

ECCLESIOLOGICAL HIGHS AND LOWS:

Thomas F. Torrance's Ecclesiological Influence on Ray S. Anderson

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines highlights of the ecclesiologies of Thomas F. Torrance and his student Ray S. Anderson. Torrance's ecclesiology exhibits traits commonly understood as "high church" while Anderson's ecclesiology can be characterized as "low church." Yet Torrance and Anderson develop their respective ecclesiologies by way of common Christological and Pneumatological commitments, and do so in ways that allow them to differ from conventional "high" and "low" church ecclesiologies. Torrance's theological influence on Anderson's ecclesiology presents a fertile case study for both ecclesiology and theological method.*

If my memory is accurate, I came across the name and under the influence of T. F. Torrance only a short time before having the same experience with Ray S. Anderson. Torrance's *Reality and Evangelical Theology*¹ set off a seismic and disorienting, but no less happy, unsettling and resettling of my theological world. After an interlude of several years, more of Torrance's work crossed my path, but in the interim that salutary role was filled by Ray Anderson. I happened upon two of Anderson's journal articles that had a similar effect to that of Torrance's book. Then one of Anderson's D.Min. students gave me a pre-publication manuscript entitled "The Praxis of Pentecost," later to be published as *Ministry on the Fireline*.² I knew at that point that my world would never be the same. Never having been a student at a school where either one taught, I never had the

1 Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982).

2 Ray S. Anderson, *Ministry on the Fireline: A Practical Theology for an Empowered Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993).



privilege of meeting Professor Torrance personally and only met Dr. Anderson once. Yet I cannot overstate the quality and quantity of influence that each has wielded in my faith, theological journey, and teaching.

Over the years I procured almost every work I could get my hands on (or afford, in Torrance's case) from both theologians, seeking to get inside their ways of theological thinking. During that time the subject of ecclesiology never stood out to me as a prominent subject for either of them. Certainly, I knew of their respective ecclesiastical alliances—Torrance with the Church of Scotland and Anderson with the Evangelical Free Church of America—yet all that seemed ancillary to their animating, core theological concerns. That was an oversight on my part, to say the least. Ecclesiology received more than modest amounts of attention from each (especially Torrance) and seems to have been a sort of theological laboratory for them. To draw an analogy from their favorite epistemologist, Michael Polanyi, ecclesiology is part of their theological subsidiary awareness that both depends upon and allows for other theological themes to take prominence in their focal awareness.³

Thomas F. Torrance's (1913 – 2007) ecclesiological commitments reflect more longevity and continuity as he had at least a third generation connection to the Church of Scotland.⁴ Yet, this familial ecclesiology was experienced and expressed through his parents' work with the China Inland Mission. As a result of political unrest in China, the family returned to their native Scotland in 1927 where, interestingly, the family attended a Baptist church for a while, "finding its theological position more acceptable than that of the local kirk."⁵ In Scotland Torrance completed his secondary education, followed by MA and BD degrees at the University of Edinburgh. In 1937-38 he entered postgraduate studies under Karl Barth in Basel, eventually completing his doctoral qualification in 1946 after years of ministry in both parish and military chaplaincy. The character of his academic career, propelled by a commitment to "theological ministry in service to the gospel,"⁶ was shaped profoundly by these years of pastoral ministry. As McGrath observes, "Every Barth has a *Safenwil*, a period of pastoral ministry which forces correlation of the themes of systematic theology with the realities of human existence."⁷ From 1950 to 1979 he served on the faculty of New College at the

3 Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 88, 92, 115.

4 Alister E. McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 6.

5 *Ibid.*, 20.

6 *Ibid.*, 42.

7 *Ibid.*, 60.

University of Edinburgh, lecturing initially in Church History, then transitioning to Dogmatics in 1952.⁸ Throughout his academic career he maintained a compelling interest in the scientific methodology of theology, particularly as defined by and exemplified in the themes of God’s redeeming revelation through the Incarnation and Atonement.⁹

Ray S. Anderson (1926 – 2009) began his ecclesiological journey experientially in the Lutheran tradition while growing up on a farm outside Wilmot, South Dakota. After serving in the Army Air Force during World War II, completing a bachelor’s degree at South Dakota State University, then farming for several years,¹⁰ he completed a BD at Fuller Theological Seminary and served for a decade as founding pastor of the Covina Evangelical Free Church. In 1970 he began PhD studies under Torrance at the University of Edinburgh.¹¹ Following completion of his PhD he taught at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California for four years, then returned to Fuller Theological Seminary in 1976 to join the faculty. While on the faculty at Fuller, Anderson and several friends launched Harbour Fellowship, a small non-denominational church that met in the multi-purpose room of an elementary school in Huntington Beach, CA. It was, as Anderson described it, “the high of low churches.”¹² Harbour Fellowship’s integration of structural flexibility and selective liturgical practice (e.g., weekly celebration of the Eucharist) provided a “theological laboratory”¹³ for Anderson’s commitment to theological *praxis*.¹⁴ Though ecclesiology proper was not a prominent concern

8 I am indebted to McGrath’s *Intellectual Biography* for the bulk of the material in this paragraph.

9 Fittingly, the two volumes of his published lecture notes, edited by his nephew Robert T. Walker, are entitled *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008) and *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009).

10 By his frequent admission and as reflected in numerous of his writings, his early life on the farm deeply influenced the shape of his theological thinking.

11 Anderson’s life pilgrimage from farming to seminary to pastoral ministry to academia factors significantly into the shape of his theological thinking and is well-chronicled in several of his own publications, as well as by Christian D. Kettler in *Reading Ray S. Anderson: Theology as Ministry, Ministry as Theology* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), ix-xix; Christian D. Kettler and Todd H. Speidell, eds., *Incarnational Ministry: The Presence of Christ in Church, Society, and Family: Essays in Honor of Ray S. Anderson* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1990), xiii-xvii.

12 Kettler, *Reading Ray S. Anderson*, xvii and 96.

13 Ibid., 96.

14 The particular manner in which Anderson uses the word *praxis* is crucial to understanding his theological method. See *Ministry on the Fireline*, 27-30, where he explains how he draws upon Aristotle’s definition of the term (in *Nicomachean Ethics*) as

in his published writings, he frequently expressed his theology in terms of its ecclesiological character and implications.¹⁵

This article explores the question of how Torrance's ecclesiology influenced Anderson's ecclesiology. What makes this question interesting is that their respective ecclesiologies were, at least ostensibly, quite different. A strict definition of "high church" might not fit Torrance in every way. The label was originally associated with the Church of England and its emphasis on liturgy, sacraments, clerical orders, the use of clerical vestments, and in some cases "the importance of apostolic succession and the historical continuity of Anglican bishops with the early church."¹⁶ Yet, more broadly understood, Torrance can be considered "high church" by commitments such as his theology of the Eucharist and his emphases on ecclesiastical polity and the orders of ministry. Certainly, the ecclesiastical context of his work reflects the questions and concerns generally considered "high church."

Whether or in what sense the Church of Scotland and Torrance in particular should be classified as "high church," their ecclesiastical ethos clearly contrasts with Anderson and the "low church" ethos of the Evangelical Free Church of America. The EFCA derived from two of several pietistic groups that migrated to the United States from the Scandinavian countries, having broken away from the Lutheran church in that setting.¹⁷ Though Anderson grew up as a Lutheran in South Dakota, he found his way into the EFCA and eventually into an entirely non-denominational ecclesiastical environment.

By Anderson's own testimony and as evidenced throughout his writings, Torrance's influential on his theological thinking can hardly be overstated.¹⁸ Though Anderson never directly explored Torrance's ecclesiology, the imprints are clear and instructional, illuminating the implications and texture of the theological themes that Anderson drew from Torrance. The macro-level influence of Torrance's theology on Anderson's ecclesiology can be traced along Trinitarian

action that embodies its telos.

15 For example, see *Ministry on the Fireline* and *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006).

16 See www.anglican.ca/help/faq/high-low-church.

17 The Swedish Evangelical Covenant and the Swedish Baptists were also among these groups. The Swedish Evangelical Free Church and the Danish-Norwegian Evangelical Free Church eventually merged in 1950 to become the Evangelical Free Church of America. Key features of EFCA churches are their commitment to congregational polity and biblical inerrancy. See Calvin B. Hanson, *What It Means to be Free: A History of the Evangelical Free Church of America* (Minneapolis: Free Church Publications, 1990).

18 Ray S. Anderson, "The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Participatio* 1 (2009): 49-50.

lines. More specifically, the micro-level influence reflects Torrance's familiar emphases on the Incarnation and the role of the Holy Spirit. What do we have to learn from the distinctive way in which Anderson appealed to Torrance, and especially these commitments, in his ecclesiology?

Key Features of Torrance's Ecclesiology

Thorough analysis of Torrance's ecclesiology has already been offered by more capable TFT scholars.¹⁹ What follows will not rehearse those analyses but simply point to salient features of Torrance's ecclesiology that warrant its classification as "high church" and that illuminate continuity with and influence upon Anderson's ecclesiology. It will also be seen that the particular ecclesiological features that locate Torrance within the "high church" realm are at the same time theologically-based challenges to or departures from some "high church" approaches, which allows for ecclesiological linkages with Anderson's "low church" approach. Torrance's ecclesiology thus turns out to have surprisingly portable implications for ecclesiastical circles quite different from his own, which is not always the case with "high church" ecclesiologies.

Anyone who possesses even a modest acquaintance with Torrance's thought knows that his ecclesiology is deeply and distinctly Christological. That may seem to be a widespread affirmation within Christian orthodoxy. However, Torrance takes pains to provide a particularly nuanced Christology as the anchor for his ecclesiology. He keeps ecclesiology clearly subservient to Christology by warning against ecclesiological moves (Roman Catholic or Protestant, and even "Free Churches") that effectively shift the focus from Christology to anthropology.²⁰ Thus, he insists,

[W]e must not yield to the temptation to think of the Church as an independent hypostatic reality. It was not the Church that was pre-existent and became incarnate; it was not the Church that was assumed into hypostatic union with the Deity; it was not the Church that was crucified for our salvation and raised for our justification; it was not the Church that ascended to the right hand of God the Almighty . . . but Jesus Christ alone, the Only-Begotten Son of God.²¹

19 See Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), chapter 7 and Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), chapter 8.

20 T. F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, *Order and Disorder* (London: Lutterworth, 1959), 14.

21 *Ibid.*, 15-16.

Therefore he claims, "It is . . . the doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ that must engage our attention, but that means the subordination of the Church at every point to Christ Himself; it does not mean that the Church occupies the centre of our attention but Christ alone."²² Accordingly, "[t]he doctrine of the Church must be formulated . . . as a correlate of the doctrine of Christ, for the Church is the Body of Christ, not the Body of the Spirit—it was not, after all, the Spirit but the Son who became incarnate and gave Himself for the Church and affianced it to Himself as His very own."²³ The Incarnation also serves to protect the Church against destructive dualisms. On the basis of the Nicene appeal to *homoousios* Torrance protests the ecclesiological dualism between the spiritual church and the visible church—a common "low church" emphasis—and a dualistic "distinction between a juridical Society on the one hand, and a mystical body on the other hand"²⁴—a common "high church" emphasis.

As a vital first step, therefore, Torrance suggests essential priorities for where ecclesiology fits in relation to the doctrine of the triune God. Elmer Colyer points out that "[i]n his two most important essays on ecclesiology [*The Trinitarian Faith*, chapters 6 and 7, and *Theology in Reconstruction*, chapter 3] Torrance develops the doctrine of the church in the context of his doctrine of the Holy Spirit."²⁵ Paul Molnar observes,

Torrance's ecclesiology is shaped not only by a rigorous Chalcedonian Christology but by a profound Pneumatology, a rich doctrine of the Trinity and most importantly by an application once again of the Nicene *homoousion*. Just as all Christian doctrine hinges on Christ's internal relation to the Father as his eternal Son, so too does the very being of the church.²⁶

A key distinguishing feature of Torrance's pneumatological approach to ecclesiology is how the Holy Spirit forms the Church through the Incarnation. Torrance observes,

The Church is grounded in the Being and Life of God, and rooted in the eternal purpose of the Father to send his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Head and Saviour of all things . . . God has not willed to live alone, but to create and seek others distinct from himself upon whom to pour out his Spirit, that he might share with them his divine life and glory, and as Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in

22 Ibid., 18.

23 Ibid., 17.

24 T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 1997), 276.

25 Colyer, *How to Read T.F. Torrance*, 242.

26 Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 273.

their midst for ever.²⁷

Because Jesus Christ through the Spirit dwells in the midst of the Church on earth, making it his own Body or his earthly and historical form of existence, it already partakes of the eternal life of God that freely flows out through him to all men.²⁸

Thus, he shifts the focus of the Spirit's work within ecclesiology from phenomena or gifts to ontology, as through the Spirit God constitutes the Church in Jesus Christ.

In his care to keep the ecclesiological role of the Spirit oriented toward the Incarnate Son of God, Torrance offers two vital accompanying emphases. First, by keeping in view that the Spirit is intrinsically linked to Christ, the Spirit is not to be confused with either the human spirit or ecclesiastical structures. Second, we are then able to see the crucial ecclesiological role of the Spirit in communicating the free grace of God that cannot be bound to sacramental expressions.

[T]he doctrine of the Spirit has its indispensable place, for when it is allowed to be superseded or dropped out of sight the Church comes to be more or less identified with a hierarchic institution operating with a false objectivity, and the whole conception of the Church as a communion of love, a fellowship of people living the reconciled life, is suppressed. It is the doctrine of the Spirit that inhibits the imprisoning of the life of the Church in a *codex iuris canonici*, that destroys the idea that the grace of God is bound to the sacramental elements, that makes impossible the conception that divine mysteries can be controlled and manipulated by man, and therefore that keeps the Church open to the renewal of its mind and lifts it above the downward drag of the spirit of the times.²⁹

This pneumatological approach to ecclesiology distances Torrance from "high church" ecclesiologies that tend toward a sacramentalism or other forms of elevated ecclesiastical structures that essentially attempt to corral and control the grace of God.

Additionally, Torrance's pneumatological ecclesiology stands distinct from some "low church" ecclesiologies that appeal merely or primarily to the presence and work (if not the formal doctrine) of the Holy Spirit as the phenomenological validation of God's presence in their life together or that appeal to the shared

27 Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1996), 192.

28 Ibid., 193.

29 Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement*, Vol. I, 18.

experience of the individuals who voluntarily assemble to constitute the Church.³⁰ Still, as Torrance anchors the reality of the Church in God, he acknowledges an essential human element that might be considered of a second order. He states, "The Church does not derive from below but from above, but it does not exist apart from the people that make up its membership or apart from the fellowship they have with the life of God."³¹ In this sense Torrance reflects sympathies with "low church" concerns for the shared life of the gathered people of God and perhaps distances himself from ecclesiologies that disregard the reality and phenomena of the actual, gathered people of God—the fellowship of the saints—in favor of transcendent or historical criteria.

In what sense, then, can Torrance's ecclesiology be considered "high church"? Molnar points out that Torrance considered it legalistic to find "the church's oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity" in "the visible structure of the community."³² Rather, for Torrance, the incarnational roots of the Body of Christ provide grounding for the physical, corporate nature of the church, the legitimacy of a bishopric of some sort, and his resistance to spiritualized, mystical, or quasi-docetic understandings of the Church. Through the Spirit, the Church draws life from its ascended Lord to live out that life as the Body of Christ within the structures of history, yet without being bound to those structures.³³ Still, for Torrance, the structural expressions of the Church within history—e.g., a bishopric—derive from his focus on the Spirit's mediation between the Church and its ascended Lord.

The intensely incarnational character of the Church as the Body of Christ, for Torrance, also forms the basis of his familiar "high church" emphasis on Word and Sacrament as definitive of the Church, particularly of its historical/empirical/visible existence as expressed through its ministry.

[T]he Word and Sacraments in their inseparable unity span the whole life and mission of the Church in the last times inaugurated by Pentecost, holding together the First Coming with the Final Coming in the one *parousia* of Him who was, who is, and who is to come. It is therefore in terms of the Word and Sacraments that we are to articulate our understanding of the ministry of the Church, of its order and of the nature of its priesthood functioning through that

30 Emil Brunner argues a similar point, though in slightly different fashion. See his typology and critique in *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 10-16.

31 Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 192.

32 Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 268.

33 T. F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 56, 59.

order. An examination of the Biblical witness at this point makes it clear that the order of the Church is determined by the real presence of the Son of Man in Word and Sacrament, and that the priesthood of the Church, while distinct from the unique vicarious Priesthood of Christ, is nevertheless determined by the form of His Servant-existence on earth.³⁴

[I]t is the Apostolic tradition of the Holy Sacraments that enshrines the continuity of the Church's being in history, as St. Paul says: 'I have received of the Lord that which by tradition I delivered unto you' (. . . 1 Cor. 11.23), and he is speaking of the *traditio corporis* in the Lord's Supper which is the creative centre of the Church's continuity as Body of Christ. That is the Apostolic succession in the secondary sense, for it is through the Apostolic foundation that the corporeality of the Word is extended and mediated to a corporeal world by such physical, historical events as the Bible, Preaching, Sacraments, the physical society of the members of the Church, the historical communication and edification, and all that that entails from age to age.³⁵

At the risk of creating confusion or misunderstanding by his choice of wording ("real presence"), Torrance anchors the Church's nature, structure, and mission incarnationally, while insisting that the Church never owns or conjures the life of Christ. On this point he observes,

It belongs to the nature of the case that order in the Church which is the expression here and now of the coming Kingdom and is of the nature of the divine love, is not to be possessed, or is to be possessed only as the Spirit is possessed. The nature of the *charismata* is determined by the Spirit who is Himself both the *Giver* and the *Gift*, so that even as Gift He remains transcendent to the Church . . .³⁶

Thus, the "high church" impulses and emphases of Torrance's ecclesiology, by being tethered to the Incarnation but mediated through the Spirit, exhibit another area of compatibility with conventional "low church" values—the freedom of the Spirit.

Torrance's "high church" ecclesiology also aligns with "low church" values in its missional character. This derives not only from his Christological grounding of the Church but, more specifically, from his insistence that in fulfilling God's covenant with Israel, Jesus Christ expressed the missional character of that covenant. "High church" ecclesiologies are commonly perceived (rightly or wrongly) as valuing unity and ecclesiastical structures in ways that functionally

34 Ibid., 63.

35 Ibid., 70.

36 Ibid., 66.

inhibit mission or at least do not naturally foster missional thinking. However, Torrance insists on both unity and mission by drawing attention to the identification of the early Church with the historic structures of the nation of Israel and the missional impetus seen in the spread of the gospel to the Gentile world.³⁷ He argues that the rootedness of the gospel in the nation of Israel provides the gospel's (and the Church's) missional character because that was Israel's original mandate.³⁸ This intrinsic missional character is coextensive with the intrinsic unity constituted by the Church's roots in God's covenant with Israel. This is the case, he asserts, despite the fact that the split between the Jewish and Gentile churches, exacerbated by the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., created a tension by allowing the Gentile churches to find institutional identity in the thought forms and worldviews of other cultures (Greek and Roman) rather than in the intrinsically missional nature of Israel's mandate to universalization.³⁹

This brief profile illustrates how Torrance's animating theological commitments shaped his ecclesiology along recognizable "high church" lines while resonating with central values of "low church" ecclesiologies. At this point we turn to examine Ray Anderson's ecclesiology, particularly his appeal to Torrance's theological commitments and how he expressed them in a unique "low church" manner.

Key Features of Anderson's Ecclesiology

To describe Ray S. Anderson's ecclesiology as "low church" is, in one sense, to state the obvious. Accepting ordination by the Evangelical Free Church of America, Anderson subscribed to a congregational polity and a confessional/regenerate understanding of the nature of the Church.⁴⁰ Moreover, his

37 T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 25.

38 Ibid., 26.

39 Ibid., 27.

40 The EFCA Statement of Faith affirms, "The true Church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers." www.efca.org/explore/what-we-believe. Though this is the revised version of the EFCA Statement of Faith, adopted in 2008, these commitments were held at the time of Anderson's ordination. In addition to its Statement of Faith, the EFCA affirms six "distinctives". Distinctive #1 states, "The Evangelical Free Church of America is a believer's church—membership consists of those who have a personal faith in Jesus Christ." Distinctive #6 affirms the commitment to a congregational form of government.

longest tenured pastoral ministry was in a non-denominational congregation (Harbour Fellowship) that functioned even more autonomously than would an EFCA congregation. In this "low church" context Anderson implemented an ecclesiology that echoed key values of T. F. Torrance, taking the logic of Torrance's ecclesiological commitments beyond where Torrance took them.

Though the criteria of apostolicity factors overtly into Torrance's ecclesiological values, Anderson also makes that his ecclesiological starting point when he claims that "there is only one gospel and if any church is faithful to the gospel it is apostolic, regardless of what other distinctives it claims." Furthermore, "Christ is the chief apostle and . . . he continues to have a threefold apostolic ministry, which began in the first century and continues to this day."⁴¹ According to Anderson, this understanding of apostolicity accounts for Protestantism's rejection of "'mechanical' succession of apostolic authority through the *office* of apostle, and grounded the apostolic nature of the church in the *message* of the apostles, that is, in the gospel to which the apostles gave witness."⁴² Thus, for Anderson apostolicity does not primarily dictate ecclesiastical structure or practice, though those are not insignificant.

Perhaps surprisingly, Anderson considers himself a sacramentalist. In one of his more explicit statements he both explains his understanding of the sacramental nature of the church and links his view to Torrance.

The Word of the gospel (*kerygma*) that the church proclaims, as Thomas Torrance has said, "is in the fullest sense the sacramental action of the Church through which the mystery of the Kingdom concerning Christ and His Church, hid from the foundation of the world, is now being revealed in history . . . in *kerygma* the same word continues to be 'made flesh' in the life of the church."

The church's life is thus sacramental in the sense that it is the continuing life of the historical Jesus ministering to the world on behalf of God while, at the same time, the church is the eschatological presence of the coming Jesus Christ who has destroyed the power of death and gives assurance of resurrection and forgiveness through the Holy Spirit.⁴³

In response to Anderson's remark, Christian Kettler observes that to Anderson, "The issue . . . is not whether we are 'sacramental,' but are we sacramental

41 Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 147.

42 Anderson, *Ministry on the Fireline*, 121.

43 Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 170. Anderson's citation of Torrance is from T. F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 2, *The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel* (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 158-159.

enough?"⁴⁴ Not encumbered by traditional "low church" misgivings with sacramental theology and terminology, Anderson unapologetically draws his understanding of sacramentalism directly from the Incarnation and the fact that the Incarnation anchors the *kerygma*.

Kettler points out that Anderson borrows from Barth (whose influence is clearly felt through Torrance) to insist that the presence of Christ, based on his humanity, is the primary sacrament, *contra* traditions that insist on the sacraments being linked to the practices of the church. In this regard, Kettler suggests that Christ's kenotic presence, as constituting the community he creates, was perhaps "Anderson's most important contribution to ecclesiology."⁴⁵ Thus, a central question about Anderson's ecclesiology turns out to be the *type* of sacramentalism he represents, and how he works this out within an ostensibly "low church" context.

Like Torrance, Anderson understands the role of the Holy Spirit as integral and not ancillary to the incarnational nature of the Church. Yet the Spirit is not the ecclesiastical possession of the church. He states,

The praxis of Pentecost begins its theological reflection from the perspective of this paracletic ministry of the Spirit of Christ taking place in the world before it takes place in the church. That is to say, Christ is not first of all contained by the nature of the church so that only when Christ is shared by the church does the world encounter him. Rather, as Thomas Torrance has put it, "Christ clothed with His gospel meets with Christ clothed with the desperate needs of men."

This paracletic ministry of Jesus, of course, presupposes the *kerygma* as the announcement of this act of reconciliation. But even as the incarnation provides the basis for the *kerygma* in the humanity of Jesus Christ as the ground of reconciliation, so the continued humanity of Christ provided the ground for the paracletic ministry of the Holy Spirit and the *kerygmatic* message.⁴⁶

In the following, Anderson underscores the ecclesiological implications of this point that the church must not be over-associated with the presence or mission of God in any sense that would imply control or power over the work of God.

Theology loses contact with the praxis of God when it seeks to ground its

44 Christian D. Kettler, *Reading Ray S. Anderson: Theology as Ministry, Ministry as Theology* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 99-100.

45 *Ibid.*, 99-100.

46 Anderson, *Ministry on the Fireline*, 65. Anderson's citation of Torrance is from Thomas F. Torrance, "Service in Jesus Christ," in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. Ray S. Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 724.

existence in some kind of continuity with a natural right or law, even when these natural laws become supportive of its religion. There is nothing so destructive to the humanity of persons as a theology of the church that fuses race, religion and political theory. At the same time there is nothing so contemporary, compelling and downright dangerous to such deadly orthodoxy as the humanity of God unleashed as the mission of Christ in the world. The humanity of God in Jesus Christ, his birth, life, death and resurrection, is both the "personalising of persons" and the "humanising of man," as T. F. Torrance once put it.⁴⁷

Anderson's insistence on the freedom of the Spirit to work out the incarnational/kerygmatic character of ministry without being bound to ecclesiastical structures constitutes one of his most salient extensions of Torrance's ecclesiological influence within his own "low church" context.

Anderson develops the ecclesiastical implications of this ecclesiological framework in his book *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (2006). Ironically, this work draws upon the ecclesiological foreshadowing of a chapter entitled "An Emerging Church" in *Ministry on the Fireline* (1993), which was written before the "Emerging Church" was a popular, recognizable cultural reality in the U.S. Whether or not Anderson knew about the nascent "Emerging Church" movement when he published his earlier chapter, he explicitly draws that line of thought forward to provide validation and theological grounding for the movement in his later book. In *An Emergent Theology* Anderson makes perhaps his most direct use of Torrance to offer an ecclesiological justification of the Emerging Church movement.

How Torrance would have assessed the "Emerging Church" is interesting to consider. One suspects that with the value Torrance placed on history and continuity, he may have been rather uncomfortable with the openness and seemingly unanchored creativity of this particular ecclesiastical trend. Yet, Anderson appeals to Torrance's ecclesiological values to provide a theological defense of the phenomenon.

Emerging churches do not need well-defined boundaries because they have a real presence of Christ at the center. This again reveals the fact that it is about the right gospel, not the right polity. Where Christ is not clearly visible as the life of the community of faith, the boundary lines tend to become [sic] more visible, often to the exclusion of those who are themselves ambiguous with regard to their spiritual identity. Emerging churches will often be a little messy

47 Ibid., 171. Anderson's citation of Torrance is from Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, new ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1992), 78-79.

around the edges—like the original followers of Jesus—but Christ can handle that!⁴⁸

Torrance's emphasis on the character of grace as killing in order to make alive provides Anderson with a defense of the ecclesiastical messiness of "Emerging" churches. "[W]hat grace puts to death is what we create by our own religion based on a human and natural law, which the law of God reveals as inhuman and enslaving."⁴⁹

Anderson draws on Torrance even more pointedly in the following assessment:

I have the feeling that the emerging church appears a bit naked to those who see it unencumbered by the traditional institutional forms and polity of the church. The vestments of the pastoral office, though often vibrant with color, may still carry the musty odor of the tomb. The gospel is not really naked, but clothed with Christ in the form of human need and human aspirations. Thomas Torrance says it eloquently when he writes:

"The Church cannot be in Christ without being in Him as He is proclaimed to men in their need and without being in Him as He encounters us in and behind the existence of every man in his need. Nor can the Church be recognized as His except in that meeting of Christ with Himself in the depth of human misery, where Christ clothed with His Gospel meets with Christ clothed with the desperate need and plight of men."⁵⁰

The incarnational constitution of the church appears once again as central in Torrance's thought and echoes the broader character of Anderson's theological interest in the revelatory nature of the Incarnation. More specifically, Anderson regards the entrance of the Son of God into human brokenness as an almost irreducibly poignant act of reconciliation and revelation.⁵¹

Reflecting Torrance, Anderson also makes ecclesiological appeal to the work of the Spirit in his apologetic for the "Emerging Church." He cites Torrance in two key passages; the first emphasizes that the Spirit's primary goal is to build a Christ-shaped community and not primarily to effect certain individualistic

48 Ray S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 89.

49 Anderson, *Emergent Theology*, 89-90.

50 Ibid., 93. Anderson's citation of Torrance is from "Service in Jesus Christ," in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, 724.

51 See for example his published PhD thesis. Ray S. Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God: A Christological Critique* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) and "The Little Man on the Cross," *The Reformed Journal* (November 1982): 14-17.

interior states.⁵² Second, he relies on Torrance to make the point that “The community of the Spirit is formed by the charism, or gift, of the Holy Spirit and thus can be called a charismatic community. The body of Christ becomes the corporate manifestation of this life in Christ; the fruit of the Spirit becomes our personal manifestation of this life in Christ.”⁵³

This modest sampling illustrates Torrance’s influence on Anderson’s ecclesiology, though far more examples of Anderson’s direct and indirect reliance on Torrance could be cited. At this point the focus must shift to what has already been mentioned, but not yet explored—the intriguing difference between the ecclesiastical expression of their respective ecclesiologies: “high church” and “low church.” What accounts for this difference when Anderson draws on Torrance so frequently and enthusiastically?

Comparative Analysis

Features of Torrance’s and Anderson’s ecclesiologies considered thus far raise important questions for both ecclesiology and theological method. What differences exist between their ecclesiologies, or at least between the ways they utilize a common theological framework, and what is the significance of those differences? What accounts for the ways in which Anderson adapts or modifies Torrance’s ecclesiological paradigm for a “low church” context? Does Anderson’s use of Torrance’s ecclesiological paradigm expose any inconsistencies with the trajectory of thought for either? What can we learn from this comparison about the process of theological development?

Torrance’s ecclesiology may differ from Anderson’s most obviously in how Torrance viewed the nature and significance of ecclesiastical structure, most notably perhaps with regard to the role of ordination in the administration of the Eucharist. He elaborates on this role and the theological background for it in *Royal Priesthood*, making clear how his view differs from a sacramentalism that understands the Eucharist as possessed or controlled by the Church. Rather, he insists that the Eucharist is subordinate to the risen and ascended Christ, who by the Spirit ministers himself to the Church.⁵⁴ “Because the Sacraments are Sacraments of the Word made flesh, they are nothing apart from the Word . . .”⁵⁵ The Apostolic ministry of the Word then becomes pivotal in the life of the Church,

52 Anderson, *Emergent Theology*, 165.

53 Ibid., 167. Here Anderson cites Torrance from *Theology in Reconstruction*, 247.

54 Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, 71.

55 Ibid., 75.

both originally and as iterated in a designated clerical order.

[T]he Apostles occupied a unique position as the foundation of the Church, for it was through them that the Mind of Christ came to be articulated in the Church as divine Word in human form and yet prior to, and transcendent to, the Church. Hence the Apostles always come first in the Pauline lists of the *charismata* (Eph. 4.11; I Cor. 12.29, etc.). But within the Church the ministry of the Word, through evangelists who establish congregations or through prophets and teachers who build them up in the faith, occupies the primary place, for it is the ministry of Word that continues to beget and maintain the Church, and it is the proclamation of the Word to the Church which effectively forms it as the Body of Christ and preserves it as Body from usurping the place and authority of the Head . . . [I]t is as the Word becomes event in the sacramental ordinances that the Church as Body takes shape and form under the ordering of the Word of the ascended Head. As such the Sacraments mean the enactment of the authority of Christ over the Church and its life and ministry, and so the ministry of the Word and Sacraments involves a *charisma* of oversight (ἐπισκοπή) over the whole congregation and its worship, in which the unity of Word and Sacrament, and the proper relation of Sacrament to the Word may be maintained in the Church which is the Body united to Christ as its Head. Thus an *episcopus* presides over the fellowship of the Church by exercising the ministry of Word and Sacrament, but in such a manner that he is to be accounted a *steward* (οἰκονόμος) of the mysteries of God and an able minister (ὑπηρέτης) of the Spirit (I Cor. 4.1f; cf. 2 Cor. 4.1ff).⁵⁶

Such charismatic ordering, Torrance argues, exists in continuity with and as an extension of the priestly role in the Old Testament, a significant aspect of which was the filling of the priest's hands with consecrated offerings. Torrance pulls this particular thread through to weave his theology of ordination. This filling of the priest's hands "came to be the most distinctive term for ordination, for it was in this part of the rite that the priest's consecration was brought to its fulfilment as he engaged in the sacrificial oblations for the first time."⁵⁷ After developing this line of argument further, Torrance concludes, "Out of this there arises very properly a theology of ordination in which the climax, so to speak, of the rite of ordination is reached, not in the laying on of hands . . . but in the actual celebration of the Eucharist. It is as *Christ fills the hands* of the presbyter with the bread and wine that his ordination is properly realised and validated."⁵⁸

Anderson's comfort with the looser ecclesiastical practices of the "Emerging

56 Ibid., 76-77.

57 Ibid., 79.

58 Ibid., 80-81.

Church” suggests that he may not have held as strictly to some particulars of Torrance’s views on ordination and the administration of the sacraments as he did to other aspects of Torrance’s ecclesiology.⁵⁹ He defends the model of leadership present in that ecclesial model by appealing to 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 and Paul’s argument that the Corinthian converts, the fruit of his ministry, were the only validation he needed for his ministry. Anderson concludes,

The emerging churches founded by Paul were not led by credentialed elders, nor did Paul train others to assume leadership roles, except with the possible cases of Timothy and Titus, for example. And even here, if Timothy was sent to give leadership to the church at Ephesus, as some think, his “credentialing” was not by an ordination certificate but by “the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6). Paul’s confidence in the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ to provide instruction, guidance and leadership for the emerging churches was bold and uncompromising, even though it sometimes led to some degree of confusion and even disorder. Despite all that, Paul did not write to the churches (at Corinth, for example), telling them to replace the leadership of the Spirit with a more top-down ecclesial system of authority. On the contrary, he simply reminded them that the unity of the Spirit and the mind of Christ given by the Spirit were to be sought by consensus.⁶⁰

Later in his theological reflection on the “Emerging Church” Anderson revisits the issue of ordination to argue for the ordination of women on the same pneumatological basis, i.e., that the validation of the Spirit constitutes the defining stamp of approval on a person’s ministry.⁶¹

The nature and administration of the Eucharist provides an equally illuminating example of Anderson’s ecclesial latitude with Torrance’s framework. Anderson’s open view would be disturbing or at least seem odd to those across the high-low ecclesiastical spectrum. Anyone familiar with Anderson’s corpus and his personal pastoral practice knows that he advocates an “open table.” However, for him “open” does not simply mean open to Christians of other denominations or

59 Both Torrance and Anderson supported the ordination of women. Torrance argued this case by anchoring ordained ministry in the scope of Christ’s incarnation and atonement. See Thomas F. Torrance, “The Ministry of Women,” in *Gospel, Church, and Ministry*, Thomas F. Torrance Collected Studies 1, ed. Jock Stein (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 201-219. Anderson also argued for the ordination of women, contending that the church should follow the trajectory of human community that was launched by the Resurrection, is propelled by the Spirit, and anticipates full realization in the eschaton. See Ray S. Anderson, “The Resurrection of Jesus as Hermeneutical Criterion: A Case for Sexual Parity in Pastoral Ministry,” in *TSF Bulletin* 9:4 (March/April, 1986): 15-20.

60 Anderson, *Emergent Theology*, 72-73.

61 *Ibid.*, 128-131.

congregations. It means open to believer and non-believer alike, considering the Lord's Table an invitation to experience God's grace. He states, "The essence of sacrament may be defined as a gracious invitation to participate in the life of God along with a gracious impartation of a spiritual benefit."⁶² Essentially, Anderson sees the Eucharist functioning not primarily as a sign of the covenant for those who have already had their membership ratified by baptism or by prior confession of faith, but for those in need of covenant grace. This move seems curiously in keeping with the impulses of Torrance's Christological sacramentalism, but extends it beyond what Torrance might have practiced.

Torrance appeals to Israel's role in a manner that may have set the direction for Anderson's practice of an open table. "[B]ecause the election of Israel as God's Servant was the election of man in his sinful existence and enmity to God, election involved the judgment of man in his will to isolate himself from God and in his refusal of grace."⁶³ Possibly Anderson draws on Torrance's notion of election, with its more inclusive, corporate character as the basis of the Church, as the basis for his more inclusive approach to the Eucharist. Anderson is fond of using Torrance's notion of the "inner logic" of the gospel. Most likely, he would contend that this is exactly what he follows in his Eucharistic practice.

Why does Anderson not work out the ecclesiological implications of his Christology in the same fashion as did Torrance? Several possibilities can be considered. Perhaps he is not as convinced as Torrance that the character and trajectory of the Old Testament priesthood establishes the structure or order for the Church. Without question Anderson appeals to the liturgical and ecclesiological significance of Israel, much as Torrance does.

In a certain sense . . . Israel as the people of God renders a service to God on behalf of all the nations. Thus Israel is a *leitourgos*, offering up to God in the name of all human creatures that which properly belongs to him. But Israel, of course, must be saved herself; and thus Jesus Christ, as the one Israelite appointed and anointed for that service, renders to God the service that is appropriate. Consequently, Jesus is call the *leitourgos* (minister) who serves in the sanctuary of God (Heb. 8:2). He is the liturgist, who chooses the fields, the shops, and the streets as his sanctuary in which to render service to God. As the incarnate Son of God, he takes humanity and brings it back to its appropriate serviceableness to the Creator.⁶⁴

62 Ibid., 216.

63 Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 197.

64 Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Pasadena: Fuller Seminary, 1982), 181.

However, here Anderson takes Torrance's premises and develops their logic in ways that fit or reflect both his "low church" church context and his understanding of the nature of the Church and its ministry as constituted by the Incarnate Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps Anderson sees more hermeneutical significance in the role of the Spirit to grant the Church freedom in working out the implications of the Resurrection through fresh adaptations to the actuality of human brokenness and need. In comparison, Torrance seems to see the ecclesial role of the Spirit more (though not exclusively) along the contours of the OT priestly role. Furthermore, while Torrance emphasizes the work of the Spirit to mediate between the ascended Christ and his Body within the structures of history, Anderson seems to place more emphasis on the Spirit's role in working out the character of the coming eschatological order in the present order, often apart from the structures of the Church. His view that there is a "secular" expression of sacramentalism loosens the work of the Spirit from being bound to the structures of the Church and fixes that work on the humanity of Christ as expressed to all people through the Incarnation. Both possibilities (and there may be others) are congruent with the theological and methodological rationale for ministry that Anderson presents in his key works.⁶⁵

What might be the significance of these moves on Anderson's part? Interestingly, the significance may be found in how both Anderson and Torrance appeal to different aspects of the same Christological paradigm. For each, the Resurrection is more than an apologetic stamp of validation or a decisive completion of Christ's redeeming work (though no less than those). For Anderson the Resurrection constitutes a methodological construct that, through the Spirit of the Risen Christ, opens fresh and creative possibilities for ministry as long as those possibilities were tethered to proper theological "antecedents."⁶⁶ A key difference between Torrance's "high church" ecclesiology and Anderson's "low church" ecclesiology is the way in which each connects

65 In *Ministry on the Fireline* and *The Soul of Ministry* his notion of "ministry as theology" (which phrase also appears in the subtitle of Christian Kettler's *Reading Ray S. Anderson*) constitutes his central methodological commitment that the realities of ministry practice have a vital hermeneutical role for the shaping of theological affirmations. Earlier in his career he made a similar case, appealing to the eschatological orientation of the Spirit's work in order to argue for women in ministry. See Anderson, "The Resurrection of Jesus as Hermeneutical Criterion".

66 Anderson refers to the concept of biblical "antecedents" as a hermeneutical safeguard against ungrounded interpretive moves in the name of the Spirit and the eschaton. See *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 109-112.

the Incarnation ontologically to the Church's sacramental practices and its organized life together. Anderson either shifts or extends the emphases of Torrance's Christo-ecclesial paradigm in way(s) that fit a "low church" context, even if his adaptations exist on the fringes of what would be acceptable to many other "low church" contexts.

Anderson's adaptations of Torrance's ecclesial paradigm allow him to function with the latitude of "low church" ecclesiastical settings and be a theological advocate for movements like the Emerging Church, while also incorporating certain sacramental motifs typically found in "high church" settings. Hence, he is able to describe Harbour Fellowship as "the high of low churches." He is unashamedly sacramental, as defined by his theological paradigm.

A theology of sacrament can be expressed as a twofold movement: a gracious invitation to participate in the community of God's inner life as spiritual beings, and a gracious impartation of divine blessing on our life as human beings. Human life therefore might be considered as a secular sacrament through which gracious access to the Creator enables humans to serve as priests of creation, offering up praise and thanksgiving to him. At the same time, humans represent a gracious blessing from the Creator on the secular workplace, thus fulfilling the very nature of sacrament itself.⁶⁷

This framework for sacramentalism serves as the platform for a more specific understanding of sacramentalism with respect to the Church.

[Paul] did not bind grace to sacrament but sacrament to grace . . . Grace is not a commodity that can be packaged and dispensed. It is the life of the Spirit that renews and transforms every facet of both the inner and outer life of those who belong to Christ . . . There is no suggestion in Paul's rebuke and instructions that the problem was in the act of dispensing the elements of bread and wine that represent the body and blood of Jesus. The sacramental act is participation in the meal itself, not in a ritual of administration.

We should understand that the grace of sacrament is Jesus himself, who unites the real presence of God with humanity in his own person. He is the primary sacrament from which all sacramental life flows and has its origin . . . Our need does not cause the grace of God to be dispensed for us, but God's grace in our lives brings us to the altar. Grace lives on both sides of the altar, at both ends of the Table of the Lord.⁶⁸

67 Anderson, *Emergent Theology*, 104. See his development of this theme with application to the caregiving professions in *Spiritual Caregiving as Secular Sacrament: A Practical Theology for Professional Caregivers* (New York: Jessica Kingsley, 2003).

68 *Ibid.*, 215-216. For both Anderson and Torrance, the notion that grace is person and not a discrete, ontological entity can be traced back to Karl Barth in his treatment of the

To be a truthful church is to make the truth of Christ an incarnational reality that is present in the world and to the world as the very presence of Christ.⁶⁹

Clearly, then, Anderson understands sacramentalism not primarily in terms of particular ecclesiastical practices or objects but as invitation and expression of God's grace, expressed generally through creation and specifically through the Incarnation in the experience of God's people.

What accounts for Anderson's adaptations of Torrance's ecclesiological paradigm for a "low church" context? Why does he so frequently cite Torrance on ecclesiological matters to argue for "low church" ecclesiological values which Torrance likely would have questioned? By his own admission Anderson works out a theology of ministry in which the act of ministry itself plays a central role in his theological method. He frequently admits that his ministry experiences profoundly reshaped his theological method in that direction. He brings that reservoir of experiential resources with him into his doctoral studies with Torrance and we can easily surmise that they provide an epistemological framework for his interpretation of Torrance throughout his career. The possible significance of Anderson's U.S. context should not be overlooked. Due to multiple socio-political features of U.S. culture, "low church" values have been particularly easy to perpetuate. Whatever factors may be identified in Anderson's ecclesiological adaptations, he provides an illuminating case study for the influence of ministry practice and context in theological development. It is not without significance in this regard that Anderson describes Torrance as a "practical theologian."⁷⁰

One's theological starting point wields considerable influence on theological conclusions by establishing a trajectory. Yet, by definition a trajectory is not destination. Thus, it is impossible to predict, at least exhaustively or precisely, where a trajectory will lead. Sometimes the trajectory makes more sense when viewed in the "rear view mirror" from the vantage point of a destination. This phenomenon can be observed in the influence of Torrance's ecclesiology on Anderson, though the former worked out his ecclesiology in a more "high church" context and the latter in a more "low church" context. Two possible implications surface.

First, in ecclesiology other theological commitments come together, often in complex ways. Ecclesiology can be considered a laboratory or case study for understanding the ways in which other theological commitments are held, how they are related to each other, and how they are worked out in life and ministry.

doctrine of election. See Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, II.2.

69 Ibid., 217.

70 Anderson, "The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," 49.

Second, the trajectories established by theological starting points are themselves like complex cables that contain more facets and implications than adherents understand. In the case of Torrance and Anderson, this may be an example of what they loved to quote from one of their favorite epistemologists, Michael Polanyi, "You know more than you can tell." Torrance's theology of the Incarnation and the vicarious humanity of Christ shape Anderson's understanding of the sacramental character of the Church. In a sense, Anderson uses this theme and the broader context of Trinitarian relations to redefine sacramentalism, pointing to community as "[t]he fundamental liturgical paradigm of personhood," then going on to claim that "liturgy takes place as a fundamental expression of God as a fellowship of being."⁷¹

This approach to sacramentalism actually illustrates the first implication by showing the interconnectedness of ecclesiology and anthropology for Anderson. In the liturgical community human personhood as "co-humanity" is "enacted," "re-enacted," "reaffirmed, supported, and reinforced" through participation in the reality of triune, divine community.⁷² It would be not over-reaching to suggest that for Anderson the church re-humanizes as it worships! Kettler's astute observation is worth repeating. For Anderson, he states, "The issue, then, is not whether we are 'sacramental,' but are we sacramental *enough*?"⁷³

Conclusion

Ray Anderson's overall approach to the theological task decidedly bears the imprint of his theological mentor T. F. Torrance. Readers cannot get far into Anderson's corpus without seeing frequent citations of Torrance and noticing how deeply Anderson's thought is shaped by Torrance. Torrance's influence on Anderson's ecclesiology presents, however, a curious and intriguing example of that influence since Torrance's ecclesiology is expressed along the lines of several traditionally understood "high church" values, while Anderson's ecclesiology clearly follows conventional contours of "low church" values. At points they obviously go in what seem to be different ecclesiological directions. Interestingly, they follow these different directions—"high church" and "low church"—from similar theological starting points and yet find their way to conclusions that harmonize.

They share a commitment to the Incarnation as an ecclesiological starting

71 Anderson, *On Being Human*, 182.

72 Ibid., 182-183.

73 Kettler, *Reading Ray S. Anderson*, 99.

point and benchmark that determines the place of the Church in and for the brokenness of humanity. They share a commitment to the role of the Holy Spirit as the divine agent who works out the incarnational character of the Church in the current order, yet in ways that keep the Church from being bound to or owned by the current order. In their respective and distinctive approaches to these common commitments, Torrance and Anderson make nuanced theological moves that allow each to situate those commitments within diverse ecclesiastical contexts. These moves are not incompatible but do illustrate the methodological significance of placing differing levels of emphasis on different theological motifs and of connecting those motifs in different ways.

T. F. Torrance and his student Ray S. Anderson continue, posthumously, to nourish the theological world through their theological legacies, both in print and in oral tradition. Even without offering comprehensive and systematic ecclesiologies, each gives noteworthy attention to that area of Christian doctrine. Studied separately, their ecclesiologies can be seen to reflect the values and impulses of their broader theological frameworks. Since their frameworks are so similar—Anderson drawing much of his from Torrance—students of each can hardly help but notice how those frameworks find unique expression in “high church” and “low church” contexts. Yet, even those differences never take center stage but ultimately reside in the shadows of their compelling commitment to the incarnate, risen, and ascended Lord whose life the Church enjoys through the Holy Spirit, and whose Spirit relentlessly breaks through barriers, structures, and religious forms with the shocking grace of the Kingdom of God.