸

The repeated phrase "assumed . . . form" stands out. It is the indwelling movement of Christ's fullness which serves as the heart of the incarnational analogy. The church is not a second incarnation, but it is incarnational in a secondary and derivative sense. There is only one incarnation, to which the church through the Spirit is related by *katalepsis*. The church is grasped by the incarnation and given a form and nature which corresponds to it. Christ assumed *our* human nature in *his* bodily existence; that union is actualized by the Spirit in our experience, conforming us to the reality of our being in Christ.

The process of *conforming* is itself not an external relation. Our humanity has already been healed in Christ; conformity or correction is simply the actualization or indwelling fullness of that healing. Hence, all stress is placed on Christ's actual humanity as central. "The Church is not the Body of the Trinity, nor the Body of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁹ The *filial* (adopted children of the Father) and *architectonic* (temple of the Holy Spirit) images must not be interpreted apart from the governance and preeminence of the corporate image, lest they destabilize or circumvent the Christocentrism to which Torrance is committed.

There are not *two* bodies, but only *one* body – Christ's. That affirmation is correlative to the mutual involution of incarnation and incorporation in Torrance's Christology: there are not *two* unions which bring about salvation, but only *one* – the hypostatic union. "The union between Christ and the members of his body" must be regarded "as established by incarnation and atonement."⁵⁰ Incarnation and incorporation are "one living redemptive movement gathering up the church into the mystery of Christ."⁵¹ The church is "concorporate" (*σύνσωμα*) with Christ, which means that it subsists in "sacramental" relation to "the all-inclusive living Body of Christ."⁵² When Torrance speaks of the church as Christ's body, he means "the ontological reality of the Church concorporate with Christ himself, who not only mediates reconciliation between man and God but constitutes and embodies it in his own divine-human Reality as

48 *RP*, 69-70.

49 *CAC2*, 231. Torrance does say that "the Church is the embodiment of the Spirit of Christ," but by this he does not mean that the church is an incarnation of the Spirit, but simply that the church and Christ are united by one Spirit into one body. *CAC2*, 162.

50 *TF*, 266.

51 *CAC1*, 258.

52 *Ibid.*, 218-19.

Mediator.”⁵³ It is crucial to recognize here that for Torrance, the church is not merely *spiritually* related to Christ in some external way. Concorporate *really means* ontologically concorporate. Christ has really reconciled *us* to God in his assumption and healing of *our* humanity. “His being was not only individual but also corporate . . . embodying in himself also the new humanity of the future.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, the corporate image must be understood “very realistically as a *somatic* and not just a *pneumatic* reality.”⁵⁵ To speak of the *body* of Christ is to draw attention to this somatic union; “body” indicates not only the *reality* to which the church is related but the *mode* of that relation. “The Church of Christ is not just the holy society founded to perpetuate his memory, or to observe his teachings, or to proclaim his Gospel . . . it inhered in his being as the Incarnate Son, was rooted in his humanity as the historical Jesus, and grew out of the fulfillment of his ministry in the flesh.”⁵⁶

That is an absolutely critical point for Torrance, and he deploys it in ecumenical dialogue to confront ecclesiologies in which (as he sees it) the church is only externally related to Christ. All such ecclesiologies, regardless of nomenclature – Protestant, Catholic, moral, sacramental, covenantal, mystical – tend to find their *esse* somewhere outside of Christ’s humanity, often in institutionalized grace or in social programs and initiatives. Torrance relies so heavily on the corporate image because he wishes for us to not lose sight of the centrality of Christ and the soteric significance of the incarnation.

The determinative mutual involution of the *somatic* and the *pneumatic* in the corporate image should bring to mind the resurrected “spiritual body” of Christ.⁵⁷ “Spiritual body” does not mean a *spiritualized* or *incorporeal* body. “To be a spiritual body is not to be less body but more truly and completely body, for by the Spirit physical existence is redeemed from all that corrupts and undermines it, and from all or any privation of being.”⁵⁸ This is not a minor point. Christ assumes our “empty” humanity and heals it, “filling” it with his own fullness of meaningful life. That movement in which God fills us up with his own fullness through Christ is absolutely fundamental to Torrance’s entire theological system. In its union with him, the church is provided “a new structure, the Spiritual Body

53 T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 67.

54 *Reconstruction*, 200.

55 *TF*, 291.

56 *Reconstruction*, 201.

57 *CAC1*, 113.

58 *STR*, 141.

of Christ." Consequently, "to walk according to temporal succession, or tradition, turned into a dogmatic principle (Col. 2.20; Eph. 2.2) is not to walk according to Christ (Col. 2.8), for that is to subject oneself again to the tyrant forces from which we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ."⁵⁹ Such ecclesial institutions of power are a mere empty "shadow" (σκιά) compared to the fullness of the spiritual body (Col. 2.17-18).⁶⁰ Insofar as the church is filled with his fullness and conforms to his image, it becomes *more real* and *more alive* than the passing world around it.

Much as the fallenness of Christ's humanity veiled his fullness of divine life, so also the church's fallenness veils his ascended fullness. Until his full physical manifestation at the end of time, when Christ's body appears, the true reality of ecclesial being remains hidden (Col. 3.4). The way in which the church manifests the reality of its life is by living in accordance with that reality, in defiance of the fallenness of the world. Torrance calls this "the continuing life of the church apocalypse":

[The church] must not be schematized to the form of the secular world but must be transformed through the renewal of our mind in Christ. We are called constantly to shed the image of the corruptible and put on the image of the new creation, for we are caught up in a movement that runs counter to the regressive flow of corruption and decay and carries us forward into the future to the final and full disclosure of our real being in Christ.⁶¹

In short, the church's life is one of *being-in-becoming*. Through Word, sacrament, and ministry the church becomes what it already is. As it participates in Christ's life and ministry, it shares in his fullness of meaning. Yet that means, paradoxically, that the church must descend to ascend, empty itself in order to be filled, die to self in order to live. The judgment which Christ brought upon sin in the flesh must be actualized in the church's existence. That is the Christological correction of the church.

At any rate, the analysis of Torrance's thought thus far shows that "the body of Christ" is no *mere* "figure," "image," "metaphor," or "analogy," but "essential" and an "ontological reality."⁶² While Torrance concedes that "when we speak of the Church as Christ's Body we are certainly using analogical language," he is adamant that "we are speaking nevertheless of an ontological fact, that is, of

59 *RP*, 53.

60 *CAC1*, 205; cf. *STR*, 90.

61 *Atonement*, 247.

62 *CAC1*, 230, 38.

a relation of being between the Church and Christ."⁶³ It is a *filled* rather than an *empty* analogy; the incarnation provides "its true substance and content."⁶⁴ "Christ is 'in' us through sharing our bodily existence."⁶⁵ When a soteriology of objective, incarnational atonement is affirmed, "a realist and unitary doctrine of the church" must follow, in which "*the empirical Church is the Body of Christ.*"⁶⁶

As is no doubt evident above, Torrance is clear that the corporate image does not, in his view, elide distinctions between Christ and the church. There are two reasons why: (1) the relation between Christ and his church is fundamentally asymmetrical; (2) while the relation between Christ and his church is already complete, it nonetheless awaits consummation.⁶⁷ These two qualifiers are closely associated with the corporate image in the New Testament through the concepts of *headship* and *fullness*. Christ is the head under whom the church as his body reaches toward fulfillment. Torrance brings these distinctions together as follows: "the relation between the Church and the Body of Christ is one of *koinonia* and *abiding* and is eschatologically conditioned. It is thus that the Church participates in the *wholeness* of Christ, but because that *wholeness* is already whole there can be no talk of an extension of the Incarnation or historical continuity of the Body of Christ."⁶⁸

The Son does not *need* this body in order to be *whole*.⁶⁹ His wholeness precedes his bodily existence. Through its incorporation into him, the church is given to share in his personal wholeness. Since his embodied existence is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, it is made present to the church in history through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ecclesial life subsists in Christ's wholeness, which never becomes an inherent property of the church, for it is the wholeness of his *person* and cannot be abstracted from him. Hence, the asymmetry: "Christ is the church, but it cannot be said that the church is Christ, for Christ is infinitely more than the church, although in his grace he will not be without it."⁷⁰

This asymmetrical relation is "eschatologically conditioned" by an *already-not yet* dialectic of presence and distance. "The Church through the Spirit is joined

63 *RP*, 29.

64 *CAC1*, 231.

65 T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 16.

66 *TF*, 276.

67 *CAC1*, 232-33. Of course, another way in which Torrance will state this is to say the relation is *already* consummated in Christ, but we await the *appearance* of that consummation.

68 *Ibid.*, 51.

69 *Ibid.*, 217.

70 *Atonement*, 362.

to the Body of the risen Christ and is One Body with Him; but on the other hand, Christ has removed His Body from us so that we have to think of the relation of the Church to the risen Body of Christ in terms of the distance of the ascension and the nearness of His *parousia* in Glory. There is an eschatological reserve in the relation of our union with Christ, an eschatological lag waiting for the last Word or the final Act of God."⁷¹ During this time of reserve, Christ's wholeness is operative in such a mediated and accommodated way that creatures are not destroyed but rather transformed by it.

Another way of putting this is that Christ is himself both the *already* and the *not yet*, the Alpha and the Omega of history. In him the entire world has already been saved and judged; his work is both objective and universal. "Our salvation is already fully accomplished in what Christ has done for us, and only needs His coming again and the unveiling or apocalypse that it involves to make it manifest to all."⁷² That apocalypse will determine the nature of reality with *finality*. For now, it determines the nature of the church *transformatively*. As his body, the church participates in the *already* and the *not yet* (which are at one in Christ). Ecclesial life is thus grounded both in the past and in the future. The church "is the sphere where through the presence of the Spirit the salvation-events of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension are operative here and now within history, [and] the sphere where within the old creation the new creation has broken in with power."⁷³

Can the empirical church truly be regarded as *somatically* or *carnally* united to Christ if his embodied existence (in which that union subsists) has ascended into heaven? Torrance answers affirmatively: "the Church is even now the Body of the risen Christ, and therefore shares already in the risen Body of Christ."⁷⁴ In other words, the church's somatic union with the risen Christ is already a *reality*. Of course, because of the ascension, it is a reality partly held in reserve. "The Church is already sacramentally concorporate with the Risen Body of Christ but still waiting herself for the redemption of the body."⁷⁵ The church's *somatic* union with Christ must therefore be made *spiritually* present, an event that occurs in the sacraments. When the eucharist is administered (for example),

there is enacted a *true and substantial union*, an ontological union, between Christ and His Church. Christ has become bone of our bone and flesh of our

71 *RP*, 45.

72 *Ibid.*, 47.

73 *Ibid.*, 23.

74 *CAC1*, 114.

75 *Ibid.*, 220.

flesh, but in the Eucharist we become bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. No union, save that of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, could be closer, without passing into absolute identity, than that between Christ and His Church as enacted in the Holy Eucharist.⁷⁶

This enactment makes the objective reality of the *somatic* union to be subjectively real or actualized in the experience of the church, such that it really partakes of Christ's body, and is given to "taste the powers of the age to come."⁷⁷ The church's identification with the body of Christ is not abrogated by his ascension. Rather, in and through the sacraments the church really *becomes* the body in history. The church is "the Body of Christ, the Body not only of the crucified but of the risen Christ . . . the Body which, though on earth and within history, is yet made participant in his risen power."⁷⁸

Paradoxically, the aforementioned qualifiers (asymmetry and eschatology) actually make the church *more* Christ-like, and the corporate image *more* Christological. Such distinctions pertain first and foremost to the hypostatic union. Christ's wholeness precedes the incarnation (asymmetry); his historic life is characterized by an *already-not yet* tension (eschatology). This means that the church's differences from Christ do not ultimately distance it from Christ. Christology draws ecclesiology centripetally into its domain even as distinctions are drawn between the two, for these distinctions are archetypally Christological distinctions.

Ecumenical Ecclesiology

Ecumenical interest in the corporate image continued to develop until it reached a peak in 1952 at the Third World Conference on Faith and Order in Lund, Sweden. Torrance was present, and argued for "a deeper understanding of Holy Baptism as our incorporation into Christ, as the basic ground for unity," and for "a thoroughly Christocentric doctrine of the Church as the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and ascended."⁷⁹ He prepared a paper titled "Eschatology and the Eucharist," in which most of his central ecclesiological ideas

76 CAC2, 188-89.

77 Ibid., 160.

78 STR, 99.

79 T. F. Torrance, "From a Christocentric to a Trinitarian Ecumenism, Ecumenical Suicide or Christocentric Renewal," unpublished paper, The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary [Box 36], 1-2.

are already extant.⁸⁰

K. E. Skydsgaard subsequently reported that Torrance was "most helpful in stimulating discussion" on the subject of ecclesial ontology, which asks "what is the church?" As Torrance was "influential in presenting this question to the Lund Conference," he was appointed secretary of a new theological commission which would be dedicated to the study of ecclesiology and Christology.⁸¹

By all accounts, a paradigm shift occurred at Lund. For the first time, discussion transitioned from *comparative ecclesiology* – in which "the denominations learnt to know one another" – to *Christological ecclesiology*.⁸² No longer was the conversation dominated by the assertion of opposing confessional distinctives. The entirety of the Christian tradition and what it had to say about Christ was in view. "The atmosphere of the discussion altered. . . . it seemed to us that the things which still divide us looked different when they were analyzed in the wider frame of common history than when there were merely opposed to each other in dogmatic disjunction."⁸³ Torrance reflected with enthusiasm that Reformed theologians were speaking the words of the church fathers, and Eastern Orthodox theologians were speaking the words of the Reformation.⁸⁴

Unfortunately, this shift to Christological ecclesiology was rather short lived. In Geneva (1966) it was decided that the work of God in which the church shared was one of "the liberation of the oppressed," and Christ's ministry was "a struggle for political justice."⁸⁵ The focus of the ecumenical movement began to turn toward various social initiatives: feminism, environmentalism, pacifism, and the like. Attention gradually drifted from Christology and the incarnation. Ecclesiology became concerned instead with the church's effectiveness, its ability to persuade the world around it to conform to its subjective ethical ideals.

80 The essay was republished in *CAC2*, 154-202.

81 K. E. Skydsgaard "Faith and Order: Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches," *The Ecumenical Review* 6.1 (1953), 12-13. For this commission, Torrance produced a number of study documents later compiled in the first volume of his *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*. His draft "Our oneness in Christ and our disunity as churches" was later revised by Oliver Tomkins and offered at the second WCC conference at Evanston, Illinois (1954). Once again, special emphasis was placed on the identity of the Church as the Body of Christ.

82 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 12-13. For an excellent overview of this shift, see Paul A. Crow, Jr. "The Legacy of Four World Conferences on Faith and Order," *The Ecumenical Review* 45.1 (1993), 13-26.

83 Albert Cook Outler, "A Way Forward From Lund," *The Ecumenical Review* 5.1 (1952), 63.

84 *CAC1*, 227.

85 Clowney, *The Church*, 156.

Torrance reflected upon the Uppsala Assembly (1968) with some concern:

the decision . . . to move “from words to action” in the sphere of human relations, with wholly laudable and essentially Christian aims, has actually under its Programme to Combat Racism taken a form in which economic and political pressure is exerted against oppression – yet in the last resort that can only play into the hands of the secular will to power so evident in the widespread violence of our times. No doubt the leaders of the World Council of Churches are sincere in their claim that they do not intend to support violence, but when as a matter of fact they use political theology as a basic hermeneutic to interpret the Gospel and the mission of the Church in the world today they nevertheless become trapped in an ecclesiastical will to power, when all too easily the World Council of Churches slips into the habit of using its own worldly force as an organization together with its institutional connections with the nations as the instrumental means of exerting pressure in the attaining of its declared aims.⁸⁶

For Torrance, the issue is not the fact that Christians are upholding the rights of the oppressed, but rather that in making this the centerpiece of ecclesial life and action they have usurped the centrality of Christ and appropriated with new vigor the sorts of power-plays that undermine rather than establish true unity.

As concentration on the centrality of Christ waned, so did Torrance's participation in the WCC: he had “little . . . direct involvement after the early 1960's in official events of Faith and Order or the World Council of Churches.”⁸⁷ By Canberra (1991), Christology became so downplayed that a vague notion of “Spirit” was taken up as the conference-theme. The supposed advantage was the theme's general appeal to groups such as “feminists, who prefer ‘Spirit’ to male terms for God” and “adherents of non-Christian religions, who are offended by such themes as ‘Jesus Christ, the Life of the World’ (the theme of the Sixth Assembly), but who, as non-Christians, can dialogue about shared conceptions of ‘Spirit’.”⁸⁸ Today, the WCC remains a largely socio-political entity, gravely concerned about issues such as climate change and oppression. For the most part, attempts to find unity on theological issues remain occluded by the prioritization of institutional action.

Why did Torrance's ecclesiology fail to gain traction in the ecumenical movement? In part this was simply because the ecumenical movement quickly

86 *Reconciliation*, 79.

87 Matthew Baker, “The Correspondence between T. F. Torrance and Georges Florovsky,” *Participatio* 4 (2013), 293.

88 Cloney, *The Church*, 20.

moved past the theological sensibilities displayed at Lund, adopting an approach more suited to establishing unity of praxis than of dogmatics. The ecumenical movement has always been characterized by a certain urgency and angst. Unity in social action has always been more immediately accessible and achievable than agreement on matters of faith and theology. Torrance was dismayed to see ecumenical ecclesiology lose its theological anchor, becoming tossed about by cultural and political tempests.

On the other hand, Torrance's comprehensive interrelation of Christology and ecclesiology was perhaps too ambitious. By embedding a *semper reformanda* principle in Christology, Torrance hoped to sway other traditions to a Reformed theological perspective. However, Torrance's historical case for Christ's assumption and sanctification of fallen humanity remains at best inconclusive, and his theological case is beset by ambiguities and inconsistencies which leave it little hope for broad acceptance.⁸⁹ Reformed theologians will nonetheless find Torrance's unique perspective of interest in constructing their own accounts of ecclesial reformation, though certain aspects of the Christological assumption of fallen humanity in Torrance's thought will themselves require reformation and revision.

Torrance's voice deserves to be heard again in the ecumenical movement. He presents a critically realist ecclesiology in which the doctrine of the church is not constructed on the basis of cultural concerns or institutional effectiveness but rather is shaped by the objective reality of the church's essence. That essence is ascended beyond history – it is the very sanctified and resurrected humanity of Christ. To speak in this way about the church need not be to render it an abstraction. The risen Christ is not an abstraction, but a Person who still addresses the church through his Spirit. The church which conforms to the reality of its being in Christ will be better prepared to effectively witness about the Gospel and to minister to the world around it.

A church, on the other hand, which defines itself purely in terms of cultural exigencies and social initiatives will only constitute itself one institution of power and self-projection among many in the world. The Christological correction of ecclesiology challenges the church's worldly notions about itself, and builds the

89 For a fair-handed treatment of the difficulties and ambiguities surrounding Torrance's concept of Christ's assumption of fallen humanity, see Kevin Chiarot, *The Unassumed is the Unhealed: The Humanity of Christ in the Christology of T. F. Torrance* (Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2013). See also Myk Habets' recent proposal that these ambiguities might be resolved via a more overt or developed Spirit Christology. "The Fallen Humanity of Christ: a Pneumatological Clarification of the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Participatio* 5 (2015), 18-44.

church up into holiness in such a way that issues of social injustice may be addressed with appropriate grace and courage.

Torrance is adamant that the church not be construed as an extension of the incarnation or a second incarnation. His arguments on this topic offer a helpful corrective to certain late modern Anglo-Catholic ecclesiologies. Christ's objective work of salvation is sufficient – the church does not add to this work or bring it to completion. Rather, Torrance argues that the church is given to participate in Christ's already completed work, witnessing to the salvation that he alone has accomplished. Again, courage is offered to the church. Victory is assured in Christ.

Ecumenical theologians will find in Torrance's ecclesiology a treasure trove of careful thought and powerful insight, as well as a challenge to the temptations which still beset ecclesiology today – the temptation either to separate Christ and the church or to cause the church to usurp Christ's place. Torrance invites us to crucify ecclesial will to power, and so to put to death the power struggles which so often characterize our divisions. He reminds us that in Christ the church will find its unity, its peace, its reconciliation, and its life.