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“THAT WHICH IS NOT ASSUMED IS NOT HEALED”:
A DOGMATIC RESPONSE TO RECENT FORMULATIONS OF
THE SON’S ASSUMPTION OF A FALLEN HUMAN NATURE

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For Josie,

Inveni Amorem Aere Perennius.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CD* Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975.
- IJST* *International Journal of Systematic Theology*
- Mod. Theol.* *Modern Theology*
- PRRD* Muller, Richard A. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725*, 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003.
- RD* Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
- SBJT* *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
- SCG* *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010.
- SJT* *Scottish Journal of Theology*
- ST* Aquinas, Saint Thomas. *Summa Theologiae: Complete Set*. ed. The Aquinas Institute. Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute, 2012.
- Works* Owen, John. *The Works of John Owen*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965.
- WTJ* *Westminster Theological Journal*

PREFACE

The pleasures of thinking on the deep things of God are given only to a few. Through the history of the church, the existence of benefactors has made possible for the production of works to which civilizations are indebted. This work will not probably be widely circulated; this dissertation, however, has been made largely possible through the generous donations of H.U.G. Missionary Society. These brothers have made my M.Div and Ph.D possible by investing in me even when I did not believe in myself. My family has also invested in me in tears, prayers, and many other ways. Thanks Mom, Dad, and sister (Elaine, Edson, Larissa).

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patiently nudged me in the directions this work should go even when I could not see the light. Dr. Jonathan Pennington has been a great fountain of encouragement for me. As the director of the Ph.D program, he made it possible for weak and scared new students, like me, to succeed in their vocations. Dr. Christopher Holmes, whom I took an independent study on Karl Barth's Christology, has showed me the character of a true scholar, emphasizing that the lonely and patient work with primary sources is always better than quick secondary source references. Having worked in the library for several years of my graduate studies, I am especially thankful for the librarians who made this work possible: Ryan Vasut, Christi Osterday, and Dr. C. Berry Driver have all helped me both finding and acquiring new materials. Their patience with me is a virtue to be modeled. The virtuous body of Third Avenue Baptist Church has also flooded my family and me with love and support during this time of study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is an understatement to assert that the human nature of Christ is a contentious topic. Different controversies regarding the humanity of the Savior have loomed over the church. As early as the first century, gnostic tendencies challenged the goodness of created human nature and therefore provoked responses from biblical authors.¹ Early Church councils also dealt with issues regarding Christ's human nature. Apollinarianism and Monophysitism held to some deficient notions of the humanity of the Savior.² It is in the context of defending the Nicene trinitarian Christology against Apollinarian tendencies that Gregory of Nazianzus penned the words, *nam quod assumptum non est, curationis est expers*,³ 'that which is not assumed is not healed.' Opponents of Apollinarianism made this phrase by Gregory the Theologian an axiom against the insistence that the soul of Christ is somewhat substituted by the divine person. In the following debate the same phrase is used, but to argue for another substitution.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a claim arose out of the German and English speaking worlds. Several theologians asserted that the Son of God assumed a fallen human flesh mainly because he had to assume what was natural in our humanity.

¹See Urban C. von Wahlde and Chris Keith, *Gnosticism, Docetism, and the Judaisms of the First Century: The Search for the Wider Context of the Johannine Literature and Why It Matters* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

²Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 47.

³"That which is not assumed is not healed." quoted in Jacques-Paul Migne and Theodor Hopfner, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Seu Bibliotheca Universalis, Integra, Uniformis, Commoda, Oeconomica Omnium SS. Patrum, Doctorum, Scriptorumque Eccles* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2012), 37. I am using the Latin translation because the doctrine of the fallen human nature of Christ became known in the Latin phrase, "*non-assumptus*."

To be clear, the theologians who made such claims and the ones who will be covered in this study have not said that Christ sinned, but that his nature was one like man after the fall. The doctrine of Christ's assumption of a fallen flesh (henceforth, *non-assumptus*) was made known by theologian Edward Irving (1792–1834). The British theologian emphasized the role of the Spirit in the incarnation and was even charged with heresy by his contemporaries.⁴

Since the charge of heresy is often raised in this debate, it should be pointed that this present work does not aim to charge anyone with heresy.⁵ There are a few ways one can construe the relationship of the Son and his humanity and still remain orthodox. It is especially telling that many advocates of the *non-assumptus* (especially the ones

⁴Irving maintains the creator-creature distinction in order to uphold the integrity of the incarnation and, at the same time argue for the historic condescension of the Son. Even though there is a kenotic principle running through his formulation, it is not the same as Irving's contemporaries. Irving argues that there are two principles that must be distinct and yet held together—the Son has to a divine will and a human will. Nonetheless, these wills are not two different agents for there are not two agents in the incarnation. Building upon this principle, Irving finally proposes the non-assumptus. He asserts against docetic and apollinarian tendencies of the traditional view: if Christ did not have a reasonable soul, his human feelings and affections were but an assumed fiction to carry out the end which His mission had in view; and his sufferings and his death were a phantasmagoria played out before the eyes of men, but by no means entering into the vitals of human sympathy, nor proceeding from the communion and love of human kind, and bringing up again the fallen creature to stand before the throne of the grace of God. The full humanity of Christ is linked to the assumption of a fallen state. Here, Irving uses the Nazianzus's maxim to defend his view. For Irving, to defend anything less than a fallen human nature for Christ is to operate within the bounds of Apollinarianism. Not only Apollinarianism, but also pharisaism and perfectionism are risks that the church runs to when it rejects the doctrine of the non-assumptus. Gunton summarizes Irving's position: "Unless the fallenness of the flesh is accepted, then perfectionism and pharisaism are likely to result: 'You will say, "Stand off: I am holier than thou." Similarly, the Church's estimate of itself is at stake: 'if Christ may not follow the creature down the precipice ... it is a thing past Divine Power, and unto Divine holiness repugnant, to descend into the gulf, and labour among the wretches there'. And so, 'Holiness becomes distance; love keepeth asunder ... the church ... removed away into a sanctimonious distance. At this point at we can see Irving's unique contribution in this debate: the action of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is enabled to respond to temptation not primarily through christological lens, but via the relationship to the Spirit. As Gunton reminds us, this relationship is different than the traditional view of the incarnate Son's relationship to the Spirit. While Irving constructs his model around the Spirit as personal other, the Augustinian tradition sees the Spirit in substantial possession of Jesus. Hence, Jesus's obedience to the Spirit showed us "an example, that we should follow His steps; and hereby He became the great prototype of a Christian, as He had been the great antitype of all the holy men under the law." The sinlessness of Christ is thus discarded because he does not secure his obedience via the divine hypostasis, but through a dynamic relation with the Spirit of power. Irving's proposal is paradigmatic (and it will be revisited throughout this study). However, since there is maturation of his proposal later in theology this study will focus on Barth (with later Barthian approaches) and Torrance (with later Torrancian approaches). See Colin E. Gunton, "Two Dogmas Revisited: Edward Irving's Christology, *SJT* 41, no. 3 (1988): 161-63.

⁵Any accusation of heresy that goes beyond ecumenical confessions and ecclesial division (in the case for the doctrine of justification, separating Roman Catholics and Protestants) has the *onus probandi* resting on the accuser.

surveyed here) also assert that the Son did not sin even if united to a sinful flesh. It is the concern of both sides of the debate to be fair to such texts as of Hebrews 4:15. Christ must be said to be like us in every way, but also, *be without sin*.

One cannot cover every position and nuance regarding the possibility of the human nature of Christ and sin. In order, however, to lay the subject at hand in a better purview, I will use the Sykes-Hastings taxonomy of affirmations used by E. Jerome van Kuiken in order to facilitate the analysis of those who affirm the *non-assumptus*:

1. Prior to the conception, the humanity of Christ existed in Mary in a state of original sin;
2. At the time of conception, the humanity of Christ was transformed;
3. During Jesus's earthly ministry he suffered the amoral effects of the fall, but not the moral corruption: He was hungry, sad, sick;
4. Whatever one means by fallenness, it cannot mean that he sinned or has personal guilt.⁶

This grid should allow one to read proponents of the *non-assumptus* charitably, even when disagreeing with them. What remains then is to dispute issues like the manner and trinitarian character of assumption, sanctification, and the nature of sin and corruption. So, we start here with a basic notion of human nature and then follow the next chapters discussing deeper and more complex issues.

What Is a Human Nature? A Chalcedonian-Thomistic Account

Foundational to the debate of whether or not Christ had a *fallen human nature* is a deeper discussion of what is a human nature. It is only normal that many points of departure are possible. In fact, it has been argued for a while that we should abandon

⁶E. Jerome Van Kuiken, *Christ's Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy: Fallen or Not?* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 165–66.

church imposed dogmas on what constitutes a human being (person and nature).⁷

This dissertation, however, listens attentively to the church. Not with a presupposed distrust, or chronological snobbery, but with an initial trust that the rehashing of concepts regarding nature, person, grace, etc. has been guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. In such fashion, we have conceptual tools on how to talk— at least minimally— about human nature, starting with the one who reveals nature to us.⁸

Since Chalcedon solidified the talk about the human nature of Christ, it is only fitting that we start with this council. Sarah Coakley provides three possible readings of the Chalcedonian definition.⁹ The first is a *linguistically regulatory* view. According to this view, the council was not particularly setting an ontology of the person-nature distinction, but merely establishing parameters for predication. The second view is associated with John Hick. Here Chalcedon is seen only as *metaphorical* and in no way regulatory. The third option, according to Coakley is the *literal* view. Here, Chalcedon provides something true about person and natures—in Christ. This, in some fashion, provides the possibility of ontological speech about the person of Christ, even if the details are not precisely discussed.¹⁰

Following the *literalist* view, we can say that the council makes a fundamental assertion that is later picked up regarding the development of natures and person in dogmatic theology. Even if not fully developed in AD 451, concepts such as natures and

⁷John Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 1977).

⁸See Marc Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016). Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018). Aaron Riches, “Christology and Duplex Hominis Beatitudo: Re-Sketching the Supernatural Again,” *IJST* 14, no. 1 (January 2012): 44–69.

⁹Sarah Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian Definition,” in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 143–63.

¹⁰Thanks to Darron Chapman for pointing me to this essay.

persons are cohesively developed following the parameters set by Chalcedon and Nicaea. The work of Brian Dailey on Leontius of Byzantium¹¹ and of Hans Urs von Balthasar on Maximus the Confessor¹² showcases the consistent development of the *an-en-hypostasis* and dyotheletism within the parameters of Chalcedon.

Developments of Chalcedonian dogma were not restricted to 551 (Constantinople II) and 681 (Constantinople III). The Scholastic period (roughly 1100–1700) saw an increase of questions regarding the God-World relationship that largely reflected on Christology.¹³ Thomas Aquinas (*Doctor Angelicus*) reflected on the modes of sanctification that can be attributed to Christ and also discussed human nature in a long philosophical reflection in *prima pars*. These were extended meditations that tried to preserve the concepts handed down from Chalcedon. Aquinas, however, did not contradict or develop his doctrines of sanctification apart from Chalcedon.

It is true that Aristotelian metaphysics played its part in Aquinas's development of nature, essences, and existences, but that should not hinder us from appreciating the approach. Although Scripture gives general guidelines for metaphysical approaches, in several instances, Scripture does not determine what metaphysical approach one should take. As long as no contradiction arises, appropriation of a certain Greek formulation does not invalidate or undermine the philosophical-theological approach.¹⁴ Moreover, Aquinas does not uncritically receive Aristotle's formulation, but

¹¹Brian E. Daley SJ, ed., *Leontius of Byzantium: Complete Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003). See also, Pauline Allen and Brownen Neil eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹³On the God-World relationship and scholastic theology (epitomized in Thomas Aquinas) see Christopher R. J. Holmes, "Revisiting the God/World Difference," *Mod. Theol.* 34, no. 2 (October 27, 2017): 159–76.

¹⁴Paul J. Griffiths, *Decreation: The Last Things of All Creatures* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 35-59.

Christianizes it in order to make sense of biblical data.¹⁵

Foundational for this discussion is Thomas Aquinas's concept of essences and existences. St. Thomas explains that created reality has a fundamental difference between *esse* and *essentia*.¹⁶ By doing that, Thomas secures that God is the only being (*ens*) in which essence and existence are coexistent. Moreover, this doctrine gives Aquinas a way “to theorize as to how primary matter (the pure potentiality present in all material things) is entirely dependent ontologically upon the creative act of God (through the *esse* of its essential form, which gives existence to the materiality of the created substance).”¹⁷ Creation—and human essence *per extension*—participates in existence only derivately, as God gives existence to man. This human essence as it is the focus of Q75–Q86 of *Prima Pars* is composed of body and a soul. Here again one sees Aquinas's Christian

¹⁵The Thomistic-Aristotelian approach does not run uncritically in the Christian tradition. Thomas Torrance, who will be surveyed in this dissertation claims that Thomas does not pay sufficient attention to the biblical testimony and uncritically imposes a Greek metaphysical grid in the Bible, but, as Thomas White said, “St. Thomas's critical evaluations and use of the Aristotelian corpus (and other ancient and medieval philosophical authors) are influenced by his theological perspective in important ways that seek to adapt the insights of philosophical science to the truths of revelation. I have already suggested in the previous chapter how Aristotle's philosophical principles developed in a certain kind of implicit independence from the cosmological representation that formed the background of his thought. Aquinas was explicitly concerned to identify more clearly the philosophical core of Aristotelian insights in separation from pagan cosmological elements that were in contradiction to Christian doctrine. He accomplishes this in a twofold way with respect to his interpretation of Aristotelian physics: first, he denies the immortal life of the celestial bodies, and second, he argues that the eternity of the (created) universe cannot be demonstrated philosophically, contrary to what Aristotle claims.” Thomas Joseph White, *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009), 76.

¹⁶St. Thomas says, “Separated] intellectual substances are not composed of matter and form; rather, in them the form itself is a subsisting substance; so that form here is that which is and being itself [*esse*] is act and that by which the substance is. And on this account there is in such substances but one composition of act and potency, namely the composition of substance and being [*substantia et esse*] . . . On the other hand, in substances composed of matter and form there is a twofold composition of act and potentiality: the first of the substance itself which is composed of matter and form; the second, of the substance thus composed, and being [*esse*] . . . It is therefore clear that composition of act and potentiality has greater extension than that of form and matter. Matter and form divide natural substance, while potentiality and act divide common being.” *SCG II*, 54.

¹⁷White, *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity*, 83. I am not dealing here with some recent treatments of Aquinas in which scholars analyze *Quaestio Disputata de Unione Verbi Incarnati*. Here, there is some dispute on what Thomas really means when he asserts that Christ's humanity is a secondary *esse*. For an interesting discussion, see here Joshua Lee Gonnerman, “Substantial Act and Esse Secundarium: A Critique of Lonergan's ‘Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ’” (Th.M., University of St. Michael's College Faculty of Theology and University of Toronto, 2012).

dualism as dependent of the language of Chalcedon (“rational soul and body”). Although we cannot dive in the hylomorphic theory and the relation of the soul as the form of the material body, for our purposes, we can just defer to the affirmation that although intimately connected, the soul and the body are two different things.¹⁸ Although they are two different things, and although the soul is individuated in matter by the body, both soul and body are necessary for human nature.

Thesis

The thesis of this dissertation is that those who argue for the Son’s assumption of a fallen human nature are mistaken because they either revert trinitarian order, or work with a faulty notion of the nature of the hypostatic union, or work with a defective notion of original sin. By retrieving the Patristic notion of inseparable operations, together with the Thomistic categories of grace of union and habitual grace, and the Post-Reformed theology of original sin, I will show that the formulations that assert that the Son assumed a fallen human nature are out of step with faithful, biblical, theological, and historical articulations. In order to explain this thesis further, I will summarize several of its main aspects: (1) what is meant by “inseparable operations,” (2) what is meant by “Thomistic

¹⁸Ralph McInerny and John O’Callaghan write that “In 75.6, relying upon all that has gone before, Thomas argues that the human soul is a subsistent that is incorporeal, and thus does not cease to exist as a result of the death of the body. This result shows the soul to be a subsistent form that can exist without out matter. And so it is now seen to be an immaterial subsistent in the second sense described above, not just the first sense. Now ‘immaterial’ characterizes its mode of existence, not just the negative fact that it is immaterial like all other forms are immaterial. So the difference between the human intellectual soul and the souls of other animals is that while both are immaterial in the first sense, the sense of not being material principles, the intellectual soul is an immaterial subsistent in the second sense while the souls of other animals are not immaterial subsistents. And it is the second sense of ‘immaterial’ that gives us a key for understanding what Thomas means by a “material form,” particularly a material substantial form. A material form is a form that is not an immaterial subsistent; it exists either as an accident in a corporeal subject or as a substantial form in a corporeal subject, and does not subsist. So the substantial forms of bodies, particularly the souls of living bodies, are in general material forms with the exception of the intellectual soul. The souls of other animals are immaterial in the first sense and material with regard to the second sense, while the human soul is both immaterial in the first sense and immaterial in the second sense.” Ralph McInerny and John O’Callaghan, “Saint Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/aquinas/>.

categories of grace of union and habitual grace,” and (3) what is meant by “Post-Reformed theology of original sin.”

Inseparable Operations

The principle of *opera ad extra sunt indivisa* states that the works of the persons of the Trinity towards the outside are one.¹⁹ They initiate in one and terminate in another person, following the order of God’s inner modes of being. So, when sanctification is scripturally (1 Pet 1:2; Rom 8:13) and theologically tied to the Spirit, for example, it does not mean that his actions are separate from the other persons of the Trinity, but it means that the Spirit comes as the perfecter/finisher of something started by the Father and the Son. This is why the Spirit is usually connected to works of habit and progressive sanctification—because it most fits him to be the perfecter, or one who applies the works of Father and Son. Khaled Anatolios notes this pattern of trinitarian operation as he discusses Gregory of Nyssa’s theology:

[W]ith regard to the divine nature (*epi tes theias physeos*), we do not learn that the Father does something by himself, without the Son taking part [in that very action], nor again that the Son distinctly does something without the Spirit. Rather, every activity (*energeia*) reaching from God to creation and named according to our various conceptions (*ennoias*) originates in the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is completed in the Holy Spirit. The exertion of each in any act whatsoever is not separated and owned distinctly. But whatever happens in the course of the providence towards us or the management and constitution of the universe happens through the Three and yet does not result in three happenings.²⁰

The oneness of God’s being forbids us to account for a separate work of each person in creation. This same unity, however, should not propel us to affirm an “undifferentiated agency in which the persons partake in exactly the same manner.”²¹ God’s Trinitarian

¹⁹For a discussion of the Reformed Orthodox’s reception of the doctrine of inseparable operations, see *PRRD* III, 257–63. For a dogmatic approach to this doctrine see John Webster, *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology: Vol 1: God and the Works of God* (New York: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2015), 162–64.

²⁰Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 231.

²¹Anatolios asserts, “The notion of an altogether undifferentiated agency in which each of the persons partakes in exactly the same manner is also implicitly but very clearly ruled out by Gregory’s

mode of agency, follows the order of his own being.²² John Owen concludes: “The order of the subsistence of the persons in the same nature is represented unto us, and they have the same dependence on each other in their operations as they have in their subsistence.”²³ Created order follows the same pattern of God’s life in himself. Therefore in the incarnation, the Son’s action precedes the action of the Spirit. Legge explains this reality in Thomistic fashion:

The Son breathes forth the Spirit, not only eternally but also in his mission in the economy of grace. As the Son’s eternal procession implies the procession of the Holy Spirit (the Father, in begetting his Son, gives the Son the power to spirate the Holy Spirit), so also the Son’s visible mission intrinsically implies the Word breathing forth the Spirit to that same humanity. In eternity and in time, the Word proceeds from the Father, breathing forth Love. As Thomas explains elsewhere (with a quotation he attributes to Athanasius), ‘Christ himself as God the Son sent the Spirit from above, and as man below he received the Spirit; from himself to himself, therefore, the Spirit dwells in his humanity from his divinity.’²⁴

What Legge says here will have bearings for the next section; implying that habitual grace flows from grace of union. If we tie the work of the Spirit to habitual grace because of its perfecting character, then the most fitting kind of grace to be ascribed to the Son’s

consistent strategy of using three different verbs to distribute the common action distinctly to the three persons. As we have seen in the passage quoted above, the typical pattern for that distribution is that every action issues from the Father, is actualized through the Son, and is completed by the Spirit. There is thus an ineffable distinction within unity in divine co-activity such that the one divine activity is completely effected by each of the persons and yet is distinctly inflected between them. Every activity that is originated by the Father is equally yet distinctly owned by Son and Spirit. Once again, the notion of ‘no interval’ plays a key role in Gregory’s conceptualization of the unitarian distinction-within-unity: “There is no delay that exists or can be conceived in the motion of the divine will from the Father through the Son to the Spirit.” Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 231 .

²²Webster’s elegant prose is worthy to quote at length: “This suggests that, far from being a mere background idea without any directly operative consequences for soteriology, the doctrine of the Trinity is critical in ensuring the correct placement and proportions of the Christian doctrine of salvation. Accordingly, a Christian theology of salvation has to be undergirded by a double theological principle- (1) God’s saving history with creatures is to be conceived as the outworking of the divine missions in which the sending of the Son and the Spirit is the bodying forth of the Fathers eternal divine counsel, and not simply as an intra-historical reality; (2) description of God’s saving history through a theology of divine missions must rest upon a theology of the divine principle *missiones sequuntur processiones*. The saving roles of the Son and the Spirit are grounded upon their processional roles in the inner life of the Godhead.” Webster, *God Without Measure*, 163.

²³*Works*, 4:92.

²⁴Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 149.

assumption of his flesh is the grace of union.²⁵

Grace of Union And Habitual Grace

Thomas Aquinas correctly asserts that human nature stands in “need of the gratuitous will of God, in order to be lifted up to God.”²⁶ However, the elevation of human nature up to God is twofold: (1) by operation—habitual—or (2) by personal being—grace of union. Aquinas’s point is that both the sanctification of man and assumption of human nature by Christ are gracious sanctifying events. Nonetheless, the mode of elevation by operation is a habitual activity that is accidental. Contrary to the grace that unites human nature to the divine person, the accidental character of grace by operation results in a work that renders participation in likeness. The elevation by personal being, on the other hand, is greater because it is not accidental. The human nature is once and for all united to the person of the Son, not in a participation in likeness, but in a substantial union. Whereas, according to Aquinas, all saints participate in the operative grace, only Christ’s human nature is *united* to the divine nature by grace of the person of the Son. The significance of this for the present work resides in the importance one places on the sanctification of Christ during his earthly ministry. If fallenness is a matter to be conquered in participation and sanctification like ours, then there might be a diminishing relevance to the hypostatic union—hence the importance of grace of union.

Post-Reformed Theology of Original Sin

The era of the Reformed Orthodox was one of intense theological refinement.

²⁵John Owen also makes a similar point: “The Father is the fountain of all, as in being and existence, so in operation. The Son is of the Father, begotten of him, and, therefore, as unto his work, is sent by him; but his own will is in and unto what he is sent about. The Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and, therefore, is sent and given by them as to all the works which he immediately effecteth; but yet his own will is the direct principle of all that he doth,—he divideth unto every one according to his own will. And thus much may suffice to be spoken about the being of the Holy Spirit, and the order of his subsistence in the blessed Trinity.” *Works*, 4:92.

²⁶*ST* III Q2. A10. co.

Richard Muller has argued extensively that there are continuities and discontinuities between the Reformers and the Reformed Orthodox.²⁷ Although there are many theological continuities, it is the contention of several scholars that original sin gained moderate revision during the period of the Protestant Scholastics. Calvin himself held to a semi-mediative view on the transmission of sin. For Calvin, it is metaphysically and exegetically impossible to make the case that one is guilty of someone else's sin, but one still gets the corruption of his father, Adam.²⁸ The Protestant Scholastics, on the other hand, made a case that two things are present in the transmission of sin: corruption and guilt.

The important idea here is of the status of “public person” that Adam had. As Beeke and Jones said, “by the appointment of God, Adam and Christ were made public persons according to the covenants in which they represented their people, namely the covenant of works (Adam) and the covenant of redemption (Christ).”²⁹ The principal cue here is taken from a closer exegetical case in Romans 5.

There are both moral and legal status connected to the progeny of Adam due to his representativity. Reflecting on Romans 5 Owen states,

[F]irst, in that his [Adam] voluntary act is imputed to us as ours, by reason of the covenant which was made with him on our behalf. But because this, consisting in an imputation, must needs be extrinsical unto us, therefore, secondly, we say that Adam, being the root and head of all human kind, and we all branches from that root, all parts of that body whereof he was the head, his will may be said to be ours. We were then all that one man,—we were all in him, and had no other will but his; so that though that be extrinsical unto us, considered as particular persons, yet it is intrinsical, as we are all parts of one common nature. As in him we sinned, so in him we had a will of sinning.³⁰

²⁷*PRRD* I, 37-40.

²⁸John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), Romans 5:12.

²⁹Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 206.

³⁰*Works*, 10:73.

In Owen's discussion we already see refinement upon Calvin's theology, for human nature is discussed with reference both to Adam's federal headship, and this external character of the theology of representation is included. The bearings of this for the dissertation are crucial. For if Christ assumed a nature just like ours (post-lapsarian), guilt is necessarily connected to the progeny of Adam.

Method: Dogmatics And Retrieval

Karl Barth starts his magisterial *Church Dogmatics* with a definition of dogmatics as "the scientific self-examination of the Christian Church with respect to the content of its distinctive talk about God."³¹ In this way, dogmatics is not disordered talk about God, but it is ordered thinking and talk in praise to the glory of the triune God of the gospel.

In ordering its thinking dogmatic theology first approaches topics from a necessary set of beliefs affirmed by a confessional group. As R. Lucas Stamps reminds us, dogmatics is not "mere articulation of a specific confessional symbol. Dogmatic theology does not merely describe what a particular church or denomination believes; it also seeks to defend what Christians *ought* to believe based on the authority of Scripture read in light of the Christian tradition."³² Hence, even though there might not be a specific council on the issue of Christ's flesh, *via* relative ecumenical consensus and ecclesial implications, this dogmatic study is validated. Also, the eclectic group affirmed in the thesis (Roman Catholic, Patristic, and Post-Reformed theologies) presupposes an ecumenical account in this dogmatic approach.³³

Second, retrieval in dogmatics means that "we inhabit the classroom of the

³¹*CD I/1*, 3.

³²Robert Lucas Stamps, "'Thy Will Be Done': A Dogmatic Defense of Dyothelitism in Light of Recent Monothelite Proposals" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 19.

³³Kevin Vanhoozer and Daniel Treier, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 19–25.

communion of the saints and we seek to learn from their instruction.”³⁴ This does not mean that retrieval in dogmatic theology is blind to the exegetical enterprise, but it means that while we appropriate the tradition, we do so critically. However, as Webster said, our attitude in retrieval is “much more trustful, more confident in the contemporary serviceability, unpersuaded by the superiority of the present age.”³⁵ Scripture is held throughout the dissertation as the *norma normans*, ‘the rule of rules.’ Tradition, nevertheless, will also hold an important place at the table, as it is the *norma normata*, ‘the ruled rule.’ Moreover, dogmatic reasoning (the wisdom of the Church) comes from and sends one back to exegesis.³⁶ Dogmatics exists in the retrieving mode for the sake of renewal—to help the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ respond to recent challenges with the wisdom from previous saints.

Since this dissertation operates mainly from this dogmatic standpoint, it resources from biblical, theological, and historical disciplines as the case shall require, but in no particular priority. Both David Yeago and Kevin Vanhoozer have argued that biblical theology is not actually closer to the text than systematic or dogmatic theology. Yeago uses the idea of *concepts* and *judgments* to articulate his point. For Yeago, one can use different concepts than the Bible to preserve the same judgments. Judgmental reality is not an extraction of the textual concepts, but faithful judgments preserve the ideas of the biblical text by using different words.³⁷ Or, using Vanhoozer’s *theo-dramatic* model, one could say that Scripture is the script and the acting is the living out of the text. As one improvises in acting to different audiences, one is hopefully preserving the intention of

³⁴Michael Allen and Scott Swain in “Introduction” by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, eds., *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 4.

³⁵John Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain R Torrance (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 592.

³⁶Allen and Swain, *Christian Dogmatics*, 6.

³⁷D. S. Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 45, no. 4 (2002): 371–84.

the author, while at the same time using different formats.³⁸ Therefore, because neither biblical, or systematic theologies are actually closer to the text than the other, the eclectic pattern utilized in this dogmatic approach allows for an interweaving of these disciplines as the case requires.

Chapter 2 not only deals with Karl Barth's theology of the *non-assumptus*, but attempts to locate this subject in the entire project of reconciliation. In order to do this, I discuss Barth's actualism and how that eventually places Christ's history and essence in an interesting dialogue. Furthermore, his theological project is set in the proper context of solidarity and grace. And although actualism and solidarity could mean the attribution of fallenness to the immanent life of God, Barth's project rejects this notion. The Son's solidarity, however, deals with the sanctification of humanity. And the hypostatic union continues and is guaranteed through Jesus's certainty that the Father and his angels will hold and sanctify him in temptation.

Chapter 3 deals with T. F. Torrance. For Torrance, a few intuitions guide the atonement. The first is a response to what he calls the Latin Heresy, in which the work of Christ in the cross is analyzed separately from his life as God the Son incarnate. Therefore, creating all sorts of problems such as legal fiction and externality of the gospel. The second, and a consequence of the first, is that in order to fully heal human nature Christ had to take upon himself a fallen human nature.

Torrance's formulation of the fallen human nature is dependent upon his rejection of what he calls the Latin Heresy. Christ had to be united to all humanity and redeem it from the inside of his personal union. My goal, however, is to show that such a position is at least unstable because it depends upon a questionable philosophical view of human nature. Also, on a deeper level, Torrance's defense of the *non-assumptus* is

³⁸Kevin Vanhoozer, "May We Go Beyond What is Written After All? The Pattern of Theological Authority and the Problem of Doctrinal Development," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 760.

problematic because it may lend a hand to Nestorianism and because it is never clear when the personal union is complete. If Christ heals humanity within his inner constitution and redeems humanity in himself, then is the hypostatic union conjoined during the incarnation, but only united after the resurrection? To achieve this goal, I will describe Torrance's rejection of the Latin Heresy in terms of his modification of the *an-en-hypostasia* and his advance of the doctrine of *theosis*. Once I have shown that he is rejecting any "external" concept of the atonement, I focus on his most problematic rejection of the Latin Heresy—*via* his formulation of the fallen humanity of Christ (*non-assumptus*). In this last section, I focus on three inter-related issues: the problem of Nestorianism, the problem of the virgin birth, and the problem of the property-pile assumption.

Chapter 4 starts the constructive part of the dissertation. After surveying some initial articulations and developments of the doctrine of inseparable operations, most of the argument will depend on scholastic distinctions of real relations, missions and acts, and visible and invisible missions. Such distinctions allow one to understand what exactly "assuming" mean. To assume is not simply "to get," but presupposes (if one follows the scholastic distinctions) both passivity and activity. After these notions have been established, then Barth and Torrance's projects will be evaluated. Needless to say such evaluation is only possible once Torrance and Barth have been already understood under their own rubrics in the previous chapters. In these new chapters, the twentieth century theologians will be checked "against" the western and scholastic tradition. Sometimes, they reject these formulations and the tradition entirely and try to construct a metaphysical scheme on their own (i.e., Barth's actualism), but the assumption of human nature cannot be a totally independent doctrine. Certainly, the incarnation is a mystery, but even as a mystery, the incarnation is not isolated in history. The two metaphysical schemes have to be judged upon Scripture and reason.

Chapter 5 discusses the relationship of grace and nature as they relate to the

incarnation. The entry point into this section will be the somewhat recent Roman Catholic kerfuffle over the existence of pure nature. In a dialogue with Herman Bavinck, I will argue that although Bavinck's conception that grace is only opposed to sin and not nature is correct, some scholastic distinctions on the relationship of grace and nature in the incarnation are helpful. Here, I will appeal to grace of union and habitual grace. Through a robust notion of how the Son's human nature is actually sanctified, one can avoid the errors of those who propose Christ's assumption of a fallen nature. In a way, this chapter is borrowing some conceptual apparatus from chapter four. Since it will be made clear that created reality does not contradict God's inner order, then I will argue that proposing an assumption of fallen nature needs to suppose that habitual grace is occurring "before" the actual personal union.

Chapter 6 is on the doctrine of original sin. Although the doctrine has major developments in the early church, the focus of this chapter will be on Calvin and developments of the doctrine of original sin after the Swiss Reformer. After discussing a recent interpretation of Calvin's doctrine of original sin, I will try to propose a *via media* between this recent interpreter and some other established scholars. Nonetheless, Calvin's doctrine still needed some development and again, with the assistance of Herman Bavinck's organic motif, I will show how federal headship avoids not only the charge of arbitrariness in the transmission of sin, but also avoids the assumption of a fallen nature in Christ.

At the conclusion I revisit each chapter with hopes to clarify that asserting that the Son assumed a fallen human nature does not pay close attention to the Trinitarian nature of the act of assumption, nor does it carefully work through the metaphysics of grace—especially in its Thomistic form, nor does it judicially conceptualize the biblical pattern of representation regarding original sin.

Scholarly Contributions, Justification, and The Nature of This Study

Much of the discussion regarding the *non-assumptus* goes back to claims from the Early Church Fathers. Although the late long-time editor of *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, John Romanides believed that Fathers universally held to a notion of Christ's assumption of an Adamic-like nature,³⁹ T. F. Torrance believed that several Fathers were on the side of the *non-assumptus*.⁴⁰ Although there is a legitimate debate over the position of the Fathers (Greek and Latin), this study will not discuss this quarrel at length (even if at times it will touch on it). While this dissertation will mention certain debates, the main interlocutors will be Karl Barth and T. F. Torrance. The reason for this choice is because both move past some of the shortcomings of Irving and also because recent developments in the doctrine often appeal to their dogmatic (in Barth's case) and retrieval (in Torrance's case) work. Moreover, the task of arbitrating the appropriation of the Church Fathers has recently been taken in E. Jerome van Kuiken's published dissertation.⁴¹ In van Kuiken's monograph, he surveys ten Church Fathers and ten modern proponents of the *non-assumptus* and the unfallen position. His main goal was to first, determine "the degree of accuracy in modern debaters' handling of Christian tradition; and secondly, to exploit any patristic insights which may contribute towards resolving the current debate."⁴² I have already pointed to this elsewhere saying,

³⁹Romanides asserts, "The teaching of Julian of Halicarnassus that the Logos united to Himself manhood as it was before the fall is not in itself wrong and is accepted by all Fathers. What is wrong with Julian's position, as pointed out by Father Samuel, is that the human nature of Christ was considered incorruptible before the resurrection. I would add that most Fathers would rather say that the human nature of Christ was by nature mortal but not by nature under the power or sentence of death and corruption which are the wages of sin. In this sense even angels are by nature mortal. Only God is by nature immortal. It is for this reason that the death of the Lord of Glory in the flesh was voluntary and not the wages of personal or inherited sin." J. Romanides, "Unofficial Consultation between Theologians of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, August 11-15, 1964: Papers and Minutes," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1964): 7-160.

⁴⁰Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark, 1988).

⁴¹Van Kuiken, *Christ's Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy: Fallen or Not?*

⁴²*Ibid.*, 2.

van Kuiken carefully looks into both the Greek and Latin church fathers. Although some Greek Fathers—for example, Gregory of Nyssa—might be more favorable to the language of a fallen or sinful humanity, no exact parallel can be found in Latin christology. The main christological parallel might be the virginal conception in which “God’s Son breaks the hold of sin upon human nature so that his own humanity, like unfallen Adam’s, is unblemished by sin, uncontrolled by Satan, and under no debt to die.”⁴³

Regardless of the conclusion van Kuiken reaches, my main goal is to lay out fences regarding talk about the fallen view. Thus, even though van Kuiken’s dissertation is a major accomplishment, the uniqueness of my work lies in the positive construction of a model to reject the fallen view.

Other major studies have been published on the *non-assumptus*. Harry Johnson’s 1962 dissertation, *The Humanity of the Saviour* argues extensively for the *non-assumptus* and engages with New Testament exegesis and historical claims. After arguing for Gregory of Nyssa’s support for his position, he surveys other modern interpreters like Torrance and Barth. Johnson thinks that the Church has always shied away from the doctrine of the *non-assumptus* for a few reasons.

First, the church is fearful that fallen flesh might “undermine belief in the sinlessness of Christ,”⁴⁴ to which Johnson replies that all proponents of the *non-assumptus* deny.⁴⁵ Second, Johnson says that the *non-assumptus* has been neglected because of its close association with original sin. Johnson laments that the term “*peccatum originale*”—from which we get original sin—carries the notion of original guilt. Moreover, Johnson traces a docetic tendency in the history of the church. After the New Testament is written, “Jesus has almost ceased to be a historical human figure and

⁴³Rafael Bello, review of *Christ’s Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy: Fallen or Not?* by E. Jerome van Kuiken, Reading Religion, accessed November 17, 2018. <http://readingreligion.org/books/christs-humanity-current-and-ancient-controversy>

⁴⁴Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour: a Biblical and Historical Study of the Human Nature of Christ in Relation to Original Sin, with Special Reference to Its Soteriological Significance* (London: Epworth, 1962), 193.

⁴⁵I shall still determine if this denial is merely formal or material.

has become the ‘mythological’ subject of metaphysical speculation.”⁴⁶ So, for example, he sees Athanasius and Hilary already downplaying the true humanity of Jesus Christ.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the victory of the Alexandrian school over the Antiochene deepened the negligence over the humanity of the savior. This is exemplified in the celebration of Cyril’s *communicatio idiomatum*. Even though Cyril understood the *communicatio idiomatum* as the one person sharing “equally in both the names and properties and experiences of both natures,”⁴⁸ later interpreters took it to mean that the union was so close that the natures interpenetrated one another. And as a result, this interpretation always resulted in diminishment of true humanity.

Another major monograph published in this field was by the Roman Catholic theologian, Thomas Weinandy. In the thesis of *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh* he states that,

[Christ’s] humanity was of the race of Adam and he experienced, of necessity, many of the effects of sin which permeate the world and plague human beings – hunger and thirst, sickness and sorrow, temptation and harassment by Satan, being hated and despised, fear and loneliness, even death and separation from God, and (2) that Jesus was born of the fallen race of Adam and that such a condition was absolutely indispensable for our salvation.⁴⁹

This thesis is articulated through an appeal to the Nazianzus’s axiom (*nam quod assumptum non est, curationis est expers*).⁵⁰ in historical theology and on the

⁴⁶Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour*, 195.

⁴⁷To that effect, he cites C. E. Raven and J. A. Dorner as researchers who also see that trajectory. See Charles E. Raven, *Apollinarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 78–85. And Isaak August Dorner and Patrick Fairbairn, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (New York: T&T Clark, 1862). The thesis of Alexandria vs. Antioch’s differing Christology has been basically debunked in recent scholarship. See Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*.

⁴⁸James Franklin Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine to the Time of Chalcedon* (London: Methuen & Company, 1903), 293.

⁴⁹Thomas G Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 18, 21.

⁵⁰“That which is not assumed is not healed.” Found in Jacques-Paul Migne and Theodor Hopfner, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Seu Bibliotheca Universalis, Integra, Uniformis, Commoda, Oeconomica Omnium SS. Patrum, Doctorum, Scriptorumque Eccles* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2012), 37. I am using the Latin translation because the doctrine of the fallen human nature of Christ became known in the Latin phrase, *non-assumptus*.

exegetical basis of Romans 8:3. The main thrust of the argument seems to be an emphasis on a soteriological model that pays close attention to the dynamic character to the incarnation, where the Son must experience the moral corruption of sin, but in his agency does not choose to sin. Hence, he is able to heal our nature from within himself.

The historical section is broken into three chapters: “Early Church,” “Medieval Church,” and “Modern Theologians.” Weinandy cites Athanasius, Nazianzus, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, to name a few, as proponents of the *non-assumptus*.

When Weinandy tries to retrieve Athanasius for his side, he describes Athanasius’s position on the ignorance of Jesus: “Since he was made man he is not ashamed to profess ignorance because of the ignorance of the flesh; to show that though knowing as God he is ignorant according to the flesh.”⁵¹ The problem with this quote is that the issue of Jesus’s knowledge is closely connected to his will. With the third council of Constantinople, the dyothelite position was consolidated as coherent with the full humanity of Christ. Furthermore, the holy council asserted that the human nature of the Lord preserves his properties, yet without sin.⁵²

Yet, Weinandy anticipates the charge and has an entire section called, “Yet Without Sin.” Here Weinandy appeals to several Fathers, but the argument is circular, for the Fathers almost always point to the fact that Jesus took the same flesh as ours.⁵³ This does not prove Weinandy’s point anymore than it proves the case for the traditional view. Both views hold to weakness and ignorance in the Son’s nature *qua* human. Weinandy’s

⁵¹Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, 3.38, 43. As quoted in Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*, 26–27.

⁵²So the council says: “But when we make a confession concerning one of the same three Persons of that Holy Trinity, of the Son of God, or God the Word, and of the mystery of his adorable dispensation according to the flesh, we assert that all things are double in the one and the same our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ according to the Evangelical tradition, that is to say, we confess his two natures, to wit the divine and the human, of which and in which he, even after the wonderful and inseparable union, subsists. And we confess that each of his natures has its own natural propriety, and that the divine, has all things that are divine, without any sin.”

⁵³Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*, 30–36.

position is also somewhat unique since he wants to hold Mary's immaculate conception and therefore not locate original sin in the humanity given by her.

Kevin Chiarot's *The Unassumed is Unhealed: The Humanity of Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance* also produced a study that engages T. F. Torrance's proposal of the *non-assumptus*. Chiarot's aims to demonstrate three things: first, that the assumption of fallen flesh is a pervasive and foundational component of Torrance's theology. Second, that Torrance's pervasive theology of the *non-assumptus* is often behind other debated aspects of his theology such as his theology of our union with Christ and personal need of salvation. Third, Chiarot analyses the data and lays the judgment that there are "critical problems in Torrance's presentation of the doctrine that call into question its intelligibility."⁵⁴ Chiarot does that *via* several fronts, but the most telling, according to him are by presenting Torrance's ambiguous status of the humanity that Christ assumes and also by pointing to a split between *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* in Torrance's thought.

Duncan Rankin also published a dissertation critically engaging with Torrance's views.⁵⁵ His main engagement is with Torrance's couplet of the *an-en-*

⁵⁴ Kevin Chiarot, *The Unassumed Is the Unhealed: The Humanity of Christ in the Theology of T. F. Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 21.

⁵⁵ Rankin says, "This thesis examines and critiques the doctrine of carnal union with Christ in the theology of Scottish theologian Thomas Forsyth Torrance. Torrance's teaching on union with Christ in general and carnal or incarnational union with Christ in particular is unfolded within the wider context of his christocentric dogmatics and its genetic development. Extensive use is made of Torrance's unpublished Auburn and New College lectures on the subject. The teachings of Athanasius, Calvin, and Barth on union with Christ, since Torrance professes such a great debt to their influence on his own thought in this area, are also surveyed, and lines of continuity and discontinuity with Torrance's teaching are traced. I demonstrate that, although developed from a variety of historical sources and not so readily seen from his published works, a unique development of the ancient theological couplet of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* exists at the heart of Torrance's christology. This couplet lies behind Torrance's understanding of the person of Christ and his union with humankind. He develops his doctrine of carnal union with Christ under these twin rubrics of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*. I contend that while Torrance seeks to resolve the tension between these juxtaposed categories, it is not clear that he has adequately resolved the antithesis. Part of the tension is due to a lacuna in the *anhypostatic* rubric. Specifically, the abbreviated version of salvation history for carnal union with Christ that Torrance develops from the *nonassumptus* is less overtly trinitarian than that of its *enhypostatic* counterpart. I demonstrate that Torrance's doctrine of carnal union with Christ omits clear reference to the role of the Holy Spirit in this *anhypostatic* aspect of the incarnation, creating confusion in the minds of critics over the relevance of both the Holy Spirit and human response in

hypostatic theology. Rankin point to the fact that Torrance's use of the couplet has a failed Trinitarian component; especially related to the Holy Spirit's role in the incarnation. Rankin thinks the solidarity articulated in the *anhypostatic* side of the equation keeps the Spirit out of the soteriological work of God. Moreover, the solidarity present in the *non-assumptus* might point to a contingent necessity of the incarnation in Torrance's thought.⁵⁶

Other major studies in Torrance's theology have been published. However, differently than Chiarot and Rankin, most of the other studies on his theology of the *non-assumptus* have an approving tenor. Christian Kettler's PhD dissertation engages with Torrance, but does not develop the *non-assumptus* much. Rather, he assumes Torrance's view of a general human nature.⁵⁷

Another recent study has been published on the humanity of Christ in the thought of T. F. Torrance by Todd Speidell.⁵⁸ Although mainly preoccupied with ethics, Speidell relies heavily on Torrance incarnational ontology. Speidell asserts that

Jesus Christ, for Torrance, is both God's Word to humanity and the perfect human response to God because Jesus is both one with God and one with us. Because Jesus acts as one among us and for us, we *actually* do share in his vicarious humanity as

Torrance's theology. This lacuna begs clarification in a theology that is otherwise known as overtly trinitarian. Furthermore, I contend that Torrance's doctrine of carnal union with Christ introduces an element of contingent necessity into the nature of the incarnation. Torrance's construction demands that God must incarnate in just this way, setting up a carnal union with Christ that includes all humankind in its universal range, because the Logos who assumes humanity is the creator: Christ is not only a man but Man. I argue this contingent necessity endangers the freedom of God and truncates the voluntary nature of Christ's person and work, as well as valid human response, in the *anhypostatic* rubric. Because of these potential difficulties, clarification beyond mere appeal to the other juxtaposed category of *enhypostasia* is required. Thus, I conclude that it is not acceptable for Torrance to leave doubt about either the significance of the Holy Spirit or human response in even one strand of his theological tapestry." William Duncan Rankin, "Carnal Union with Christ in the Theology of T.F. Torrance" (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 1997), Abstract. Some of my critiques will resemble his.

⁵⁶Ibid., 290.

⁵⁷Christian D. Kettler, "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation" (Ph.D diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986).

⁵⁸Todd Speidell, *Fully Human in Christ: The Incarnation as the End of Christian Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).

we participate and live in union with him by the presence and power of his Spirit.⁵⁹ This construction reasserts a certain philosophical view of human nature that will be addressed in this dissertation.⁶⁰

Myk Habets, who with Speidell and van Kuiken is one of the editors of the *Participatio Journal* of the T. F. Torrance Theological Fellowship, exposes the concept of mediation (which I also agree is key to understand Torrance's project) in the context of the *non-assumptus*. The entire life of Christ is to be understood as redemptive, "for everything he assumed from us is organically united in his one Person and work as Saviour and Mediator."⁶¹ Habets correctly points out that Donald Macleod mistakenly puts Torrance and Irving in the same category. However, Torrance's formulation is more sophisticated and careful than Irving's.⁶² Habets argues that while, Irving's thesis has a great dependence on Spirit Christology and reformulations of original sin (even has ebionite tendencies), Torrance's formulation is greatly dependent on his own concept of *theosis* in which he tries to unite objective and subjective aspects of salvation.

On a purely systematic take of the doctrine of the *non-assumptus*, Emmanuel Hatzidakis published a large volume that engages it from an Eastern Orthodox perspective. Hatzidakis first lays a positive case for the unfallen flesh of Christ and then deals with objections coming from several perspectives. Hatzidakis's study stems from his preoccupation of saying that the humanity that the Son took was deified *via* the personal presence of the *Logos*.⁶³

R. Michael Allen also dealt with the *non-assumptus* in his published

⁵⁹Speidell, *Fully Human in Christ*, 6. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁰See Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*, first edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 90-117.

⁶¹Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 82.

⁶²Ibid., 72-73.

⁶³Emmanuel Hatzidakis, *Jesus: Fallen? The Human Nature of Christ Examined from an Eastern Orthodox Perspective by Emmanuel Hatzidakis* (Clearwater, FL: Orthodox Witness, 2013), 25.

dissertation, *The Christ's Faith*.⁶⁴ The work of Allen is laudable and impressive in terms of retrieval. He constructs a robust case under two headings. The first one is that “[t]he eternal Word assumes a human nature of sinful flesh, performing his redemptive activity within and upon the realm of sin and death.”⁶⁵ Here, Allen’s point is simply that Christ’s coming in the likeness of sinful flesh comes with every weight of *sarx*: “A morally impugned human existence which marks humanity after the fall (cf. Jn 1.14).”⁶⁶ Since the *communicatio idiomatum* is a *predicatio verbalis* (against the *genus majesticum* of the Lutherans), the hermeneutical use of this doctrine preserves the ontological integrity of the Son for Allen.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, we have to keep close attention to the dynamic and sympathetic character of the Son’s incarnation: “Salvation in Christ takes time.”⁶⁸

The second feature in Allen’s construal of the *non-assumptus* is that “the eternal Word assumes a nature after that of sinful flesh, *anhypostatically in ipsum* and *enhypostatically* within the Word, sanctified immediately and thereafter by the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁹ The process of sanctification is central to Allen’s proposal. Divine nature *per se* is not the instrument of sanctification (*contra* Hatzidakis), but the

⁶⁴R. Michael Allen, *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2009).

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 129.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷I say hermeneutical rather than ontological because that is Allen’s purpose: “This discussion of Calvin’s careful manner of discussing the relation of the two natures of Christ is not to suggest that he had no doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, rather it must be noted that his discussion of the *communicatio* does not operate on the ontological level. Calvin discusses the *communicatio* within his hermeneutical discussion of New Testament texts regarding the person and nature(s) of Christ. Calvin refers to the *communicatio* as a ‘figure of speech’ whereby: ‘They sometimes attribute to Him what must be referred solely to His humanity, sometimes what belongs uniquely to His divinity; and sometimes what embraces both natures but fits neither alone’,” R Michael Allen, “Calvin’s Christ: A Dogmatic Matrix for Discussion of Christ’s Human Nature,” *IJST* 9, no. 4 (October 2007): 391. This is also the judgement of David Willis when he says that “for Calvin the *Communicatio Idiomatum* is primarily a hermeneutical tool [contrasted to an ontological one] to keep in balance the variety of Scriptural witness to the one Person; but it rests upon and presupposes the hypostatic union.” See David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the so-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 2 (Leiden, Germany: E. J. Brill, 1966), 67.

⁶⁸Allen, *The Christ's Faith*, 130.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

activity of the person of the Holy Spirit. The co-temporality of the process of sanctification and the *an-en-hypostatic* tension guards against the dangers of adoptionism. All of this points to the idea that Christ assumed fallenness, but was also sanctified from fallenness. The moral nature he received from Mary was corrupted and necessitated the remedy of the Spirit. Hence, to put things succinctly, for Allen, Christ can assume a morally vitiated nature because this fall is connected to corruption—a tendency to sin that is not itself sin. He is, however, sanctified in that the Spirit empowers him in the context of his life to never sin and therefore not receive the declaration of guilt.⁷⁰

Other four recent and shorter constructive contributions merit mention. The first is by Ian McFarland, who suggests a new approach to the location of fallenness. According to his approach, fallenness is a property of nature and not of the hypostasis—“fallenness is a property of nature and sin of hypostasis (or person).”⁷¹ Moreover, although fallenness is defined in terms of intrinsic damage and there is no active choosing that effectively renders Christ sinful, we have to be prepared to establish some framework for our speech. The fallenness of Christ’s nature corrupts all of his composition in his humanity. Because, however, the will has an ontologically odd location, then he is not sinful.

What is so special about the will? McFarland asserts,

⁷⁰I should note that Allen has made some revisions in his doctrine of the *non-assumptus*. They are still in movement and not altogether clear. Via email, he told me that “yes, I have tailored my approach to the question of the character of the Son’s assumption of human nature in recent years. My earlier account (pt. 3 of ch. 4 of “The Christ’s Faith”) has been given a good bit more nuance and clarification in an essay entitled “Christ” (now released in the “T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin”). The fundamental shift is drawing a distinction (creating one, I should say) between “assumption from” and “assumption to”: emphasizing that the only human nature Mary has to offer is a fallen one, yet the only human nature that Christ receives is an unfallen one. I think this helps honor the concerns of both parties and, in so doing, highlights one facet of the miracle of the assumption. Anyhow, that’s the very quick and simplistic version of the modification.” See Michael Allen, “Christ” in Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber, eds., *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

⁷¹Ian A. McFarland, “Fallen or Unfallen? Christ’s Human Nature and the Ontology of Human Sinfulness,” *IJST* 10, no. 4 (October 2008): 412.

To speak of Christ's will as deified does not imply any . . . structural alteration: as a piece of human nature, the deified will differs from the non-deified will only in its relationship to God . . . This difference reflects the ontologically odd status of the will as the feature of human nature that gives this nature a kind of indeterminacy. This is not because our wills allow us to determine our natures. To argue that way would be precisely to misapprehend the will as some sort of ontological reserve standing over against human nature rather than as part of it. The will is not a power we have over our natures (since we will what we desire, and we do not control what we desire), but rather identifies the fact that we live out our nature as agents.⁷²

McFarland reaches back to the Constantinople III and Maximus the Confessor's notion of gnostic will. Contrary to any other human, Christ does not possess gnostic will—or deliberative will. His will is always and everywhere directed in a godward movement. Hence, in the aforementioned quote, McFarland was able to say that Christ had a deified will. Once again, McFarland explains,

Maximus does not believe that the deification of Christ's human will rendered his human body impassible; for Maximus (as for Thomas) Christ's body is not glorified until Easter. His point is rather that by virtue of the fact that his hypostasis was divine (i.e. that he was none other than the second person of the Trinity), his human will did not subsist in isolation from God ('bare like ours') but was at every point shaped by God's will. Consequently, whatever he did as a human being, from hungering and sleeping to suffering and dying, was a function of his obedience to God's will. Thus, in so far as he was genuinely human, he was subject to the natural passions of human existence, like thirst, weariness and even fear in the face of death; but because his will was (again, by grace and not by virtue of any alteration in essence) united with God's in each of these acts, he submitted to each of these realities freely and not by compulsion.⁷³

In summary, for McFarland the fallen human nature of Christ does not automatically render him guilty. Because *what* we are (nature) is a function of *who* we are (person), then, according to McFarland, the *non-assumptus* position poses no problem to an Augustinian doctrine of original sin since Christ never actually *chose* to sin even though he had a sin nature.⁷⁴

⁷²McFarland, "Fallen or Unfallen?," 410.

⁷³Ibid., 409–10.

⁷⁴McFarland explains, "Precisely here, however, the relationship between sin and fallenness disclosed through christological analysis provides a corrective. It is true that sin – a function of the individual human hypostasis – is what separates us from God; it is true that this sin is not natural, inasmuch as nature is that which connects us to God; and it is true, finally, that we are responsible for sin, since to speak of sin is ineluctably to say that I participate in and do not merely suffer that separation. The structure of sin is such that it implicates even those who are sinned against in estrangement from God. And yet all this does not require that sin be interpreted as a matter of guilt that calls for blame, because the original sin

The second constructive contribution stems from Rolfe King. In his article, “Assumption, Union and Sanctification: Some Clarifying Distinctions,”⁷⁵ King opposes the *non-assumptus*, and argues that the Son of God assumed an unfallen nature, but with the powers of fallenness operative within it, and that this notion is consistent with a distinct account of sanctification. In support of these claims, he develops distinctions between a conjoining union and a transferring union, and between the Chalcedonian union at the incarnation and the extension of that union on the cross. At the *assumptio carnis* a conjoining union occurred, not a transferring union. Christ sanctified his own nature, prior to a transferring union. Some of what will be developed here in this dissertation is similar to King’s arguments, although some of his moves are somewhat unique.

Oliver Crisp has also engaged in the debate by discussing the Son’s assumption of a human nature with an eye towards original sin. For Crisp, fallenness would render human nature still loathsome to God. And even though fallenness is not the same as guilt, it still generates some metaphysical problems for God’s holiness.⁷⁶ Marc Cortez has recently published a book in which he engages with Crisp’s argument, but ultimately rejects the unfallen position. For Cortez, the unfallen position’s affirmation of the Son’s experience of temptation and his sinlessness are somewhat *ad hoc*. Identification and historic existence like ours seems to require a fallen nature like ours.⁷⁷

that, in Augustinian perspective, is the ground of all actual sin, is fundamentally an ontological rather than a moral category. It is, in other words, not in itself the kind of act for which one might be blamed or rightly feel guilt. Indeed, it is not an act at all (which is why it can be thought of as congenital) but rather the ground of all our acts apart from the transforming power of grace. In this way, we sin because we are always already sinners; but because our sinfulness is logically prior to our acting as agents, our agency is not the cause of our sin. Instead, our sinfulness turns out to be deeper than those individual acts of the will for which guilt and blame may well be appropriate responses.” McFarland, “Fallen or Unfallen?” 414.

⁷⁵Rolfe King, “Assumption, Union and Sanctification: Some Clarifying Distinctions,” *IJST* 19, no. 1 (November 2016): 53-72.

⁷⁶Oliver Crisp, “Did Christ Have a Fallen Human Nature?,” *IJST* 6, no. 3 (July 2004): 270-88.

⁷⁷Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 165.

A widely referenced article is Kelly Kaptic's "The Son's Assumption of a Human Nature: A Call for Clarity." In his article, Kaptic does not necessarily argue for one position, but he attempts to survey what are the main claims of each position and demonstrate that there are miscommunications in the debate. For example, discussing the Reformation era, Kaptic states that "a few samples will suffice to demonstrate that the inheritance of original sin is commonly thought equivalent to claiming one is a sinner."⁷⁸ Depending, however, on how one treats the communication of original sin, Kaptic understands that corruption may not be understood as moral. After this survey, Kaptic writes seven observations of what are some common grounds between fallen and unfallen advocates. These observations are worthy to be reproduced at length here:

1. Both fallen and unfallen adherents oppose those who have treated Mary simply as a 'channel',³⁸ affirming rather that the Son is able from Mary to assume a complete human nature: including a reasonable soul (with all its various faculties) and physical body.

2. Both positions affirm that the incarnate Son of God entered not a pre-fallen paradise, but a sin-ravaged world as the true son of fallen Mary; thus, the Son assumes our *common infirmities* and weaknesses, including hunger, thirst, pain, sorrow and ultimately death. As such, Jesus is never outside of a relationship to a sinful and chaotic world

3. Both positions affirm the Holy Spirit's involvement in allowing Jesus Christ to be 'without sin'. The unfallen position claims that because of the Spirit's sanctifying work at conception it is impossible to speak of a time when the human nature was fallen, although the Spirit's activity does not end at conception but remains essential for the incarnate Lord to continue in obedience. The fallen position emphasizes the Spirit's role in keeping the person of Christ free from sin, though the human nature is itself 'sinful flesh'. Further clarity is needed at this point since unfallen advocates still claim that the fallen position inevitably ends up in Nestorianism by so sharply dividing the natures.

4. Jesus's temptation are real and really experienced. However, there is still debate on whether he was "able to sin (*posse peccare*), not able to sin (*non posse peccare*), or if this is even a legitimate question."

5. There is disagreement among those holding to the fallen position whether Jesus had an inner propensity to sin (i.e. concupiscence), some affirming and others denying. Those who affirm this believe only by the Spirit is such inner pollution

⁷⁸Kelly M. Kaptic, "The Son's Assumption of a Human Nature: A Call for Clarity," *IJST* 3, no. 2 (July 2001): 154-66.

overcome. The unfallen position commonly denies such a propensity to sin, granting only that Jesus experienced all sinless emotions and disruptions; he was free from sinful cravings and evil desires arising from these distinctions, however, can become fuzzy at times. Does ‘without sin’ require that Jesus’ faculties are unaffected by the fall and thus resemble prelapsarian humanity? Or is it only possible for Jesus to be ‘tempted as we are’ when there is internal disorder to be overcome? Does such disorder necessarily entail impurity or sin? These questions require further reflection by the unfallen position, calling specifically for a renewed examination of Jesus’ temptations, emotions and relationships.

6. In contemporary theological discourse, fundamental to being human is relationship to others and to God. If we simply say that Jesus experiences the painful realities of human relationships in a sin-infected world, then both sides can agree. No one appears willing to deny the strained relationships between Jesus and his friends, enemies, relatives, general followers, and close disciples as a result of their sin, unbelief, disloyalty, distraction, etc. However, if fallen entails rebellion and broken fellowship with the Father, then there seems real hesitancy from all sides to endorse this claim.

7. Perhaps the greatest need for clarity resides in the question of the relationship to original guilt and sin. Both positions want to affirm that Jesus acts vicariously for us, taking upon himself our guilt and sin. It is somewhat debated by unfallen proponents how and when this occurs; some narrowly concentrating on the cross, others more satisfyingly stressing the vicarious nature of his entire life culminating in his death, resurrection and ascension. Unfallen proponents do agree that Christ’s ability to act vicariously is possible as a result of the Spirit’s mysterious work in the holy conception, freeing Christ from personal guilt, sin or any form of moral corruption. On the other side, proponents of fallen language have been divided. Some have been hesitant, fearing that unless careful distinctions are made Jesus becomes a blemished lamb, and so unable to take away the sins of the world. Other fallen proponents seem to believe that any qualification only leads back to the original problem: the Son assuming a human nature somehow different than our own. Progress on this question will only occur when definitions of sin, guilt and vicarious are agreed upon. An additional concern is how solidarity is maintained between Jesus and the rest of humanity. Since both sides uphold the Spirit’s unique work at conception (in some form or other) some element of discontinuity between Christ and the rest of humanity must be admitted.⁷⁹

Other works engage with this doctrine. However, due to the limited scope of this work and the dialogue partners chosen, discussion of these works will either show in the body of the dissertation—as these authors develop the thought of Barth and Torrance—or they will be pointed out for future studies.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Kapic, “The Son’s Assumption of a Human Nature,” 64–66.

⁸⁰See this list for just an example of the fruitful debate: Ho-Jin Ahn, “The Humanity of Christ: John Calvin’s Understanding of Christ’s Vicarious Humanity,” *SJT* 65, no. 2 (2012): 145–58. Allen, “Calvin’s Christ.” Ivor J. Davidson, “Pondering the Sinlessness of Jesus Christ: Moral Christologies and the Witness of Scripture,” *IJST* 10, no. 4 (October 1, 2008): 372–98, Daniel J. Cameron and Myk Habets, *Flesh and Blood: A Dogmatic Sketch Concerning the Fallen Nature View of Christ’s Human Nature* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016). John Clark and Marcus Peter Johnson, *The Incarnation of God: The*

The great array of opinions and theological approaches open space for a fresh look at the theology of the *non-assumptus*. This dissertation attempts to clarify the talk about the humanity of Christ, by providing Trinitarian, Thomistic and Post-Reformation categories that create a kind of fence for talk about the moral status of the humanity of the savior.

What do these Terms Mean? Assumption and Fallen/Unfallen: A Tentative Clarification Approach

One of the contributions made by E. Jerome Van Kuiken was to, after surveying roughly twenty scholars, attempt some terminological clarity. It becomes clear from the beginning of the debate regarding Christ's human flesh in the twentieth century that terms like "sinful," "fallen," "affected," and others can take a great range of meaning depending of who is treating them.

For example, van Kuiken points that the term "assumed" is used to describe the "condition *out of which* he assumed it or the condition *into which* he assumed."⁸¹ According to van Kuiken, whereas those who think Christ had a fallen human nature would like to emphasize the latter, those who think Christ assumed an unfallen human nature would prefer the former. In any case, the simple statement that Christ assumed a fallen or depraved nature could be accepted by those defending the unfallen side of the debate, insofar as that simply means that it is condition *out of which* he assumed (the only theologians this could cause any problems are those defending the immaculate

Mystery of the Gospel as the Foundation of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015). Bruce L. McCormack, "For Us and Our Salvation: Incarnation and Atonement in the Reformed Tradition," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43, no. 1/4 (1998): 281–316. Marilyn McCord Adams, *What Sort of Human Nature?: Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1999). Kopic, "The Son's Assumption of a Human Nature," 154–66. Stoyan Tanev, "The Concept of Energy in T. F. Torrance and in Orthodox Theology," *Participatio: Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* 4, no. 1 (2013): 190–212. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*.

⁸¹Van Kuiken, *Christ's Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy*, 167.

conception).⁸² The problem with van Kuiken's proposal is that like many theological terms, treating "assumed" in this manner is to proclaim the term's death *via* too many qualifications.

As I argue in the chapter on inseparable operations, Thomas and the scholastic tradition provided a way forward in the debate by defining what is an act. The term assumed has to be seen in its proper Trinitarian structure. As Vidu states, "Trinitarian persons act as a single agent in the economy, such that each Trinitarian person is co-agent in each other's action tokens."⁸³ This means that even though it is only the Son who incarnate the act of assuming is caused by all three persons of the Trinity because "each is co-agent in each other's action tokens."⁸⁴ An action is not only a *state*. Each Trinitarian person is involved in the action of the assumption of human nature, because each person caused it. The *state*, however, resulted by this action is only appropriate to the Son. By resorting to this Thomistic approach, I hope that it may be clear that any fallen proposal could eventually lend a hand to the idea that the persons of the Trinity are causing the assumption of sin.

Terms like "unfallen" and "fallen" also carry a certain baggage. The idea that Christ has an unfallen human nature is usually tied to the concept of a pre-lapsarian human nature. Van Kuiken, however, reminded us that such talk can be interpreted as if Jesus was never even affected by the fall or that his humanity existed before the fall. Although such reading is at times uncharitable, the point is, according to van Kuiken, that

⁸²Van Kuiken, *Christ's Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy*, 167.

⁸³Adonis Vidu, "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 4, no. 1 (2016): 106.

⁸⁴Again, Vidu states, "From an action perspective, the agency in the case of the incarnation/ assumption belongs to the Trinity as a whole. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are together causing the assumption. In other words, they are together bringing it about that a relationship of dependence obtains between this human nature and the person of the Son. However, from a state perspective, it is said that the action terminates on the Son. In other words, from a state perspective the action results in a state that characterizes the Son alone.14 Thus, Augustine's "reference to a single person" means that in this particular case, the human flesh is really united and made dependent on the person of the Logos." *Ibid.*, 113.

“unfallen” communicates a perfectionism that should be avoided. A suggestion was made, then, for the replacement of “unfallen” with “restored.”⁸⁵ This would yield a dynamism lacking in the unfallen terminology.⁸⁶ McCormack states,

On this view the question posed at the outset—was Christ’s human nature fallen or Unfallen cannot be answered without qualification. It was indeed a fallen human nature in that it was taken from the substance of sinful human flesh. But it was made to be “unfallen”—or better, a “restored” true humanity, for this was in the strictest sense not a new creation—by the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

McCormack is correct. Christ does draw his humanity from Mary, who is a sinner. The idea of sanctification, however, needs to be qualified as well. The sanctification occurred in the Son’s assumption of human nature is both unlike and like sanctification of man. It is unlike because the grace of union resulted from the incarnation can only be given to that particular human nature. It is like other man’s sanctification because the Spirit also dwells in Christ, sanctifying his humanity in *habitus* fashion. Giving up on the term unfallen has noble motives, but it can generate more questions than answers. In the end, if one chooses “restored” we might also have to spend time qualifying the mode of sanctification.

Let us take stock of the approach presented here: “Assumed” cannot be seen as an isolated operation of the Son, but it demands a Trinitarian framework. Furthermore, the “fallen”/“unfallen” terminology should not be discarded because it may tend to static notions of the incarnation. Any direction one goes, the perils of clarification *ad nauseam* are present. So, keeping with classically used terms, as long as they have their Trinitarian framework as foundation will aid one’s analysis.

⁸⁵McCormack, “For Us and Our Salvation,” 296.

⁸⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

KARL BARTH'S THEOLOGY OF THE INCARNATION AND CHRIST'S FLESH

The number of resources dealing with Karl Barth's (1886-1968) doctrine of the incarnation in recent years has grown exponentially.¹ Though the Swiss theologian is often quoted as one of the proponents of the doctrine of the *non-assumptus*, no monograph has been produced dedicated exclusively to Barth's reception and/or formulation of this doctrine. Although the fallen human nature of Christ plays a central role for T. F. Torrance's doctrines of the incarnation and atonement,² Barth's treatment of this doctrine has been marginalized.

Barth discusses the Son's assumption of a fallen state in *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, under §59, "The Obedience of the Son of God." In this section, Barth is at pains to show that the Son is *pro nobis*. Embedded into the *pro nobis* character of the atonement for sins is the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is in solidarity with man. Such solidarity is not merely external or forensic in character but is who the Son of God is in the far country. Solidarity is Christ's identification with man in his humility and in humanity's

¹Darren O. Sumner, "The Twofold Life of the Word: Karl Barth's Critical Reception of the Extra Calvinisticum," *IJST* 15, no. 1 (January 2013): 42–57; Darren O. Sumner, *Karl Barth and the Incarnation: Christology and the Humility of God*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology. (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Paul D. Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*, T&T Clark Theology (New York: T&T Clark, 2008). Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016),] 1, 2; Rustin E. Brian, *Covering Up Luther: How Barth's Christology Challenged the Deus Absconditus That Haunts Modernity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013); Edwin Chr Van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). David Gibson, *Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election and Christology in Calvin and Barth*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology (New York: T&T Clark, 2009); Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

²Torrance even received entire monographs dealing with the *non-assumptus*. Kevin Chiarot, *The Unassumed Is the Unhealed: The Humanity of Christ in the Christology of T. F. Torrance* (Eugene:OR, Pickwick, 2013).

exaltation.

I intend to look into two sections of *CD IV/1* and another from *CD IV/2* that Barth affirms the *non-assumptus* and to put it in the context of these sections. I will also exegete another commonly appealed section from *CD I/2* (under §15 – Barth’s early construction of the doctrine). I will argue that despite Barth’s pastoral and ethical concerns for the affirmation of the *non-assumptus*,³ there are some problems that the doctrine of the fallen human flesh and the sinlessness of Christ pose for the hypostatic union.⁴ These problems are further articulated in his doctrine of the *communicatio gratiarum* in which the communication of graces to the human nature as discussed by Barth, may divide the natures and thereby suggest an implicit Nestorianism. I am not arguing that Karl Barth was Nestorian, but that maybe his doctrine of the *communicatio gratiarum*, used to protect the Son from sin, may have unintentionally separated the natures in a Nestorian direction.

This study will progress in six steps. First, I will set Barth’s discussion in what he sees are the historical and theological backgrounds of his “re-discovery” of the *non-assumptus*. Second, I will explain Barth’s understanding of the self-humiliation of the Son in light of the event of Jesus Christ’s solidarity with us. Third, I will discuss the issue of sinlessness and the antecedent life of the Son as it relates to the fallen state of Christ and the grace of God in the incarnation. Fourth, I will evaluate those proposals in light of Karl Barth’s doctrine of the *communicatio gratiarum*. Fifth, I will identify some recent contributions that try to retrieve Barth’s formulation in order to argue for the fallen flesh of Christ. Finally, with the aid of Thomas Aquinas’s categories of grace of union and habitual grace, I will propose a mild and brief evaluative-corrective to Barth’s doctrine of the *non-assumptus* and impeccability based on a few perceived missteps in Barth’s

³*CD IV/1*, 216.

⁴*CD IV/1*, 258–59.

formulation.

Early Stages of Argumentation: Flesh and Identity

In §15, Barth discusses the “Mystery of Revelation.” Under this rubric, he talks about the assumption, sanctification, and existence of the Word with us and Godself. He sets the stage by asserting that “very God and very man” are unnegotiable aspects to true christological speech. Nonetheless, there is a proper order that needs to be maintained: since he never ceases to be very God when assuming human nature, we have to start by protecting the divine aspect of our christological discourses.⁵

Once Barth has protected the divine person, he moves to talk about what does it mean for the Word to become flesh. The unity of flesh in the person of the Son should prompt us to have no reservation in ascribing to the humanity of Christ the revelation of “God Himself in person.”⁶ For Barth, the humanity of Christ is the revelation of the eternal Word in such a way that even the name *Logos* is merely seen as a placeholder for Jesus Christ.⁷

Flesh, however, does not mean a mere man. Flesh for Barth implies an “essence and existence” which makes a man a man as opposed to God, angel, or animal.⁸ The primary meaning then for “The Word became flesh” is that the Word became participant in human essence and existence. Nonetheless, this can only be real in the

⁵*CD* I/2, 136. Here he cites Epiphanius as support for the irreversibility of the statement. “very God and very man”

⁶*CD* I/2, 148.

⁷I have already pointed out somewhere else that I agree with Richard Bauckham’s assessment of Barth’s exegesis in John. “Barth’s idea of a Logos as a placeholder serves the purpose ‘of not allowing Jesus to be defined by the preexisting categories, which would threaten the absoluteness and exclusivity of revelation in Jesus Christ’ (29). Nonetheless as Bauckham sees, Barth missed the point of the prologue entirely. For Bauckham, the point of the incarnation is not that God is revealed in the God-man Jesus, but that Jesus, in his concrete human life, is the Son of the Father.” See Rafael Bello, Review of “Reading the Gospels with Karl Barth,” Reading Religion, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://readingreligion.org/books/reading-gospels-karl-barth>.

⁸Here Barth appeals to Polanus’s, “Natura humani Christi est essentialis seu substantia humana, qua Christus nobis hominibus coessentialis est.” *CD* I/2, 149.

concrete life of the man Jesus Christ. Barth's movement here avoids at once adoptionists tendencies by maintaining in check the *an-en-hypostatic* theology (he appeals to Wollebius, "*Christus non hominem, sed humanitatem, non personam sed naturam assumit*"⁹). The essence and existence of this man were never a reality of itself, but according to Barth because the Son became this man the possibility of that human nature came into being in him. Moreover, Barth asserts that in this assumption the Word and man were not really side by side (therefore formally rejecting Nestorianism). This man exists because "the Son of God appropriated and actualized His special possibility as a Man . . . this is the sole ground of existence, of this Man, and therefore of Christ's flesh."¹⁰ The strong unity that Barth references here is explained in terms of identifying the reality of Jesus Christ "as God Himself in person actively present in the flesh."¹¹ Hence, the man Jesus Christ is Himself God in the flesh—not a demigod, nor an ideal man, but God's Word in person who represents us to God and God to us.¹²

⁹CD I/2,

¹⁰CD I/2, 150.

¹¹CD I/2, 151.

¹²Paul Dafydd Jones has argued convincingly that the *an-en-hypostatic* pair serves as a theologumenon that mediates Barth's critical realism and his dogmatic appropriation of sixteenth-century dogmatics in its dialectic fashion. Jones says, "How did this relatively obscure bit of christological dexterity help with Barth's doctrine of revelation? Well, discerning an elective affinity between the *anhypostasis/enhypostasis* pairing and the dialectic of veiling and unveiling, Barth used this affinity to coordinate his 'critical realism' with a new emphasis on Christ's person as the norm that governs theological reflection. On one level, talk of the *anhypostasia* and *enhyposstasia* of Christ's humanity was compatible with Earth's abiding conviction about the 'infinite qualitative difference' of God and humanity. It allowed an avowal of the *unio personalis* that did not compromise the distinction between God and humanity; Christ's humanity could function as a veil for God's self-revelation while remaining clearly distinguished from that revelation. On another level, revelation was now made local to Christ. The anhypostasis /enhyposstasis pairing was not only 'well-suited for clarifying what was at stake in speaking of revelation as revelation in concealment, as indirect communication', but Barth could also specify 'the Subject of revelation [as] the Person of the Logos who has veiled Himself in human flesh'. Tethered to Jesus Christ, the veiling/unveiling dialectic could shed even the possibility of functioning in a non-christological manner. Earth's doctrine of revelation was now bound firmly to the incarnation of the Son. Accordingly, even though Earth's move towards Christocentrism was initially impeded by a commitment to 'pneumatocentrism'—which meant, ironically, that his theology sometimes appeared to be Christocentric in principle, but not in practice, until the mid-1930s – the Gottingen Dogmatics established the foundation upon which the Church Dogmatics would be built." Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 23.

Next, Barth is concerned to debunk any view in which σάρξ describes a neutral human nature. Since σάρξ, in the New Testament, concerns not only man in general but the situation in which man is liable to judgement and verdict of God – under His wrath. Σάρξ is the “concrete form of human nature marked by Adam’s fall.”¹³ Hence, the identity of the Son of Man is bound up with a post-lapsarian human nature. Since Barth has already established that this unity is not fictitious but real—for the humanity of Christ is the revelation of Godself—it would be natural to identify this move with sin in the divine life. I should note however, Barth’s careful initial move in this section when he asserts that “very God and very man” have a proper order. We hold to the unity of the person, but we protect the divinity of the Godhead.

Once divinity is protected and identity with post-fall is asserted, Barth continues discussing that the identity of the Word with post-fall flesh is not only external, but like ours even in our opposition to him.¹⁴ This movement is the greatest inconceivable, but true revelatory one—that He is God’s revelation to us; he would not be revelation if he was not man, and he would not be man if he was not σάρξ in this definite sense.

Becoming σάρξ in this definite sense, however, does not mean that he was a sinful man.¹⁵ He entered into solidarity (according to Barth, internally and externally—whatever it means) with us. Only by bearing *innocently* what Adam and us are guilty of doing he can reveal God to us. Barth takes his cues from Hebrews 2:18; 4:15; and 5:2. These classic texts are commonly associated with the compassion of the Son for our humanity. Nonetheless, Barth seems to take it a step forward. If to say that to become flesh is simply to become man or even hero, we descend to the level of other religions.

¹³CD I/2, 151.

¹⁴CD I/2,

¹⁵CD I/2, 152.

Christ's compassion extends to the fact that he "became sin." No other religion can affirm such thing.

The early moves from *CD I/2* regarding the *non-assumptus* are still situated in Barth's theology of identification, but with a lower actualistic force. Following Bruce McCormack's interpretation, it is possible to locate a heightened mode of speech regarding the identity of the Son in the Godhead as the man Jesus after *CD I/2*. As I will show, even though the actualism plays its part in Barth's construal, it is not determinative to attribute fallenness in the Godhead. Paul Dafydd Jones, has located a second actualistic move that makes sense of the incarnation *via* the pairing of the *en-an-hypostasia* and the *communicatio naturarum*. Jones states,

McCormack's interpretation can be intensified and tightened up somewhat. The key point is this: Barth's actualism encompasses not only Christ's human relation to the Father but also the relation of the assumed human to the divine Son. Although the man Jesus lacks his own *hypostasis* (a non-essential property of human being), he does not lack agential power (an essential property of human being), and he exerts this power in a way that contributes to, and in fact assists in the establishment and preservation of, the personal simplicity definitive of his divine-human person. Specifically, the word 'participation', while sidestepping the problematic insinuation of an interpenetrative co-inherence of 'natures', allows Barth to suggest that the union of humanity and divinity in Christ's person is an event mutually confected and, in some respect, mutually forged, given the concurrent activity of Christ's humanity and Christ's divinity. While unilaterally established, this union is neither unilaterally imposed nor unilaterally sustained. Each essence 'takes part' in the task of upholding the numerical simplicity of Christ's person; 'on both sides there is a true and genuine participation' (*IV/2*, p. 62). *Pace* McCormack, it is not quite that one essence is particularly involved in 'receiving' and the other essence is particularly involved in 'giving'. Rather, Christ's essences together enact and realize Christ's personally simple identity. On the one side, the divine act of incarnation fulfils God's decision to be the 'electing God'. God realizes, under the conditions of time and space, the utterly particular identity that God pre-temporally assigns to the divine Son. The divine Son is therefore the subject who directs and animates comprehensively the person of Christ; the divine Son is the 'who' of Christ's person. On the other side, Christ *qua* human is given, receives and then acts to affirm and uphold the simple identity definitive of his person. Christ's human essence does its 'bit' to ensure that Christ is the person that God wills him to be and that he is—the Word incarnate.¹⁶

Jones's intuitions here seem correct. Dogmatic retrieval made possible for Barth to

¹⁶Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 133.

eventually stop seeing the incarnation in control of the divine consortium. Eventually, as we move from *CD I/2* to *CD IV/1* and *CD IV/2* these convictions are more settled and the *vere deus et vere homo* start to be mutually determinative. So we move now (after the *excursus*) to *CD IV* in hopes to trace Barth's reasoning of identity and flesh as it relates to his mature Christology.

Excursus: Gleanings from the History of the Church in Church Dogmatics

Since the early church, theology has been diverted from its proper course (even if this course was well-intentionally diverted). Barth announced that in an effort to protect the impeccability of Jesus, the church softened its declaration of the kind of flesh Jesus assumed: "But there must be no weakening or obscuring of the saving truth that the nature which God assumed is identical with our nature as we see it in the light of the fall. If it was otherwise how could Christ be like us?"¹⁷ With solidarity, the Son who was without sin was made sin. Hence, Barth asserts that we must disagree with Gregory of Nyssa who posited that since God is good and good cannot cohabit with sin, the incarnation is in accordance with the intrinsic goodness of creation.¹⁸ We cannot agree with Honorius also, who said "*a divinitate assumpta est nostra natura, non culpa, illa (natura) profecto, quae ante peccatum creata est, non quae post praevaricationem vitiate.*"¹⁹ Barth's simple response in light of his own theology of solidarity is that his is *natura vitata*.

Barth also points to Calvin, the Leiden Synopsis, Luther, and Hollaz as guilty of weakening the truth that the flesh the Son assumed was one like ours and also of neglecting texts like 2 Cor 5:21 and Gal 3:13.²⁰ The Leiden Synopsis (with its scholastic

¹⁷*CD I/2*, 153.

¹⁸*Or. Cat.* 15.

¹⁹Honorius I Denz No. 251.

²⁰*CD I/2*, 153. The first translation of the Leiden Synopsis has just been published in English

tendencies) weakened the theological point even more. The Synopsis says in disputation 25, 18: “*non enim conveniebat humanam naturam peccatum obnoxiam Filio Dei uniri.*” Barth thinks that if it is not fitting (*conveniebat*) for the Son to take a nature like ours, it is impossible for him to represent us. Moreover, although there is a laudable desire to protect God’s honor, this movement also rejects the Scriptural exaltation that happens in condescension.²¹

Nonetheless, there have been a few enlightened figures in history. He cites Gottfried Menken, Edward Irving, J. C. von Hoffman, H. F. Kohlbrügge, Edward Bohl, and H. Bezzel as the few who were courageous to stand against the tradition’s wish to protect the honor of God, but that at the same time compromised his condescending empathy.

Some of the movements exemplified in the figures above resemble Barth’s talk of solidarity. Others take it further (with Barth’s blessings). Such is the case of Edward Irving who asserts that the sinlessness of Christ is not in virtue of the presence of the divine person of the Son who sanctifies it but due to the presence of the Holy Spirit. For Irving, since Christ assumed a manhood that was fallen, he needed to experience the grace/favor of God in overcoming sin. Barth quotes Irving saying that “Christ was holy in spite of the law of the flesh working in Him as in another man; but never in Him prevailing.”²² We will take Barth’s articulation of the sinlessness of Christ below; it seems, however, that he is taking his cues from Irving. Although Barth does not discuss

and it is an excellent work. See Henk Van Den Belt et al: *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae / Synopsis of Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation*, Lam edition (Leiden ; Boston: Brill Academic, 2016). Dolf te Velde et al., eds., *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae / Synopsis of a Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation: Disputations 1-23*, bilingual ed. (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 2014).

²¹The relationship of exaltation and humiliation shall be taken at a later stage in this dissertation. For now, it suffices to say that Barth thinks they are simultaneous. See Rob Price’s superb published dissertation: Robert B. Price, *Letters of the Divine Word: The Perfections of God in Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011). See also, Jeremy R. Treat, *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 156–64.

²²CD I/2, 154.

the role of the Spirit in keeping Christ sinless; his move is similar to Irving's. In *CD IV/1*, Barth will connect sinlessness with the giving of grace. It is to that movement that we turn now.

Deus Pro-Nobis

Engraved in *CD IV/1*, 211–217 is Barth's preoccupation with solidarity in the humility of the Son. "God has not abandoned the world and man in the unlimited need of his situation, but He willed to bear the need as his own."²³ Salvation is not an external act of the triune God in favor of man, but "He humbles Himself to our status in order to be our companion in that status . . . in order to change the status from within."²⁴ This act of humility is probably the rationale for Barth's alignment of fallen human nature with Christ. No doubt there is a very good intuition running here. Solidarity is a central biblical concept in the atonement and here Barth's actualistic theology harmonizes even better with the theme of solidarity. It is not solidarity from the incarnation forward. It is solidarity from the "history in which He is God."²⁵

For Barth, "We explain the incarnation docetically and therefore explaining it away, we should be closing our eyes . . . the Word became flesh means that the Son made

²³*CD IV/1*, 215.

²⁴*CD IV/1*, 216. The self-humiliation of the Son of God, according to Barth in §59, is never an isolated theologoumenon, but is always accompanied by the exaltation of man. As he says elsewhere, it is "the twofold action of Jesus Christ, the actuality of His work: His one work, which cannot be divided into different stages or periods of his existence, but which fills out and constitutes His existence in this twofold form" (*CD IV/1*, 133). For Barth is both clear that God is primarily pro se, but also in his Being has chosen (whatever that means) to be a humble God for us. Second, the humility is framed in connection with the way of the divinity of the Son and not his humanity (which is the one exalted) even though these two movements are always together. In taking humanity at the incarnation this humility has its basis in God and therefore is not new to the Son himself, but is "a strangely logical final continuation of the history in which He is God" (*CD IV/1*, 203). The assumption of humanity is then the act of the person of the Son of God who humbly acts in accordance with whom he is from eternity—humble God. It must be clear that the act of humiliation is not from the side of the humanity, for humanity is already low. The humble action is from the divine person of the Son of God, who "did not have to be or become" (*CD IV/1*, 214). Barth here frames the solidarity and the assumption of the fallen state with the humility of the Son. This could be problematic, granted that Barth's language of humility is usually tied to the act of the divine Son. It is hardly the case, however, that humility always mean the same thing every time Barth uses the word. Therefore, it would be a case of uncharitable reading if one implied fallenness to the divine life in Barth's theology.

²⁵*CD IV/1*, 203.

his own the situation of man.”²⁶ The Son is not only in solidarity with man in eternity (*via* divine humility), but also in time one must explain the incarnation as one in which the Son takes fallen flesh, otherwise one falls into docetism. Docetism is the christological heresy Barth rejects in his formulation of the assumption of the fallen flesh of Christ – Jesus does not merely appear to be fully human—He is fully human. So, Barth equates being fully human with a fallen state of flesh. The most important questions here are what is a human nature? What is needed for the Son’s assumption of human nature in order for him to be in solidarity with man? Is sin a necessary property of human nature?²⁷ It is hard to find an answer to these questions, especially considering Barth’s uneasiness with the vocabulary of Chalcedon at times. Even raising these questions does not seem like the natural flow of Barth’s argument. As said before, Barth’s main concern here is solidarity. Man is not alone, he was not left with sin and its own devices. What is clear from this passage (even if that is not Barth’s main preoccupation) is that he prefers a maximalist account of humanity in which sin is not an independent ontological entity that takes hold of man but is essential to man’s composition to be human after Adam.²⁸

In fact, sin is more than necessary for human nature *per se*. For Barth, sin must be addressed christologically (not Adamically). Just like no theological *loci* has an independent status, so hamartiology has no other foundation but Christ.²⁹ As Tseng puts

²⁶*CD* IV/1, 215–16.

²⁷The nature of Christ’s human nature (no pun intended) is a controversial topic. Can one talk about human nature in general (or abstract) and concrete terms? First, some have already explored the possibility of an abstract human nature and proved to be a way forward. Probably the greatest defender of such view is Alvin Plantinga. According to Plantinga, “the second person of the Trinity assumed human nature, i. e. assumed a property which is necessary and sufficient for being a human being.” For example, a monkey can do the pincer movement with his fingers and so does a human being. The human, however, has other essential properties that make him human. In one sense then, the monkey and the human share similar properties, but there are essential irreducible properties that comprise a human nature. That irreducible nature is what is assumed by the Son in Barth’s model—what unites all human beings or what it means to be human. Nonetheless, this is not Barth’s concern here. Though this seems like a valid concern regarding a proper discussion of the *non-assumptus*, it shall not be dealt with here. For an excellent treatment of abstract vs. concrete nature, see Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, chap 4.

²⁸I am aware of Barth’s doctrine of sin elsewhere in which he describes sin not as something that has its own reality. See *CD* IV/1, 389–98.

²⁹See Allen Jorgenson, “Karl Barth’s Christological Treatment of Sin,” *SJT* 54, no. 4 (2001):

it, for Barth, “to consider sin independently of Christ as such is to give sin an ontological status alongside God, thus turning sin into a second god.”

In §60 “The Pride and Fall of Man,” Barth starts with a discussion on “The Man of Sin in the Light of the Obedience of the Son of God.” One of the burdens of this sections is to assure that sin does not have an ontological life separate from the Word. If we conceive of sin as an independent reality, then we put it before God Himself. It is only through the real encounter with Jesus Christ that we understand sin itself. Jesus Christ reveals the destructiveness of sin, and the suffering it causes, but it is only in Jesus that we see the real pure form of this sin because he was the innocent one who suffered without deserving it. In “The Pride of Man,” Barth analyses sin’s construction. For him, the root of all sin is that man wants to be God. Key to Barth’s formulation is the idea of concealment. Whereas Christ conceals his divinity in humanity in the act of humility, man tries to exalt himself to the point of divinity in the concealment of pride. The concealment of Christ humiliation is deeply shown at the cross. Here at the cross kingship and grace are shown to be the way forward for humanity who always chooses exaltation.

The other section is called “The Fall of Man.” Here Barth tries to identify the man of sin himself. The man of sin falls exactly because he is the one who tries to exalt himself. God on the other hand has humiliation from the beginning. This humiliation is evidenced even by the fact that God has chosen to suffer: “It is God who suffers through the failure which comes with human pride.”³⁰ This suffering is what makes possible for us to experience forgiveness. Forgiveness is the restoration of order (491). We are inverting the order on everything that God set as the determination for man and God. We are prideful and try to establish order through our ways, but these ways do not bring

439–62. See also Adam J. Johnson, *God’s Being in Reconciliation: The Theological Basis of the Unity and Diversity of the Atonement in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 147.

³⁰CD IV/1, 485.

order, but disorder. Real order can only be introduced by the grace of God. This grace is shown in the economy *via* the atonement. One must not forget, however, that the atonement is the person of Jesus Christ.³¹

Jesus's solidarity then is not only an act of compassion, but God's own preoccupation with making all things converge to himself by virtue of his divine person (1 Cor 1:20).³² Barth's main concern is not to propose a new ontology of man, sin or God. Any careful reader would approach this section and note an intentional ethical and pastoral concern. For Barth, the "Word became flesh . . . means that the Son of God made His own the situation of man."³³ Even though we will quickly see ontological implications, the text should be read giving full credit to Barth's ethical intentions.

Moving to these implications: Christ's solidarity with man in sin precedes man's history. The gracious election of Christ in its supralapsarian character³⁴ allows Barth to insist that man does not *cause* solidarity in the Godhead. God, on the other hand, proactively embraces the plight of man in Christ's assumption of a fallen flesh. For, "God allows the world and humanity to take part in the history of the inner life of his Godhead, in the movement in which from and to all eternity he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and therefore one true God."³⁵ Solidarity has a twofold meaning: it is both the life of the Son into the far country with humanity and the humanity taking part in the Godhead. The "strangely logical final continuation" of the economy is pertinent to the life of the Son in a "fallen and perishing state" *pro nobis*.

³¹See also Shao Kai Tseng, *Karl Barth's Infralapsarian Theology: Origins and Development, 1920-1953* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 245.

³²Adam Johnson writes, "Just as the doctrine of the divine perfections encourages us to explore Christ's work in light of each of the perfections of the Triune God, Barth's doctrine of sin encourages us to a variation of this task, approaching Christ's work in light of the various aspects sin revealed in Scripture and given their definitive exposition in light of the cross." Johnson, *God's Being in Reconciliation*, 148

³³CD IV/1 216.

³⁴van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway*, chap 5.

³⁵CD IV/1, 215.

The key term, then, for our investigation is what Barth means by *Deus pro nobis* in this section, in light of the fallen and perishing state and the twofold meaning of solidarity.³⁶ Barth answers the question by stating that “*Deus pro nobis* is something which he did not have to be or become, but which, according to this fact, He was and is and will be – the God who acts as our God.”³⁷ *Deus pro nobis* functions as the turning of God towards man in which God is free and *pro se* by being humble and *pro nobis*. God’s life *pro nobis* is demonstrated in His history “played out as world-history and therefore under the affliction and peril of all world-history.”³⁸ That cannot mean the existence of any necessity that the *pro nobis* generates in God. If we speak of any necessity, we have to speak of the necessity of the

fact that the being of God, the omnipotence of his free love, has this concrete determination and is effective and revealed in this determination and no other, that God will magnify and does in fact magnify His own glory in this way and not in any other, and therefore to the inclusion of the redemption and salvation of the world.³⁹

God is free when he shows his love and solidarity to another by being humble. We are not allowed to think of the freedom of God only in terms of the *Deus pro se*, without *Deus pro nobis* because this is who God determines himself to be in his free love. God’s free love is Barth’s underlying framework which provides a rationale for a deep theological sense of how God is in himself, *Deus pro nobis*. The love of God in revealing himself speaks of the reality that he is— “God is love” (1 John 4:8). As noted, in this love that he is, he determined to be *for us*. On the other hand, his freedom underscores the fact that in this determinative giving God remains himself.⁴⁰ Colin Gunton explains this point

³⁶Johnson summarizes the fourfold ways in which God is for us in §59.2: “(1) Christ took our place as Judge, he takes our place as the glorious one who shames us; where (2) he took our place as the judged, he is the one shamed; where (3) he was judged in our place, he was shamed in our place; and where (4) he acted justly in our place, he removes our shame and clothes us with his own glory (CD IV/1, 273; CD IV/2, 384).” Johnson, *God’s Being in Reconciliation*.

³⁷CD IV/I, 214.

³⁸CD IV/1, 215.

³⁹CD IV/1, 213.

⁴⁰See Christopher R. J. Holmes, “The Perfections of God,” in *The Westminster Handbook to*

lucidly:

God's revelation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the event in which he creates fellowship with man, and it is in doing that he reveals that he is love. But this is a love that is given freely, for the mode of revelation makes it clear that, first, he is Father as well as Son, and, second, that he is Father, Son and Spirit independently of his relation to man.⁴¹

But how exactly can we still speak of freedom in humility and solidarity if such solidarity could logically imply some sort of fall in humanity as it “take[s] part in the history of the inner life of his Godhead”?⁴² Barth does not seem to answer this question here and moves quickly to his pastoral and ethical concerns of how solidarity plays a role in the Son's life for us. Maybe Barth is not interested in developing the logical consequences of his formulations. For Barth, the Son of God did not “float over the human situation like a being of completely different kind. He entered into it as a man with men.”⁴³ This language and others such as “He was not immune from sin”⁴⁴ could be taken in several directions, especially if combined with the participatory language of the previous page.⁴⁵ But after this brief analysis, it looks like attributing fallenness to the divine life of the Son as an implication of Barth's participatory speech is not his goal in this section. His main goal in this section is to press in the mind of his readers that God does not forget man in his sin. This deeply theological subject brings with it a deeper pastoral content. The plight of man is God's concern in his gracious way of being in the

Karl Barth, ed. Richard E Burnett (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox), 158. The issue of God's free love is important here, but is embedded in a much deeper discussion that Barth takes on *CD II/1*.

⁴¹Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 187–88. See also, Price, *Letters of the Divine Word*; Christopher R. J. Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes: In Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel and Wolf Krötke* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

⁴²*CD IV/1*, 215.

⁴³*CD IV/1*, 216.

⁴⁴*CDIV/1*, 216.

⁴⁵ “God allows the world and humanity to take part in the history of the inner life of his Godhead, in the movement in which from and to all eternity he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and therefore one true God.” *CD IV/1*, 215.

Son. This moves the reader to an ethical and pastoral consideration first and then, maybe, to ontology. But such conversation depends on concepts that are hardly Barth's concerns here.

As we will see, even though there is the eternal "taking on of human essence," divine immanent life is never given up. It is clear that Barth is interested in history and not in conceptualization. His main goal is to help his readers read the Bible at face value.⁴⁶ He conceptualizes as needed, but Barth mainly wants his readers to see that God is *for us* in every way possible and without reservation. Because the atonement cannot be separated from the person of Christ, the taking up of our sinful state works as a maneuver to keep this twofold person-work doctrine together in Barth's account of the atonement.⁴⁷ However, more than that, it serves a pastoral purpose. God is not free to be only *pro se*, but he freely determines himself to be God for us from eternity.

Sinlessness in *Church Dogmatics*

In *CD IV/1*, 258–259, Barth affirms the *non-assumptus* by asserting that "he took our flesh, the nature of man as he comes from the fall."⁴⁸ In Barth's interaction with the possibility of sin, however, he contends that sinlessness was not his condition, "It was the act of His being in which he defeated temptation in His condition which is ours, in the

⁴⁶I owe this point to Tyler Wittman.

⁴⁷Holmes's warning is valid here: "The Subject Jesus Christ is this history, 'we must not forget, on another level, that Barth, while never championing any division, does surely insist on rightly distinguishing them so as to give each their due. Thus, I do not think that Gunton and Jones quite adequately preserve the sense in which Barth, while wholeheartedly affirming the history of the atonement in terms of 'the sacrament of the being of Jesus Christ,' nonetheless continually strives in his account of the unio hypostatica to speak of the Son who is by nature God as the One who posits himself 'in this being [the life] of Jesus Christ.' The Son of God makes the union possible; he is active in and through both natures in Jesus Christ. While not wanting to divide the person from the work, Barth certainly does want to differentiate the two, but only for the sake of reminding us that Jesus Christ exists 'only in the act of God. But, at root, what is the life of Jesus Christ but the act in which God becomes very God and very man, positing Himself in this being [Sein]?" See Christopher R. J. Holmes, "The Person and Work of Christ Revisited: In Conversation with Karl Barth," *Anglican Theological Review* 95, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 37–55.

⁴⁸*CD IV/1*, 258.

flesh.”⁴⁹ The issue here goes beyond solidarity. According to Sonderegger, for Barth, Christ stands in need as he is the great penitent of the Bible.⁵⁰ If sinlessness was not the condition of Christ, one has to ask: is there an antecedent status that gives reason for the work of atonement? The rejection of Christ’s impeccability is the starkest when the Swiss theologian pits concrete and abstract views of the obedience of the Son. He says that the obedience of the Son is concrete in a way that he takes our place as sinners but does not sin. Whereas an abstract view of the sinlessness of Christ sees his obedience by virtue of his purity and goodness—he is sinless because he is the *Logos*.⁵¹ According to Barth, we must reject an abstract view of the sinlessness of Christ because it does not pay careful attention to the testimony of Scriptures. Indeed, for Barth the correspondence language of 2 Corinthians 5:21—“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”— plays a crucial role. The correspondence language is used here in order to further the solidarity of taking humanity’s fallen nature, not forensically motivated, but from conception, Jesus bear the weight of the fall on his human nature.

One way this is demonstrated is in Christ’s life of continuous repentance. In his “own person He reversed the fall,”⁵² because he is the lost son who keeps coming back to the Father. Christ refuses “to take part in the game”⁵³ of un-repentance. Man’s renewal of sin is exactly his unwillingness to repent.⁵⁴ Christ’s sinlessness, however, is marked by the very fact that he is never tired of repenting. In man’s nature, he was exposed to

⁴⁹CD IV/1, 259.

⁵⁰Katherine Sonderegger, “The Sinlessness of Christ,” in *Theological Theology: Essays in Honour of John Webster* ed. R. David Nelson, Darren Sarisky, and Justin Stratis (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 267–75.

⁵¹CD IV/1, 258.

⁵²CD IV/1, 259.

⁵³CD IV/1, 258.

⁵⁴CD IV/1, 258.

temptation, but contrary to man's ways that are marked by impenitence, Christ is marked by obedience—coming back to the Father.

The issue here goes beyond the mere *assumptus*, but regards the person of the Son. Because sinlessness was not his own (personal) condition, the condition or possibility to sin had to be a condition that the person of the Son had to live. He had to understand the lowliness of creaturely sin and “acquire” sinlessness by obedience.⁵⁵ If, however, there is no personal antecedent guarantee of sinlessness, then what are we to make of the hypostatic union itself?⁵⁶

Granted that Barth's attentive reading of Scripture with its economic framework is at full force, even the most charitable of readings, however, cannot but be perplexed by an affirmation that leads to a rejection of God's free antecedent life. For all the exegetical work one can make here, there seems to be no other way out, but the admission of an inconsistency with other sections in Barth's work where God's freedom and/or glory are admitted and celebrated.

We must return to the question in a different way: what can possibly guarantee the integrity of the personal union for Barth? Clearly for Barth, God is for us in Jesus

⁵⁵See *CD IV/2*, 92. How could there be any solidarity with us in our lostness? Would it not mean that the Son of God had become the Son of Man but had not as such taken to Himself our sin and guilt? But if He had not done that, how could He have taken them away, as He has done? He did in fact bear them. But He bore them without sin. “Without sin” means that in our human and sinful existence as a man He did not sin. He did not become guilty of the transgression which we in our human essence commit. He bore an alien guilt, our guilt, the guilt of all men, without any guilt of His own. He made our human essence His own even in its corruption, but He did not repeat or affirm its inward contradiction. He opposed to it a superior contradiction. He overcame it in His own person when He became man. And we can and must say that He overcame it at the deepest level by not refusing to accomplish the humiliation of the Son of God.

⁵⁶Sonderregger is worthy of quoting at length here: “On pain of rupturing that union, I would say, the humanity born of Mary and the Spirit must be fully and wholly and perfectly reconciled to God. It is not simply compatibilism - or non-competitiveness, as it is often termed - that causes me to shy away from the mere possibility of fallibilism and sin. No, it is much stronger than that. Christ cannot sin because the bare possibility of it - *posse peccare* - is the possibility, *ex hypothesi*, of the human nature of Christ going its own way, seeking its own end, joining in the rebellion against God. The personal unity of such a Christ can only mirror the obedience of Adam and Eve: it is good, we might say, as far as it goes. But we do not seek an amalgam of this sort in Christology! What can break apart is fragile, whether riven apart in the end or no. But our salvation, the world's deliverance rests on the perfect, full and uninterrupted union of the Logos with human flesh.” Sonderregger, “The Sinlessness of Christ,” in *Theological Theology: Essays in Honor of John Webster* (New York, Bloomsbury, 2015), 275.

Christ. That is his determination. Nothing causes the incarnation, but this event is the “strangely logical final continuation of the history in which He is God.”⁵⁷ Therefore, a rupturing of the hypostatic union is not a viable option because it could mean the negation of God himself.⁵⁸ Even though he did not have to be *pro nobis*, this is who he determined himself to be as our God. God’s determination is unbreakable. However, contrary to classical Reformed understandings, Barth does not secure the hypostatic union because of the personal existence of the Son—after all, Jesus Christ is not sinless. What secures the personal union is the grace of God by which Christ is sanctified.

Barth hints at this sanctifying project in his exegetical excursus in *CD IV/1*.⁵⁹ He sets the discussion of the temptation of Christ with a quotation from Hebrews 2:11: because “He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are one he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” In his unity with man, the Son of God is both the one sanctifying and empowering, as also the one being sanctified to endure temptation through his human nature. Christ’s role as representative is tied to him being able (*δύναται*) to identify as one with mankind.⁶⁰ Empowerment (*δύναται*) and sanctification being almost interchangeable means that Christ’s sinlessness is not necessarily a reality of his unity with the divine person *per se*, but a reality of grace that empowers him to respond in a God-honoring way through temptation. If grace is the path that we follow, that is the path that He

⁵⁷*CD IV/1*, 203.

⁵⁸See Kornél Zathureczky, “Jesus’ Impeccability: Beyond Ontological Sinlessness,” *Science et Esprit* 60, no. 1 (January 2008): 55–71. “The meaning of the hypostatic union for Barth lies in God’s election of Himself when in His Son He determines Himself to be fully human. Therefore, when God becomes human in the historical person of Jesus Christ the limitations and humiliations of this existence are not in contradiction to God’s immutability. On the contrary, the integrity of the divine essence would only be in jeopardy if the Son had not experienced humiliation. The election of God to become human in His Son is a determination of the divine essence.” See also Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 129–30. The stress for Barth is always the unity of subject. “God does not merely indwell a human; Christ’s unity entails the divine Son’s being the defining and exclusive subject person.

⁵⁹But it is only at *CD IV/2* that he fully develops his view. For an interesting discussion of Barth’s appropriation of the *Communicatio Gratiarum* at *CD IV/2*, see Darren O Sumner, “Falleness and Anhypostasis: A Way Forward in the Debate over Christ’s Humanity,” *SJT* 67, no. 2 (2014): 195–212. See also Barth, *CD IV/1*, 85–86.

⁶⁰*CD IV/1*, 259.

follows. Otherwise, he cannot be our representative. As with much of §59, the focus is on obedience and representation: “He persisted in obedience, in penitence, in fasting.”⁶¹ Obedience is the mark of a grace filled sanctified being. As Barth states, “He willed to live only by that which the Word creates, and therefore as one of the sinners who have no hope apart from God, as the Head and King of His people.”⁶² Once again, there is no antecedent guarantee for his sinlessness, but is obedience through created communicated grace that makes it possible for his identification with us. One must not overlook the centrality of power. In the classical (or in Barth’s language, abstract) account of the sinlessness of Christ, the power to resist sin comes from the acting agent—the person of the Son, who only acts as one who is always free. On Barth’s “concrete” formulation there is power, also. The power, however, is the communicative sanctifying grace that creates, in Christ, obedience in temptation.

Christ’s identification with sin is confirmed through Jesus’s risk⁶³ that God and his angels are going to help him in the temptation account. Jesus must test and prove “of the final assuring of His relationship to God *in foro conscientiae*, in the solitariness of man with God.”⁶⁴ Jesus does not hold to his privileges as the eternal Son of God, but as man and in man’s place, he risks the certainty of obedience for obedience that acquires certainty.⁶⁵ Risk is not necessarily a blind leap of faith, but one that “dare[s] to leap into

⁶¹CD IV/1, 262.

⁶²CD IV/1, 262.

⁶³CD IV/1, 263. “Jesus is to risk this headlong plunge with the certainty, and to confirm the certainty that God and His angels are with Him and will keep Him.”

⁶⁴CD IV/1, 263.

⁶⁵Kevin Hector makes this point here: “Christ’s sinlessness, and the overcoming of sin, must be understood as a continuous overcoming of sin. Because the Son took on flesh that had been handed over to disobedience, he ‘had to achieve His freedom and obedience in the chain of an enslaved and disobedient humanity’ (IV/1:216). Moment by moment, then the Son of God takes on flesh that has become enslaved in disobedience, and moment by moment he perfectly obeys the Father’s will, thereby overcoming this disobedience. God’s assumption of sinful flesh is, accordingly, the ongoing activity in which the Son repeats his being-in-response in human history, and is therefore the ongoing activity of defeating human disobedience.” See Kevin Hector, “Atonement,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth*, ed. Richard E Burnett (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox), 11–14.

the abyss, the way of the cross, when the will of God leads him to it . . . but what led Him to it would have been His own will to make use of God's favour."⁶⁶ This risk is not a godless, uncontrolled event but is the world hanging on Jesus's trust of divine favor, his grace—strengthening for obedience.⁶⁷

Grace is evidenced in Barth's exegesis of the Garden of Gethsemane. Whereas in Barth's exposition of the wilderness temptation, he asserts that Christ showed no hesitation; in the Gethsemane, Christ "had to face the reckoning."⁶⁸ "He knows that for Himself and His disciples, calling God is the only way to meet and defeat."⁶⁹ Although the disciples fail Jesus, in his prayer, Christ is strengthened to endure the final hour and to accept the cup of wrath.⁷⁰

He only prays. He does not demand. He does not advance any claims. He does not lay upon God any conditions. He does not reserve His future obedience. He does not abandon His status as a penitent. He does not cease to allow that God is in the right, even against Himself. He does not try to anticipate His justification by Him in any form, or to determine it Himself. He does not think of trying to be judge in His own cause and in God's cause. He prays only as a child to the Father, knowing that He can and should pray, that His need is known to the Father, is on the heart of the Father, but knowing also that the Father disposes what is possible and will therefore be, and that what He allows to be will be the only thing that is possible and right.⁷¹

In summary, for Barth, Christ does not have an antecedent certainty of sinlessness, nor does he trust in the future reiteration of his perfect obedience. He only trusts that he will be graciously empowered, strengthened, and sanctified.

⁶⁶*CD IV/1*, 263.

⁶⁷As Sumner said, "Thomas Aquinas spoke of this in terms of an infused habitus of grace: because 'Christ had grace and all the virtues most perfectly . . . the 'fomes' of sin [i.e., concupiscence] was nowise in Him.' Protestant theologians recast this habitus by way of their expansion of the *communicatio naturarum*. This is where Barth locates the actuality of Christ's sinlessness: not in his lack of a fallen nature, but in that nature's divine giftedness." Sumner, "Falleness and Anhypostasis."

⁶⁸*CD IV/1*, 265.

⁶⁹*CD IV/1*, 267.

⁷⁰*CD IV/1*, 268. "It is only after the strengthening which comes to Jesus that we hear of His *αγορία*."

⁷¹*CD IV/1*, 270.

***Communicatio Gratiarum* and the Sinlessness of the Son**

Barth's theology of God's grace plays no small role. From election to the new Jerusalem, grace is a central concept for Barth.⁷² The concern of this section, however, is not to debate how Barth avoids (or does not avoid) the necessity of grace in Godself. The discussion here will turn on how Barth uses grace in order to preserve the hypostatic union *vis-à-vis* his formulations of the fallen human nature and the sinlessness of Christ in our last sections.

In Barth's discussion of the "Homecoming of the Son of Man" at *CD IV/2*, there is an extensive discussion of the grace of God in relation to the incarnation. Here Barth contends that any sort of *Communicatio Gratiarum* to the human nature cannot be a "permanent state of blessing, but the continuity of which can be assured only . . . by the fact that He is always the same elect man confronted and surrounded and filled by the same electing grace of God."⁷³ Barth wants to avoid static conceptions of the grace of God in regards to the incarnation, because such conceptions would render the states of exaltation and humiliation less dynamic than they should be. For example, he asserts that the qualitative and quantitative differences between Him (Christ) and all other men is located in the exaltation of his human essence in which he *always* participates in the life of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost.⁷⁴ Even that difference, however, must not be seen in contradiction to the concept of man that embraces us: "It only contradicts all other actualisations of this concept."⁷⁵ Barth emphasizes that his christological anthropology is not an empty ideal that is not real to man. On the contrary, Jesus really fulfills what it means to be human. His human exaltation is not because he is of a different kind of man,

⁷²See a few examples in recent literature: Katherine Sonderegger, "Grace," in *The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth*, ed. Richard E Burnett (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 87–89; Sumner, *Karl Barth and the Incarnation*, 131–32; Price, *Letters of the Divine Word*, 49–60; Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 136–46.

⁷³*CD IV/2*, 96.

⁷⁴*CD IV/2*, 94–95. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁵*CD IV/2*, 95.

but because he is the real man. However, one must ask what makes this exaltation possible and how can he fulfill his humanity perfectly?

The humanity of Christ is exalted and united to the life of Father and Spirit despite “creaturely, human and even sinful essence.”⁷⁶ The “mechanism” that makes such union continuously possible at the reiterated life of the Trinity in the economy is the same electing grace of God. In this grace, sanctification is imparted to the human nature of Christ. Even though there is a presupposition of the antecedent life of the Son who positively affirms the sinless of Christ, Barth quickly qualifies it by stating that such thing is a mere presupposition. The reality is that the electing grace, as it is repeated in the incarnation, is repeated with empowerment (ἐξουσία) in sanctification: “He receives power.”⁷⁷ This power is given so that the work of reconciliation is accomplished not “in the nakedness of his divine power, in which they could not have been done as the reconciliation of the world with God, but as the Son of Man, in His identity with the man Jesus of Nazareth.”⁷⁸ The mediator is not another *Logos* that is outside of the man Jesus Christ. Here is a subtle polemicizing of the *extra-calvinisticum* in Barth’s christology. “In him, therefore, this one man, it is given to human essence to attest the divine authority, to serve and execute it Thus divine authority has also the *form* of human authority.”⁷⁹ The polemics, however, of the *extra-calvinisticum* are quickly taken back by the assertion that human nature is an organ of “the Son of Man who is primarily the Son of God.”⁸⁰ The acting subject of the incarnation is the Son of God. Human nature is the medium

⁷⁶CD IV/2, 96.

⁷⁷CD IV/2, 96.

⁷⁸CD IV/2, 97.

⁷⁹CD IV/2, 98. See Sumner, *Karl Barth and the Incarnation*, 171. As Darren Sumner posits, “[t]here are no general concepts for giving definition to the content of Christology – only the life of the savior narrated in Scripture.”

⁸⁰CD IV/2, 98.

necessary for the work of atonement—an organ.⁸¹

Nonetheless, one must not press the theological point too far. Human essence must not be conceived as “an appropriated state.”⁸² Contrary to the reformed view of *habitus*,⁸³ in which the “essentialist/nature” concepts were overemphasized, Barth places the *locus* of the *communicatio gratiarum* (empowerment) in Christ’s history.⁸⁴ We circle back again to Barth’s actualism. Whereas reformed theology talked in terms of successive states of humiliation then exaltation, Barth stressed the “history in which He is God,”⁸⁵ or the fact that “His life is an event and not a state or *habitus*.”⁸⁶ The contours of this history are widely known, but are worthy to be recounted—in taking humanity, the one “who is

⁸¹CD IV/2, 98. “It is empowered [human essence] as the necessary creaturely medium for His action.”

⁸²CD IV/2, 99.

⁸³See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 134. “*habitus*: disposition; specifically, spiritual capacity, belonging to either of the faculties of soul, i.e., to mind or to will. The scholastics assumed that, in addition to defining the faculties of the soul, they also had to acknowledge the capacities or dispositions of those faculties. A faculty cannot receive a datum or act in a manner for which it has no capacity.”

⁸⁴It is worthy to quote Sumner at length here: “the Reformed held to a stronger account of the communication of grace in order to secure some of the same benefits. ‘These *gratiae habituales*, of which impeccability or *non posse peccare* is one (since Christ could not sin), were of course imparted to the humanity of Christ without measure, since they are the highest gifts of the Spirit which a creature can receive at all’. The Reformed agreed that the gifts are finite and created, emphasising that their context was Christ’s state of humiliation. These gifts were given to him gradually and not all at once, ‘so as not to impair the natural development of his humanity’. The result was that the *gratiarum* functioned as a conceptual container for everything that the Reformed wanted to say about Christ’s humanity in distinction from other men and women, but which they did not wish to attribute to his divinity and the hypostatic union.” Sumner, “Falleness and *Anhypostasis*.”

It is also worthy to point out here that although Sumner is correct, the role of the continual transmission of gifts is true, these gifts were for the natural development of Christ. Barth’s formulation differs from the Reformers in that he uses for the sanctification of the fallen human nature and to maintain the sinlessness of Christ in the economy. James Gordon explains the manner in which the Reformers understood this *communicatio*: “the *communicatio gratiarum* refers to the divine gifts of grace communicated to the human nature of Christ by the Word in the incarnation. These gifts include the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as the grace of union which makes Christ’s human nature worthy of honor.” James R. Gordon, “The Holy One in Our Midst: A Dogmatic Defense of the *Extra Calvinisticum*” (PhD diss., Wheaton College, 2015), 100. The emphasis should fall on the grace of union. As we will see that the empowerment in the habitual grace is not in the horizon of the Reformers.

⁸⁵CD IV/1, 203.

⁸⁶CD IV/2, 99.

primarily the Son of God”⁸⁷ humbles himself. On the other hand, the human essence is “exalted to dignity . . . the glory and dignity and majesty of the divine nature”⁸⁸ This exaltation of the human essence, however, is not a deification. The exaltation is the elevation of human essence into the “*consortium divinitatis*, into an inward indestructible fellowship with his God-head which He does not in any degree surrender or forfeit, but supremely maintains as He becomes man.”⁸⁹ Here the immanent life of God is gloriously celebrated and protected. But once this qualification is made, Barth quickly moves back to how we identify this God. In a procedure similar to the previous sections, he states that from eternity the grace of God has come in the form of his election – being Emanuel – God with us. The human essence that he takes on is “a clothing which He does not put off.”⁹⁰ This clothing is not deified but sanctified for its exaltation, that is, the continuity of the hypostatic union.

Some Musings on the Doctrine of Original Sin and Representation

Anyone dealing with Barth’s doctrine of original sin will notice that the placement is interesting. He intentionally worked the doctrine of original sin after treating christology. So, it is only in §60 that he inserts his discussion, long after §58 and §59, the *locus classicus* for his mature Christology.

As asserted above, Barth refuses to treat sin apart from Christ because doing so would give sin an ontological reality apart from Jesus Christ, and as it is well known, for Barth sin is an impossible possibility—literally, nothingness.

Through his actualism, Barth discusses the judgment revealed at the cross as a

⁸⁷CD IV/2, 100.

⁸⁸CD IV/2, 100.

⁸⁹CD IV/2, 100.

⁹⁰CD IV/2, 101.

reiteration of who the Son is. This movement is contrary to man who always reiterates his pride. Man is always prideful and cannot break from this vicious cycle. God in Christ is altogether flesh, but this flesh is the one that breaks from man's vicious cycle of pride.⁹¹ The grace of God is always victorious and where pride/sin had the upper hand, "his grace did not cease or retire, but overflowed in the form of avenging righteousness, showing itself to be super-abounding, so that in the face of this opposition His forgiveness was His iron scepter."⁹² This sin is not hereditary. Barth rejects a realist account of the transmission of sin and starts here an account of original sin itself.

Since one cannot see anything that does not converge in Christ, to construct an account of the doctrine of sin apart from Christ and focused only on Adam is to miss the point that Christ is greater than Adam. Christ is the *telos* and beginning of revelation. Adam also can only be seen through Christ. Adam "belongs to the past and has no future, but Christ is the one who reaches back and to the future."⁹³ Christ is one person who is always free and in his freedom incorporates the time necessary for the atonement and his revelation. Eternity is no longer an abstract concept but is the incorporation of time so that all the movements necessary for salvation are not in contradiction to the Godself, but in complete harmony.

This approach is crystalized in Barth's book *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5*.⁹⁴ This book is an exercise in theological exegesis. Fully aware of how the passage of Romans 5:12–21 is usually interpreted, Barth sets his work in order to exalt Christ. Barth's initial discussion is set upon the speakability of God in Christ. Barth asserts that although Paul sees God and Christ as identical, he also distinguishes them in

⁹¹CD IV/1, 496.

⁹²CD IV/1, 496.

⁹³CD IV/1, 502.

⁹⁴Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

Christ's human nature. This distinction, however, is not to say that Christ is a different man than us.

In fact, Christ is the only true man. He is the one who tells us what it means to be man. Adam does not have the right to tell us what it means to be man. Christ does not adapt to Adam, but Christ, being the true image is the real man. One of the ways that Barth makes this point is by asserting that our existence in Adam does not have an independent status. He means that Christ is the only one able to stand as true representative for man. Christ is the only one able to vouch to the existence of Adam, but Adam cannot vouch for the existence of Christ. Adam is below and not above, "because his claim to be the 'first man' and the head of humanity like Christ is only apparent."⁹⁵

This typological reading is engraved into Romans 5:12–21. Typology is verified by the "how much more" formula that Paul used here. Barth affirms that any time that this formula is used, the two things fall under the same organizing principle. "The lesser" in this organizing principle organized by Paul is Adam and not Christ. Christ himself, although stands in the high degree of this principle, he also identifies with humanity: "He is already king, secretly in His humiliation." This move of exaltation and humiliation is always present in Christ. And it is also because of this move that we can know Christ as king even in his crucifixion.

Our union with Adam is less essential than our union with Christ exactly because of the way in which God organized things. In Christ, the relationship between the one and the many is a gracious relationship. Between Adam and Christ stands Moses and the exposure of sin. With Christ, however, grace and life have a new way. The law came so that transgression is not covered, but grace came so that life and man might live as they were meant to be.

In the history of God with Israel, we can safely say that it is also the history of

⁹⁵Barth, *Christ and Adam*, 22.

God with Adam. For both in the history of God with Israel and with Adam the response is the same.⁹⁶ Sin has had its ways. Barth asserts that “God’s dealing with Israel make it impossible either to conceal or to explain away the fact that man is sinful, hard as it is for us to admit that is true.”⁹⁷ Because of the sinful character of Adam and Israel, they do not exemplify true humanity. True humanity is also victorious and free because it is in God who does not have fellowship with sin and conquers it in his humanity.

Although there was a substitution of the other nations taken by Israel, this substitution takes also the formula of “how much more.” Jesus’s substitution for Israel is the final great substitution. By taking the place of Israel he stands in place of all. Jesus is the true Israelite, the Messiah.⁹⁸ He is one who no Israelite father could beget, but one who is the Son of God.

According to Barth, by freely submitting “Himself to the Law He fulfilled it.”⁹⁹ This is tying back to God’s identity—as the one who exists determining his life for us—Barth constructs his reading of the Bible in an economical fashion. He refuses to reach back into the immanent life of God, but looks at Jesus and Adam, these two representatives and exalts Christ to his rightful place.

Nonetheless, what was man’s response? It was not connected to any prevenient grace. Man actually rejected God in his exalted and humble state. The coming of Jesus Christ is extremely opposed to man’s plight, but it is also an indication of a one direction decision to end man’s opposition to God. Grace does not presuppose any cooperation, but it is God’s way among and as man.

Because Jesus came as man and as a Jew and was crucified, we have certainty

⁹⁶Barth, *Christ and Adam*, 48.

⁹⁷Ibid., 49.

⁹⁸Ibid., 61.

⁹⁹Ibid.

that salvation is an event from God only. It does not depend upon some ethnicity, because the one who came as a Jew was crucified by the Jews. And even though he was crucified, God's grace was also manifested to them; making the point that God's grace is not for one people but to all men.¹⁰⁰ John Webster has made some interesting observations on this. He stated,

The notion of original sin goes awry, however, when it is attached to that of hereditary sin. Barth's departure from the traditional terminology here (which he marks by preferring *Ursünde* to *Erbsünde*) is ultimately because an inheritance cannot be one's own act. "What I do as one who receives an inheritance is something that I cannot refuse to do, since I am not asked concerning my willingness to accept it It is my fate which I may acknowledge, but for which I cannot acknowledge or regard myself responsible. And so, 'it is not surprising that when an effort is made to take the word "heir" seriously the term "sin" is necessarily dissolved.' Sin is deliberate action; linked to the notion of inheritance it comes to have a 'hopelessly naturalistic, deterministic and even fatalistic ring'. Properly speaking, then, by original sin is meant 'the voluntary and responsible life of everyman . . . which by virtue of the judicial sentence passed on it . . . is the sin of every man, the corruption which he brings on himself so that as the one who does so . . . he is necessarily and inevitably corrupt. In this connection it is important that Barth treats the scriptural account of Adam and the fall as *saga* rather than history. To read it in such a way is to suggest that 'it is the name of Adam the transgressor which God gives to world-history as a whole,' De-historicizing Adam, that is, lifts the concept of Adam's sin out of the idiom of causality.¹⁰¹

Finally, Barth summarizes the entire argument of the book by simply stating that even sinful man is essentially related to Jesus Christ—that is the truth about Romans 5:12–21.¹⁰² Such affirmation is only possible because Jesus, even though an individual, is the representative of all men. He is not only the representative of believers, but of all men because our standing as believers (5:12–21) is only possible because of the *dia touto* that is grounded in the global and wide aspect that is described in 5:1–11.

¹⁰⁰Barth, *Christ and Adam*, 69.

¹⁰¹J. B. Webster, "The Firmest Grasp of the Real: Barth on Original Sin," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 4, no. 1 (1988): 19–29.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 74.

Recent Barthian Approaches

Darren Sumner

Sumner's project is an attempt to clarify Barth's proposal and also to mediate some of the misunderstanding regarding the *non-assumptus* and the classical position. According to Sumner, Christ is fallen only *anhypostatically*, but not in his *theandric* person.¹⁰³ For Sumner, this tracks closely to the classical person-nature distinction from Chalcedon, since natures cannot sin and therefore cannot be sinful. Nature, however, can receive or have the property of fallenness.

If fallenness is ascribed to Christ in the human nature only *anhypostatically*, then it can "achieve the sort of sympathy with and participation in real human existence that they desire."¹⁰⁴ For Sumner, the restriction of fallenness in *anhypostatic* manner allows one to say that the Son came into our state, but did not leave it that way. For Sumner, every side of the debate (of whether or not Christ had a fallen human nature) should adhere to *anhypostatic* fallenness. Sumner moves the debate further; he argues that even in the personal sanctification operated by the Son in his human nature, this human nature is still conditioned by the fall. What sanctification really achieves is to protect Christ from a state of peccability.

Furthermore, Sumner uses Barth's actualism to escape from the substantial/essential differences of states of pre-fall and post-fall human nature. In other words, contrary to the classical notion that persons possess natures and essences, Barth (and Sumner by extension) argue "that Jesus' humanity is not a static thing of which he came into possession but a lived history, and so talk of 'human nature' will necessarily be a somewhat artificial imposition."¹⁰⁵ In turn, this allows Sumner to argue for a *process* of

¹⁰³See Darren O. Sumner, "Fallenness and Anhypostasis: A Way Forward in the Debate over Christ's Humanity," *SJT* 67, no. 2 (2014): 201.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 202.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 203.

sanctification of Christ's humanity, instead of an assumption of state. Since the humanity of Christ is in *lived history*, one must not appeal to a change in the nature of Adam from pre-fall to post fall. Hence, Jesus assumes humanity as Adam, even if that entails an assumption of a fallen nature.

Paul Dafydd Jones

Jones's monograph *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* registers some insights on how to read Karl Barth's Christology.¹⁰⁶ A key point for Jones is to begin the analysis *in media res* – starting from *CD IV/2* and then moving to *CD IV/1* (a move different than my own exposition). Jones's reasoning is that first, *CD IV/2* discusses Barth's doctrine of reconciliation as it converses with protestant scholasticism, and provides robust exegetical foundations. Second, *CD IV/2* provides robust exegetical foundation; in contrast to other parts of *CD*, here at *CD IV/2* Barth keeps his promise of keeping the Bible at the center, instead of long philosophical *excurses*. According to Wolf Krötke, because self-actualisation is only possible through the testimony of Scripture, the formation of true Christology has to be done in such fashion.¹⁰⁷ Third, any attempt to look into §59 (part of *CD IV/1* and probably Barth's most conscious attempt to ground God's action in the atonement) in isolation from the entirety of the doctrine of reconciliation (*CD IV/2*, for example) runs the risk of avoiding the necessity of Christ as *our* human response. Treating *CD IV/2* before *CD IV/1* provides the necessary leverage to look at Barth's actualistic moments carefully.

As I have shown in my exposition of §59, an intentional actualistic reading of Barth here is not necessary to understand *what* he wants to theologize regarding Christ's

¹⁰⁶Paul Dafydd Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008).

¹⁰⁷Wolf Krötke, "Die Christologie Karl Barths als Beispiel für den Vollzug seiner Exegese," in *Karl Barths Schriftauslegung*, ed. Michael Trowitzsch (Heidelberg: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 1. Referenced in Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 122.

human nature—at least in regard to the *non-assumptus*. Close attention to his own discussion of *Deus Pro Nobis* displays that it “is something which he did not have to be or become, but which, according to this fact, He was and is and will be—the God who acts as our God.”¹⁰⁸ Actualism eventually works itself out, yes! specially in *CD IV/2* through the *Communicatio Gratiarum*, but careful, intentional reading of *CD IV/1* also provides the necessary guardrails for an acute analysis.

This discussion is not neglected by Jones, who argues similarly to my own exposition, that contrary to old Reformed understanding, Barth’s common actualisation provides a way to speak about the hypostatic union in a more dynamic way—instead of a *unio* it is a *uniting*. The theologoumena employed in this service are the *communicatio gratiarum* and the *communicatio operationum*.

Via the communicatio gratiarum, Barth places himself in an interesting discussion. Contrary to Aquinas who sees the habitual grace of the hypostatic union as the flow of the grace of union (because Christ is the “pre-eminently graced human”¹⁰⁹), Barth insists that the term be defined as the “confrontation” of divine self-determination and human election: God petitions (a) “Christ, as human, to enact a certain history and (b) how Christ’s human agency begins with the act of gratitude.” With this move, Jones argues that Barth was able to use the theologoumenon of *communicatio gratiarum* to tie his doctrine of election, covenant, and incarnation. God’s grace must be conceived as inherently communicative. Hence, in the “moment” of election God actualize an infinite, never ending communication of his grace to the human nature of Christ. Just as I showed in my exposition, Jones re-asserts Barth’s avoidance of the *habitus* notion raised by Aquinas (such conception is too static):¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸*CD IV/I*, 214.

¹⁰⁹Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 136.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 139.

In the same moment that God's elective act brings into existence the human identifiable as Jesus of Nazareth, this human's 'confrontation' with grace carries the petition that he embrace and realize his identity as the Son of Man who is also the Son of God, and that he enact a history that leads from Bethelhem to Golgotha.¹¹¹

What relevance has this discussion to the *non-assumptus*? Jones sums it up by reflecting in this section of *Church Dogmatics*:

[T]he sinlessness of Jesus was not a condition of His being as man, but the human act of His life working itself out in this way from its origin. And on this aspect, too, the determination of His human essence by the grace of God does not consist in the fact that there is added to Him the remarkable quality that He could not sin as a man, but in His effective determination from His origin for this act in which, participant in our sinful essence, He did not will to sin and did not sin. As a determination for this act it is, of course, His absolutely effective determination. [But] He accomplished it, He did not sin, because from this origin He lived as a man in this true human freedom - the freedom for obedience - not knowing or having any other freedom. The One who lived as a man in this harmony with the divine will, this service of the divine act, this correspondence with the divine grace, this thankfulness had no place for sinful action.¹¹²

While Christ is the sovereign free *Deus pro Nobis*, who does not have to be or become and therefore is sinless, the common actualization of the natures must entail that his human nature has agency (a common property of human beings).¹¹³ This free agency is exercised in "His effective determination from His origin for this act in which, participant in our sinful essence, He did not will to sin and did not sin."¹¹⁴

Initial Evaluation

I have made it clear that Barth places the sinlessness of Christ neither in the acting subject (the person of the Son) nor in the unfallen human nature of Christ (since he does not have one). The *locus* of the sinlessness of Christ is twofold: history and the grace of God (by which Christ's humanity is empowered to obey and confirm his sinlessness). This grace, as seen, is not a *habitus*—a disposition of the soul or nature—as

¹¹¹Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 139.

¹¹²CD IV/2, 92–93

¹¹³See Jones discussion of agency and human nature in Barth's theology in Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 169–75.

¹¹⁴CD IV/2, 92.

a singular act of union, but is grace that empowers him to respond in a God-honoring way through ministry, temptation, cross, and death.

The polarity is clear: Barth affirms the complete personal union, but, the sinlessness of Christ can only be affirmed when the Son completes the obedience of His human life. One must ask, however, if anything “sanctifying” can maintain the hypostatic union and make it sinless?

The Catholic tradition of the Church has, with reason, answered with a resounding but qualified “No.” Taking my cues from Thomas Aquinas, I will show that Barth’s rejection of the classical position on sinlessness puts the hypostatic union on an unstable foundation. Barth’s emphasis on the necessity of grace for the acquisition of sinlessness is at a deeper level a debate on whether or not the personal union is complete from the moment that the person of the Son assumes body and soul, or when his obedience is finalized through his death on the cross.

As stated in the introduction of this dissertation, Aquinas correctly assumes that human nature stands in “need of the gratuitous will of God, in order to be lifted up to God.”¹¹⁵ However, the elevation of human nature up to God is of two forms: (1) by operation or (2) by personal being. Aquinas’s point is that both the sanctification of man and assumption of human nature by Christ are gracious events. Nonetheless, the mode of elevation by operation is a habitual activity that is accidental. Contrary to the grace that unites human nature to the divine person, the accidental character of grace by operation results in a work that renders *participation in likeness*. The elevation by personal being, on the other hand, is greater because it is not accidental. The human nature is once and for all united to the personal being of the Son, not in a participation in likeness, but in a substantial union. Whereas, according to Aquinas, all saints take participation in the operative grace, only Christ’s human nature is *united* to the divine nature by grace of the

¹¹⁵ST III Q2. A10. co.

personal being.

Aquinas also contends that “no merits of His [Christ’s] could have preceded the union.”¹¹⁶ Such affirmation would hardly be rejected by Barth. If we trace, however, the logic of Barth’s argument thus far in this study, some issues may come to the surface:

1. The personal union is a fact;
2. The Son, in solidarity, assumes a fallen human nature;
3. In assuming this nature, he sanctifies it;
4. This work of sanctification (through the *Communicatio Gratiarum*) is what gives continuity to the hypostatic union so that Christ may acquire sinlessness.

The sanctification of human nature for the continuity of the hypostatic union—in Barth’s scheme—is a property that human nature receives; therefore, it is accidental and not essential.

In Barth’s contention that Christ’s “life is an event and not a state or *habitus*,”¹¹⁷ he has an operative notion that the history of Jesus Christ is the meaning of the personal union and not the other way around. Here lies both the genius and the error of Barth. He does not theologize with concepts, but he conceptualizes as he theologizes. This man’s history vitally tells us who God is—*Deus pro nobis* without reservation.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶*ST III* Q2. A11. co.

¹¹⁷*CD IV/2*, 99.

¹¹⁸Ivor Davidson beautifully captures the heart of Barth’s economical reading and the genius of his conceptualization as he theologizes: “In Barth’s idiom, God is one Subject in three co-equal modes of being, but at the heart of the divine life is a relation in which there is ‘an above and a below, a *prius* and a *posterius*, a superiority and a subordination’: ‘it belongs to the inner life of God that there should take place within it obedience.’ God the Father ‘commands’ and God the Son ‘obeys’, and God the Holy Spirit ‘unites’ God the Father and God the Son. This relation is a matter of free, eternal self-constitution, and does not result from historical process or necessity; nevertheless, what it is in time, witnessed in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, is, equally vitally, grounded in what it is of itself in eternity: God is simply able and free to act as he does in Jesus Christ. When the incarnate Son submits to enter into the world, suffer and die, he takes on flesh, but he does not take on the disposition of humility, for ‘high humility’ is already primordial to God’s way of being divine. When the Son of God takes the final step on the way into the far country and dies, *pro nobis*, the death of the sinner, his obedience means the bearing of terrible judgement; the ultimate in divine condescension, of lowly deity, also spells the homecoming of the Son of Man, the acme of human exaltation.” See Davidson, “Pondering the Sinlessness of Jesus Christ,” 393.

This history of the divine and human together, however, is kept together with God's history *via* the communication of graces in the same manner we experience it.

As mentioned in the start of this paper, this is where the Nestorian problem enters.¹¹⁹ Underscoring any Nestorian formulation is the idea that the union of divine and human natures is not ontological, but they cooperate in conjunction, never union. Thomas White asserts that two distinct problems can actually undergird different versions of Nestorianism: (1) when someone posits a real distinction of persons in Christ; (2) when someone “attempts to conceive of a personal union of God and man in Christ, but does so through the medium of spiritual operations of Christ alone (Christ's consciousness of God).”¹²⁰ Our focus here is on the second distinction, for in this formulation “Jesus is one with God/the Logos insofar as he is remarkably conscious of God.”¹²¹ If the four premises above are true of Barth's formulation of both the fallenness and the sinlessness of Christ, then one can hardly miss the underlying Nestorian category of conjunction under the second distinction provided by White. The “obedience that acquires sinlessness” with the communication of graces as the instrument for continual preservation of the hypostatic union indicates that the agent that acquires sinlessness may not be identical with the *Logos*. After all, the *Logos* is sinless.

The classical Thomistic formulation states, as surveyed, that the hypostatic

¹¹⁹In a similar move made by Kelly Kopic's description of the fallen vs. unfallen debate, I understand that the “fallen position emphasizes the Spirit's role in keeping the *person* of Christ free from sin, though the human nature is itself ‘sinful flesh’. Further clarity is needed at this point since unfallen advocates still claim that the fallen position inevitably ends up in Nestorianism by so sharply dividing the natures.” See Kopic, “The Son's Assumption of a Human Nature: A Call for Clarity,” 154–66. Kopic is not the first to see the potential for Nestorianism. Ivor Davidson also makes a similar point: “The task of maintaining the latter as well as the former of these assumptions is certainly complex. How does one speak of the intrinsic moral ordinariness of the flesh of Jesus without saying that the incarnate Son is himself a sinner? The delicacy of Paul's language in Rom. 8:3 illustrates the challenge. As various theologians have found to their cost, though none as painfully as Edward Irving, describing the humanity of Jesus as, in itself, ‘fallen’ is an emotive business. Within the logic of a tight Augustinianism, the endeavour to hold such a claim together with the necessary insistence that the Son is indeed sinless in his person may easily collapse into Nestorianism, and certainly faces difficulties in terms of dominant.” Davidson, “Pondering the Sinlessness of Jesus Christ,” 397.

¹²⁰White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 111.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 112.

union is maintained through the grace of assumption itself. Because the divine person of the Son assumes a human nature, this nature is endowed with a special grace that only comes when united to the person of the Son. This empowerment, however, is not given to the human nature so that it can respond to something. This is where Barth's formulation seems to lend a hand to Nestorianism: the empowerment for the acquisition of sinlessness in obedience is dangerously close to attributing some actions to the human Jesus that are not the same of the *Logos* himself.

A final word of caution is needed. Given Barth's uneasiness with the vocabulary of Chalcedon and his preference for dynamic language, it is possible and likely that his rejection of *habitus* is not so much a rejection of the Thomistic account of "grace of union." The more plausible explanation is that he is actualizing the human nature of Christ. Although sympathy is needed for Barth's project—dynamism does capture several of the biblical movements—the innovation may be costly. The sinlessness of Christ is not conditioned to the continual receiving of grace. As Aquinas shows, the union of the Son with the created human nature communicates grace. This grace, however, is not an empowerment for the ministry of life and death of Christ.

In conclusion, Barth's accounts of the assumption of the fallen human nature of Christ, his sinlessness, and the communication of graces are beautifully interwoven in several maneuvers that keep his dynamic reading of the Bible alive. The God who is for us without reservation is in solidarity so that "sinlessness was not therefore His condition."¹²² To keep him from sin, the grace of God is communicated to Jesus in his ministry of life and death.

If sinlessness is not the condition of Christ, then the agent of the incarnation could be interpreted as a different agent than the *Logos*, who is sinless. When, in Barth's account, Christ must test "the final assuring of His relationship to God *in foro*

¹²²*CD IV/1*, 259.

conscientiae, in the solitariness of man with God”¹²³ one cannot help but ask, who is the agent of the solitariness with God?

In conclusion, Barth’s rationale for the *non-assumptus* goes through complete solidarity and the empowerment of Jesus. Against some recent Barthian scholarship, I do not think that it is necessary to posit a heavy accent on actualism, nor that actualism inserts sin in the divine life because of solidarity. However, due to a lack of antecedent personal guarantee, then the Son of God becomes one who depends on the Spirit to conquer sin.

¹²³CD IV/1, 263.

CHAPTER 3

T. F. TORRANCE AND THE MEDIATION OF SALVATION

The Latin Heresy and Incarnation

For Torrance (1913-2007), salvation does not occur externally to Christ, but it “takes place within him, within the incarnate constitution of his person as Mediator.”¹ This intuition constitutes the grounds for Torrance’s rejection of the Latin theory: an idea that “Jesus’s work is separate from or external to his person.”² The hypostatic or personal union of the divine and human natures in the Son of God guarantees that whatever happens, happens through the mediation of Christ himself—therefore a personal salvation. Furthermore, this mediation is personal because the person of the Son heals the state of the human nature (fallen) in which he assumes from within his own being. Hence, all the actions of this mediator are not external to us, in forensic fashion, but are intrinsic to us—to our own nature that he unites to his own person.

It is important to note here that Torrance is moved by robust, Trinitarian and christological theologies. *Homoousios* plays a central role for his formulation of the atonement and his rejection of the Latin commercial/external transaction. For him, it was not possible to separate the person and work of Christ. He said,

There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all. For Athanasius this meant that the mediation of Christ involved a twofold movement, from God to man and from man to God, and that both divine and human activity in Christ must be regarded as issuing from one Person. Here we see again the soteriological significance of the Nicene homoousion:

¹Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (New York: T&T Clark, 1993), 155.

²Kevin Vanhoozer, “Atonement” in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 183.

If Jesus Christ the incarnate Son is not true God from true God, then we are not saved, for it is only God who can save; but if Jesus Christ is not truly man, then salvation does not touch our human existence and condition. The message of the Gospel, however, is that Jesus Christ embodies in his human actuality the personal presence and activity of God. In him God has really become man, become what we are, and so lives and acts, God though he is, ‘as man for us’ (ὡς ἄθρωπος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν). *Only God can save*, but he saves precisely as man -Jesus Christ is God’s act. God acting personally and immediately as man in and through him, and thus at once in a divine and in a human manner (θεϊκῶς and ἀνθρωπίνως). With this basic Nicene principle in mind, we shall consider first the significance of the incarnation and the incarnate Mediator, and then the import of the atoning mediation, reconciliation and redemption accomplished by Christ on our behalf and for our sakes.³

The basic thrust of what Torrance said here should be affirmed by any theologian. Yes, it is wrong to separate the person and work of Christ. Such separation is often made only for dogmatic and didactic purposes. Torrance, however, is going farther with the principle of *homoousios*. The fact that Christ is *homoousios* with the Father and *homoousios* with men tells one that the work of atonement is a passive action because it is the work of God on man, but this man is also God. Again, this should also be affirmed by any coherent doctrine of atonement. The problem lies when the *locus* of the passive action of God is seen as synonymous with the incarnation itself. Two movements inform Torrance’s identification of the incarnation as the *locus* of atonement: the *an-en-hypostasis* and *theosis*. Both of these ideas will open the way for Torrance to reject the “transactional” or “external” aspects of Penal Substitutionary Atonement. These two movements are finally encapsulated in Torrance’s theology of mediation.

An-En-hypostasis

In the *an-en-hypostasis* the point is usually made that the created human nature which the *Logos* assumed had not a personalized created human person (*an-hypostasis*), but it got its personalization *via* the assumption of the person of the Son (*en-hypostasis*).⁴

³Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 149.

⁴See Fred Sanders in Scott Horrell et al., *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 31. Sanders said, “On the one hand, the human nature of Jesus Christ is in fact a nature joined to a person, and therefore enhypostatic, or personalized. But the person who personalizes the human nature of Christ is not a created human person (like all the other persons personalizing the other human natures we encounter); rather it is the eternal second person of the Trinity. So the human nature of Christ is personal, but with a personhood

In Torrance's hands, the doctrine is nuanced. For Torrance, "*Anhypostasia* stresses the *general* humanity of Jesus, the human nature assumed by the Son with its *hypostasis* in the Son, but *enhypostasia* stresses the *particular* humanity of the one man Jesus, whose person is not other than the person of the divine Son."⁵ It seems that the accent should fall on what Torrance means by general humanity. His explanation of the *an-hypostasia* seems to illuminate the question:

In the doctrine of *anhypostasia*, we state that the Son did not join himself to an independent personality existing on its own as an individual. That is, he so took possession of human nature, as to set aside that which divides us human beings from one another, our independent centers of personality, and to assume that which unites us with one another, *the possession of the same or common human nature*.⁶

So, the solidarity that the Son assumes with us is one of an ontological and maybe even physical nature. Torrance, however, comes back later to add the *en-hypostatic* reality to signify representation. At this point, Crisp's warning is valid:

Torrance is not claiming that incarnation is the atonement. The claim that "simply in virtue of the act of becoming incarnate that the Son brings about salvation 'overlooks the fact that as the incarnate *Logos*, Christ acts personally [*enhypostasia*] on our behalf' and does . . . from within the ontological depths of our human existence [*anhypostasia*]."⁷

from above. Considered in itself, on the other hand, and abstracted from its personalizing by the eternal person of the Son, the human nature of Jesus Christ is simply human nature, and is not personal. The human nature of Christ, therefore, is both anhypostatic (not personal in itself) and enhypostatic (personalized by union with the eternal person of the Son)."

⁵Thomas F. Torrance and Robert T. Walker, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 230.

⁶Ibid., 231. Emphasis added. In personal conversation, Luke Stamps told me that he thinks Torrance keeps the *an-en-hypostasia* in tension so that he can still affirm a concrete human nature of Christ. I can see that whenever the couplet is treated together, but I fail to see in this quote (and others) how Torrance could have affirmed a concrete human nature (body and soul). That is specially telling when he formulates his doctrine of *theosis*.

⁷Oliver Crisp, *Revisioning Christology: Theology in the Reformed Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 113. Torrance says also, "The first point to be made here is that together anhypostasia and enhypostasia reinforce the fact that God in Christ has acted for us in our place, anhypostasia that as man he has acted for all humanity and enhypostasia that as a man he has done so personally and individually for each and every human being Therefore far from dismissing the substitutionary element in atonement and in the saving work of Christ even more radical in its implications. In his dying our death under the judgement of God Jesus Christ does not just take our place in his 'passive obedience' to the consequences of our sin, but in his 'active obedience' also he takes our place before God and represents us in his human righteousness and faith Jesus Christ thus radically supplants us in his active as well as in his passive obedience, even to the extent of making the response of faith in his own obedient, individual and personal humanity." Thomas F. Torrance and Robert T. Walker, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*

Nonetheless, the question has to be raised: Is there a sense in which the humanity of Jesus is *general* and is also united to ours? The nature of Christ's human nature is a controversial topic. Can one talk about human nature in general (or abstract) and concrete terms?⁹ First, some have already explored the possibility of an abstract human nature and proved to be a way forward.¹⁰ Probably the greatest defender of such view is Alvin Plantinga. According to Plantinga, "the second person of the Trinity assumed human nature, i.e. assumed a property which is necessary and sufficient for being a human being."¹¹ For example, a monkey can do the pincer movement with his fingers, but human beings can do that also. A human, however, has other essential properties that make him human. In one sense then, the monkey and the human share similar properties, but there are essential irreducible properties that comprise human nature. That irreducible nature is what is assumed by the Son in Torrance's model—what unites all human beings or what really means to be human.

If one adopts a christological anthropology, it is possible that God has in his mind what it really means to be human by proleptically establishing human nature after Christ's human nature himself. Therefore in the mind of God, he has an idea of what it means to be human.¹² As Arcadi asserted,

(Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), xxv.

⁹Here, "concrete" stands for a body and soul composite distinct from the Word. An abstract view stands for a set of properties necessary to be human.

¹⁰Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, eds., *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71–75; Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 70; Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 112–31.

¹¹Alvin Plantinga, "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth," *Faith and Philosophy*, vol 1. no. 2 (April 1999): 182-93.

¹²Knowing that Torrance was a faithful disciple of Barth could be illuminating in this section. Marc Cortez offers a good summary of Barth's christological anthropology at this point, "Barth thus offered a nuanced methodology for moving from Christology to anthropology, one that refuses to collapse anthropology into Christology—as though everything important that we need to say about the human person can be derived directly from Christology—while retaining Christology as the necessary starting point of a truly theological anthropology. A truly christological anthropology, then, will determine first what we must believe about humans in general on the basis of Christology, and only then will it draw conclusions about particular anthropological issues like the mind/body debate. This means that Christology serves as the paradigmatic framework within which we have to understand the human person. Christology

At bottom, when deciding what view of nature one wishes to adopt, one can ask a fundamental distinguishing question of an entity: does it have properties that entail membership in a kind or is it a member of a kind that then entails certain properties? If one affirms the former one is working with an abstract-nature conceptual infrastructure, if the latter then one endorses the concrete-nature perspective.¹³

The assumption of property-pile (abstract) will play an important role in Torrance's formulation of the *non-assumptus* (Christ assuming a fallen human nature), which shall be dealt later in this paper. Even though the abstract formulation is valid, we shall see if it coheres with what the tradition has said about the incarnation.

Theosis

Given Jesus's share of human nature (*an-hypostasia*) and his personal representation (*en-hypostasia*), Torrance builds his case for how humanity benefits from the work of Jesus.

In an article called, "Incarnation and Atonement: *Theosis* and *Henosis* in the Light of Modern Scientific Rejection of Dualism,"¹⁴ Torrance sets the stage for his discussion of *theosis* by asserting that "The hypostatic union carries with it the realization that the atoning exchange whereby we are reconciled to God takes place within the incarnate constitution of the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁵ He continues affirming that "it [*sic*, "if"] the incarnation is not thought in terms of saving and healing assumption of our fallen human nature and is therefore not internally integrated with the atonement, then the

does not answer all of our anthropological questions, but it does offer a way of thinking christologically about anthropology, one that even has implications for as complex an issue as the mind/body relationship." Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective*, 162.

¹³James M. Arcadi, "Kryptic or Cryptic? The Divine Preconscious Model of the Incarnation as a Concrete-Nature Christology," *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 58, no. 2 (2016): 229–43. My aim here is not to defend either-or views on the human nature of Christ. The concrete view seems to avoid some of the pitfalls of Apolinarianism. In the abstract view, it seems that the Word takes the properties of what it means to be human, but the animation and particulars of that nature are only given through the Word, which becomes the soul—hence the pitfall of Apolinarianism. Therefore, I have a preference for the concretist view, but that is not also to say that it does not come with its problems. The paper above, for example, tackles some issues with Divine Preconscious (DPM) and the concretist view.

¹⁴Thomas F. Torrance, "Theosis and Henosis in the Light of Modern Scientific Rejection of Dualism," *Society of Ordained Scientists* 7 (Spring 1992): 8–20.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

doctrine of the atonement can be formulated only in terms of external transaction.”¹⁶

Finally, he built upon a few main points that show the ontological reality of the atonement in conversation with scientific and theological dualisms. His goal was to show how Christianity is a religion of unity (*henosis*) and not a dualistic perception of the world.¹⁷ In what follows, I will summarize Torrance’s concerns with *theosis* and then address his mechanism for incorporation.¹⁸

First, the introduction of Newtonian science and the incorporation of Kantian

¹⁶Torrance, “Theosis and Henosis in the Light of Modern Scientific Rejection of Dualism,”¹².

¹⁷Stoyan Tanev summarizes Torrance’s reaction against dualism well through the eyes of Collin Gunton: “According to Colin Gunton, Torrance’s concern with dualism has two distinct aspects. First, there is the division between the world of sense and the world of intellect, which deprives modern intellectual life of its basis in material being. The continuity of the human mind with the material world is essential for the integration of thought and experience, without which neither natural nor theological science can operate. According to Gunton, Torrance’s approach generates a realist parallel to Kant’s essentially idealist epistemology, since for Torrance all theological concepts must have a corresponding empirical grounding if they are not to detach into a theology which is not rooted in the Gospel. The second dualism with which Torrance is concerned regards the relation between the being and act of God. Interestingly, Torrance associates this dualism with what he calls ‘the Latin Heresy’: for in theology at any rate its roots go back to a form of linguistic and conceptual dualism that prevailed in Patristic and Mediaeval Latin theology.” According to Torrance, this heresy has entrenched in the tradition the breach between the act of God (what he does) and his being (what he is) leading to a radical distinction between the person and work of Christ. Torrance seeks to avoid this dualism and its resultant external, transactional notion of redemption through the adoption of an incarnational model of atonement. Further, Torrance’s Trinitarian theology appears to be a continuous effort to overcome the same dualism. For him the danger of the dualistic disconnect between God and man requires a knowledge of Jesus Christ on his own ground as he reveals Himself to us and according to His nature (*kata physin*) within the objective frame of meaning that he has created for the church, through the apostolic testimony to him. Here Torrance follows the basic Barthian axiom that God’s being is known only through his act, and that the person and work of Christ are inseparable. In Torrance’s own words, “Christ is what he does, and does what he is.” If the identity and mission of Jesus Christ form a coherent whole, then it is both the person and the work that have redemptive significance. “The Redemption is the Person of Christ in action; not the action itself thought of in an objectivist impersonal way.” Tanev, “The Concept of Energy in T. F. Torrance and in Orthodox Theology,” 198.

¹⁸There is an interesting and increasing acceptance from Torrance of the doctrine of *theosis*. From an initial rejection to later a semi-Palamite view of energies and participation. “In the first letter of Torrance [to George Florovsky], written in Jan. 1950, Torrance registers his rejection of the doctrine of theosis as ‘un-Hebraic and un-biblical.’ By 1964, however, he would address the World Alliance of Reformed Churches with a plea ‘for a reconsideration by the Reformed Church of what the Greek Fathers called theosis.’ In his 1970 lecture ‘The Relevance of Orthodoxy,’ Torrance described theosis as the experience of “our participation in the Holy Spirit, in which we come under the direct impact of God’s uncreated energies in all their holiness and majesty, and are sanctified and renewed by them . . . God Himself acting upon us personally and creatively.” It was surely no coincidence that in this same published sermon, when remarking on how ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox had often led him to reconsider his Reformed presuppositions in his reading of the Bible, Torrance stressed the crucial influence of Florovsky in particular. He would later cite Florovsky’s essay on ‘St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers’ approvingly for its understanding of theosis in terms of ‘personal encounter.’” See Matthew Baker, “The Correspondence between T.F. Torrance and George Florovsky (1950-1973),” *Participatio: Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* 4, no. 1 (2013): 287–323.

metaphysics created a massive dualism between absolute time-space and relative time-space. The Christian tradition, according to Torrance, fundamentally needs to reject scientific dualism and retrieve the truths of *theosis* and *henosis* from the early Church. For in those truths the atonement was an internal act of God in the incarnate Jesus in space and time and not an outside “impossibility” (as described in Kantian metaphysics).

Second, God is activity in his being. To assert activity in the being of God was Athanasius’s contention when he coined the term *enousios logos* “to speak of the inherence of the word of God in his being.”¹⁹ According to Torrance, it is only with John of Damascus and Thomas Aquinas that such understanding is pulverized in favor of a dualist mentality that sought to protect God’s impassibility and immutability. Karl Barth saved the day by not choosing between God’s being or his act. Karl Barth saw that the early Church, specially Athanasius, was interested in the activity of God and that the tradition from which the Reformation had sprung had a special interest in the being of God. God is fundamentally a being-in-act. Therefore, the work of atonement is not an act that goes forth, externally, as a decision from the being of God. Jesus Christ is the atonement because he does what he is—in time and eternity.

Third,²⁰ through Christ and in the Spirit, we can know the internal relations of God’s triune being. Torrance contends that a doctrine “of atonement is to be formulated in terms of what took place in the inner constitution of the mediator.”²¹ Torrance builds this theory by expanding on the intelligibility of the doctrine of creation. The Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* sustained that the contingent nature of the universe was held open to scientific investigation. With this move, the doctrine of creation avoided the dichotomy between the empirical and the theoretical. It is with Kant, however, again, that

¹⁹Torrance, “Theosis and Henosis”: 13

²⁰Torrance had two other points, but for the sake of space and relevance, I will stay with the most important points. Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

the “laws of nature were regarded not as read out of nature but as read into nature, for realities, he held cannot be known in their internal relations but only as they appear to us.”²² For Torrance, Kant’s epistemological revolution has to be dismissed. Science itself has proved to operate “through penetrating as deeply as possible into the the rational structure embedded in empirical reality.”²³ Even though there are differences between knowledge of creaturely realities and God’s uncreated reality, Torrance insists that the foundation of knowledge helps us in a reappropriation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity not only for our worship, but for the certainty that all our knowledge of God’s ways and works (including incarnation and atonement) is grounded in the fact that God is Father, Son, and Spirit.

Finally, for Torrance, to separate the work and person of Christ is to operate in dualistic categories. The activity of the Lord in time is what he is. Hence, he was able, with Barth to say that Jesus Christ is the atonement. The Son’s life towards the outside cannot add anything to himself. There is no separation of person and work—Jesus Christ, in his inner constitution is the atonement, but one ought to be careful not to say that we become God. Torrance is aware that one cannot speak in this way. “Rightly understood, then, *theosis* actually expresses the sheer ‘Godness’ of God the Holy Spirit.”²⁴ *Theosis* is participation in the divine life in which “we receive the grace and light of his Spirit, [and] are said to be *theoi*.”²⁵ Therefore, there is a gracious enabling that puts one as participating in the very light of God but not transformed into God.

In summary, Torrance is trying to displace the subjective aspect of salvation. For him salvation and atonement happen at the birth of Jesus Christ where he takes our

²²Torrance, “Theosis and Henosis”: 13

²³Ibid.

²⁴Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 198.

²⁵Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 139.

nature heals it in uniting himself to it. James Cassidy states that for Torrance, “our humanity (and in fact, humanity as such) is born and born again in the birth and rebirth of Jesus Christ.”²⁶

Theosis as Union: Torrance’s Mechanism and a Brief Excursus on Reformed Theosis

Myk Habets claims that Torrance is developing what is already present in Calvin’s thought. Habets sets the stage by quoting Calvin at length in a section that Calvin defines the *unio mystica*: “we do not, therefore, contemplate him outside of ourselves . . . in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us . . . because he designs to make us one with him.”²⁷ Yes, there is continuity between Calvin and Torrance. Calvin was not formulating his doctrine of atonement from a purely forensic (Latin heresy) perspective, but his doctrine of union was embedded in his covenantal paradigm. Torrance’s “innovation,” however, comes when building upon Calvin’s mystical union he proposes that our union with Christ is also in “*prothesis*—divine purpose, *mysterion*—mystery, and *koinonia*—fellowship/communion.”²⁸

Prothesis refers to the election whereby Jesus is both the object and the subject of election. This is the classical Barthian formulation where there is no *decretum absolutum*.²⁹ For Barth (and subsequently for Torrance) there is no decree regarding the choosing of individuals. Jesus Christ is the decree and his incarnation is the eternal decision (being-in-act) of God in his Love. *Mysterion* points to the mystery of the

²⁶James J. Cassidy, “T. F. Torrance’s Realistic Soteriological Objectivism and the Elimination of Dualisms: Union with Christ in Current Perspective,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 19 (2008): 165–94.

²⁷Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.10, in Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*, 100.

²⁸Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*, 105.

²⁹For an excellent treatment on the difference between Barth’s and Calvin’s views of the absolute decree see David Gibson, *Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election and Christology in Calvin and Barth*, *T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009).

hypostatic union. Because the hypostatic union is the union between two estranged realities coming together, this is also a reconciling union in which we are reconciled and elevated. Christ not only comes in man, but as man and therefore, the two realities are not only seemingly conjoined, but forever united in one person. Also, this reconciling union is not even remotely juridical, but actual. Thus Torrance can posit:

[I]t is not atonement that constitutes the goal and end of that integrated movement of reconciliation but union with God in and through Jesus Christ in whom *our* human nature is not only saved, healed and renewed but lifted up to participate in the very light, life and love of the Holy Trinity In the Church of Christ all who are redeemed through the atoning union embodied in him are made to share in his resurrection and are incorporated into Christ by the power of his Holy Spirit as living members of his Body Thus it may be said that the ‘objective’ union which we have with Christ through his incarnational assumption of our humanity into himself is ‘subjectively’ actualised in us through his indwelling Spirit, ‘we in Christ’ and ‘Christ in us’ thus complementing and interpenetrating each other.³⁰

Habets also shows how Torrance applies the concept of *mysterion* to the tension of the one-and-the-many—Christ and his Church. For Habets, in defense of Torrance, the key is to see the ontological union between Christ and his body, the Church. Torrance saw the union with Christ largely as a corporate reality in which individual members are engrafted into Christ by baptism.³¹ Finally, *koinonia* has a double reference; one is vertical and the other is horizontal. Vertical refers to our participation “through the Spirit in the mystery of Christ’s union with us.”³² Horizontal refers to our communion with one another in the body of Christ. Even with all this apparatus, Torrance thinks that he is also able to dodge deification and not blurry the creator-creature distinction. The work of the reader is to measure such affirmations and to see if it is merely formal/rhetorical, instead of material affirmation.

After this survey of Torrance’s innovations, one must ask if they at least plausible? First, in *prothesis*, there is substantial literature on Barth’s view of election.

³⁰Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983), 66–67.

³¹Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*, 106.

³²*Ibid.*, 107.

The strongest argument against it, however, seems to be that if God elects to be human *pro nobis*, but *in se*, then there is contingency in the Godhead. Even Barth and Torrance themselves would deny such affirmation. The literature here is endless, but in my estimation, the amount of qualifications needed by the Barthian side renders the position at least unstable.³⁴

The most problematic is the *mysterion* of Torrance. Here it seems that Torrance's formal denial of human deification crumbles. How can humanity be "not only saved, healed and renewed but lifted up to participate in the very light, life and love of the Holy Trinity."³⁵ without a natural change? Also, human beings cannot be *in toto* engrafted into the hypostatic union. Yes, the personal union is mysterious; it is, however, a union of a concrete nature and not a general abstract human nature. Finally, as I will point out in my main critique, if our reconciliation is being accomplished by the personal union in Christ, when this "reconciliation" happens does the hypostatic union finally happen? At which stage are we engrafted into Christ's hypostatic union?

A moderate Reformed version of *theosis* may be of help here, without actually creating an ontological continuity between Christ and the Church and at the same time not operating *only* in forensic categories.³⁶ J. Todd Billings states,

In terms of contemporary theological discussion, perhaps the greatest danger in claiming that Calvin teaches "deification" is that his view could be too quickly assimilated into late Byzantine notions of $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$, from which he retains distance . . . frequently Palamite theology is used as the "standard" by which to judge other theologies of deification. As a result, theologies of deification in the West end up looking like more or less truncated versions of a late Byzantine theology with which

³⁴That is not to say that the classical protestant position does not need qualifications. For a quick survey of problems with the Barthian position, see Bruce L. McCormack, "Let's Speak Plainly: A Response to Paul Molnar," *Theology Today* 67, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 57–65; Kevin W. Hector, "God's Trinity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar," *IJST* 7, no. 3 (July 1, 2005): 246–61; Gibson, *Reading the Decree*; Edwin Chr. van Driel, "Karl Barth on the Eternal Existence of Jesus Christ," *SJT* 60, no. 1 (February 2007): 45–61.

³⁵Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 66.

³⁶See Kyle Strobel, "Jonathan Edwards's Reformed Doctrine of Theosis," *Harvard Theological Review* 109, no. 3 (July 2016): 371–99.

they never explicitly engaged. Scholarship on Calvin is no exception to this trend.”³⁷

Billings ends up arguing for a distinctive perception of *theosis* that tends to be more careful through the eyes of Calvin.³⁸ Even though Calvin uses the word *θέωσις*, he meant to point to redemption in which the original union of God and man would be restored. This restoration is in “Christ through the Spirit as the believer grows to be ‘conformable’ to God; this process is culminated in the participation in Christ’s resurrection and glorification, and in a beatific vision.”³⁹ At this point at least there is a contrast with Torrance who seemed to imply that our participation in Christ’s hypostatic union is even before the cross in the inner constitution of the savior.

Most importantly however is that for Calvin, the participation of man in the life of God is not synergistic. Calvin’s anthropology would not “permit” him to affirm that man had anything to do with the inner life of God. It is however, in the life-giving (economy) of the God-Church that one participates in that *theosis* for Calvin. Torrance would never subscribe to a synergistic soteriology, but, it is hard to see that if one is engrafted into the hypostatic union through the human nature of Christ, how is one also not accomplishing things in cooperation with Christ.

³⁷J. Todd Billings, “United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 3 (July 2005): 315–34.

³⁸For example, look at Billings’s exegesis of this section in Calvin’s institutes: “We experience such participation in him that, although we are still foolish in ourselves, he is our wisdom before God; while we are sinners, he is our righteousness; while we are unclean, he is our purity; while we are weak, while we are unarmed and exposed to Satan, yet ours is that power which has been given him in heaven and on earth to crush Satan for us and shatter the gates of hell; while we still bear about with us the body of death, he is yet our life. In brief, because all things are ours and we have all things in him, in us there is nothing. Upon this foundation we must be built if we would grow into a holy temple to the Lord.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Revised edition (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2007), 37.

Is this passage “legal” (like the “Calvinists”) or “mystical,” as McLelland would have it? The passage certainly makes it clear that the doctrine of justification is not simply a detached, “judicial” doctrine wherein an impersonal transaction takes place: it is about union with Christ, and the wondrous exchange that takes place in this union. In addition, Calvin makes it clear that the believer grows in real holiness in sanctification, such that we “grow into a holy temple to the Lord.” Yet, contra McLelland, the passage is deeply “forensic” and “legal” in asserting that by participation in Christ, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the believer.” Billings, “United to God through Christ”: 320.

³⁹Ibid.

The Mediation of Christ

Torrance scholars still debate if there was a mature Christology developed after the Auburn lectures (1939). In order to escape from charges of treating Torrance with an eye towards his early theology, I will deal here with his *The Mediation of Christ* (first published in 1992).⁴¹ This is not only his more mature work, but it is a summary of his christological musings.

He begins by stating that, that God is one with man is true, but does that imply we are not to distinguish between the *Logos asarkos* and the *Logos ensarkos*? Since “God was in Christ making reconciliation,” how do we explain that without seeming like we are operating with flagrant Nestorianism?

The answer goes back to how we know things. Torrance understands the world of physics to be an illuminating analogy. In the beginning of the last century, with Ernst Mach’s claims that atoms are merely “scientific fiction” and Kant’s position that we do not know things as they really are but just as we project them, positivism and observational scientific theory had the upper hand. The work of Max Planck on quantum theory put an end to mere observation. Atoms were proved to be real not by observation, but by the “discovery that energy has an *atomic* structure governed by the universal constant *h*.”⁴² All this shows that science had to give up its obsession with appearances and observation and develop a simpler, yet sophisticated theory of knowledge where “knowledge of things is controlled through the disclosure of things in their internal relations and structures.”⁴³

By analogy, in theology, the inner relations of Father-Son are revealed in the incarnate person of Jesus Christ. This goes directly against both phenomenological approaches since Schleiermacher and also against the speculative approach in the Middle

⁴¹Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*.

⁴²Ibid., 51.

⁴³Ibid.

Ages. That is why Torrance reaches to the Fathers as he thinks that they neither do Christology from below or above. Patristic theology, starting with the Person of Christ as revealed in the gospels, avoids dualistic approaches that divide the Savior into categories.

Such knowledge is foundational for understanding that the Son does not “mediate a revelation or a reconciliation that is other than what he is.”⁴⁴ In this unity one must posit the idea that there is no God behind the back of Jesus Christ. To see any line of demarcation is only to go back to Arianism.⁴⁵

Mediating salvation in this form, Jesus came into “our human being and united our human nature to his own, then atoning reconciliation takes place within the personal Being of the mediator.”⁴⁶ What Jesus Christ does is not separate or external from who he is because it discloses truthfully his inner relations. Therefore, when he *really* takes “our sin and guilt, our violence and wickedness . . . he might do away with our evil and heal and sanctify our human nature from within.”⁴⁷ Because Jesus reveals perfect harmony of his filial relationship, then men and women who are *taken up* also share in this relationship and are healed from their sins in the one who reconciles in himself.

How then can we think about a union with our humanity that does not completely divinize it? The explanation lies in Torrance’s concept of *Personalizing person*: against dualism he claims that Christ’s uncreated person personalizes our created persons. Because we are persons but are not sincere and hypocrites, we tend to live dual personal lives. The Word personalizes us by taking out insincerity and living a true human life that avoids its dualistic senses.⁴⁸ To further the argument beyond moralistic

⁴⁴Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 56.

⁴⁵Ibid., 61.

⁴⁶Ibid., 63.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 69.

understandings of the incarnation, Torrance creates a dual scheme of analysis of how Jesus makes us truly one: 1. atoning union and 2. hypostatic union. He subsists in our nature and takes away what “cuts us off from genuine relations with others, so that the very personal relations in which persons subsist as persons [are atoned for].”⁴⁹

Recent Torrancian Approaches

Kathryn Tanner

Tanner, follows a similar line as that of T. F. Torrance.⁵⁰ Her books, *Christ the Key*⁵¹ and *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity*⁵² attempt to bring back a theology of participation that takes seriously the importance of Christ to every theological *loci*, especially to anthropology. The incarnation takes humanity up into the life of God and in that movement Christ becomes the very means of how we also become what we were meant to be.

Tanner, like Torrance (perhaps even more radically), argues that the incarnation is the atonement. The cross is not the means of salvation, but the effect of salvation. Seeing the cross as central to the forgiveness of sins works with a commercial and external view of the atonement. The mechanism for atonement, as incarnation, then is found in the communication of properties in the incarnation. In the incarnation the “characteristics of human life become the (alien) properties of the Word, and thereby the properties of the Word . . . become the (alien properties of humanity in a way that saves humanity from sin and death.”⁵³ Therefore, the atonement ceases to be interpreted as a

⁴⁹Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 69.

⁵⁰See Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 111–31.

⁵¹Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁵²Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus Humanity and the Trinity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

⁵³Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 254.

transaction between the Father and the Son and becomes the Son's vicarious substitution for humanity.

Tanner furthers her argument by stating that the notion of sacrifice as propitiation has been kidnaped and modified in the hands of fundamentalists. For Tanner, propitiation is related to "the cultic sacrifices of Israel [which they] celebrate or end in joyous communion."⁵⁴ The idea of sacrifice must not be connected to appeasing an angry God, because sacrifice by definition, "involves the reinstatement or restoration of communion with God *via* divine prevenient action . . . Applied to the atonement, this means that the sacrifice of the cross , as a part of the larger divine act of redemption that is the Incarnation, is 'a rite performed by God and not human beings.'"⁵⁵

John Clark and Marcus Peter Johnson

Clark and Johnson's approach is yet another recovery of Torrance's formulation. Therefore, the fear of an extrinsic atonement (i.e., Latin heresy) and the *an-en-hypostatic* distinctions are widely used in their recent monograph.⁵⁶ They state that because the incarnation is not an external transaction, Christ did not interrupt the normalcy of human organic structure and stream of human heredity, but he invaded them. By invading human organic structure and stream of heredity, the Son penetrates the depths of our human fallenness and concretely heals it.⁵⁷

Clark and Johnson try to bring clarity to the issue with five points under a section called, "What Are We Saying And Not Saying?"⁵⁸ First, their affirmation of the assumption of the fallen nature grounds the cross in the incarnation. The cross would

⁵⁴Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 266.

⁵⁵Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 118.

⁵⁶John Clark and Marcus Peter Johnson, *The Incarnation of God: The Mystery of the Gospel as the Foundation of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 119.

have no meaning if it was an alien imposition. If seen as culmination, instead of an interruption, the cross works from the beginning as God's plan. Second, they want to emphasize that the incarnation should not be viewed in an instrumental fashion. The Son did not assume a body and a soul only to atone for sins at the cross. For Clark and Johnson, the Son assumed a human nature so that the incarnation was at once atonement and the atonement was at once incarnational. Third, the human nature of Christ was corrupted and tended towards sin, but keeping with Chalcedon and the Bible, Clark and Johnson deny that he ever sinned.⁵⁹ Fourth, "the immediate sanctification of the sinful flesh that God the Son assumed in the womb of Mary must not be understood as Christ's immediate glorification."⁶⁰ Admitting immediate glorification in this case would lead towards a denial of the state of humiliation. Such thing is denied both by proponents of the *non-assumptus* and the traditional view. Fifth, the *non-assumptus* position keeps the unity of God and man closer than the traditional view without actually attributing sin to Christ. In this way God redeems us because the acts of the Son took place within the inner constitution of the mediator and not outside.

Initial Evaluation

Before any initial evaluation, it may be profitable to posit what Torrance is and what he is not affirming. Contrary to Irving, who taught that the Son remained sinless

⁵⁹Here Clark and Johnson support this point with a quote from the late John Webster: "This re-making [of our humanity] takes place as he assumes sinful flesh, human existence in repudiation of and rebellion against its ordering by God to find fulfillment in fellowship with God. The Word assumes the full extent of human alienation, taking the place of humanity, existing under the divine condemnation. But his relation to the human alienation which he assumes is not such that he is swallowed up by it. He does not identify with humanity under the curse of sin in such a way that he is himself sinner. . . . He adopts the condemned human situation without reserve, but with a peculiar distance from our own performance of our humanness. By not following our path, by refusing complicity with the monstrousness of sin, he is and does what we are not and do not: he is human. In his very estrangement from us as the bearer rather than the perpetrator of sin, he takes our place and heals our corruption. That the Word became flesh means that he takes to himself the accursed situation of humanity in sin. But he takes it to himself; he does not evacuate himself into our situation." John Webster, "Incarnation," in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, ed. Gareth Jones (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 220, quoted in Clark and Johnson, *The Incarnation of God*, 123.

⁶⁰Clark and Johnson, *The Incarnation of God*, 123.

only through the work of the Spirit when he took a human nature,⁶¹ Torrance maintained that the sinlessness of Christ is due to his divine person.⁶² So, the person-nature distinction is still operative in Torrance's formulation of the *non-assumptus*.

What Torrance is saying is that "the Word became flesh," means that he "took 'our human nature as we have it in the fallen world.'"⁶³ Integral to this scheme is Torrance's use of Nazianzen's axiom: "the unassumed is unredeemed." Not only would it be unredeemed, but it would show a lack of love from God. Chiarot writes and quotes Torrance here:

Rejection of the *non-assumptus* leads to 'the Latin heresy', which consists of construing salvation in wholly forensic and external categories, and results in an instrumental conception of the humanity of Christ. Torrance states the implication of the denial starkly. 'How could it be said that Christ really took our place, took our cause upon himself in order to redeem us? What could we then have to do with him?' It would mean that the love of God had stopped short of union with us in our actual condition.⁶⁴

Immediately after this quote two issues of contention arise: the question of the love of God and the question of instrumentalism. On the former issue, no side of the debate has the upper hand. While advocates of the fallenness position may argue for identification and union, advocates of unfallenness position can argue that because God loves us, he does not identify with sin.

The issue of instrumentality, however, is serious. The charge here is that Christ's center of consciousness is the Word and the human nature of Christ is merely an avatar in which the Word works through. To speak thusly is rhetorically appealing, however, it became factorially more complicated to recur to an instrumentalist perception

⁶¹Kevin Chiarot, "The Non-Assumptus and the Virgin Birth in T. F. Torrance," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 2 (2011): 229–44.

⁶²Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ: The Auburn Lectures 1938/39* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 122–24.

⁶³Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 62, quoted in Chiarot, "The Non-Assumptus and the Virgin Birth in T. F. Torrance."

⁶⁴Chiarot, "The Non-Assumptus and the Virgin Birth in T.F. Torrance."

of the incarnation with Constantinople III and the Dyothelite consensus. The two minds of the Son in his full humanity should inform Torrance that fallenness is not the only way to construct the Son's full identification with human nature. The early Church was able to affirm the full humanity of Jesus by simply asserting that he needed a body and soul (with Constantinople III developing that in the issue of minds) and not necessarily with a fallen nature.⁶⁵

However serious the issue the charge of instrumentality is, it is not at all wrong to speak in terms of instrumentality, provided one is careful with the ideas. In Thomas White's superb study in Thomistic Christology, he asserts that the humanity that is assumed "cannot be a subsistent human person on its own," but only insofar as it is assumed by the one person of the Son.⁶⁶ White's concerns regarding the nature of the incarnation and what is the nature of the assumption are relevant for our next analyses.

Nestorianism

Torrance's aversion to Nestorianism is clear.⁶⁷ It is, therefore, not the claim here that Torrance is Nestorian. The claim is that he is implicitly or tacitly operating with Nestorian categories, and even though he formally rejects Nestorianism, the question is whether or not he can materially reject it, given his theological commitments.

By assuming a human nature, only to heal it from within his inner constitution means that Jesus's assumption of the human nature is one in which there is a progression of sanctification. This sanctification is what White (*via* Aquinas) calls habitual grace:

Habitual grace, meanwhile, is that gift which pertains to all the saints insofar as they receive sanctifying grace from God. As such it is something created and finite which elevates the spiritual creature to share truly but imperfectly in the life of God. This occurs chiefly through operations of the soul, in which the spiritual powers of the

⁶⁵Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, Rev ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988).

⁶⁶ White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 13.

⁶⁷Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 104.

soul (the intellect and the will) are united to God by knowledge and by love.⁶⁸ In habitual grace scheme, the difference between the Son's union to human nature and our own union with God is purely of degree and not of kind.⁶⁹ Therefore the grace of sanctification (habitual) is a precondition to the personal union. Here the parallel with classic Nestorianism is the starkest: "The human nature of Christ receives grace such that it might operate in *conjunction* with the Word."⁷⁰ For the Nestorian system, "could not have them [the natures] joined ontologically (in their being) or hypostatically (constituting one person), but only morally or psychologically."⁷¹

For White, the appropriate way to speak about the union is an immediate union. Therefore, he calls it a grace of union. No precondition to the union is necessary. The un-personalized human nature of Christ is given *gratis* "from above" in the person of the Word.⁷² Finally, and as a corollary of Thomas Aquinas's categories (as used by White), is the idea that if the human nature that Jesus assumes needs sanctification, it requires another hypostasis to habitually sanctify or heal it in order for it to be finally united to the Word. More on this will be taken in the appropriate chapter of grace of union and habitual grace.

This "finally united" for Torrance occurs not at conception but at the resurrection and ascension.⁷³ Therefore, posing a massive problem for the natures of the virgin birth, and of the personal union. Once again, if Christ's human nature is personally united only after the resurrection, then during the entire earthly ministry and at the state

⁶⁸White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 87.

⁶⁹White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 87.

⁷⁰Ibid., Emphasis added

⁷¹"Dictionary : Nestorianism ," accessed October 7, 2016, <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=35102>.

⁷²White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 87. Some space must be given for some habitual grace, because even the Bible speaks about Jesus's "growing."

⁷³Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell*, (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000), 14.

of humiliation, the union was only different than ours in degree but not of kind. Christ's union was something completely unique in history.

Torrance could very well recourse to the fact that he does not think that Aquinas/White's categories are necessary. It seems clear, however, that any "internal healing" doctrine will fall into the pit of separating the natures to the point in which a communication of graces has to come from an independent *hypostasis* to the human nature until it can be fully united to the word.

To be clear, T. F. Torrance never affirmed two *hypostases*. In some sense he was still trying to operate within the tradition.⁷⁴ For him, after Nicaea, the church "tended to lose sight of his [Christ's] atoning work, so far, that is, as creedal formulations were concerned."⁷⁵ He goes as far to say that if Chalcedon was true to Nicaea's champion, Athanasius, it would have affirmed the human nature of Jesus "under the servitude of sin."⁷⁶ For Torrance, the lack of creedal formulation regarding the atonement is largely in fault because the Latin Church, under the influence of Leo, turned its back to the *non-assumptus*.⁷⁷

The Virgin Birth

Closely related to the issue of Nestorianism is the virgin birth. There is a clear tension in Torrance's thought here, for even though "the union of God and man in Jesus Christ is not thought of somehow ontologically complete at Bethlehem,"⁷⁸ Christ, "breaks through the continuity of Adamic existence"⁷⁹ in the incarnation.

⁷⁴His two massive volumes on incarnation and atonement have excellent discussions of the councils and on how to honor the Christian Scriptures and tradition.

⁷⁵Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 198.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 201.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 199.

⁷⁸Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 14.

⁷⁹Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 94.

The reason for this break with Adamic existence, for Torrance, is the virgin birth. In his exposition of the doctrine, he affirms a fairly traditional position in which the continuity is within the flesh Christ receives from Mary. The discontinuity is the vertical intersection of the Holy Spirit who interrupts the process and creates a discontinuity. The puzzle for the careful reader is on how to affirm a discontinuity if the flesh Christ assumes is a fallen one?

Torrance's way out of that conundrum was to say that "when the holy Son of God unites himself to our corruption, the incarnation in the 'narrow sense' cannot but be a healing event."⁸⁰ The complexity of Torrance's thought here also poses a problem for the critique, since for him incarnation and atonement are fully united. There are indeed moments of the life of Christ, however, one must not separate person and work of Christ. Therefore, Torrance can speak of the sanctification of the virgin birth as a completed event even if Christ assumes a fallen human flesh. The perception of time (incarnation-then-atonement) in Christ's life of atonement is merely a dualistic perspective to which Torrance is allergic.

I shall point to a few problematic constructions here. First, it is doubtful that a creative way out is to affirm a "narrow sense" of healing in the incarnation. The incarnation is an event brought forth by the work of the Holy Spirit who through the virgin birth, once for all, unites the Son to *a* human nature.

Second, as seen in our discussion of Nestorianism, the sanctifying event is not of degree but kind. Torrance, however, sees that virgin birth is an indication of what happened within humanity in general (degree) when the Son of God became man."⁸¹ The virgin birth serves as a signpost for *theosis* which creates a mere difference of degree between man and God since there is a full participation.

⁸⁰Kevin Chiarot, *The Unassumed Is the Unhealed*, 99.

⁸¹Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 94–95.

Finally, clearly for Torrance, something redemptive happens at the virgin birth but, as Chiarot aptly showed, the key question to be posed is, how? If human nature is healed, then Christ assumes a human nature that is not fallen (not the case for T. F. Torrance). If regenerated, Christ assumes a *posse non peccare* nature, but this is not exactly what Torrance affirmed. If the human nature that Christ assumed was one with enabled will to resist sin, then the nature that Jesus received was almost like the one we have, but not entirely. For Torrance, any hint of “almost” would lead to an external atonement. It is unclear in the end of the day what the virgin birth really creates in terms of discontinuity for Torrance.

The Property-Pile Assumption

Another issue that we need to take here is the property-pile assumption. Because the chapters in the critique will not deal with this, then this critique can be presented in this section.

Torrance’s use of the *an-hypostasia* to defend a general human nature may have philosophical validity, but is questionable if it helps his theology of the *non-assumptus*. The problem seems to be that in assuming a property-pile human nature, Torrance does not explain how is that human persons are healed. Redemption is applied to human natures—whatever that means⁸²—but not to concrete realities of human persons. This is the thread that runs through the credal formulations of Constantinople II and III—persons are agents. Even though Torrance could account for original sin, the agency of persons in perpetrating sin could not be accounted in the *non assumptus*. Chiarot says that this is devastating for the *non-assumptus* because “no concrete *personal* instance of fallen humanity is assumed.”⁸³

The Scottish theologian saw this problem. His solution was to add the caveat

⁸²Chiarot, *The Unassumed Is the Unhealed*, 163.

⁸³*Ibid.*

that Jesus is the personalizing person, who indeed personalizes human nature in the incarnation. All other human persons in the world are only persons because they are made after this person—the Word. Nonetheless, the problem seems to persist because the Son’s person is divine. If the Son’s person is divine, then how can he heal human persons from the inner constitution of the hypostatic union? According to Chiarot, Torrance’s way out is to work a societal penetration. Jesus came to the mess of our world and encounter true human persons. Again, this seems to go against Torrance’s construction of the healing from the inner constitution. Human persons are *ad extra* to God and not *ad intra*.⁸⁴

⁸⁴Chiarot, *The Unassumed Is the Unhealed*, 164.

CHAPTER 4
INSEPARABLE OPERATIONS

Theological Development

The doctrine of inseparable operations boasts an impressive and catholic pedigree. John Owen, for example, explicitly appeals to Athanasius, Basil the Great and Ambrose of Milan to further his argument in ΠΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ.¹ Today, however, the doctrine has come under sharp attack and needs to be properly defined. My goal in this section is to demonstrate how the classical articulation of the doctrine of inseparable operations forbids one to assert that the Son assumes a fallen human nature.

In order to do that, I will spend time describing the development of the doctrine. From the first articulations of Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine of Hippo until the refinement of language brought about by Thomas Aquinas and John Owen in their scholastic approach. Second, I will specifically relate the doctrine of inseparable operations to the doctrine of the incarnation. Finally, I will demonstrate how a robust doctrine of inseparable operations as described in points one and two prevents one from subscribing to the Son's assumption of a fallen human nature and relate it to the fallen human nature issue.

The principle of *opera ad extra sunt indivisa* states that the external works of the persons of the Trinity are one.² They initiate in one and terminate in another person, following the *taxis* of God's inner modes of being. How the church gets to this assertion

¹*Works*, 4:93.

²For a discussion of the Reformed Orthodox's reception of the doctrine of inseparable operations, see PRRD III, 257–63. For a dogmatic approach to this doctrine see Webster, *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology: Volume 1: God and the Works of God* (New York: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2015), 162–64.

is important, for there is a development and refinement on the language used here.

Augustine

Augustine's (343-430) discussion of the doctrine of inseparable operations is an interesting case study. Lewis Ayres has pointed out to a slight development in his defense of the doctrine. Early in *Letter II*, there is an affirmation that is basically a repetition of what Hilary and Ambrose have said without much connection to the incarnation (written in AD 389, only three years after his conversion). Here the bulk of the discussion sits within the common nature shared by the Father and the Son. There is, however, later development in AD 410 when Augustine writes *Sermon 52*. Here, Augustine's Trinitarian theology has reached a more mature articulation.³ Hence, let us follow the structures of *Sermon 52* (together with other sections from *De Trinitate*) to see how Augustine properly discusses the doctrine of inseparable operations.

Augustine starts *Sermon 52* by describing the nature of the catholic faith: it is not loosely connected articles of faith that are declared by several people's opinions, but it is "the firmest and most orthodox faith, that Father Son and Holy Spirit are one inseparable trinity or triad; one God not three gods."⁴ Nonetheless, as he turns to a discussion of Matt 3:16–17 Augustine raises the question: "where is the inseparability of the trinity?"⁵ Since we have the voice of the Father, the Spirit coming as a dove, and the Son being baptized, it all seems to be separate activities that contradict the united voice of the catholic faith.

The meditation that begins to answer this question is found in another deeper question: does the Father do anything without the Son? Augustine answers with the

³See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 374.

⁴Augustine, *Sermons 51-94*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1992).

⁵Augustine, *Sermon 52.3*.

biblical axiom that nothing that was created was created without the Son.⁶ As we look now to the Father, should we also say that the Father was born of the virgin Mary or that the Father suffered on the cross? Augustine answers with a decisive no. Let us examine the birth of the Son from the virgin Mary. By confession we are obliged to say that it is only the Son who was born from her, but Augustine states that the birth of the Son is a “work of both Father and Son. It was not indeed the Father but the Son, who suffered; yet the suffering of the Son was the work of both Father and Son.”⁷ So Augustine spends time from sections 52.9 forward making the exegetical case that the birth of the Son was brought about from the Father (Gal 4:4–5) and from the Son also (Phil 2:6–7).⁸ He summarizes the exegetical section saying:

I have made good what I promised; I have established my propositions with, as I think, the strongest proofs and testimonies. Hold fast then what you have heard. I will recapitulate it briefly, and entrust it to be stored up in your minds as a thing, to my thinking, of the greatest usefulness. The Father was not born of the Virgin; yet this birth of the Son from the Virgin was the work both of the Father and the Son.

⁶Augustine, Sermon 52.4.

⁷Augustine, Sermon 52.8.

⁸Augustine also references the biblical case for the inseparability of God’s work in the passion of the Son, with the Father giving us the Son (Rom 8:32) and the Son giving himself up for us (Gal 2:20). “Let us prove that the Passion also of the Son was the work of the Father and the Son. We may see that the Passion of the Son is the work of the Father, since it is written, Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; and that the Passion of the Son was His own work also, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me. The Father delivered up the Son, and the Son delivered up Himself. This Passion was wrought out for one, but by both. As therefore the birth, so the Passion, of Christ, was not the work of the Son without the Father, nor of the Father without the Son. The Father delivered up the Son, and the Son delivered up Himself. What did Judas in it, but his own sin? Let us then pass on from this point also, and come we to the resurrection. Let us see the Son indeed, and not the Father, rising again, but both the Father and the Son working the resurrection of the Son. The resurrection of the Son is the work of the Father; for it is written, Wherefore He exalted Him, and gave Him a name which is above every name. The Father therefore raised the Son to life again, in exalting, and awakening Him from the dead. And did the Son also raise Himself? Assuredly He did. For He said of the temple, as the figure of His own body, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again. Lastly, as the laying down of life has reference to the Passion, so the taking it again has reference to the resurrection. Let us see then if the Son laid down His life indeed, and the Father restored His life to Him, and not He to Himself. For that the Father restored it is plain. For so says the Psalm, Raise Me up, and I will requite them. But why do ye wait for a proof from me that the Son also restored life to Himself? Let Him speak Himself; I have power to lay down My life. I have not yet said what I promised. I have said, to lay it down; and you are crying out already, for you are flying past me. For well-instructed as you are in the school of your heavenly teacher, as attentively listening to, and in pious affection rehearsing, what is read, you are not ignorant of what comes next. I have power, says He, to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, and take it again.” Augustine, Sermon 52.8.

The Father suffered not on the Cross; yet the Passion of the Son was the work both of the Father and the Son. The Father rose not again from the dead; yet the resurrection of the Son was the work both of the Father and the Son. You see then a distinction of Persons, and an inseparableness of operation. Let us not say therefore that the Father does any thing without the Son, or the Son any thing without the Father. But perhaps you have a difficulty as to the miracles which Jesus did, lest perhaps He did some which the Father did not! Where then is that saying, The Father who dwells in Me, He does the works? All that I have now said was plain; it needed to be barely mentioned; there was no necessity for much labour to make it understood, but only that care should be taken, that it might be brought to your remembrance.⁹

And once he felt comfortable with the exegetical case made for the inseparability of the operations of Father and Son, Augustine moves to a metaphysical defense of it. The first step is by stating that the Godhead is beyond material location. This key affirmation for the doctrine of simplicity serves as the backbone for inseparable operations: because God is one and immaterial, his will or nature cannot be divisible, even if we are talking about three persons. Thereunto, Augustine remains silent and cannot seem to say much more¹⁰ (here the concept of subsistent relations as will be developed by St. Thomas will bear more fruit.)¹¹ The only way forward for Augustine seems to be through his triads of psychological analogies.

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine continues the reflection on the external operations of the Trinity. This time, however, Augustine recurses to the internal order of the Trinity as the basis of external action. In other words, the internal *taxis* of the persons of the Trinity is reflected in the order of action towards us. The reason that the Son cannot do

⁹Sermon 52.14.

¹⁰Steve Duby asserts, “The content of the doctrine of divine simplicity is often fleshed out in a largely apophatic manner. So Turretin’s summation: ‘God’s simplicity is his incommunicable attribute, by which the divine nature is conceived by us, not only as lacking in all composition and division, but also incapable of componibility and divisibility.’ All the same, there are flashes of the cataphatic in this divine attribute. This is evident when one marks, with Alsted, that God is not *imum simplex* (which ‘lacks in all things’) but rather *summum simplex* (which ‘lacks in nothing’). Inferred from such attributes as the singularity, aseity, and immutability of God, divine simplicity affirms that in his abundance, perfection, and absoluteness God is pure act, mightily alive, and identical with all the fullness that he has and is in himself, which claim then constitutes the inner theological ratio of the aforementioned attributes.” Steven J. Duby, “Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account” (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 2014), 113.

¹¹Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds., *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 68.

anything *from* himself (John 5:19) is because the Son is not of himself, but *eternally from* the Father.¹² Eternal generation grounds the temporal activity of God. As Keith Johnson suggests reflecting in Augustine Trinitarian theology:

The Father acts with the other divine persons according to his mode of being “from no one” (unbegotten). The Son acts with the other divine persons according to his mode of being “from the Father” (generation). The Spirit acts with the other divine persons according to his mode of being “from the Father and the Son” (procession). Combining these two elements we might say that the divine persons act inseparably through the intra-Trinitarian *taxis*: from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. We can see this dynamic clearly in Augustine’s discussion of the work of the divine persons in creation. Genesis 1 teaches that God created light. What light did the Son create? It certainly cannot be a different light. Rather, it must be the same light: “Therefore, we understand that the light was made by God the Father, but through the Son” (Tract. 20.7, 170). Similarly, the Father created the earth. The Son did not create another world by “watching” the Father. On the contrary, the world was created by the Father through the Son. Summarizing his discussion of the creative work of the triune God, Augustine explains, “The Father [made] the world, the Son [made] the world, the Holy Spirit [made] the world. If [there are] three gods, [there are] three worlds; if [there is] one God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, one world was made by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.” (Tract. 20.9, 172).¹³

Gregory of Nyssa

In Gregory of Nyssa’s (335-394) *Ad Ablabius* he is preoccupied that because we experience God through the ends of an operation, we might assert that there are different operations from the persons. So, Gregory starts with establishing that any act is done in accordance with the nature of the agent. In God’s case, Nyssa asserts that the biblical testimony points to an unnamed nature. Whatever can be said of the divine nature

¹²*De Trinitate* 2.3. Augustine states, “The working of both the Father and the Son is indivisible and equal, but it is from the Father to the Son. Therefore the Son cannot do anything of Himself, except what He sees the Father do. From this rule, then, whereby the Scriptures so speak as to mean, not to set forth one as less than another, but only to show which is of which, some have drawn this meaning, as if the Son were said to be less. And some among ourselves who are more unlearned and least instructed in these things, endeavoring to take these texts according to the form of a servant, and so misinterpreting them, are troubled. And to prevent this, the rule in question is to be observed whereby the Son is not less, but it is simply intimated that He is of the Father, in which words not His inequality but His birth is declared.” See also the reflection of Keith E. Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 119. See also Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 247.

¹³Keith E. Johnson, “What Would Augustine Say to Evangelicals Who Reject Eternal Generation?” *SBJT* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 34.

can never be known in *toto*. The Cappadocian gives the example of incorruptibility: although we know that God is incorruptible, “our conception of incorruptibility is this,— that that which is, is not resolved into decay: so, when we say that He is incorruptible, we declare what His nature does not suffer, but we do not express what that is which does not suffer corruption.”¹⁴ Nonetheless, when speaking of natures, Nyssa raises the question with an imaginary debater: does not human kind have the same nature, but we still speak of multiple man in plural? Two men making a shoe are not one man, even if it is the same activity. Why should we apply a different principle to the Godhead?¹⁵

Since each action of men, even if in the same pursuits, are separated from each other, we have to speak of multiple men. In God, the reverse is true because

in the case of the Divine nature we do not similarly learn that the Father does anything by Himself in which the Son does not work conjointly, or again that the Son has any special operation apart from the Holy Spirit; but every operation which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of it, has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit. For this reason the name derived from the operation is not divided with regard to the number of those who fulfil it, because the action of each concerning anything is not separate and peculiar, but whatever comes to pass, in reference either to the acts of His providence for us, or to the government and constitution of the universe, comes to pass by the action of the Three, yet what does come to pass is not three things.¹⁶

Our sensibilities should then be reworked with the biblical testimony. We do not

¹⁴Gregory of Nyssa, “On ‘Not Three Gods,’” in *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Austin Wilson, vol. 5, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1893), 333. Hereafter, *Ad Ablabius*. It is important to note here that this move does not characterize an absolute apophaticism (as it is common in Nyssa’s scholarship). Khaled Anatolios notes regarding Gregory, “God is not some inett object that can be passively spied on and encompassed by a creaturely knowing, but an active subject who can only be encountered in relation to his own self-presencing. Given the definition of “the divine nature” as the “subject” (*hypokeimenori*) that underlies this active self-presencing, the claim to know the divine nature would amount to the claim that one can . . . go behind the effected self-presencing of God and reach to the very innermost cause of that effect., .to know God through God’s self-presencing is in no way a matter of a lack of knowledge of God . . . but rather of knowing God as a God who is always lord of his own selfpresencing, which is the only way to know God as God . . . more profoundly than any modern theologian, Gregory of Nyssa offers the most thorough explanation of why it must be that we only encounter the Trinity through the trinitarian economy.” Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 230.

¹⁵It is important to note that Nyssa applies the term “Godhead” exclusively to God’s operation, and not to refer to God in his nature (since it has been shown that avoids naming the divine nature).

¹⁶Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabius*,” 334.

experience the acts of God in a separate fashion, but we experience the actions of God always through the one operation of the three persons. Nyssa is careful here not to assert that three acting does not amount to three things—contrary to the actions of men who may have similar pursuits.

The supreme example of reworked sensibilities on God’s action towards us is that the gift of life given to us is not tripled because we “see” three persons in that bestowing. Life is given to us by the Father, prepared by the Son, and depends on the will of the Holy Spirit. This, however, does not amount to the giving of three lives to us.

Moreover, the operations of God follow a certain pattern of causality. It is communicated by the Father through the Son to the Holy Spirit. Even though we have three persons involved in a cause of an action, these are not three separate causes. Nyssa explains that the act is only complete, so to speak, when it has sprung from the Father, operated by the Son, and perfected in grace by the Holy Spirit. Only then an action can be said to have been caused by God.¹⁷ This follows the fitting pattern of action: whatever happens inside is mirrored outside. The Holy Spirit is the gift of new life to us, because he is the eternal Gift of the relationship of Father and Son.¹⁸

Similarly to Augustine, Gregory builds on the issue of causality and the inner life of God. Although we are pressed to say that it is only one cause in the economy of

¹⁷I will come back to the definition of acts and causality later. This by Nyssa, is a good start, but still raises some questions. Nyssa never really clarifies how the persons relate to one another in order to complete the action. Furthermore, there are definitions of acts that need to be addressed. Ultimately, these are questions raised by later analytical approaches. These cannot be ignored in order to bring precision to our discussion.

¹⁸On the naming of the Holy Spirit as Gift and Love see *De Trinitate*, chapter 15. For an excellent exposition of this section see, Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church*, 2016, 106. Levering says, “When we call the Son the Father’s gift, or the Spirit the gift of the Father and Son, ‘gift’ here refers to origin and to the fact that the gift ‘is personally distinguished from the giver’ so as to be actively able to ‘use or rather enjoy Himself.’ This kind of gift, Aquinas observes, ‘does not imply subjection, but only origin as regards the giver.’ Here is the decisive explanation (as the next article will make explicit): the distinction between the ‘Giver’ (Father and Son) and the ‘Gift’ (Holy Spirit) involves an eternal relation of origin, which accounts for a personal distinction within the Trinity. Lastly, there are also ‘gifts’ that are ‘essentially distinct from the giver.’ The created gifts of the Spirit in us—gifts of grace—are ‘gifts’ that are essentially distinct from the Spirit.”

salvation, Gregory establishes that the one cause must be seen through different angles: One is the cause and another is of the cause. He clarifies stating that this talk about distinction of cause is not referring to the nature of God, but to the manner of existence. “To say that anything exists without generation sets forth the mode of its existence, but what exists is not indicated by this phrase.” Here we see again the caution of not naming the divine nature. The relations of origins, however, are enough for us to see and apply within an economical shape a unique and one operation of God that differs in manner of cause (because of the different relations) but is one because it is one undivided nature.

Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation: Some Necessary Scholastic Distinctions

Although Augustine and Nyssa’s description of the inseparable operations of the Trinity are laudable, there are still some points that need to be clarification. Thomas Aquinas concepts of Real and Subsistent Relations illuminate the fittingness of the incarnation in a way that the Spirit’s work have a certain quality coherent with who he is in Godself. This move will help to discern whether there is a sanctification that the Son works in the human nature, and if so, what is the quality of this sanctification?

Real Relations

The concept of Real Relations as expounded by St. Thomas aims to establish a certain difference between creator and creature and also differentiate the persons of the Trinity. According to Gilles Emery, Real Relations have a two sided perspective: “(1) it is a pure relating to another, and (2) it has existence within a subject.”¹⁹ In (1) each person of the Trinity is distinguished and constituted through the relation he has with the other person. Creatures are not brought into this region. In (2) the relation is the same as

¹⁹Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010), 340.

the divine essence. Meaning that each person possess fully the divine essence. Here Aquinas permits a talk about creatures. For him, God creates through the divine essence, meaning that “God creates because he is God *and in so far as he is God.*”²⁰ The personal relations in its pure forms are totally constitutive of each person, but the person *is* involved in the external relation to the world in the manner in which he is God. Put another way, “the eternal processions are the cause and the rationale of the making of creatures.”²¹ Here is what has been hailed as one of the greatest moves from Aquinas—his theology of fittingness. Aquinas asserts that a thing is fitting “which belongs to it by reason of its very nature.”²² And although it is the very same nature that is of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the manner or reason in which this nature subsists in the Son makes him the suitable one to assume human flesh.²³

The idea of a fitting operation then is not grounded merely in the aesthetics of the personal relation, but more fundamentally, on the actuality of that pure act in the inner life of God. The incarnation is fitting, not because it adds something to the pure relations of God, but because the incarnation is an external operation that accords with God in the manner of existence as Son who is generated by the Father.

²⁰Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 341.

²¹I *Sent* d. 14, q. 1, a. 1.

²²*ST* 3.1.1.A

²³The usual caveat is needed here to maintain a classical, proper Christology. Aquinas himself provides it: “Although in God Nature and Person are not really distinct, yet they have distinct meanings, as was said above, inasmuch as person signifies after the manner of something subsisting. And because human nature is united to the Word, so that the Word subsists in it, and not so that His Nature receives therefrom any addition or change, it follows that the union of human nature to the Word of God took place in the person, and not in the nature. Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt explains that following the teaching of Chalcedon, Aquinas does not conceive of the person that unites humanity and divinity as some neutral *suppositum*; rather, it is the second person of the trinity, the divine Word. Thus, although Christ has a genuine human nature, this nature exists in the divine *suppositum* of the Word. Strictly speaking, therefore, although Christ has a human nature, he is not a human ‘person.’ However, we must remember that for Thomas, ‘person’ means the subject to which things are attributed it does not carry our modern notion of ‘personality.’” Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt and Thomas Aquinas, *Holy Teaching: Introducing the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 180.

Divine Missions and Acts

So far, the theology of a Real Relation has helped us see the fittingness of an action. This action, in time, is what has been called a mission. A mission as Legge describes, reflecting on Thomas, has two key elements: “(1) the person’s eternal procession, and (2) the divine person’s relation to the creature in whom this person is made present in a new way, according to some created effect.”²⁴ In (1), also reflecting in the constitutive relations of origin, Aquinas argues that there are two acts in the divine nature: one of intellect and another of will. The act of intellect is seen as God the Father who understands Himself and eternally generates the Word. Since nothing can be loved by will unless it is conceived by the intellect, then the Spirit of Love proceeds from the Father and the Son.

The activity of the Trinity outside of the blessed life in its mission includes “the eternal procession [described above], and adds something, namely, a temporal effect.”²⁵ And even though as Nyssa stated, there is only one cause of divine action, because there is only one God, this one God acts in a manner fitting to his relative properties. The addition of the created effect is not to the general deity per se, but to one specific person. Hence the incarnation, is the temporal effect of the divine mission added to the Son.

Catherine LaCugna has objected to the notion of inseparable operations exactly on the basis that one cannot identify a specific act of a person if all acts are in themselves of all three persons of the Trinity. She states,

Once it is assumed that the Trinity is present in every instance where Scripture refers to God, and once the axiom *opera ad extra* is in place, no longer, it seems, is there any need for the plurality of persons in the economy. At least it is no longer

²⁴Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 15.

²⁵*ST I. 43., A. 2 ad 3.* This section on divine missions has been largely inspired by Adonis Vidu, “Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation,” *Journal of Analytic Theology* 4, no. 1 (2016): 112–15

possible to single out any one person in relation to a particular activity.²⁶ As has been shown here, however, the actuality of the processions allows for a mode of action towards outside that befits one specific person even though all three persons are in one sense involved in this *act*. According to LaCugna, God's self-communication "is not a copy or analogy of the inner Trinity but is the Trinity itself; this means that the communication can occur only in the intra-divine manner of the selfgiving of Father to Son and Spirit. Both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, then, the divine persons 'do not differ from their own way of communicating themselves.'"²⁷ Any mediation between true expression of Godself and history that express difference in the threeness of God is not a true self-communication of God.

Adonis Vidu has also made the case for a specific definition of act that avoids LaCugna's fears. Reflecting on Thomas and applying some analytical principles, Vidu concludes that an act is an event "which has both active and passive components. There is an active agency involved here, in so far as an agent is causing the assumption of the human nature. There is a patient too, though, insofar as the assumption is predicated of a particular person."²⁸ Vidu urges the reader to think about a butler dressing his master. The master is really the one taking the clothes, but the act of dressing is an inseparable act *caused* by the butler and the master. In the same manner "the Son alone assumed human nature, as long as assuming human nature does not designate an action, but the state resulting from an action."²⁹ John Owen's perception is interesting here. He states:

As unto *original efficiency*, [the assumption] was the act of the divine nature, and so, consequently, of the *Father, Son, and Spirit*. For so are all outward acts of God – the divine nature being the immediate principle of all such operations . . . As unto

²⁶Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 97–98.

²⁷Catherine Mowry Lacugna, "Re-Conceiving the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation" *SJT* vol 38, no. 1 (1985): 7

²⁸Vidu, "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 112.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 113.

authoritative designation, it was the act of the Father . . . As unto the *term of the assumption*, or the taking of our nature unto himself, it was the peculiar act of the person of the Son.³⁰

The end of the incarnation is ascribed to the Son, but it is clear that the in operation that is concerned with taking human nature, the entire Trinity is involved.

Invisible and Visible Missions

It is natural and easy to recognize the visible missions of the Trinity. The Son is sent into the world and the Spirit comes as a dove. These visible manifestations are not alone, however, as they are also accompanied by invisible missions. The invisible missions are “the sending of a divine person to a human being (or angel) through visible grace and it ‘signifies a new mode of that person’s indwelling, and his origin from another.’”³¹ The invisible missions are, according to Thomas, connected to works of habitual grace because the sending of the Son and the Spirit into souls is not perceptible, even though the manifestation of that sending is. The perception is made visible though character transformation—new habits (or habitual grace).³² The visible missions are “the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit through visible signs (at Christ’s baptism and transfiguration, at Easter John 20:22-23], and at Pentecost [Acts 2]).”³³ Both in invisible as in the visible missions, the *taxis* is not reverted for the persons follow their processions and add created effects.

Fallenness and the Operations of the Trinity

Proper order of Trinitarian operations allows us to speak of causality and *taxis*.

³⁰*Works*, 1:225. I owe this quote to Tyler Wittman’s work, Tyler R. Wittman, “The End of the Incarnation: John Owen, Trinitarian Agency and Christology,” *IJST* 15, no. 3 (July 2013): 298.

³¹Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 25.

³²For a good defense of Protestant appropriation of habitual grace, see Michael Allen, *Sanctification*, ed. Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 246-55.

³³Gilles Emery, “‘Theologia’ and ‘Dispensatio’: The Centrality of the Divine Missions in St Thomas’s Trinitarian Theology,” *The Thomist* 74, no. 4 (October 2010): 520.

What does assuming a fallen human nature have to do with the inseparable operations of the Trinity? In order to answer this question, let us revisit Barth and Torrance's discussions on the *non-assumptus*.

Karl Barth

For Barth, the relationship of the Trinity is key in the Gethsemane passage. This must be explained in the Trinitarian existence *ad intra* that justifies the mode of obedience of the Son in his revelation *ad extra*. This relationship of "reiteration" is so strong that tends to diminish analogical mode of thinking from the creatures. Hence, the obedience of Christ in the world is as true here as it is in God's inner reality.³⁴ The Gethsemane episode then shows not only how Jesus is the obedient Son of God, but also how he must trust the Father to keep him from falling.

In Jesus's trust was built the fallen human nature he assumed. He had to overcome that fallenness by trusting in the Father. As has been argued previously, this does not mean that there is fallenness in God's own life but that reverts Trinitarian operations by placing a kind of sanctification that is due to the Spirit. The mode of sanctification is covered under chapter 5, but what concerns us here is that the cause and *taxis* of Trinitarian agency seem to be reverted.

As discussed above, the cause of a trinitarian operation are always rooted in the unity of the essence of God. Moreover, "God creates [or we may say, provide] because he is God *and in so far as he is God*."³⁵ The person-relations constitute the basis of the acts of God towards the outside. For Barth, even though there is a presupposition of the antecedent life of the Son who positively affirms the sinless of Christ, Barth quickly qualifies it by stating that such thing is only a presupposition. The reality is that

³⁴See *CD IV/1*, 178-202.

³⁵Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas*, 341, emphasis added.

the electing grace, as it is repeated in the incarnation, is repeated with empowerment (ἐξουσία) in sanctification. “He receives power.”³⁶ This kind of power received in history has been described in Church history as fitting to the Spirit.

Note that there is nothing wrong in relating the Spirit to Christ in the incarnation. As we have been reminded, the incarnation is caused by the Trinity in inseparable fashion. The issue arises when Barth relates the agency of Spirit separately than that of the Son. The Son is not empowered in a vacuum, so to speak. The Spirit’s action in Christ is always and everywhere also caused by the Son himself with the Father. This is a corollary of the *filioque*—the Spirit comes forth from the Father and of the Son. Divine missions “includes and discloses the eternal procession upon which is founded.”³⁷ Therefore, the receiving of the Spirit’s power in the sanctification of Christ cannot be divorced from Christ’s own breathing forth of the Spirit in his own human nature.

Furthermore, for Barth, the continuity of the hypostatic unity rests in the work of the Spirit sanctifying Christ. Moreover, “He did not sin, because from this origin He lived as a man in this true human freedom – the freedom for obedience – not knowing or having any other freedom.”³⁸ Although Barth pays some lip service to the personal origin of the Son as a constitution of resulting sinlessness, this cannot be the determining factor for the history of the man Jesus. His humanity is fully dependent on true obedience *via* the grace of the Spirit.

As Barth prepares to discuss the *communicatio naturarum* (which as I have shown previously, ends up heading with the *communicatio gratiarum*; contrary to the tradition) he sets the stage with a brief Trinitarian theology of the incarnation.³⁹ It is true,

³⁶CD IV/2, 96

³⁷Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 89.

³⁸CD IV/2, 93.

³⁹CD IV/2, 94–97.

he says, that the Son of God does not exist in isolation during the incarnation.

Furthermore, “the three divine modes of existence are to be distinguished, but they cannot be separated.”⁴⁰ Because the Son is always and everywhere present, the Trinity is there also. So, in Barth’s account, the man Jesus is sustained by the Father’s blessing and his “Yes” and “impelled inwardly by the comfort and *power* and direction of the Holy Spirit.”⁴¹ The Trinitarian set up presented here is used to discard any notion that Christ’s humanity is deified. Christ’s humanity does not become the fourth person of the Trinity, but the humanity he assumes takes the full share and participation in creation, as the Son takes full share in the deity.

Hence, the determination of the human essence assumed by the Son in obedience and sinlessness is not a naked reality, but it is the Godhead who surrounds this man like a garment (something external to the condition of this man).⁴² This position, however, yields a rejection of any *inward* disposition of the Son caused by himself or by a classical notion of Thomistic missions. Barth himself asserts (probably with Thomas in mind) that “there can be no transferred condition, or an infused habit in this grace addressed to him.”⁴³ For Barth, there can be no permanent *state* of blessing, since Christ comes in history and encounter us anew.

As stated above, if we follow Thomas’s concepts of invisible missions as a corollary of the *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*, then the *inward* disposition of the Son is breathed out from himself with the Spirit yielding a certain disposition and state of blessing.⁴⁴ This is because the Spirit is sent by the Son into himself and that invisible

⁴⁰CD IV/2, 94.

⁴¹CD IV/2, 94. Emphasis added.

⁴²CD IV/2, 94

⁴³CD IV/2, 94

⁴⁴It is important to note here that in a sense we are comparing two different metaphysical approaches. My goal is not to ascertain which one is correct. I am already presupposing that a Thomistic approach is correct. Barth’s approach, specially through his actualism results in a different form to see

mission is consistent with the work of the Spirit who comes as the perfecter and finisher of something started by the Father and the Son. This does not mean that the Son does an incomplete job in assuming human nature. It is paramount to keep in mind the Thomistic notion of act: that an act is caused by the three persons (but does not have three different causes), even if there is one person who is considered the *terminus* of such action. This invisible, perfecting, and sanctifying work of the Spirit is then “part” of the divine cause of the Son’s assumption.

T. F. Torrance

As seen in chapter 3, Torrance’s avoidance of any dualistic notions of the atonement, motivated his rejection of what he termed, “Latin Heresy.” For Torrance the understanding of the incarnation not as “God *in man*, but God as man, implies a rejection of the idea that the humanity of Christ was merely instrumental in the hands of God.”⁴⁵

The way Torrance builds upon the mystery of the incarnation is inherently Trinitarian. Hence the emphasis on the fact that we must contemplate Jesus as we contemplate the divine activity: with “the [patristic] *being-of-God-in-his-acts* and the Reformation emphasis on the *acts-of- God-in-his-being*.”⁴⁶ Any separation between this emphasis, and we return to the “Latin heresy.” The structure of the Trinitarian argument is as presented below.

First, the *homoousios* doctrine of the Nicene Fathers forbade any dualistic separation of who the Son is in himself (in Trinitarian life) and his revelation as Jesus of Nazareth (remember, “there is no God behind the back of Jesus Christ”). Hence, union with God “in and through Jesus Christ who is of one and the same being with God

things. That should be taken into consideration, but in the end, I think it is a false metaphysical approach. For Barth’s actualism, see Paul Nimmo, “Actualism” in *The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth*, ed. Richard E. Burnett (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 1-3.

⁴⁵Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 150.

⁴⁶ Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 85.

belongs to the inner heart of the atonement.⁴⁷ Therefore the incarnation represents the lifting up of mankind to the inner life of the Trinity because man is *homoousios* with Christ, who is *homoousios* with God.

Second, this unity between God and man is *real*. The term here is being used in its technical form. Meaning at the incarnation “*God sent his own Son in the concrete likeness of sinful flesh (ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας), and as sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*”⁴⁸ Torrance continues pressing the issue by thinking that in this unity, Christ took what was ours and imparted to us what was his. This *real* and ontological union places the incarnation at center stage (even if it is not *in toto*) of the soteriological work. The “incarnational assumption of our human nature was at the same time reconciling, healing, sanctifying and recreating activity.”⁴⁹

Third, this work of sanctification and healing is only connected to our side of the equation. Our persons need sanctification, whereas Christ’s person does not need any, and as such, even our persons are only derivatively persons. The Spirit gave the Son his uncreated human person, so-to-speak, and we are *persons personata* whereas Christ is *persona personans*.⁵⁰ Against dualism, Torrance claims that Christ’s Spirit-given-uncreated person personalizes our created persons. Because we are persons but are not sincere and hypocrites, we tend to live dual personal lives. The Word personalizes us by taking out insincerity and living it in full sincerity.⁵¹

Some issues pointed out by Torrance are worthy and commendable; some, however, are questionable. First, when we talk about man being lifted up to the

⁴⁷Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 159.

⁴⁸Ibid., 160.

⁴⁹Ibid., 162.

⁵⁰Ibid., 230.

⁵¹Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 69.

Trinitarian life of God, caution is advised. Appealing to the doctrine of inseparable operations is helpful in this dialogue, for the participatory aspect is made possible by the Spirit's engrafting of man into the life of God *via* union with Christ.

The soteriological processes of engrafting, sanctifying, and elevating human nature are fundamentally Trinitarian, and as such, they follow a certain order and principle of cause. The exchange described by Torrance ("incarnational assumption of our human nature was at the same time reconciling, healing, sanctifying and recreating activity."⁵²) where the Son gives us what is his and we give him what is ours tends to attribute to the Son a work fitting in order to the Spirit. As Billings notes, the restoration is in "Christ through the Spirit as the believer grows to be 'conformable' to God; this process is culminated in the participation in Christ's resurrection and glorification, and in a beatific vision."⁵³ The Son sends the Spirit to us who engrafts us into the Son in a mystical union.⁵⁴ The *duplex gratia* of Spirit's work (justification and sanctification), however, is one manifested in one's growth of the beatific vision. It is true that the Spirit is involved in both ends of the *duplex gratia*, but Torrance's scheme of "objective salvation"—making one already present in Christ by the sheer fact of participating in the same human nature—tends to devalue the subjective growth in the beatific vision propelled by the Holy Spirit. Mark Garcia makes an important contribution here by reminding us of one of the qualitative differences between the personal union of the Son with a particular, human nature, and our engrafting in him:

Unlike what is in view in the christological *communicatio* model, the union of Christ with the believer is not a hypostatic union. In our union with Christ, as Calvin repeatedly insisted, there is a union of persons in the bond of the Spirit—a union,

⁵²Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 69.

⁵³Billings, "United to God through Christ.": 320

⁵⁴Language borrowed from Calvin: "That joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union [*unio mystica*]*—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed.*" Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.10.

then, of a different order. The Reformed Orthodox were wisely sensitive to this point, including in their discussions of the *unio mystica* or *unio spiritualis* the added qualifier *sive praesentiae gratiae tantum* (“by the presence of grace alone”) in order to distinguish saving union with Christ from the hypostatic union of natures in the person of Christ.⁵⁵

Any talk about participation must thread carefully both in its Trinitarian and metaphysical implications. Mark Garcia exemplifies that here by reminding us of the different order in which we participate in the Son’s own life. Attributing the kind of participation that Torrance does will make the Son the *terminus* of the divine activity in sanctification. And as it is clear scripturally and theologically, sanctification (habitual or progressive) is a work of the Spirit (1 Pet 1:2; Rom 8:13).

Second, the kind of incarnational soteriology emphasized by Torrance seems to lend a hand to a diminishment of a robust Trinitarian soteriology. Kevin Vanhoozer puts the question in a masterful way: “is soteriology (i.e., participation in Christ) simply ontology writ large (i.e., a matter of partaking in human nature), as if being human were itself a sufficient condition for being ‘in Christ’?”⁵⁶ There is a tendency in Torrance to overshadow everything in light of the incarnation. This move has raised questions, for years, as to whether Barth, but especially Torrance were universalists. The answer by both theologians and their interpreters has not satisfied; staying at a mere agnosticism about the possibility of universal salvation, but never rising to certainty. This discussion might seem like it has no resemblance to talk about inseparable operations. However, Making soteriology, as a whole, subservient to the incarnation leads to a certain kind of divine action. This action displaces the Spirit’s life in participation. If participation is merely achieved by sharing humanity with Christ, then regeneration loses its Spirit-giving facet.

⁵⁵Mark A. Garcia, “Imputation and the Christology of Union with Christ: Calvin, Osiander, and the Contemporary Quest for a Reformed Model,” *WTJ* 11 n. 4 (Fall 2006): 248.

⁵⁶Kevin Vanhoozer, “From ‘Blessed in Christ’ to ‘Being in Christ’” in, *In Christ in Paul: Explorations in Paul’s Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Constantine R. Campbell (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 18.

Third and finally, it is unclear how is that Christ gives us our persons but heals our nature. The issue at stake here is fundamentally a person-nature distinction. The entirety of human existence has been affected by sin (person and nature), but when Torrance speaks of the Spirit giving the Son his uncreated human person, we have to ask why is the Spirit initiating something in the divine activity?⁵⁸ As John Owen states, the Spirit's role is of "concluding, completing, perfecting acts."⁵⁹ That is because as stated earlier in this chapter, "God creates because he is God *and in so far as he is God.*"⁶⁰ The divine person *is* involved in the external relation to the world in the manner in which he is God or, again, "the eternal processions are the cause and the rationale of the making of creatures."⁶¹

Concluding Thoughts on Inseparable Operations and the *Non-Assumptus*

Moving to the next chapters, the foundation laid out here sets the tone for divine actions. At the risk of being overly repetitive, we must emphasize that God acts not contrary to who he is in himself. So the next chapter on grace, the way that God gives grace to his creation (including Jesus's own humanity) must not contradict the blessedness of his own life.

At the conclusion of this chapter it is worth remembering that the relationship of Jesus's humanity and his divine person are non-competitive. Because God is not in this *genus* and is not being like creatures are being, the relationship he establishes with his creations must not be thought as cooperating or competing with his own blessed life. As Henk Schoot stated, "God is not different within a certain genus, on the basis of a

⁵⁸Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 230.

⁵⁹*Works*, 4:94.

⁶⁰Emery, 341, emphasis added.

⁶¹I *Sent* d. 14, q. 1, a. 1.

common similarity. . . . God is ‘outside’ of any genus, and thus God is not different from creatures the way in which creatures mutually differ. God differs differently.”⁶² God’s simplicity stands as the background both of God’s oneness and as basis for his relationship to the world as one who does not need anything even when he unites himself to man. Being different even in the way that he differs from man, God can unite himself to another nature following the fitting order in which he is himself, but even in that not change his own being. As Tanner stated, “Only what is not a kind—and therefore not bound by the usual differences between natures—can bring together in the most intimate unity divinity and humanity.”⁶³

The proposals of Christ’s assumption of a fallen flesh could be corrected by applying not only the concept of inseparable operations but the Thomistic apparatus behind it. By doing this, it seems like they would be less prone to buy into a fallen position at the risk of reverting Trinitarian order. It is clear from the descriptions above that by stating fallenness in Christ’s flesh, the invisible missions of the persons of the Trinity do not follow the visible. Since Christ needs to receive sanctification that does not come necessarily through the presence of the divine Son in that human body/soul, but through the Spirit’s power from keeping him from sinning, then the Spirit’s action seems to be independent from the Son’s own sending. Keeping with the axiom that what happens inside the life of God is not contradicted in the outside, we need to reject the fallen position on that basis.

12. ⁶²Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus Humanity and the Trinity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001),

⁶³Ibid., 11.

CHAPTER 5
GRACE OF UNION AND HABITUAL GRACE

Introduction

It is my intention here to show that the scholastic use of “grace of union” and “habitual grace” advance an important theological safeguard in Christology, especially when discussing the possibility of fallenness in Christ. Grace of union is the term used by the Scholastics (such as Thomas Aquinas and John Owen) to describe how there were no merits that preceded the union of the person of the Son with his human nature. Owen defines this grace as a unique dignity of Christ’s human nature not shared with any other human being.¹ Moreover, Owen ties it to the work of the person of the Son, who graciously renders the human nature of Christ “glorious and amiable unto believers.”² For in this notion, the human nature of Christ receives logical priority over all other created realities. Habitual grace is the grace God disposes to the soul of man in order for him to be sanctified. This grace “pertains to all saints insofar as they receive sanctifying grace from God. As such it is something created and finite which elevates the spiritual creature to share truly but imperfectly in the life of God.”³

In order to do that I will first discuss the metaphysics of the incarnation. How did the church arrive at a robust relationship of the Son with a human nature within the entire matrix of the relationship of nature and grace? In this section I will depend heavily both on Thomas Aquinas, Herman Bavinck, and their interpreters development of this

¹*Works*, 1:227–28.

²*Ibid.*, 1:228.

³Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 87. cf. *ST* III. Q 7, A. 11.

paradigm. Second, with the help of Thomas Aquinas, I will discuss the nature of grace of union and then of habitual grace and whether or not Christ had habitual grace. Finally, I will demonstrate how the sanctification of Christ within this Reformed-Thomistic framework does not allow for fallenness to be introduced in the human nature assumed by the Son.

The Perennial Debate of Grace vs. Nature and its Relationship to the Incarnation of the Son

Whatever it may be said of the relationship of God and the world, it has to be understood in God's free will to be in relationship with his creation. Man, as a created being, has a *telos* given by God.⁴ The debate that sprung, especially in Roman Catholic circles at mid-twentieth century was whether man had an intrinsic desire to be in relationship with God (hence, this position was termed *intrinsicism*) or if man was created in a pure form of its nature and the grace of God elevates human nature (hence, a position called *extrinsicism*).

For a long time after Thomas, interpreters of his theology assumed a form of pure nature that was explicitly extrinsic. It was with Maurice Blondel and his work, *L'Action* that things began to shift. Blondel argued that "it is not outside of man, but within him, that we must look for the secret judgement of eternity."⁵ Although the work of Blondel did not get much traction at the time because he was a philosopher and not a theologian, Henri de Lubac popularized Blondel's project in the realm of theology. For de Lubac the extreme distinction between the pure nature of man and the supernatural (*Surnaturel*) does not explicate man's innate desire for the beatific vision. In fact, the supernatural is not:

⁴This *telos* does not make God obligated to give man's its completion. For even if all men have a desire to see God, this kind of creation is still dependent on God's sustenance and nature. So, in a sense, God is only compelled by himself and his own nature.

⁵Maurice Blondel, *Action : Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984), 340

something adventitious, something 'superadded' such as may have been the 'supernatural gifts' attributed to humankind while it was still in the state of innocence; yet it 'dignifies' humanity much more than these did; it raises humanity much higher still above the level of its own *essence*, since it is entirely out of proportion with that essence. Finally, the supernatural must not be defined solely by its characteristic of gratuitousness; and yet it is infinitely more gratuitous than any other kind of favour could possibly be, and infinitely surpasses the *necessities* [*exigences*] of any possible nature.⁶

But the natural-supernatural distinction in de Lubac serves only as a backdrop for the concept of nature and grace. Grace is in the creature himself already inclining its nature to the divine. "[T]he desire of humanity for God is the result of divine action, whether by participation and imitation due to grace, *or - what amounts to the same activity - through ongoing dialogue of the soul with God.*"⁷ G. W. Parker explains:

Nature and grace for de Lubac can be elucidated in three points. Firstly, de Lubac believed that humans were created for communion with God and therefore had a natural inclination to desire God. Secondly, nature and grace are unique in that they are both a gift from God, however, there is the necessity to distinguish them. Thirdly, the natural desire for the supernatural is incomplete without grace.⁸

As a reaction to de Lubac's reinterpretation of Thomas, several Roman Catholic theologians proposed that a pure nature must be conceived; at the risk of making the beatific vision something due to man by God. Feingold asserts that the demonstration of an *elicited* natural desire for the vision of God thus manifests the great fittingness of our supernatural elevation without endangering the distinction of the two orders."⁹

⁶David Grumett, *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 9.

⁷*Ibid.*, 17

⁸Gregory W. Parker, "Reformation or Revolution? Herman Bavinck and Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace," *Perichoresis* 15, no. 3 (October 1, 2017): 84.

⁹Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas and His Interpreters* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press Ave Maria Univ, 2004), 432. Also, commenting on a passage of Aquinas, Thomas White asserts that "controversy exists over whether passages such as this one affirm a natural inclination toward the supernatural grace of beatitude (the position of De Lubac), or rather a natural tendency in the human intellect to desire the immediate knowledge of the first truth (the classical Dominican position). My own view is the latter. However, at least one thing remains incontrovertible. Because the mind is capable of knowing God as a transcendent, but undisclosed, cause, it is also naturally capable of desiring to know God as he is in himself. And in this way, natural knowledge of God leads to a terminus that is both a kind of natural perfection and an intrinsically incomplete act. That is to say, we can achieve imperfect happiness through the natural knowledge of God. For in knowing the effects (and the cause through the effects), the human person attains to a kind of wisdom (the knowledge of the primary cause of being). Yet by the same measure, this person also wishes to know the cause in itself that is to say, the essence of the cause." Thomas White, *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural*

Protestants might think that they have no interest in who is interpreting Thomas correctly, but popular characterizations of Thomas among Protestantism (especially in the Dutch Neo-calvinism camp) has tended to be bleak, as if Thomas held to a sort of pure state of nature apart from grace. This is not the position of *intrinsicists* or *extrinsicists*. For both positions, Thomas saw that nature has some sort of proportionality to grace. The main question was whether this desire needed to be elicited or it was immanently present in humanity.¹⁰

Moreover, Arvin Vos has showed that the source of confusion in Protestantism regarding this theology has its roots in late nineteenth century Roman Catholics characterizations of text-book thomisms and not of Thomas himself.¹¹ As we make our way into Herman Bavinck's interaction with grace and nature it will be clear some lines of continuity and discontinuity with these understandings -especially in his missing concept of grace and Christology.

Herman Bavinck and His Interpreters on Grace and Nature

The intramural debate between Roman Catholics in the end of the nineteenth century, spilling into the twentieth century, eventually made its way into the Reformed churches. Herman Bavinck is widely regarded as one who analyzed whole concepts of theology through the relationship of nature and grace. He even states that

Every Christian must take into account two factors: creation and re-creation, nature and grace, earthly and heavenly vocation, etc.; and in accordance with the different relationship in which he puts these to each other, his religious life assumes a different character. Man's relationship to God is determinative of his relationship to things in general. Whoever breaks the divinely appointed connection between nature and grace is led to sacrifice one to the other. Socinianism and Anabaptism,

Theology (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009), 208.

¹⁰See Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen, eds., *Aquinas among the Protestants*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), chap 11.

¹¹A. Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought: A Critique of Protestant Views on the Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1985), 152.

Rationalism and Mysticism are the resulting deviant paths into which the Christian goes astray.¹²

Although not using the terms (extrinsic and intrinsic) Bavinck taps into the issue by noticing that in Roman Catholic thought, nature is posed as something so low that grace is needed *ut elevet et sanet*. This Neoplatonic conception of nature is eventually rejected fundamentally in a Reformed theology that sees nature as essentially good. Grace is not needed to elevate human nature because grace is not antithetical to nature, but only to sin.¹³ Hence, we can say anachronistically, that Bavinck placed himself in the intrinsic side of the debate—seeing that there is no need for a superadded gift into human nature’s “pure form.”¹⁴

¹²Herman Bavinck, *De Bazuin* XLVIII, 12 (March 23, 1900). As quoted in Jan Veenhof, *Nature and Grace in Herman Bavinck*, trans. Albert M. Wolters (Sioux Center, IO: Dordt College Press, 2006), 14. The citation of Veenhof probably needs clarification in the current Bavinck scholarship. This dissertation is not a work on Bavinck, but it probably needs to be said that I do not agree with Veenhof’s portrait of two Bavincks. See James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck’s Organic Motif* (New York: T&T Clark, 2014).

¹³*RD* III, 577.

¹⁴I say anachronistically, because de Lubac is post-Bavinck. G. W. Parker makes a good point: “Henri de Lubac’s treatment of the relationship between nature and grace will be critiqued by Herman Bavinck’s ‘grace restores nature’ theme. In two significant addresses, Bavinck critiqued a Roman Catholic approach to nature and grace. De Lubac’s influence upon Roman Catholic thinking addressing nature and grace occurred post-Bavinck and has altered Catholic thinking on the subject. Neo-Calvinist scholar, Wolter Huttinga admits that Bavinck and de Lubac offer similar critiques of Roman Catholicism (Huttinga 2014). The question remains then, do Bavinck’s critiques still hold? I propose that Bavinck’s account of *grace restores nature* still makes valid critiques of a post-Vatican II construction of nature and grace. The paper is broken into three sections: (1) an exploration of de Lubac’s nature and grace theme, (2) the framework of Bavinck’s ‘grace restores nature’ theme, and (3) a Bavinckian critique of de Lubac’s nature and grace theme.” See Parker, “Reformation or Revolution?” More fundamentally Parker concludes that a Bavinckian approach distances himself from de Lubac because Is it the case that Bavinck and the *nouvelle théologie* are cut from the same cloth? We must answer in the negative. Bavinck’s four-pronged critique of Roman Catholic teachings on nature and grace draws out clear distinctions that remain between Protestants and Catholics after Vatican II. While there are certainly similarities between Bavinck and de Lubac’s critiques of Rome, the parallels are only skin deep as there is still significant difference between their nature and grace theme. Vanhoozer contrasts the problem vividly when he says, ‘The Gospel is the good news that men and women are adopted as children of God, not because human nature has by grace been “elevated”, but because human sinners (persons) have been forgiven’ (Vanhoozer 2016: 49). One must recognize in de Lubac’s own critiques of Rome, that he too is challenging the Thomistic tradition that Echeverria and others claims is non-existent. Therefore, we must not only consider Bavinck’s critiques vindicated against Vatican II constructions, but also recognize that Bavinck was not ‘simply mistaken’ in his critiques of Vatican I constructions in his day. A few problem areas remain. Firstly, grace and nature remain oppositional for De Lubac. So although De Lubac denounces that there is dualistic ‘superadditum’ that elevates nature, nature is still transformed. For De Lubac, therefore, nature and grace is one of revolution. For Bavinck nature is reformed at the loss of sin. Secondly, de Lubac’s ethics remain deontological due to the inherent dualism that remains within the system. One must suggest then with Mattson that the uncritical reception of Aquinas by Protestants, and in this case especially in Post-Vatican II constructions is unwarranted. While Catholic theologians and some Protestants may continue to shudder at Bavinck’s critiques it ultimately is unhelpful to gloss over the differences between the two. Perhaps Bavinck’s covenantal framework would provide de Lubac the coherence that his system desires, for ‘all of

Brian Mattson's excellent study, *Restored to our Destiny: Eschatology & the Image of God in Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics* directs the attention to Bavinck's analysis that the Spirit is not higher than the material; and pays high dividends in Christology. Mattson's work distills Bavinck's treatment to Christology with three movements of preparation: the triune God, creation, and the history of revelation.¹⁵ Contrary to Barthian impulses that have its starting point in Christ, christology (although central) cannot be where the theological enterprise begins. "Although it is a mystery, the incarnation is not, for Bavinck a complete *novum*."¹⁶ Christ comes in the context of creation and covenant; all of which presuppose the Trinitarian action of God.

These contexts set the stage for how one ought to understand the assumption of the human nature of Christ. The free gracious act to create, for Bavinck, follows God's decision to allow the fall.¹⁷ Mattson expands on this explaining that by following this scheme, Bavinck can maintain that Adam was a type of Christ and puts creation in its appropriate context of future maturation. Christ's nature is seen then as one of the same as Adam's and even in the incarnation it is already better. For from the beginning Christ is the *telos* of Adam (even before sin). Of course, in the resurrected state, Christ's human nature is glorified, but that does not mean that in the pre-resurrected state, it is of an inferior character. Again, we must remind ourselves that one of Bavinck's main motifs is to flee from Neoplatonic dualism in which the material is of a lower grade than the spiritual. Christ's initial incarnate state (what the Reformers called state of humiliation) *would* be in the same "level" as Adam's, for both are in the context of creation, we can

Scripture preaches the unity of God, that is, the unity of God of nature and of the God of grace, and therefore it cannot dualistically separate creation and recreation, for it always binds them organically and harmoniously together' (Bavinck 2017:105)."

¹⁵Brian G. Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 168.

¹⁶Ibid., 169.

¹⁷*RD* III, 278.

say that both are in the covenant of works. Nonetheless, the personal union introduced a category that would benefit Bavinck's treatment of Christ's human nature and aid him in interacting with Thomistic notions of grace—the categories of grace of union and habitual grace. This is not to say that Bavinck misses the point completely in his anthropology and Christology. But as John Bolt states,

While Bavinck is on surer ground in his criticism of the idea of merit in Thomas's views, a closer look at Thomas's anthropology in ST 1 a.95.1 makes it clear that on three crucial points there is no substantive disagreement between them. First, the creation of humanity was itself a gift of grace (Bavinck 2003-8, 2: 544). Second, in the Fall, something of the image is lost ("image" in Thomas; righteousness and holiness or the "narrow" sense of image in Bavinck) and something is retained ("likeness" in Thomas; broader sense of image in Bavinck; Bavinck 2003-8,2: 548). Third, there is a "plus" in redemption; humanity's final destiny is more than simply a return to Adams original state (Bavinck 2003-8, 2: 543-4). There is no substantial disagreement between Thomas and Bavinck on these points. Bavinck's misreading of Thomas is an uncharacteristic misstep on his part. The point we made earlier (from Arvin Vos) that late nineteenth-century critics of Roman Catholic theology were criticizing the Thomistic textbook tradition rather than Thomas himself is true here as well. Bavinck got caught up in the groundswell of Protestant unanimity where critics tended to repeat one another.¹⁹

These missing categories only at surface seem to contradict Bavinck's axiom that grace is not remedy for nature but for sin. One could ask: If Jesus's nature is perfect why do we need any talk about it receiving grace? At close inspection, however, we shall note that these categories are still aligned with Bavinck's rejection of dualism and with his organic motif.

Grace of Union

Richard Muller inserts the discussion of the grace of union under the rubric of the *Communicatio Gratiarum*. In Muller's description, the communication of graces includes the grace of union which means that the humanity of Christ is elevated above all creatures by its union to the person of the Son.²⁰

¹⁹John Bolt, "Doubting Reformational Anti-Thomism," in *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, ed. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 143.

²⁰Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally*

In Thomas's treatment of the hypostatic union he inserts the grace of union in several places. One of the first *loci* is when Aquinas asks whether the grace of union was natural to the man Christ?²¹ It seems at first that it was not natural because "the union of the Incarnation did not take place in the nature, but in the Person." Moreover, it seems that "grace is divided against nature, even as gratuitous things, which are from God, are distinguished from natural things, which are from an intrinsic principle."²² Thomas quickly asserts that

nature designates, in one way, nativity; in another, the essence of a thing. Hence natural may be taken in two ways: first, for what is only from the essential principles of a thing, as it is natural to fire to be carried up; second, we call natural to man what he has had from his birth, according to Eph. 2:3: We were by nature children of wrath; and Wis. 12:10: They were a wicked generation, and their malice natural. Therefore, the grace of Christ, whether of union or habitual, cannot be called natural as if caused by the principles of the human nature of Christ, although it may be called natural, as if coming to the human nature of Christ by the causality of His Divine Nature. But these two kinds of grace are said to be natural to Christ, inasmuch as He had them from His nativity, since from the beginning of His conception the human nature was united to the Divine Person, and His soul was filled with the gift of grace.²³

Aquinas is making the case that the grace of union is not a merit of the humanity of Christ in its own accord, but it is still natural in the sense that by the unity to the divine person, the human nature of Christ *naturally* receives grace. This first point already speaks to Bavinck's worries that nature is not a "receptacle" of grace because grace's function is for forgiveness and restoration. Aquinas is careful here to assert that the human nature of Christ is filled with grace because in union with the Divine Person the humanity of Christ receives the gift of the divine personal agency (already signaling the relationship of Grace of union with the *communicatio idiomatum*). It is *via* this relationship that the nature is elevated, not because it is lowly and worse than the spiritual

from *Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 72.

²¹ST III Q2. A12.

²²ST III Q2. A12. arg. 2.

²³ST III Q2. A12. s. c.

reality, but because in some way it participates in the divine consortium—even if only in a *predicatio verbalis*. Such a move is important because it respects the creator-creature distinction while still affirming God’s free agency in creation. On this point, Bavinck even seems to agree and be even more forceful when he says that “in Christ the human nature had to be prepared for union with the person of the Son, that is, to a union and communion with God as to that which no other creature had ever been dignified.”²⁴

Grace, however, is not the medium of the unity. Contrary to any other human being who is saved or sanctified by grace, Christ’s human nature follows a two-step sanctifying project. First, “the grace of union is the personal being that is given gratis from above to the human nature in the Person of the Word, and is the end of the assumption.”²⁵ This is what is commonly called the *communicatio idiomatum*. The human nature of Christ does not receive predication in isolation from the person of the Son, who *an-en-hypostatically* is the agent upon this human nature. Hence, Aquinas says that the giving of the person to the human nature makes the person the *term* (or end) of this assumption. Therefore, Aquinas is stating that in the union of creature and divine we must ultimately refer to neither but rather to the person of the Word—the ultimate “I.” This move becomes even clearer when Thomas asks whether the soul of Christ incorporated the Word or the divine essence. He states,

It is not with regard to the same, that a thing moves towards, and that it is, something; for to move belongs to a thing because of its matter or subject—and to be in act belongs to it because of its form. So too it is not with regard to the same, that it belongs to Christ to be ordained to be God by the grace of union, and to be God. For the first belongs to Him in His human nature, and the second, in His Divine Nature. Hence this is true: Christ as Man has the grace of union; yet not this: Christ as Man is God.²⁶

Second, and this will be explored later, Christ’s humanity is sanctified

²⁴*RD* III, 192

²⁵*ST* III. Q6. A6. co.

²⁶*ST* III. Q16. A11. ad. 2.

habitually. This, however, is only as a consequent reality of the grace of union. Because the Son unites himself to a human nature, the end result is a virtuous savior.

Meditating on the extent of the grace of God, Aquinas furthers his inquiry on whether the grace of union is infinite. His response is that because the person of the Son gives the gift of unity to the human nature and the person is infinite, this grace is an infinite grace.²⁷ This is because the gift is not poured into any substance of the soul or body of the human nature *per se*, but because the gift is the uniting itself. This will later be contrasted with habitual grace “since it is in the soul of Christ, as in a subject, and Christ’s soul is a creature having a finite capacity; hence the being of grace cannot be infinite, since it cannot exceed its subject.”²⁸

Let us take stock on Thomas’s concepts. The grace of union is not a mystic incorporation of the human nature into the divine consortium, but it is a slightly more forceful way of articulating the *communicatio naturarum* under the rubric of the *communicatio idiomatum*. It keeps what is proper to the human nature in place (such as finitude) and what is divine in its place (such as infinitude), but communicates it all to the divine person. The Son *qua* human has this grace from the moment of conception because it is from the beginning united to the divine person, something no other creature has ever been. Moreover, this grace is not accidental because the “personal dignity of the Word made human is [not] a common accident of both humanity and divinity.”²⁹ The union occurs in the person—a non-accidental *suppositum* who gives existence to every being. The grace of union then is underscored by the developments of the fifth ecumenical council of the church in which the human nature of Christ does not possess a person of its own, but it is *graced* in the union with the person of the eternal Word. It is

²⁷*ST* III. Q7. A11. co.

²⁸*ST* III. Q7. A11. co.

²⁹White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 86.

not graced humanity because it is sinful or it needs healing (answering to Bavinck's fears); it is graced because it participates in life with the Son. John Owen defines this grace even more forcefully as a unique dignity of Christ's human nature not shared with any other human being.³⁰ Moreover, Owen ties it to the work of the person of the Son, who graciously renders the human nature of Christ "glorious and amiable unto believers."³¹

Habitual Grace

Habitual grace does not have a good reputation in some protestant circles. Bavinck himself painted this concept as a Romanist tendency to elevate nature irrespective of sin.³² But what exactly is habitual grace? In his development of *habitus* theory, Aquinas follows Aristotle closely by seeing human actions in the context of the pursuit of the greater good.³³ According to Christopher Cleveland, Aquinas also follows Aristotle's understanding that habits are not isolated but are *caused* by the repetition of acts.³⁴ Habitual grace is then the gift of God given to the soul (the mereological locus of operations) of man in which the

spiritual powers (intellect and will) are united to God by knowledge and by love. Because the process of spiritual operations in the human person occurs habitually (by operations that move from capacity to capacity), the grace that enlivens these faculties is called 'habitual.' Under grace, the saints are given the capacity to move themselves freely to know and love God. Without grace given perpetually to inspire and sustain them in this, such acts are impossible.³⁵

Why then ascribe this kind of grace to Christ given that he already has infinite grace

³⁰*Works*, 1:227-28.

³¹*Works*, 1:228.

³²*RD III*, 574-575.

³³See Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1097b20-1098a17.

³⁴Christopher Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen* (Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2016), 75.

³⁵White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 87.

given to the human nature in the hypostatic union?

In *ST* III. Q7 Thomas gives several reasons for why it is necessary to ascribe habitual grace to Christ. He states:

It is necessary to suppose habitual grace in Christ for three reasons. First, on account of the union of His soul with the Word of God. For the nearer any recipient is to an inflowing cause, the more does it partake of its influence. Now the influx of grace is from God, according to Ps. 83:12: The Lord will give grace and glory. And hence it was most fitting that His soul should receive the influx of Divine grace. Second, on account of the dignity of this soul, whose operations were to attain so closely to God by knowledge and love, to which it is necessary for human nature to be raised by grace. Third, on account of the relation of Christ to the human race. For Christ, as man, is the Mediator of God and men, as is written, 1 Tim. 2:5; and hence it behooved Him to have grace which would overflow upon others, according to John 1:16: And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.³⁶

Let us explain these features. First, the proximity of the human soul to the divine does not correspond to any mixture of properties. Aquinas himself states that “because together with unity of person there remains distinction of natures, as stated above (Q. 2, AA. 1, 2), the soul of Christ is not essentially Divine. Hence it behooves it to be Divine by participation, which is by grace.”³⁷ Akin to other humans who are united to Christ, the keeping of human nature *qua* human and not divine necessitates that Christ undergoes the same kind of habitual sanctification in participation by likeness. It does not mean that this grace is necessary because there is some sin; but as it is now axiomatic in Reformed circles: all benefits we have come from being united to Christ, and his human nature also benefits from this unity.

Second, given that the grace of union leans closely to a verbal predication, with some limited ontological payoff for the human nature *per se*, the *actual* sanctification of his human nature needs to follow what is properly common to humans. Here we must stop to reflect on the order of “graces.” First, there is no time relation but a logical one, and it is wrong to consider habitual grace as logically prior to the hypostatic union (or the

³⁶*ST* III Q7. A1. co.

³⁷*ST* III. Q7. A1. ad. 1.

grace of union) as it to cause the personal union. Such move would only thread closely to Barth's formulation as seen before. On this point Aquinas reserves an entire section in *ST* III. Q7. 13. Here, Thomas quickly connects the giving of habitual grace with the giving of the Holy Spirit himself because just as habitual grace is a power of the soul in charity, so the Spirit is one called Love/Charity. Such move tracks closely, for Thomas, with the order of the divine missions. He writes, "Now the mission of the Son is prior, in the order of nature, to the mission of the Holy Spirit, even as in the order of nature the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, and love from wisdom."³⁸ Hence, the grace of personal union precedes habitual grace because God's actions in time cannot contradict his life *ad intra*. It can be inferred that the proximity clause is not a substantial transference of grace, but the appropriation of the Son who himself sends the Holy Spirit into the human soul.

Second, it is both by seeing grace of union as a corollary of the *an-en-hypostatic* distinction and the habitual grace as the specific mission of the Spirit (in that order) that we can avoid Bavinck's fears that grace is juxtaposed to nature instead of sin. Instead, Thomas is describing the incarnation in the proper context of the history of revelation where God acts graciously towards his creatures—including a human nature.³⁹

Excursus on Hebrews 2–5

These theological reflections are built upon important exegetical constructions. Several texts bespeak of Christ's growth in knowledge and grace. Due to Hebrews's framework of Christ's solidarity and learned obedience, an elaborated interaction with Hebrews is deemed necessary.

The text of Hebrews starts with the author's affirmation of the Son's perfect imaging of the Father (1:3). He is superior to angels (1-2), Moses (3:1-6), and any other

³⁸*ST* III. Q7. A13. co.

³⁹These same moves are done by Bavinck in *RD* 2565-ff. See also Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 180–201.

created thing, but his superiority does not hinder him from taking our human nature and with that sympathize with us in every way.

As early as Hebrews 2:10–11, the author states:

Ἐπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα, πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγ-
αγόντα τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι.
ὁ τε γὰρ ἀγιάζων καὶ οἱ ἀγιαζόμενοι ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες: δι' ἣν αἰτίαν οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται
ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν,

“He who is sanctified and those who are sanctified have one source.” Just after the affirmation of the suffering of Christ, the author links Jesus to other men *via* their common source. The oneness of Jesus and men, according to Peter O’Brien, could refer to their one bloodline or one common ancestor. O’Brien, however, clarifies it by pointing to God as the referent of *one source*: “Christ was uniquely the Son of God (1:2, 5), and others are sons in an extended sense (2:10).”⁴⁰ O’Brien seems partially correct here, for one can also make sense of this oneness in God by the fact that Jesus’s humanity and ours are both created realities. God is the creator of all humanity, including Christ’s. The Father’s claim as creator of Christ’s humanity furthers the argument of verse 11 by claiming Jesus’s brotherhood with men and women in general.

Therefore, the suffering of Jesus is set in the context of the created human nature. This is different than the Nestorianism in which an action would be performed by the human or by the divine persons. Rather, the position described here sets the Son suffering *qua* human. His brotherhood is affirmed with us in that even the Son of God suffers in and through a created human body.

The author continues in verse 14–17:

Ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ παιδιά κεκοινωνήκεν αἵματος καὶ σαρκός, καὶ αὐτὸς παραπλησίως μετέσχευεν τῶν αὐτῶν, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ' ἔστι τὸν διάβολον,¹⁵ καὶ ἀπαλλάξῃ τούτους, ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας.¹⁶ οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, ἀλλὰ σπέρματος Ἀβραὰμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται.¹⁷ ὅθεν ὤφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς

⁴⁰Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 109.

ὁμοιωθῆναι, ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, εἰς τὸ ἰλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἀμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ

Sharing of flesh and blood (αἵματος καὶ σαρκός) and partaking of the same things (παραπλησίως μετέσχεν) explains how he is made like his brothers in every manner (κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι). And in identifying with his brothers, the Son is not made of a lower status, but he brings this humanity into a unity that is of a different kind, all the while not changing this humanity. Michael Allen explains it:

Here is no maneuver towards an emanationist or angelic/mediatorial Christology; indeed, Hebrews 1.4-14 has excluded any such approach. This one is ‘very God’ or ‘fully God’, the repetition of the subject’s identification (‘he himself’) attests to the specificity of the claim. This humanity is the Word or the Son’s personal humanity. The classical dogmatic tradition has maintained this single subject Christology through the centuries;⁴¹

Christ’s humanity is intimately connected to the personal life of the Son. Such unity pervasively relates to *every* aspect of the human nature without changing it. It is therefore no hermeneutical gymnastics to think that the Son sanctifies or heals his own assumed human nature in a primary fashion, then only secondarily to be habitually sanctified by the Spirit.

Once he reaches chapter 4, the author of Hebrews moves the argument further into a sympathy that does not equate sin. The true and full human nature assumed by the Son is weak, but sin’s moral effects have no part in it: οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα μὴ δυνάμενον συμπαθῆσαι ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν, πεπειρασμένον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ’ ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἀμαρτίας (4:15). Sympathy does not equate having to sin and feeling the consequences of that sin, but that whatever sin did to us in its real encounters with our

⁴¹Michael Allen, “Christ” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin* ed. Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016). Allen states, borrowing from Cyril’s Divine Unity of Christ that “His ministry not only continues beyond that of any other human mediator, but it presses closer in to the divine life. As Cyril of Alexandria put it: ‘The mediation of Moses, however, is ministerial, while the mediation of Christ is free and more mystical since he touches the parties that are being mediated and reaches both, I mean the mediated human nature and God the Father.’ His priesthood is merciful in that it reaches down to unite and fallen humans; yet it is also faithful inasmuch as it does not involve any infringement upon or diminution of the divine presence and its concomitant standards for purity and holiness. Genuine personal presence is made real, for all personal demands are met in this high priest.”

souls, it did to Christ. Calvin aptly asserts:

But it may be asked, What does he [the author of Hebrews] mean by *infirmities*? The word is indeed taken in various senses. Some understand by it cold and heat; hunger and other wants of the body; and also contempt, poverty, and other things of this kind, as in many places in the writings of Paul, especially in 2 Cor. 12:10. But their opinion is more correct who include, together with external evils, the feelings of the soul, such as fear, sorrow, the dread of death, and similar things. And doubtless the restriction, *without sin*, would not have been added, except he had been speaking of the inward feelings, which in us are always sinful on account of the depravity of our nature; but in Christ, who possessed the highest rectitude and perfect purity, they were free from everything vicious. Poverty, indeed, and diseases, and those things which are without us, are not to be counted as sinful. Since, therefore, he speaks of infirmities akin to sin, there is no doubt but that he refers to the feelings or affections of the mind, to which our nature is liable, and that on account of its infirmity. For the condition of the angels is in this respect better than ours; for they sorrow not, nor fear, nor are they harassed by variety of cares, nor by the dread of death. These infirmities Christ of his own accord undertook, and he willingly contended with them, not only that he might attain a victory over them for us, but also that we may feel assured that he is present with us whenever we are tried by them. Thus he not only really became a man, but he also assumed all the qualities of human nature. There is, however, a limitation added, *without sin*; for we must ever remember this difference between Christ's feelings or affections and ours, that his feelings were always regulated according to the strict rule of justice, while ours flow from a turbid fountain, and always partake of the nature of their source, for they are turbulent and unbridled.⁴²

Calvin masterfully understands that “the feelings of the soul” are an internal and deeply related agony of the human nature. The sympathies of Christ for humanity are true and reach out to the core of Jesus’s life. Nonetheless, he lives that life without any sin. This fountain of sinlessness is because he is “always regulated according to the strict rule of justice, while ours flow from a turbid fountain, and always partake of the nature of their source, for they are turbulent and unbridled.” The proximity of the divine person to the human nature avails the sanctification of the nature according to the principles described above.

Hebrews 5 continues the pattern of suffering, but now introducing the clause of

⁴²John Calvin, *Commentary of the Epistle of Hebrews*. Trans. and ed. by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), Accessed August 31, 2018
<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom44.i.html>

learned obedience and being made perfect. Although debated this clause ought not to impart fear of a low christology. The author states, “⁸ καίπερ ὄν υἱός, ἔμαθεν ἀφ’ ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν, ⁹ καὶ τελειωθείς ἐγένετο πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου, ¹⁰ προσαγορευθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀρχιερεὺς κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ.” The syntax of the passage hints that the aorist τελειωθείς (made perfect) refers to the main verb ἐγένετο (he became). So that it is possible to read it as, “he was first made perfect and then he became. Both the death and resurrection/exaltation of Christ are viewed as one single event preceding his becoming the source of salvation.”⁴³

In summary, in sharing flesh and blood with us Jesus stands in solidarity with man. The fact that he primarily sanctifies his human nature with the antecedent life of the person of the Son does not create a separation between him and us. His created human nature is still the same as ours, and in ἐγένετο (becoming) the suffering that is all too common to humanity is also present in his life.

The Fallen Christ and Thomistic Concepts of Grace

How can these discussions be helpful to refute any conception of Christ’s assumption of a fallen nature? As it has been seen both in Barth and in Torrance, the language of healing and sanctification loom large in their theology of the *non-assumptus*. The precision brought by Thomas in the *Summa* allows us to reevaluate the claims of Christ’s assumption of a fallen human nature.

Karl Barth

As discussed in the chapter on inseparable operations, Barth is adamant that there can be no permanent *state* of blessing in Christ. This is both due to his conception of the incarnation as something dynamic and also to his theology of grace. Given that his

⁴³David L. Allen, *Hebrews*. The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 324.

dynamism was already treated at some length in chapter 2, this section will treat Barth's theology of grace and with that navigate how it is at odds with Thomas's.

In §30 Barth discusses his theology of grace under the heading of the divine love. As it is commonly known, he sets up the discussion with a disclaimer that we cannot be fair to divine love without connecting it with divine freedom. Eventually, we must move beyond the dialectic fears and choose one to start with. But that does not mean that one is necessarily superior to another.

Once he begins his discussion on divine love, Barth states that the grace of God must be seen as “the distinctive mode of God's being in so far as it seeks and creates fellowship by its own free inclination and favour unconditioned by any merit or claim in the beloved, but also unhindered by any unworthiness or opposition in the latter.”⁴⁴ The dynamical life of God means that his condescension is gracious. And because God has determined to condescend from the beginning, then we must not shy from saying that God's being is grace itself even in presupposition of “the existence of opposition.”⁴⁵

This entire scheme is set in contradistinction to what Barth sees as the Roman Catholic thesis that grace is a “gift of God in which He might give or not give, or an attribute which might be imputed to Him or not imputed.”⁴⁶ After all, “God is *vere et proprie graciosus*.”⁴⁷ To assert that grace is something arbitrary in the life of God only tends to a voluntaristic and static conception of God. Hence, God can only give grace in the measure that he gives himself.

As Barth gets to his more robust christology in *CD IV/2*, he must discuss the relationship of God's own being as grace/gracious and the human nature of Christ. And it

⁴⁴*CD II/1*, 353.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 355.

⁴⁶*CD II/1*, 356.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

must be done in a way that does not diminish the real divinity of the man Jesus Christ and at the same time does not pose grace as an external gift given to him.

Adam Neder correctly identifies five movements in Barth's theology with the elevation of human nature in the context of his rejection of Thomistic, Lutheran, and Reformed notions. The first is that stating that human nature of Christ is elevated will inevitably lead to Docetism. As Neder states, for Barth "the deification of Jesus' human nature necessarily means its transformation into something other than human nature."⁴⁸ The second element is that elevating the human nature by grace might lend a hand to synergism, where no sovereign action of God is taken, but it must cooperate with human nature. Third, to assert any kind of elevation of the human nature of Christ will operate with a substantialist ontology that does not pay careful attention to the living history in which Jesus Christ comes to us.

Fourth and perhaps most importantly to this study, is Barth's explicit rejection of *habitus* theory. For him, this is nothing more than infusion of grace.⁴⁹ And as such, again, it is deaf to the history in which Christ came, making him the subject of some substance outside of his life. Fifth, Neder states the positive case in which Barth talks about the humanity of Christ being exalted instead of deified. As stated before, in taking humanity, the one "who is primarily the Son of God"⁵⁰ humbles himself. On the other hand, the human essence is "exalted to dignity . . . the glory and dignity and majesty of the divine nature."⁵¹ This exaltation of the human essence, however, is not a deification. The exaltation *is* the elevation of human essence into the "*consortium divinitatis*, into an inward indestructible fellowship with his God-head which He does not in any degree

⁴⁸Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 65.

⁴⁹*CD IV/2*, 89–90. See also, Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 89–90.

⁵⁰Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 100.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

surrender or forfeit, but supremely maintains as He becomes man.”⁵² Here the immanent life of God is gloriously celebrated and protected, but once this qualification is made, Barth quickly moves back to how we identify this God. He states that from eternity the grace of God has come in the form of his election—being Emanuel—God with us. The human essence that he takes on is “a clothing which He does not put off.”⁵³ This clothing is not deified but sanctified for its exaltation, that is, the continuity of the hypostatic union.⁵⁴

There are some important moves that are radically different than the Thomistic tradition and must be evaluated. First, it must be stated from the start that some of Barth’s objections cut through in a different metaphysical approach, and as such, one needs to choose from the beginning how to approach revelation itself. If Barth’s anti-static approach is chosen, his critiques are mostly correct, but if classical theism has its turn, then there are still some points to be taken.

Is *habitus* just another word for Pelagian infusion of grace? This is hardly true since the *habitus* flows from grace of union. *Habitus* is never an isolated *theologumenon* but depends on the personal presence of the Son. The blessedness of sanctification in time (Luke 2:52) is always dependent upon the metaphysical proximity of the Son to a human nature.

If anything, Barth’s scheme seems to lend a hand to Pelagian notions of infusion. As seen in chapter two and here, the continuity of the hypostatic union is dependent upon the Christ receiving power. Of course, this must be quickly qualified, as Barth is not operating with a state of blessing but with an actualistic ontology. Even so, in the end, it seems that the *communicatio naturarum* and/or *idiomatum* is subordinated to

⁵²Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 100.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁴See chap. 2 of this dissertation. The *excursus* on the Garden of Gethsemane is telling on this concept.

the *communicatio gratiarum*—in the living history of the man Jesus Christ. And in this formulation, the give and take between divinity and humanity seems to be awfully close to a synergistic understanding of divine operations.

This grace, in Barth's structure, sanctifies the fallen nature of Christ and serves to conceptualize the continuity of an incarnation that would otherwise not continue. The fallen human nature of Christ also articulates this actualism in which exaltation and humiliation are coextensive in "solidarity terms." In doing that, Barth needs to reject the classic scholastic successive states and hence any notion that the humanity of Christ might be "so distinct" from the Son himself that it might be in proximity to him and receive grace. Proximity *could* mean Nestorianism since it tends to downplay the language of union. We, however, need to note two important movements: first, the proximity clause is not independently floating in Aquinas's construction, but as demonstrated above, it is logically secondary to the grace of union; second, Nestorianism stays close to a scheme in which some actions might be ascribed to the human Jesus because of his fallenness and some not (i.e., Barth's exegesis of the Gethsemane).⁵⁵

⁵⁵Paul Dafydd Jones says "Barth maintains a Kant-like distinction between the 'theoretical' and the 'practical'. On the one side, acknowledgement describes the human's active cognition of God. As God brings the human into the sphere of divine knowing, she cognitively (re)orients herself, conforming noetically to God. In continuity with Kant, the human being's cognitive processes are definitely active; in contrast with Kant, these processes are set in train by the prevenient advance of divine grace, particularized as God's lending Godself to be humanly known. On the other side, responsibility's 'practical' aspect: obedience. Again, the human is active; again, contra Kant, human activity occurs secondarily, 'following up' (logically, if not chronologically) God's advance. Obedience happens, then, when the human acts in accordance with the divine will: when the human responds concretely to God's commission and realizes God's intentions in word and deed. To set these terms within the larger conceptual grouping developed in *CD III/2*: when human beings acknowledge, obey and invoke God, in responsibility and with gratitude, they are genuinely 'free' – free in the sense of actualizing their basic covenantal disposition. True responsibility in acknowledgement and obedience are what Jesus achieves, paradigmatically, in Gethsemane – and it is this achievement that makes responsibility elemental for human being. Indeed, the Gethsemane excursus clarifies a particular moment in Jesus' history that informs the theological anthropology of *CD III/2*: it shows the definite marks of the 'true human' being forged. On the one side, acknowledgement. In asking 'Must it all happen?' Jesus traces, repeatedly, the shape of the divine will; he strives to achieve clarity about the telos God assigns his history. To expand on an earlier point: Jesus certainly does not possess this knowledge automatically. Barth has little time for patristic and medieval sleights of hand, designed to guarantee Jesus' intellectual perfection." Paul Dafydd Jones, "Karl Barth on Gethsemane," *IJST* 9, no. 2 (April 2007): 161.

T. F. Torrance

As described in chapter 3, Torrance conceptualizes the *non-assumptus via theosis* and the *an-en-hypostatic* distinction. Both issues are relevant to a theology of grace, since *theosis* is used to talk about participation in general terms and the *an-en-hypostatic* distinction is a way to describe the same participation in more specific terms of union *in* Christ.

The participation resultant from *theosis* is understood as *prothesis* ‘divine purpose,’ *mysterion* ‘mystery,’ and *koinonia* ‘fellowship/communion.’ We have seen that the use of *mysterion* will replace the need of a subjective response to the gospel. The union of the Son with estranged reality of fallen human nature heals, sanctifies and elevates this body of sin into the very life of God. Although I have already pointed some problems between the one and the many in this construction—Christ and the Church in chapter three—I will focus on the meaning of sanctification for Torrance.

Because Christ assumes a fallen flesh and does not sin, this means that Jesus is unlike us, who sin, “but it also means that by remaining holy and sinless in our flesh, he condemned sin in the flesh he assumed and judged it by his very sinlessness.”⁵⁶ Therefore, in the “likeness of sinful flesh, he is unlike the sinner”⁵⁷ because he does not act according to that flesh’s inclinations. As Jesus operates in that flesh as God’s *being-in-act* we witness the atoning exchange taking place; for it is in that event that he “condemns sin in the flesh, its sanctification of our humanity through the gift of divine righteousness and sanctification of the man Christ.”⁵⁸ The sanctification of man Christ occurs in the mystery of the union of God and man so that it predates any other man’s response to what God has really done in Christ. What God has done in Christ is already

⁵⁶Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 63.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

the subjective and objective aspects of the atonement. Sanctification, because it is also part of the entire “package” of the gospel, it must be accomplished objectively and subjectively in the hypostatic union.⁵⁹ Torrance states,

⁵⁹See Alexandra S. Radcliff and Andrew Purves, *The Claim of Humanity in Christ: Salvation and Sanctification in the Theology of T. F. and J. B. Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 123-33. She states that “according to the Torrances’ scheme, humanity is not only set free from the burden of attempting to achieve salvation, but also from the burden of attempting to achieve sanctification. Whilst there is a lack of emphasis on the subjective nature of sanctification in the Torrances’ theology, the objectivity of their account of salvation offers a valuable foundation for a liberating understanding of sanctification. This is a significant contribution for, having been justified by faith, it is often supposed that it is the Christian’s task to work out his own sanctification.” This can lead to another error in an overemphasis in the vicarious humanity of Christ. Again, Radcliff states reflecting on Torrance, that are concerned by Federal Calvinism’s notion of a “second work” of sanctification. They perceive this to be a serious distortion of Calvin’s teaching that justification and sanctification are inseparable in Christ. There is a notable difference between the older Reformation Catechisms and the Westminster Catechism in this regard. In the later Westminster Catechism, sanctification is presented as a subsequent stage to justification in the *ordo salutis*. Scholastic Protestant theology had separated sanctification from justification. This led to a change in preaching whereby, instead of being directed to Christ, congregations were urged to work out their own sanctification. J. B. observes that the discussion of sanctification in the Westminster Confession places its focus on the believer rather than on Christ who is sanctified for us or the believer’s participation in him: “The emphasis is on what has to happen to us and in us, rather than on the One Baptism of Christ, in which we are given to participate.” T. F. considers, In the Westminster theology the main focus of attention is upon man’s appropriation of salvation through justifying faith and the working out of sanctification. Ultimately the main content of these Catechisms is concerned with man’s action, man’s obedience, man’s duty toward God, man’s duty to his neighbour, and man’s religion. People are also turned back upon their own endeavors when sanctification is conceived of as a “second blessing” in some streams of Pentecostalism.” For a response to such attacks, see Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith*, 2nd rev. ed. edition (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994). Beeke starts by surveying Calvin’s doctrine of assurance. For Calvin, God “Himself is the assurance of the elect” (49). This truth is confirmed by the indissoluble tie between “*saving knowledge, the Scriptures, Jesus Christ, God’s promises, the work of the Holy Spirit, and election.*” This matrix of assurance is explained by the nature of faith itself. While faith consists in knowledge, it is not mere apprehension, but a “secure position of those things which God has promised us” (50). However, Calvin is not as rigid in his discussion of assurance. Some qualifications are made regarding how one has assurance. Although at some parts Calvin says that faith itself is the assurance of the believer, in some other sections he is open to the possibility to degrees of faith and assurance (52). Nevertheless, Beeke provides four principles in how to reconcile the apparent contradiction. He provides the categories of (1) *Faith and Experience* – in which Calvin concedes that “faith should always aim at full assurance, even though it cannot reach perfect assurance in actual experience” (55). (2) *Flesh vs Spirit* – in which the true believer “may lose some spiritual ‘battles’ along the pathway of life, but he shall not lose the ultimate ‘war’ against the flesh. Prayer and the sacraments assist the spirit of faith in gaining the ultimate victory” (60). (3) *Germ of faith versus Consciousness of faith* – Here Beeke has a lengthy discussion about the relationship of Calvin and the Calvinists and concludes that the continuity resides in that “assurance may be possessed without being known” (62) because the smallest grain of faith contains assurance, even if the believer cannot grasp it. (4) *Trinitarian Framework* – Beeke interprets Calvin saying that the source of assurance is in the Father’s eternal decree of election, the grounds of assurance is in God’s promises in Christ and the cause of assurance is the work of the Spirit in the heart (69). Because it has this supernatural framework, true assurance can never be experienced by the unbeliever and is normative to the believer. Next, Beeke discusses the Practical Syllogism. He tries to prove that for Calvin, the practical syllogism – though never named as such – did not play the primary role in giving assurance, but a secondary one. “Though never foundational, this ‘secondary support’ is highly beneficial for the further ‘establishment’ of assurance” (74). Finally, Beeke discusses Beza on faith and assurance. Despite Beza’s definition of faith being different than Calvin’s (with three elements, knowledge, assent, and trust), Beeke argues that Beza is one with Calvin, regarding assurance, and much of the apparent differences are due to the challenges faced by Beza. However, Beeke does not hide the differences. Beza does more strongly emphasize the personal/subjective application of the promise of the gospel (81). Beeke asserts that Beza upgrades the external testimony of Sanctification and the internal witness of the Spirit as the two pillars that assurance rests. Nevertheless, this upgrade served a reductionistic approach to “encourage the weak believer on theological grounds that if he could grasp any link in the chain (or *tabula*) of salvation, he might feel with

Justification by grace alone remains the sole ground of the Christian life; we never advance beyond it, as if justification were only the beginning of a new self-righteousness, the beginning of a life of sanctification which is what we do in response to justification. Of course we are summoned to live out day by day what we already are in Christ through his self-consecration or sanctification, but sanctification is not what we do in addition to what God has done in justification.⁶⁰

Jesus remains obedient in his earthly ministry even when united to something as low as the flesh of sin.

The issue at hand must be asked in these terms: when is the hypostatic union finally complete? At first, Torrance seems categorical that when “he [Christ] enters into our lowly creaturely and fallen existence, means also the elevation of our creaturely existence.”⁶¹ But he also asserts, reflecting on the language of Hebrews, that “he learned obedience, bringing his holy relation with sinners to its perfection and completion at last on the cross.”⁶² It is at least confusing in Torrance’s discussion. As said in chapter three, the virgin birth serves as a signpost for *theosis* which creates a difference of degree between man and God in its participation. Torrance states,

The virgin birth can also not be considered in abstraction from the triumphant consummation of Christ’s life in his resurrection, for it is there that the mystery of his person is revealed. In fact the birth of Jesus of the virgin Mary and the resurrection of Jesus from the virgin tomb (where no one had ever yet been laid) are the twin signs which mark out the mystery of Christ, testifying to the continuity and the discontinuity between Jesus Christ and our fallen humanity. The incarnation is not only a once and for all act of assumption of our flesh, but the continuous personal union of divine and human nature in the one person of the incarnate Son, a personal union which he carried all the way through our estranged estate under bondage into the freedom and triumph of the resurrection. Thus it is in the resurrection that we see the real meaning of the virgin birth, while the virgin birth has much to tell us about the resurrection. These are then the twin signs testifying to the miraculous life of the Son of God within our humanity, the one at the beginning and the other at the consummation of the earthly life of Jesus.

Although this is homiletically appealing, the parallel between womb and tomb must not

certainty the tug of all the rest” (85).

⁶⁰Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 1996), 161–62.

⁶¹Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 59.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 64.

set the tone for the metaphysics of the incarnation. Is the incarnation really complete only in light of the resurrection or does it have a character of its own?

Again, Thomas is helpful in clarifying this issue. He asks in *the Summa Theologiae* if there were any merits that preceded the union of the incarnation. Reflecting on Luke 1:35: “The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God;” Thomas asserts that “every operation of this man followed the union. Therefore no operation of His could have been meritorious of the union.”⁶³ Henceforth, it is difficult to see how Torrance’s couplet of womb-tomb may have any bearings on a theology of the incarnation itself. To do that will eventually place *habitus* in front of grace of union only to its own peril. At the risk of sounding repetitive, by doing this is to place the mission of the Spirit in front of the mission of the Son and therefore generating all sorts of problems for God’s revelation of himself.

The *an-en-hypostasis* bespeaks of participation in two ways according to Torrance: “once for all union” and “continuous union.”⁶⁴ These concepts cannot be separated, but must be seen in constant tension during the life of Christ. Moreover, because they are always in tension, they are a clear christological manifestation that the church must reject the Thomistic static conception of divine agency and opt for a more dynamic one.

The “once for all union” has as its content the general humanity that the Son assumes in the grace of God. And it is once again reflected in the doctrine of the virgin birth. Jesus Christ came as a man under the law and therefore in continuity with our sinful existence. He is also the firstborn of the new creation and also in discontinuity with our sinful existence.⁶⁵ Hence we must not ask merely biological questions about his

⁶³*ST* III. Q 2. A11. co.

⁶⁴Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 85.

⁶⁵*Ibi.*, 94.

human nature; for to ask such questions misses the point of this gracious event in which “the virgin birth is the outward sign, the sign that here in the midst of our humanity God is creatively at work a new way – the sign, in fact, that he who is born of Mary is the creator himself.”⁶⁶ Moreover, the virgin birth is the sign of union between God and man. The sign points to the mystery of the incarnation, but the sign itself is not the reality of the incarnation. Those are all explanations in a *via negativa* fashion. Torrance’s positive explanations of the virgin birth states what he actually believes regarding the humanity of Jesus. First, it is a one directional movement. It is sheer grace, for no man can produce something like the virgin birth (and it is once and for all). Second, it is a recreation out of an old creation. It presupposes the existence of another creation. So, the incarnation is not *ex nihilo*, but *ex virgine*. And it is also in this sense that Christ comes into our “fallen condition in order to redeem and sanctify it.”⁶⁷ For he takes the flesh of this virgin who is fallen. Third, the virgin birth is the pattern of grace. By this Torrance means that the Christian message is the Christmas message. We have nothing to do with what happened to that virgin, but it is still the good news to us.

The general humanity of Jesus is then explicated through the *an-hypostatic* notion in which the Son “is in solidarity with all humanity.”⁶⁸ He did not take one man who has an independent personality, but “took possession of our human nature, as to set aside that which individuates us human beings [. . .] to assume that which unites us with one another.”⁶⁹

The “continuous union” as *en-hypostasis* speaks of the particularity of the assumption. Here, in tension with the “once for all union,” the Son “comes also as an

⁶⁶Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 95.

⁶⁷Ibid., 100.

⁶⁸Ibid., 231.

⁶⁹Ibid., 231.

individual human being in our humanity, seeking in addition a solidarity in terms of the interaction of persons within our human and social life, in personal relations of love.”⁷⁰

In conclusion, the use of *an-en-hypostasis* for Torrance is not so much a negative-positive affirmation of the existence of a person in the *act* of assumption (although he does make some of the same comments as it is classically affirmed)⁷¹ as it is a conceptual maneuver to speak of assumption of humanity in general/irreducible and particular ways. In summary and in Torrance’s own words:

The *anhypostatic* assumption speaks of God’s unconditional and amazingly humble act of grace in assuming our humanity in the concrete likeness of the flesh of sin. But within that, *enhypostasia* speaks of the fact that the person of Christ was the person of the obedient Son of the Father, who in his humanity remained in perfect holy communion with the Father from the very beginning, and so was sinless, and absolutely pure and spotless and holy. Thus he, the *anhypostatic* Son of Man, lived out a life of perfect and sinless obedience to the Father in the midst of the fallen human nature which he had *anhypostatically* assumed, and in virtue of which he had entered into solidarity with all mankind. But as *anhypostatic* Son of Man Jesus Christ entered deeply and acutely into personal relations with sinners, so that in personal and responsible ways of the profoundest nature, he might enter within our personal human structure of existence, and answerably the whole burden of our sin and guilt upon himself so that he, the just, was loaded with our unrighteousness and he, the holy one, was loaded with our guilt that he in our place and on our behalf might expiate sin and guilt and make propitiation for us before the Father, thus restoring us to the Father in purity and truth and love.⁷²

The fact that, for Torrance, Jesus sanctifies us by acting within that human nature (in full solidarity with us) may imply that the union with man is of the same kind mankind has with him in salvation. Noteworthy even is Torrance’s language of sanctification. Man objectively and subjectively sanctified because of unity with vicarious humanity of Christ.

As a response to these reformulations we may retrieve Aquinas’s explanation that the difference of the union in Christ is of kind and not degree (as Torrance seemed to

⁷⁰Torrance and Walker, *Incarnation*, 231.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 228–29.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 232.

suggest in his account of sanctification). Aquinas's work in *Summa Contra Gentiles* assumes that the human nature, instead of being a proper and common feature between Christ and other humans, is an instrument of the Son.⁷³ Thomas compares the instrumentality of human nature assumed to a hand in someone's body: "man's hand is an instrument united and proper to him, whereas the spade is distinct from him and common to many."⁷⁴ The hand is united to the body, but it is not the same kind of unity that the spade has with the body.⁷⁵

When Torrance plays with *an-en-hypostasis* as to speak of assumption of humanity in general/irreducible and particular ways, he may have created a space for the gracious event of the incarnation to become conditioned upon the "final sanctification" of Christ. In doing this, he places *habitus* theory as at least logically equivalent, or in an unnecessary tension with grace of union. For as Aquinas said, "the mission of the Son is prior, in the order of nature, to the mission of the Holy Spirit, even as in the order of nature the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, and love from wisdom."⁷⁶ If the final sanctification, *via* the new theologizing of *enhypostasis* as continuous union, is held even in tension with the new theologizing of *anhypostasis* in sanctification, then the mission of the Spirit and of the Son follow no order and are also in some kind of confusing tension.

Concluding Thoughts on Grace of Union, Habitual Grace, and the *Non-Assumptus*

In former times, *habitus* theory was basically synonymous to Pelagianism. Such presentations have warrant, especially if one sees Thomists who have ran too far with Thomas's theology. As seen in this chapter, however, if proper Trinitarian life is in

⁷³SCG, IV, c. 41.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid. "Accordingly Christ's human nature is compared to God as a proper and united instrument, as the hand is compared to the soul."

⁷⁶ST III. Q7. A13. co.

place and the order of action is respected, then *habitus* is never divorced from grace of union in christology.

Sanctification and grace must be placed in their proper theological framework. The common conception that sanctification is the work of the spirit is a good direction, but it does not locate sanctification in its entire theological setting. How we talk about sanctification must respect the mode of God's action. The Spirit is the end of the work in which sanctification is located, but this same work is authored by the Father and acted on by the son.

Those who advocate for the fallen human nature of Christ, necessitate a kind of sanctification that achieves some kind of final union at the end of Christ's life. By placing the emphasis on the progressive/habitual character of this sanctification in Christ, without actually paying close attention to the preceding sanctification of the personal presence of the Son, the advocates of the *non-assumptus* have not only forgotten important categories, but have also dislocated the action of the Spirit in relation to the Son.

CHAPTER 6

ORIGINAL SIN

Original sin is a convoluted term that serves many purposes to many people. From Augustine's debate with Pelagius to the mature theology of John Owen and Francis Turretin, much has happened. Although it would be fascinating to visit Augustine's doctrine of original sin, I will briefly discuss it only when some of the Post-Reformers discussed here also do it. In this chapter, I will prove that the Post-Reformation doctrine of original sin offers a robust tool to refute any notion of assumption of fallenness in Christ's human nature.

Since the Post-Reformation relied heavily on John Calvin's theology, this chapter will deal with a recent treatment of Calvin's doctrine of original sin and its relationship to Christ. R. Michael Allen points to Calvin's doctrine of original sin in order to argue for Christ's assumption of a fallen human nature within a matrix of doctrines.¹ I will first present Allen's arguments in context. Second, I will evaluate Allen's proposal and suggest a more faithful reading of Calvin's doctrine of original sin. Third, I will interact with Calvin's use of sanctification in Christ. Fourth, I will retrieve some Post-Reformed understandings of original sin (principally from the neo-calvinist Herman Bavinck) as a way to comprehensively see the assumption of humanity both in its natural state as also in the Trinitarian component. Bavinck's organic motif provides a certain explanation that helpfully avoids the charges of arbitrariness in the doctrine of

¹R. Michael Allen, "Calvin's Christ: A Dogmatic Matrix for Discussion of Christ's Human Nature." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 4 (October 2007): 382–97. Allen's article has been fairly influential in Calvin scholarship and continues to be used to support a certain reading of Calvin. See also R. Michael Allen, *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2009), chap. 3, pt. 3. Ho-Jin Ahn, "The Humanity of Christ: John Calvin's Understanding of Christ's Vicarious Humanity," *SJT* 65, no. 2 (2012)145–58.

imputation. Finally, I will evaluate Barth and Torrance’s proposal of the *non-assumptus* in light of the Post-Reformed doctrine of original sin, its development, and improvement of Calvin’s doctrine.

**Calvin’s Christ or Allen’s Calvin:
A Critical Appreciation of R. Michael Allen’s
Depiction of Calvin’s Christology**

Calvin’s (1509-1564) doctrine of original sin is anything but simple. Especially when one tries to read Calvin through later Reformed categories, Calvin’s language on original sin can sound awfully Semi-Pelagian.² In R. Michael Allen’s 2007 article “Calvin’s Christ: A Dogmatic Matrix for Discussion of Christ’s Human Nature,” he asserts that Calvin’s view on the transmission of original sin entails no imputation of guilt. In what follows, I will outline the pertinent sections of Allen’s argument so that I can interact with the possibility or not for Christ to assume a fallen human nature.

Allen starts by asserting that in Calvin’s definitions of original sin he only refers to depravation and corruption, but not guilt—imputed or biologically transmitted. Due to the reticence of the Fathers of the Church to talk about original sin with clarity, the error of Pelagius surfaced. Therefore, Calvin proceeds to refute the Pelagian mistake that original sin propagates only by imitation.³

Next, Allen shows that Calvin treats the transmission of sin with great care both in *The Institutes* and in his Commentaries. Calvin’s theology aims to show that

²The Semi-Pelagian view of transmission of sin is that Adam’s sin entails corruption but *not* an imputation of guilt. Fesko asserts that “this view has been historically associated with Josua Placaeus (1596–1655). Placaeus believed that humanity was guilty because they sinned; they did not sin because they were guilty. Is humanity’s guilt antecedent or consequent? Do people sin because they are guilty, or are they guilty because they sin? The main thrust of his argument is that humanity does not inherit Adam’s guilt but a corrupt nature, and this corrupt nature leads them to sin.” See J. V. Fesko, *Death in Adam, Life in Christ: The Doctrine of Imputation* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2016), 212. As I will demonstrate, although Calvin sounds like he said something similar to this, for Calvin one is already guilty even before he acts. He differs from immediate imputation position because he does not have a category for a straight imputation of Adam’s guilt, but according to Calvin, we are guilty because of the obnoxious nature we inherit from Adam.

³Calvin, *Institutes*, II.i.5-10.

Adam is a type of Christ that “in his action leads to the ensuing status of his people.”⁴ These effects on Adam’s progeny mean that “the punishment of Adam’s error certainly affects the constitution of all descendants.”⁵ Calvin avoids speculative talk on the mode of transmission (whether by imputation or not), but tracks closely to the biblical language of “effects.”⁶ So Allen concludes, “[y]et again Calvin has noted the inheritance of a depraved, corrupted nature—referring to this despoiling as original sin. The natural gifts were destroyed with the fall from moral rectitude; the supernatural gifts were severely corrupted (though not destroyed). Calvin quite emphatically distances himself from the Pelagian impulse found in contemporaries such as Servetus.”⁷

On the other side, for Allen, having successfully demonstrated that imitation is not a properly biblical category for transmission of sin, the necessary consequence of Calvin’s definition of original sin is that depravity and guilt are not necessary bedfellows. Calvin completely refrains from associating the word guilt with his definitions of original sin “always and everywhere.”⁸ An example is given in the following quote:

Adam, by sinning, not only took upon himself misfortune and ruin but also plunged our nature into like destruction. This was *not due to the guilt of himself alone, which would not pertain to us all*, but was because he infected all his posterity with that corruption into which he had fallen.⁹

In this section, Calvin seems to consider guilt non-transferable from Adam to us. Allen continues to expound that, in the immediate context of the aforementioned quote, Calvin

⁴Allen, “Calvin’s Christ,” 386.

⁵Ibid.

⁶So Allen appeals to Calvin’s definition of original sin in his commentary on Psalm 51: “It is enough that we hold, that Adam, upon his fall, was despoiled of his original righteousness, his reason darkened, his will perverted, and that, being reduced to this state of corruption, he brought children into the world resembling himself in character.” *Commentary on Ps. 51:5*.

⁷Allen, “Calvin’s Christ,” 387.

⁸Ibid. Allen’s survey of Calvin’s doctrine to original sin is thorough. The relevant sections he explores are: *The Institutes*, *Commentary on Rom 5*, *Commentary on Gen.3*, and *Commentary on Ps 51*.

⁹Calvin, *Institutes*, II.i.6. Emphasis added.

proves guilt to be a reality of every human being after Adam, so much so, that we are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3). Having shown, however, that guilt does not appear in Calvin's definition of original sin, but is present in Adam's seed, Allen does not find Calvin's comments here decisive to say that guilt is imputed. He concludes then that for Calvin we are guilty because "ethics encompasses something of a 'judgement by context'"¹⁰

What exactly is "judgement by context"? Allen responds, "God sees the entire context of the life to be lived by a fetus and, on the basis of the sinful context to come, pronounces that fetus' present existence within the womb as sinfully guilty."¹¹ Therefore, as it is certain that one will express his own depravity in time, he is deemed guilty even from the moment of conception.¹² For Calvin, Allen affirms again, guilt is not passed from Adam to other members of humanity. The lack of judicial tones in any formulation of Calvin's definition of the doctrine of original sin conclusively renders him outside of the traditional accounts of this doctrine.¹³

This account certainly seems to overthrow the direct parallel between Adam and Christ. Indeed, it does not reflect the later Scholastic treatment of the doctrine. Allen suggests, however, that whereas Calvin has a one step relationship in the case of Christ

¹⁰Allen, "Calvin's Christ," 388.

¹¹Allen laments that "[u]nfortunately, documentation of the particular way in which foreknowledge operates in Calvin's system is beyond the limits of this article. Suffice it to say that Calvin, by positing a 'contextual judgement' whereby even the existence of a fetus is found to be sinful, does not contradict his insistence on predestination as based on God's sovereign decree, rather than upon his foreknowledge of human action." Ibid., 389.

¹²Allen states, "Such depravity surely brings about 'fruits of sin' continually and, in the light of Calvin's notion of 'contextual judgement', existence itself is tainted from the point of conception." Ibid.

¹³Here Allen cites Calvin's *Commentary on Romans*. Allen asserts that this is almost a definitive account in which Calvin rejects any imputation of guilt. "Paul is not dealing here with actual sin', for that is later consequential to each person's doing. When Paul notes that 'by the trespass of one, the many have died' (Rom. 5:15), he 'means that corruption has descended from him to us.' This is perhaps Calvin's most explicit statement regarding the sequence of events pertaining to Adam's fall and our guilt: 'It is not his fault that we perish, as though we ourselves were not to be blamed; but Paul ascribes our ruin to Adam, because his sin is the cause of our sin. By our sin I mean that which is natural and innate in us.'" Ibid.

and believers (the imputation of Christ's righteousness), he has a two-step relationship from Adam to humanity (the inheritance of a sinful nature that then becomes guilty due to its own actions, but is imputed before time due to God's foreknowledge).

Because the inheritance of a corrupted nature is different than judgment of guilt, Allen announces that Christ's assumption of a fallen human nature would not render him liable to punishment. Since Christ's contextual reality is one without sin, he can receive corruption—which is tendency to sin. Nonetheless, because he does not act in sin in itself, he can have a fallen/corrupt nature without being legally culpable. Questions regarding the tainting of sin in the divine are taken by Allen's account of the *Communicatio Idiomatum* that safeguards the transmission of sin to the divine nature with a hermeneutical maneuver.¹⁴

Calvin's Christ in Context

What shall we say then? Is Allen correct? Here we shall evaluate his proposal and show that although he tracks closely to the vocabulary of Calvin, he fails to interpret Calvin's theology in its own context.

First, Allen is correct that Calvin does not incorporate the word "guilt" in any of his definitions of original sin. Calvin seems wary of saying that we have the fault or the guilt of Adam. He affirms that "there [is] nothing more remote to common

¹⁴I say hermeneutical rather than ontological because that is Allen's purpose: "This discussion of Calvin's careful manner of discussing the relation of the two natures of Christ is not to suggest that he had no doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, rather it must be noted that his discussion of the *communicatio* does not operate on the ontological level. Calvin discusses the *communicatio* within his hermeneutical discussion of New Testament texts regarding the person and nature(s) of Christ. Calvin refers to the *communicatio* as a 'figure of speech' whereby: 'They sometimes attribute to Him what must be referred solely to His humanity, sometimes what belongs uniquely to His divinity; and sometimes what embraces both natures but fits neither alone.' Allen, "Calvin's Christ," 391. This is also the judgement of David Willis when he says that "for Calvin the *Communicatio Idiomatum* is primarily a hermeneutical tool [contrasted to an ontological one] to keep in balance the variety of Scriptural witness to the one Person; but it rests upon and presupposes the hypostatic union." David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the so-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 67.

apprehension than that the fault of one should render all guilty, and so become common sin.”¹⁵ Moreover, Calvin asserts that although we are justly condemned from the beginning, “this is not liability for another’s fault.”¹⁶

Second, Allen fittingly interprets Calvin as one who avoids dogmatic speculation. In Calvin’s works he rejects the word guilt or fault of Adam because it does not appear in Scripture’s treatment of the two heads or types of humans. In the Bible’s treatment of Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15, the terms used are “transgression,” “sin,” “trespass,” and “disobedience.”

Third, note that Calvin’s interlocutors in the *Institutes* and his *Commentary on Romans* are mainly Pelagius, Menno Simons, and the Marcionites. So, to analyze Calvin’s theology of original sin, one has to keep in mind that chief among Calvin’s concerns is repealing the notion of transmission by imitation.

For Calvin, this corruption of our nature is not only an inclination of our make-up. In the context of defining original sin as “a hereditary corruption and depravity . . . that produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh,”¹⁷ Calvin asserts that this corruption is designated by Paul *as sin* and it makes us obnoxious to God. Furthermore, right after the discussion in which Calvin says that an infant suffers not for another’s fault even when in the womb, Calvin claims that “their entire nature is as it were, a seed-bed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God. Hence it follows, that it is properly deemed sinful in the sight of God.”¹⁸ Allen appeals to “contextual judgement” here in order to make sense of Calvin’s doctrine and make it fit into the trajectory he is drawing: namely, that Christ can have a fallen human nature.

Allen’s argument of two-step towards guilt—the inheritance of a sinful nature

¹⁵Calvin, *Institutes*, II.i.5.

¹⁶Ibid., II.i.8.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

that then becomes guilty due to its own actions—depends on this notion of “contextual judgement” because Christ is able to receive a corrupted nature and not be sinful in his own context. There are two problems with Allen’s approach to Calvin here. The first is that Allen never discusses the mechanism of this judgment: Is it predestination? Creation? Foreknowledge? The second is that based on Calvin’s discussion, nature itself, coming from Adam, already makes you liable to punishment and is obnoxious to God. Because post-lapsarian human nature is a seed-bed of sin and Paul calls it sin, then even though corruption is not the same thing as guilt, it carries with it the principle of guilt. Therefore, Christ cannot, in his human nature, be obnoxious to God.

In the Reformed tradition after Calvin, corruption and guilt are differentiated, but both come from Adam.¹⁹ So, a fetus is guilty because Adam is his representative head and corruption is transmitted because the entire nature is affected. Notice that Allen is correct to say that Calvin is not in accord with this later Reformed doctrine.²⁰ Calvin purposefully avoids any idea of transference of guilt from Adam to his progeny. Such thing for Calvin is metaphysically and exegetically impossible.²¹ Nonetheless, fallen nature is so significantly corrupted that, on the basis of its own hideousness, God

¹⁹For a recent treatment, see John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959). For a classical treatment on double imputation, see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1993), I.ix.9; 22;24. For a good introduction to the different approaches to the transmission of sin, see J. V. Fesko, *Death in Adam, Life in Christ: The Doctrine of Imputation* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2016), 205–20.

²⁰This is contrary to popular Reformed interpretations of Calvin. Michael Horton, for example, asserts that Calvin has a doctrine of double imputation. Without actually quoting Calvin, but just by referencing the section on original sin, Horton makes an assertion of double imputation. Pointing to *The Institutes* II.1.viii, Horton affirms dogmatically that for Calvin, “original sin includes both guilt and corruption.” Michael Horton, “A Shattered Vase: The Tragedy of Sin in Calvin’s Thought (1.15; 2.1-4)” in *A Theological Guide to Calvin’s Institutes: Essays and Analysis, Paperback Edition*, ed. ed. Peter A. Lillback and David W. Hall (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 157.

²¹Calvin’s translation of Rom 5:12 gives a clue into his logic of the relationship of Adam’s sin and ours. He translates, “*Quamobrem sicut per unum hominem peccatum in mundum introiit, et per peccatum mors; atque ita in omnes homines mors pervagata est. quandoquidem omnes peccaverunt.*” *The greek clause (eph’ho) is translated here as the conjunction “quandoquidem.”* *Quandoquidem* has more of a notion of a statement of fact than a causative or consequential preposition would have. Paraphrasing, His translation in English could be read as such: Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, with that result, all have sinned.

pronounces it guilty. Each person's particular concrete nature actualizes guilt because it shows itself to be an instrument of ungodliness. Hence, my departure from Allen's interpretation is evident, for it is due to the condition in which one is conceived that he is guilty and not *via* his extrinsic context that is seen in advance by God. Therefore, Calvin is able to say that

The only explanation which can be given of the expression, 'in Adam all died,' is, that he by sinning not only brought disaster and ruin upon himself, but also plunged our nature into like destruction; and that not only in one fault, in a matter not pertaining to us, but by the corruption into which he himself fell, he infected his whole seed. Paul never could have said that all are 'by nature the children of wrath,' if they had not been cursed from the womb.²²

We are then children of wrath by nature because of the nature we received from Adam.

Allen is correct in saying that for Calvin we do not receive Adam's immediate guilt. The total corruption he plunged us in deserves death—and that is condemnation.²³ Again,

²²Calvin, *Institutes*, II.i.6

²³Again, many scholars claim, contrary to Allen's proposal, that Calvin held to a classical Post-Reformed view of the transmission of sin (imputation and corruption). See Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998); Don Macleod, "Original Sin in Reformed Theology," in *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives*, ed. Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014)129-146. I have not found scholars that described Calvin's view (except, possibly for Randall Zachman) in my terms. Henri Blocher, however, seems to have a view similar to what I described as Calvin's. He asserts, "How did punishment, death, reach all persons on the basis of (*eph'ho*) their actual sinning? It reached them in the same way that death entered Adam's person: since we are all in Adam, the head, sin could be reckoned to them according to the terms of the Adamic covenant, as offshoots of his sin. This is manifest in the imputation possible independently of Adam. . . . The hypothesis I propose easily accounts for the imperfect symmetry between the two heads of human kind. Adam's role is more firmly cast than in the 'looser' reading of Romans 5; at the same time, the unattested and difficult thesis of the imputation of an *alien* sin is avoided—without downplaying the tragic realism of the Augustinian human predicament." Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 1997), 77, 80. Given Blocher's difficult and unclear language, Schreiner provides a good summary of his view, calling it a semi-mediative view: "Blocher rejects alien guilt, and ends up arguing that Adam as our head transmits a depraved and corrupt nature to human beings. Hence, the individual sin of human beings mirrors the sin of Adam. The upshot of Blocher's view is that human beings become guilty when they sin personally since they are not charged with guilt because of Adam's sin." Thomas Schreiner, "Adam and the Fall in Dispute," in *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin*, 287.

Murray also seems to read Calvin's commentary on Rom 5:12 to lead into a different trajectory than the Reformed Orthodox. Although Murray is probably more sympathetic with Calvin in his description of the Institutes than I am. In Murray's classic work on the imputation of Adam's sin he quotes this lengthy passage from Calvin's commentary above and also points out the nature of the "*quandoquidem*" conjunction as a statement of fact and gives his verdict: "The same objections apply to this interpretation [Calvin's] as apply to the Romanist position. While it is true that Calvin is not encumbered by the difficulty Romish exegetes encounter when they are faced with the necessity of categorizing as sinful that which does not intrinsically meet the requirements of their own definition of sin and while Calvin's view of original sin is thoroughly Pauline and biblical, yet, exegetically, he has not been successful in analyzing the precise thought of the apostle in this passage. In other words, he has not been

Allen incorrectly assumes a notion of judgement by context, instead of appealing to Calvin's notion of the hideousness of nature itself. Therefore, we can understand Calvin's *Commentary on Romans 5:12*:

There are indeed some who contend, that we are so lost through Adam's sin, as though we perished through no fault of our own, but only, because he had sinned for us. But Paul distinctly affirms, that sin extends to all who suffer its punishment: and this he afterwards more fully declares, when subsequently he assigns a reason why all the posterity of Adam are subject to the dominion of death; and it is even this — because we have all, he says, sinned. But to sin in this case, is to become corrupt and vicious; for the natural depravity which we bring, from our mother's womb, though it brings not forth immediately its own fruits, is yet sin before God, and deserves his vengeance: and this is that sin which they call original. For as Adam at his creation had received for us as well as for himself the gifts of God's favor, so by falling away from the Lord, he in himself corrupted, vitiated, depraved, and ruined our nature; for having been divested of God's likeness, he could not have generated seed but what was like himself. Hence we have all sinned; for we are all imbued with natural corruption, and so are become sinful and wicked.²⁴

Notice the last clause here: the sin in which we all participate is that we are imbued with natural corruption. Furthermore, we are not guilty of Adam's particular sin, but he put us under a condition in which we are guilty when we individualize this corrupt nature.

Randall Zachman reaches a similar conclusion in his analysis of Calvin's doctrine of sin. For Zachman, when Calvin asks, "how does Adam's sin become my sin simply by being born?" his answer is that "we have, therefore, all sinned, because we are imbued with natural corruption, and for this reason are wicked and perverse."²⁵ Whereas in later Reformed vocabulary, corruption is simply described as an inclination that does not

able to get above the Augustinian tradition in the exposition of Romans 5:12." Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*, 17–18. Although Murray is correct to point out that Calvin is not interpreting Romans 5:12 together with his successors, I would not innocently describe him as a mere Augustinian. The Augustinian position holds to a numerical representativity – where all humans are seminally in Adam. Calvin holds to a representative view, but even in his representativity, it is metaphysically impossible to impute guilt to his descendants. Just like Blocher, Calvin holds that the representativity of Adam wrecks the natural make up of everyone after him, but it is impossible for one to be guilty of someone else's sin. Guilt is declared by God on the basis of each person's particular nature.

²⁴John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), Romans 5:12.

²⁵Randall C. Zachman, "John Calvin," *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin*, ed. Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 242.

render one culpable, Zachman correctly reads Calvin's nuance.²⁶

One last problem with Allen's article: In Calvin's discussion of the assumption of a human nature by Christ,²⁷ Calvin contends that "Christ, by whom our integrity was to be restored, was exempted from common *corruption*"²⁸ shutting at once the possibility to use original sin as an entryway into Christ's assumption of a fallen human nature. The virgin birth functions as the sanctifying point in which, although Christ would naturally assume a corrupted nature, the Holy Spirit hinders the natural course of nature. I argue that Calvin moves in this direction because in his doctrine of original sin, a corrupted nature would render Christ obnoxious to God and ultimately liable to punishment based on his particular concrete nature.

The Sanctification of Christ in Calvin's Theology

Calvin is known as the theologian of the Holy Spirit, but it is my contention in this section that his focus on the Spirit leads him to neglect the role of the Son in the act of assumption or union.²⁹ Calvin's lack of treatment of the Son's role in the act of

²⁶Zachman still positions Calvin in the Federalist side of the equation. Nonetheless, his solution to place Calvin in such position does not come from a simple reading of immediate imputation, but from his doctrine of the transmission of the soul. Zachman asserts, "Calvin insists that the sin of Adam corrupts the powers of the soul in particular, especially our reason and will, and not only the passions of the body. However, Calvin does not think that the soul of the child is generated by the souls of the parents, but is rather created directly by God as an immortal yet created essence. Thus there is no way for Original Sin to be transmitted naturally from Adam to his descendants, as the soul is not a Product of human procreation. In order to address this problem, Calvin claims that God willed to give all of humanity the good things that he gave to Adam. Thus when Adam lost these blessings in himself, he thereby lost them for us, thereby eliminating the need to explain this loss by means of the natural transmission of sin to his descendants. 'Should any object that generation is confined to bodies, and that souls can never derive anything in common from one another, I would reply, that Adam, when he was endued at his creation with the gifts of the Spirit, did not sustain a private character, but represented all mankind, who may be considered as having been endued with these gifts in his person; and from this view it necessarily follows that when he fell, we all forfeited along with him our original integrity.'" Ibid., 243.

²⁷Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xiii.1-4

²⁸Ibid., II.xiii.4. Emphasis added.

²⁹There are lots of implications from the hypostatic union and our union with Christ. Many readers will probably try to infer many things from my approach here on "grace of union" and "habitual grace" to their own readings on believers union with Christ. However, Mark Garcia makes an important point here: Unlike what is in view in the christological *communicatio* model, the union of Christ with the believer is not a hypostatic union. In our union with Christ, as Calvin repeatedly insisted, there is a union of persons in the bond of the Spirit—a union, then, of a different order. The Reformed Orthodox were wisely sensitive to this point, including in their discussions of the *unio mystica* or *unio spiritualis* the added

sanctification in the assumption implies a reversal of the Trinitarian order of action. In what follows, I will look to Calvin's treatment of the humanity of Christ in a few of his works and demonstrate that his notion of sanctification in Christ's human nature is solely restricted to the Holy Spirit.

Calvin starts his chapter, "Christ Clothed in the Substance of Human Nature," by emphasizing that the humanity Christ took was one that came from the seed of Abraham and Jacob. Therefore, this seed cannot be created out of thin air, but is a real human body and soul (*contra* the Manichees and Marcionites).³⁰ The real humanity of Jesus is evidenced in Calvin's use of Hebrews 2:14: "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them bretheren." This sanctification is obviously connected to Christ's human nature and not his divinity, for the divine nature cannot be enriched in any way. Therefore, Calvin explains that in no other way could one say that Christ received the Spirit for sanctification if it is not through his human nature. The argument is that sanctification or enrichment is here attributed to the Holy Spirit.³¹

The role of the Spirit is once again evidenced in his treatment of the virgin birth. According to Calvin, the Marcionites rejected the real humanity of Christ because they thought that Jesus would then be subjected to the common law that included all of the offspring of Adam—sin. Calvin answers this by stating that it is obvious from Scripture that Christ is righteous and without sin. The fact that he came from heaven (1 Cor 15:47) does not nullify his true humanity because he also came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3). Coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, however, does not mean

qualifier *sive praesentiae gratiae tantum* ("by the presence of grace alone") in order to distinguish saving union with Christ from the hypostatic union of natures in the person of Christ. See Garcia, "Imputation and the Christology of Union with Christ."

³⁰Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xiii.1.

³¹Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xiii.1.

that he is sinful because the Holy Spirit prevented sinfulness from coming in through Mary. Calvin contends, “we do not hold Christ to be free from all taint, merely because he was born of a woman unconnected with man, but because he was sanctified by the Spirit, so that the generation would be spotless.”³² Calvin asserts that the logic of Christ’s unfallen nature is not due the fact that he does not have a human father since Mary could also have given him the corruption that came from Adam, but because of the work of the Spirit.³³

Furthermore, the role of the Spirit, in effecting sanctification, is proved once more in *The Geneva Catechism*. The Catechism states,

Q52 M. You say that Christ behooved to become man, that he might, as it were, in our person accomplish the work of salvation?

S. So I think. For we must borrow of him whatever is wanting in ourselves: and this cannot be done in any other way.

Q53 M. But why was that affected by the Holy Spirit, and not by the common and usual form of generation?

S. As the seed of man is entirely corrupt, it was necessary that the operation of the Holy Spirit should interfere in the generation of the Son of God, that he might not be affected by this contagion, but endued with the most perfect purity.³⁴

Calvin’s discussion of the assumption of human nature is completely focused on the Spirit’s role in keeping the Son from corruption. No mention is made of the Son’s assumption and work in sanctification.³⁵ Note that the biblical language is that when

³²Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xiii.4.

³³This coheres with Kelly Kopic’s conclusion in his now widely reference article: Kopic, “The Son’s Assumption of a Human Nature: A Call for Clarity,” 154–66. Kopic asserts, “So how does Jesus escape this contamination and thus become able to act vicariously? The way Calvin maneuvers at this point is by turning to the importance of the sanctifying work of the Spirit. It is *only* ‘because he was sanctified by the Spirit that the generation might be pure and undefiled as *would have been true before Adam’s fall*’. He argues, accordingly, that when the scriptures refer to Jesus’ purity or holiness it must be understood as a reference to his human nature, ‘for it would have been superfluous to say that God is pure’. Since the original creation of humanity was good, sin is considered accidental rather than essential to human. Such purity of a true human nature after the fall is possible only by the Spirit’s involvement, from conception to ascension. Therefore, reference to the virgin birth is primarily in order to stress both the true humanity of Christ and his ‘incorruption in Adam’s race’, rather than his divinity. In other words, there was never a time when his human nature was not sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” First emphasis mine, second in the original. Note how Kopic also uses the word “only” to refer to Christ’s sanctification.

³⁴Calvin and Waterman, *The Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (Sydney, Australia: Wentworth Press, 2016), 15.

³⁵The closest I was able to find Calvin asserting some sort of role from the Son was in his reply

Mary is elected to be the bearer of the savior, the Spirit came *upon her*. So says Luke 1:35, “And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will *come upon you*, and the power of the Most High will overshadow *you*; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” Calvin, however, interprets such passages not only to mean that the mode of sanctification of Christ’s human nature is through the Holy Spirit but also that it speaks to the unity of Christ’s person. Calvin asserts:

This passage not only expresses a unity of person in Christ, but at the same time points out that, in clothing himself with human flesh, Christ is the Son of God. As the name, Son of God, belonged to the divine essence of Christ from the beginning, so now it is applied unitedly to both natures, because the secret and heavenly manner of generation has separated him from the ordinary rank of men. In other passages, indeed, with the view of asserting that he is truly man, he calls himself the Son of man, (John 5:27;) *but the truth of his human nature is not inconsistent with his deriving peculiar honor above all others from his divine generation, having been conceived out of the ordinary way of nature by the Holy Spirit.* This gives us good reason for growing confidence, that we may venture more freely to call God our Father, because his only Son, in order that we might have a Father in common with him, chose to be our brother.³⁶

The argument here is commonly orthodox: the continuity with humanity is perceived in

to Stancaro. “Just as the apostle reasons that Christ had to become partaker of our flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14, 17) in order to be our brother, so from its opposite we correctly infer that he first had to be God to lead us back to the Father. What is the goal of our adoption which we attain through him, if it is not, as Peter declares, finally to be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4)? How could Christ accomplish this if he were inferior to the angelic order? In fact, we, who have been incorporated into him are not made sons of God in any other way except inasmuch as he was given us as mediator. The grace of adoption depends on this: that he transfers to us what he naturally possesses. [352] Christ, therefore, would not be in a position to fulfill the role of mediator unless he was God’s only begotten Son. Furthermore, the apostle uses this testimony to prove his priesthood: ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten You’ (Heb. 1:5): from this it rightly follows that if the dignity of the Son is inseparable from that of the priesthood, then no mediator is in any way suitable except one born of God. And, as a matter of fact, he cannot be considered the Son of God without taking his divinity into account. Hence, the divine nature is included in the order of the priesthood. Paul confirms this when he says that Christ was declared the Son of God in power (Rom. 1:4), and using this expression to define the role of the mediator he certainly understands both natures at the same time. What Christ elsewhere asserts: ‘I am in the Father, and the Father is in me’ (John 14:11) cannot be predicated of the human nature alone. There to the life is the picture of a mediator! John’s whole gospel, in fact, is brought to mind by similar statements of Christ as when he claims for himself what does not belong to either nature but concerns the complete person.” Joseph N. Tylenda, “Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin’s Second Reply to Stancaro,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 8, no. 2 (November 1973): 148.

Here Calvin connects the dignity of the human nature with the incarnation, but there is no discussion of the mode of this sanctification. In Calvin’s debate with Stancaro his main worry was to preserve the idea that the human nature was also part of the work of the mediator as a person who subsists in two natures.

³⁶John Calvin’s Commentaries: *Harmony of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1974), Luke 1:35.

the flesh Christ receives from Mary. The discontinuity is the vertical intersection of the Holy Spirit who interrupts the process and creates discontinuity. Nonetheless, the honor received by Christ in his human nature, being above all, is connected once again *only* to the Holy Spirit's preservation.

Derek Thomas registers some dissatisfaction with Calvin's treatment of the Holy Spirit as the agent of sanctification here:

What was sanctified, and when? Was it the unfertilized ovum? Surely not. It makes little sense to speak of sanctifying a piece of tissue. Was it the fertilized ovum: the foetus itself? It seems impossible to speak of this being sanctified without implying that prior to such sanctification it was impure or sinful . . . It seems best to avoid altogether language which involves us in such difficulties. We need say no more than that the humanity of Christ was created by the Holy Spirit, rather than procreated by sexual intercourse, and that as such it partook of the essential character of all that God creates: it was very good.³⁷

Even though Thomas does not see the necessity to speak of sanctification at all, his frustration is connected to the Holy Spirit's role in this process. For Thomas, one must speak merely of creation by God, not the Spirit's sanctifying role in Christ's human nature. As I will show later, if one exposit the sanctification of Christ's human nature only through the Spirit, then fallenness is still open (as Thomas correctly points out), because it becomes overtly dependent on habitual grace. If the Son, as he creates, assumes and sanctifies this nature, then there is no moment in which there is the need of progressive sanctification towards moment—such progression is the role of the Spirit. This is why the Church has held to the *an-en-hypostatic* tension: it both protects the incarnation from adoptionist tendencies and correctly works with a person nature distinction within the Trinity and the Incarnation.³⁸ I fundamentally disagree with Derek

³⁷Derek Thomas, "The Mediator of the Covenant" in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis* ed. David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 213.

³⁸Here, the point is that the created human nature which the *Logos* assumed had not a personalized created human person (*an-hypostasis*), but it got its personalization *via* the assumption of the person of the Son (*en-hypostasis*). Sanders says, "On the one hand, the human nature of Jesus Christ is in fact a nature joined to a person, and therefore enhypostatic, or personalized. But the person who personalizes the human nature of Christ is not a created human person (like all the other persons personalizing the other human natures we encounter); rather it is the eternal second person of the Trinity.

Thomas's rejection of the need of sanctification but suspect that his only category for this work is one connected to habitual grace.

A few disclaimers: one must note that the discussion here is focused on the Son's assumption of a human nature and not on the relationship of the two natures and the person (on issues such as the *communicatio*). On this latter subject, Calvin's treatment is anything but short.³⁹ This also is not a discussion on the merits of the exaltation of Christ in Calvin's *corpus*. Although the exaltation of Christ's human nature might have some relevance for the purposes of this article, the energy spent here is on trying to find a mention of the Son's role in sanctifying his created human nature.⁴⁰ The debate over the

So the human nature of Christ is personal, but with a personhood from above. Considered in itself, on the other hand, and abstracted from its personalizing by the eternal person of the Son, the human nature of Jesus Christ is simply human nature, and is not personal. The human nature of Christ, therefore, is both anhypostatic (not personal in itself) and enhypostatic (personalized by union with the eternal person of the Son).” See Scott Horrell et al., *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Intermediate Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 31.

Ignatius van Wyk compares Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism (HC) and asserts that differently than the HC, Calvin omits the idea of the divine Son taking such humanity and sanctifying, because Christ's divinity is presupposed. He asserts, “In his First Catechism of 1538, Calvin (in Hesselink 1997) says that these two phrases emphasise the humanness of the Son of God. His divinity is presupposed and does not need further clarity.” Furthermore, he contends that Calvin was probably not fighting adoptionists in Geneva. That might be a route worth pursuing on why Calvin neglects the role of the Son in sanctifying his human nature. Ignatius W. C. (Natie) van Wyk, “. . . Conceived by the Holy Spirit and Born of the Virgin Mary”: The Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism in the Light of Present-Day Criticism,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 70, no. 1 (January 2014): 1–9. Muller offers another possible explanation: “Calvin's thought focuses on the concrete Christ of history and the integrity of the *forma servi* encountered by faith in the temporal dispensation of salvation.” See Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 29.

³⁹See John Calvin, *Theological Treatises* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954); *Institutes* II.xiv.1. “Thus the Scriptures speak of Christ. They sometimes attribute to him qualities which should be referred specially to his humanity and sometimes qualities applicable peculiarly to his divinity, and sometimes qualities which embrace both natures, and do not apply specially to either. This combination of a twofold nature in Christ they express so carefully, that they sometimes communicate them with each other, a figure of speech which the ancients termed *ἰδιωμάτων κοινωνία* (a communication of properties).” See also *Institutes* II.xiv.1-8. Literature on this subject continues to grow. See Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 216; Joseph N. Tylanda, “Calvin's Understanding of the Communication of Properties,” *WTJ* 38, no. 1 (September 1975): 54–65; Stephen R. Holmes, “Reformed Varieties of the Communicatio Idiomatum,” in *Person of Christ* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 70–86.

⁴⁰On the exaltation of Christ's human nature, see Robert Baylor, “‘With Him in Heavenly Realms’: Lombard and Calvin on Merit and the Exaltation of Christ,” *IJST* 17, no. 2 (April 2015): 152–75; Alan W. Gomes, “Faustus Socinus and John Calvin on the Merits of Christ,” *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 12, no. 2/3 (August 2010): 189–205. Baylor summarizes the dispute: “Peter Lombard argued that Christ merited his own exaltation. Since all humans attain their end by merit, and since Christ was true man, it follows that Christ merited exaltation for himself. Calvin repeatedly rejects this idea, arguing that Lombard obscures the fully benevolent character of Christ's mission because he abstracts Christ's

exaltation of Christ's human nature in Calvin, relevant as it is, tends to focus on whether Christ was exalted by grace or by merit, but does not tap into the mode of impartation of this grace.⁴¹

Finally, some interpreters point to Calvin's treatment of the sacraments. It is true that when dealing with the Lord's Supper, Calvin talks about the Son giving life to flesh. Moreover, he states that the flesh of Christ "seeing that by its own condition it was subject to mortality, and even now, when endued with immortality lives not by itself."⁴² His discussion is not necessarily regarding how (by what mechanism) the flesh of Christ is imbued with life, but on the fact that it participates in the life of God, who has life in himself.⁴³

humanity from his divinity. Calvin's polemic against Lombard leverages his anti-Pelagian critique against medieval theologies of merit that reduce Christ's capacity as a representative and restrict the church's full participation in Christ's atonement. Instead, Calvin attempts to establish the substitutionary character of Christ's work by rooting Christ's merits in more strictly christological grounds."

⁴¹Gomes, "Faustus Socinus and John Calvin on the Merits of Christ." Gomes even points to an internal, "apparent" contradiction in Calvin: "Pressed by Laelius Socinus on the apparent contradiction between salvation as literally merited and yet graciously bestowed, Calvin responded that Christ's literal and proper merit procured salvation but did so through God's gracious ordination of Christ as redeemer, thus obviating the apparent difficulty. Yet, in the *Institutes* Calvin criticizes Lombard for teaching that Jesus merited his own exaltation, arguing that no man, Jesus included, could gain such merit. Calvin concludes that although Christ's exaltation followed his obedience, it did so purely of grace and as an example for us. This study explores how Faustus Socinus picks up the debate, exploiting Calvin's admission of the impossibility of gaining literal merit and pressing what he sees as the devastating consequences of this admission for the orthodox doctrine. Also considered is Faustus's critique of what he regards as Calvin's untenable and contradictory response to the queries of his uncle, Laelius, on the compatibility of grace with merit."

⁴²Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.xvii.9.

⁴³J. Todd Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification," *Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 3 (July 2005): 315–34. "In his theology of the Lord's Supper and baptism, believers participate in Christ as they are ingrafted into Christ's body, becoming one with Christ. Thus, for Calvin, 'participation in Christ' is inseparable from ecclesial *κοινωνία* and social acts of love. Yet, in distinction from alternative theologies that teach deification, Calvin teaches that union with God through Christ is only properly understood when the imputation of Christ's righteousness is affirmed, and 'partitive,' synergistic understandings of the Spirit's work are rejected. While Calvin's theology is quite different from late Byzantine conceptions of deification, his theology nonetheless offers an instructive account of the possible consequences of affirming that the fullest manifestation and final end of humanity are found in union with God through Christ." See also, J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 134–37. Also see Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

Reformed Developments on Original Sin

Having noted that Calvin's theology of original sin was not one of strict immediate imputation of Adam's sin in his guilt, I will show that in the period known as Reformed Orthodoxy, the theology of original sin developed into its form of double immediate imputation. The reason is polemic, exegetical, and theological and therefore demands dogmatic attention. It is through what is known as the "positive function of heresy" that Reformed theology responded to misconceptions. When error is raised and defended, orthodoxy needs to refine what has not yet been systematized.

Much of the attention given to the subject of the imputation of Adam's guilt is a fruit of the condemnation of Josué de la Place by the Synod of Charenton (1644–1645). Up until this point there was not enough clarity over the imputation of Adam's guilt (as seen in Calvin's exposition). Around 1640, Josué de la Place "defended a number of theses at the academy of Saumur concerning the imputation of Adam's sin."⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that de la Place

claimed Calvin's support for his own rejection of the representative notion advanced by his Reformed contemporaries. La Place recognized only a realistic relationship between Adam and humankind that served as the basis for the transmission of Adam's own corruption to his descendants. If individuals own any guilt as an aspect of original sin, he argued, it is guilt for the corruption residing in them by virtue of their natural descent from Adam. His doctrine admitted no place for the "immediate imputation" of guilt for Adam's actual transgression to humankind. La Place denied, moreover, the existence of any covenant between God and Adam—that notion that supplied a theoretical basis for the representative relationship recognized by his orthodox peers.⁴⁶

Moreover, de la Place had other misconceptions, according to the Reformed, on the nature of imputation, such that he did not also believe in the imputation of Christ's active obedience.⁴⁷

⁴⁵F. P. van Stam, *The Controversy over the Theology of Saumur, 1635-1650: Disrupting Debates among the Huguenots in Complicated Circumstances* (Amsterdam: APA-Holland University Press, 1988), 179.

⁴⁶Aaron Clay Denlinger, "Calvin's Understanding of Adam's Relationship to His Posterity: Recent Assertions of the Reformer's 'federalism' Evaluated," *Calvin Theological Journal* 44, no. 2 (November 2009): 228.

⁴⁷Heber Carlos de Campos, *Doctrine in Development: Johannes Piscator and Debates over*

Herman Bavinck, an eclectic inheritor of Reformed Orthodox tradition, addressed the same errors of de la Place, but pointing to the New England theologian, Jonathan Edwards.⁴⁸ Due to Bavinck's clarity and eclecticism in his approach to theology, what follows tracks closely to his discussion on original sin. For Bavinck, Edwards fell into the same error as de la Place. Bavinck stated,

[I]t is equally incorrect for us to draw from the fact that guilt and pollution always go together in sin the conclusion that the pollution is actually anterior to guilt. Jonathan Edwards in part arrived at this position because he tried to deduce the sinful deed from the sinful inclination that originated earlier and sought to explain the latter in terms of the natural principles inherent in humanity's lower nature. (J. Ridderbos, *Jonathan Edwards*, 171ff.) But this position was advocated decisively and candidly in the school of Saumur (France) by Placaeus [de la Place] and all the proponents of a mediate imputation of Adam's sin.⁴⁹

Bavinck's rejection of mediate imputation *à la* de la Place and Edwards is inserted in his discussion of "Human Solidarity" and "Sin as Sin's Consequence." Paramount to Bavinck is that moral depravity does not arise later as a result of bad deeds, but it has a cause. The cause is Adam's originating sin, but this does make God an arbitrary tyrant that holds people guilty by sheer force of will.⁵⁰

To understand Bavinck's response to the charge of arbitrariness, one must understand his organic motif.⁵¹ He claims that "humanity is not an aggregate of individuals, but an organic unity, one race, one family."⁵² Nathaniel Gray Sutanto explains that by "organic," Bavinck means "An archetypal unity-in-diversity in the Godhead implies that creation displays an ectypal unity-in-diversity"⁵³ So, a mere realist

Christ's Active Obedience (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 189.

⁴⁸On Bavinck's eclecticism, see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*.

⁴⁹*RD* III, 109.

⁵⁰*RD* III, 101.

⁵¹For a detailed explanation to Bavinck's Organic motif related to original sin, see Nathaniel Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck on the Image of God and Original Sin," *IJST* 18, no. 2 (April 2016): 174–90.

⁵²*RD* III, 102.

⁵³Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck on the Image of God and Original Sin," 174.

account of the transmission of sin cannot account for this ectype in an appropriate manner. For Bavinck, a realist account of transmission of sin treats Adam as a private person and cannot escape the charge of arbitrariness.⁵⁴ Only when one sees unity-in-diversity as federal, instead of physically, one can make sense of the transmission of sin without falling into pure voluntarism.⁵⁵

The genius of Bavinck in this section is to see that if “Adam’s trespass had been ours in the realistic sense, we would also be responsible for all the other sins of Adam, all the sins of Eve, even the sins of our ancestors, for we were included in them.”⁵⁶ Necessarily if the only manner of transmission was physical, then it would be hard to see how Christ could escape from original sin itself.⁵⁷

This realist, which Bavinck also calls mediative, account of transmission of sin would not only render Jesus as fallen, but also lead to a certain kind of universalism in the parallel between Adam and Christ. For if Adam is only physically representative of all, then Jesus follows the same pattern and represents all the men. Bavinck illustrates the organic bond as federal representational by suggesting that moral unity is stronger than physical unity. For example, fathers, mothers, teachers and tutors have “greatest influence on those under their jurisdiction. Their life and conduct decides of their subordinates.”⁵⁸ Hence, Christ stands as a representative of those united to him in the same representational manner that Adam stands, not mere physical but as their moral, rational, and spiritual head.

Next, Bavinck reflects on the interconnectedness of pollution and guilt. He

⁵⁴*RD* III, 102.

⁵⁵*RD* III, 102.

⁵⁶*RD* III, 103.

⁵⁷*RD* III, 103.

⁵⁸*RD* III, 104.

does that by appealing to a certain psychological analysis of the fall. It was not the act of eating the fruit by itself that brought the fall into world, but reflecting on James 1:15 Bavinck states that the eating of the fruit was the “first fully matured sin.”⁵⁹ He affirms that before, during, and after eating the forbidden fruit man’s relation to God was already changed. And as such, “they did not first become one thing and then another.”⁶⁰ Bavinck means here that they did not become impure or corrupted and only after some particular act they became guilty. The change happened when Adam “progressively detached himself further from God and his law.”⁶¹

According to Bavinck, here lies the error of the mediative view held by Jonathan Edwards. For Edwards, guilt is posterior to pollution. Edwards’ artifice for his argumentation is that he “tried to deduce a sinful deed from the sinful inclination that it originated earlier and sought to explain the latter in terms of natural principles inherent in humanity’s lower nature.”⁶² Moreover, the New England theologian created a distinction between natural and moral impotence to defend that fallen man has a “natural, but not the moral power to do good.”⁶³ Bavinck views this line of argument as leading to a denial of total depravity. For Bavinck, the entire man has fallen and therefore the Reformed correctly spoke of “natural impotence.”⁶⁴ By this, the Dutch theologian means that the inability to do good is congenital and not introduced by environment or custom.

Bavinck ties the Edwardsean position back to the school of Saumur (de la Place’s school), and explains why this view is objectionable. There must be an antecedent judgement (κριμα) and this judgement on one human has as its content the sentence

⁵⁹*RD* III, 108.

⁶⁰*RD* III, 108.

⁶¹*RD* III, 108.

⁶²*RD* III, 109.

⁶³*RD* III, 121.

⁶⁴*RD* III, 122.

(κατακριμα) upon all his progeny because “being born in this state of guilt, impure, and depravity is the execution of the sentence passed by God on Adam’s trespass.”⁶⁵

Moreover, Sutanto has provided a fine analysis of how the federal position laid out by Bavinck, coupled with his organic motif, evades the charge of arbitrariness or even the charge of legal fiction.⁶⁶ Sutanto states,

A response to this worry is inherent within Bavinck’s account of anthropology. If the imago Dei does not merely consider individual human beings, but the entirety of the human race as an organic unity, the objection that one could not be held responsible for the sins of another loses its force. That is, for the objection to exert pressure, one would need to bear the burden of proof to provide a theological rationale concerning why the entire human race should not be considered as a single organic whole, or why the imago Dei should only have its referent in human individuals, and not the entire human race. Considered this way, ethical solidarity with the federal head is not to render oneself vulnerable to some ‘legal fiction’. Rather, this federal make-up is precisely that which respects the triune and relational shape of those who bear God’s image.⁶⁷

Sutanto, who also refers to Crisp’s worries, remembers that Bavinck is not placing the federal headship of Adam or Christ on a mere voluntarist (from divine will alone) or even intellectualist (stemming from God acting according to his character) fashion. God did not just choose Adam to be humanity’s representative and arbitrarily placed Adam’s guilt on his progeny. Rather, the make up of created reality is one that has within itself a pattern of unity-in-diversity that is ectypal. Because transmission of sin is not physical, then Christ is able to be in solidarity with man without actually partaking of the sin that takes hold of other man.

Excursus on Romans 5:12-21

The central idea in this text is the juxtaposition of two men. One who disobeyed God and another who obeyed. According to Schreiner, the whole section is

⁶⁵RD III, 110.

⁶⁶For a recent discussion of the charges of arbitrariness and legal fiction, see Oliver Crisp, “Original Sin,” in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 202–5.

⁶⁷Sutanto, “Herman Bavinck on the Image of God and Original Sin,” 190.

building up from the theme of hope that Paul laid out on verse 1-11 from chapter 5. For Schreiner, “Christ has overturned the negative consequences of Adam’s sin. The power of grace is stronger than sin and death, and thus believers can be assured that they will reign in life (v.17) and that grace will reign and result in eternal life (v.21).”⁶⁸ Having framed the discussion with the victory of grace one needs to deal with the difficulty of verse 12. (Διὰ τοῦτο ὡσπερ δι’ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσηλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον.)

The inherent and well noted difficulty for the current discussion lies on how to translate ἐφ’ ᾧ. The linguistic construction can have several meanings and it depends highly upon the context. Schreiner points out that instead of focusing on what is the technical linguistic referent of ἐφ’ ᾧ one should see the broader referent of the idea of ἐφ’ ᾧ.⁶⁹ In this case, it seems that θάνατος is the referent because Paul is painting a larger parallel between Christ and Adam. While Christ brings life, Adam brings (διήλθεν) death. Once the referent has been discovered, it is still unclear on how to translate the ἐφ’ ᾧ construction.

Moo has pointed out that the structure of the verse fits neatly into a chiasmatic structure that should read as following:

- A sin (12a) produces
- B death (12b)
- B all die (12c)
- A because all sin (12d)⁷⁰

As such, the ἐφ’ ᾧ conjunctive structure would render a causal meaning.

Moo basis this on the fact that the chiasmatic structure of verse 12 renders sin both as the

⁶⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 271.

⁶⁹Ibid., 264.

⁷⁰Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 321.

manner to which death came into the world, but also the fact that all die is tied to sin as well. Therein a translation that reads “on the account of (ἐφ’ ᾧ) his death, all sinned” is possible.

Moo rejects the mediative view based on the fact that it cannot account for vv. 15–18 appropriately (γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι οἱ πολλοὶ ἀπέθανον; τὸ μὲν γὰρ κρίμα ἐξ ἐνὸς εἰς κατάκριμα; γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν). A reading such as “because of one man’s trespass many became corrupted in the human nature and therefore sinned,” is unlikely to do justice to these verses. Hence, Moo concludes that all sinned must have some corporate meaning. “‘Sinning’ not as a voluntary act of sin in ‘one’s own person,’ but sinning ‘in and with’ Adam.”⁷¹

Moreover, Francis Turretin gives a few reasons why the ἐφ’ ᾧ structure must be translated as causative. First, because the apostle carefully states through the passage that death passed to everyone not as if personally everyone have sinned in themselves. Second, the parallel between Adam and Christ is “in the thing, but not in the mode of the thing.” Meaning that while Adam brought guilt and condemnation, Christ brought grace and justification. Third, the treatment of the actual sin of Adam and the necessary guilt fits better with an account of justification. Those who are justified are justified of guilt.

Henri Blocher has posed a recent mediative treatment of this passage. Blocher seems to have a view similar to what I described as Calvin’s. He asserts,

How did punishment, death, reach all persons on the basis of (*eph’ ho*) their actual sinning? It reached them in the same way that death entered Adam’s person: since we are all in Adam, the head, sin could be reckoned to them according to the terms of the Adamic covenant, as offshoots of his sin. This is manifest in the imputation possible independently of Adam. [Blocher continues] The hypothesis I propose easily accounts for the imperfect symmetry between the two heads of human kind. Adam’s role is more firmly cast than in the ‘looser’ reading of Romans 5; at the same time, the unattested and difficult thesis of the imputation of an *alien* sin is avoided – without downplaying the tragic realism of the Augustinian human predicament.⁷²

⁷¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 326.

⁷² Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic,

In summary, Blocher wants to avoid the two tendencies of either tighten or loosen the relationship of Adam and his offspring. *Prima facie*, it seems like there is a psychological appeal for this position since no one wants to be guilty of another's sin. Schreiner, however, has argued, in conversation with Blocher, that Blocher's arguments fail at least in two levels.

First, his claim that the sin of human beings mirrors Adam's sin veers away from what Paul actually teaches in Romans 5:12–19, for Paul specifically and emphatically distinguishes the sin of those who live in the era between Adam and Moses from Adam's sin. Second, the text does not share Blocher's squeamishness about alien guilt, for it teaches that human beings are sinners and condemned (and hence guilty!) because of Adam's one sin. Just as human beings are righteous because of what Christ has done, so too they are guilty because of what Adam has done.⁷³

Adam's sin has a federal *and* typological character. It is federal because his sin passed through others *via* the unity-in-diversity relationship he has with other men and women. His sin is not isolated and private but it is passed through succeeding generations by God's accounting of that unity-in-diversity relationship. Is also typological because humans also sin. They sin after the pattern of the sin of Adam. It should not be an "either/or" because the exegetical moves from Paul grant both representation and responsibility. As Schreiner aptly notes, "the forensic cannot be separated from what is actual. Those who are constituted as sinners in Adam become sinners in practice, and those who are counted righteous in Christ live righteously."⁷⁴

Original Sin and the Fallen Christ

The exposition above on propagation of sin should frame the discussion of Christ's assumption of human nature in dialogue with Karl Barth and Thomas Torrance.

1602), 77, 80.

⁷³Thomas Schreiner, "Original sin and Original Death: Romans 5:12-19" in *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives*, ed. Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 277.

⁷⁴Thomas Schreiner, "Original sin and Original Death": 286.

Original sin in the Reformed tradition after Calvin was established as a tale of two federal heads—Adam and Christ. If the above sketch is true to the biblical data, then Christ and Adam both stand in the covenant of works. They are both sons of God whose humanity is determinative for their representatives. Both Barth and Torrance have some unique contributions to the doctrine of original sin and shall, again, be evaluated according to the exposition above.

Karl Barth

The affirmation of Christ and Adam as representative of humanity are clear in Barth's works.⁷⁵ As shown before, Christ does not adapt to Adam, but Christ, being the true image *is* the real man. One of the ways that Barth makes this point is by asserting that our existence in Adam does not have an independent status. He means that Christ is the only one able to stand as true representative for man. Again, our union with Adam is less essential than our union with Christ exactly because of the way in which God organized things. In Christ, the relationship between the one and the many is a gracious relationship.

Regarding the transmission of sin, Barth forcefully rejects hereditary sin and even realist accounts as “hopelessly naturalistic, deterministic, and even fatalistic,” but he still wants to keep the term original sin (*Ursünde*). He reasons that original sin still keeps the “voluntary and responsible life of every man.”⁷⁶ Embedded in this affirmation is Barth's rejection of the Reformation doctrine of total depravity. For as, Shao Kai Tseng reminds us, “Barth is emphatic that the good nature of human beings remains in the fallen sinner despite the total destruction of the imago.”⁷⁷ Much of this reformulation of the

⁷⁵CD IV/1, 501.

⁷⁶CD IV/1, 501.

⁷⁷Shao Kai Tseng, “‘Non Potest Non Peccare’: Karl Barth on Original Sin and the Bondage of the Will,” *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 60, no. 2 (2018): 199.

doctrine of original sin resides in Barth's restructure of the image of God as Jesus Christ himself. As Tseng reminds us again, "he [Barth] would come to redefine *imago Dei* as none other than Jesus Christ himself, who as the very relationship between God and humanity is a 'copy' of the triune relationship that is the "divine original" (this is the crux of Barth's famous *analogia relationis*)."⁷⁸

Hence, goodness is ascribed to man because he is made in the pattern of Christ. And Christ's determination to be *for us* has also brought a determination for an identification with us in our fall. Of course, as pointed out in chapter 2, this does not mean that God has sin in himself (*ad intra*), but simply that solidarity goes back as far as it can.

The move of representation here is justified in that we are dealing with "two great contexts, or unities, in which all men stand."⁷⁹ Adam belongs only to the past and has no future.⁸⁰ His verdict is only seen in the final day through Jesus Christ. Christ embraces Adam prospectively in election and as Christ comes into the far country.

The combination of Barth's rejection of any hereditary sin, with his modified representational theology through actualism and election, leads to Christ's assumption of a fallen nature within a matrix that is not self-contradictory. When Adam's representation is weakened in order to make his classical, christocentric move, Barth must place sin somewhere in its relationship to God. After all, Barth knows that theology is about God and all things in relation to God. Christ's flesh, then, bears the full weight of sin in his relationship to God in this far country. Exactly because Christ does not "wait" for Adam but proactively is *for us*, sin's location is able to shift freely. Moreover, the fact that sin does not belong to this existence but is an impossible possibility makes sin something

⁷⁸Tseng, "'Non Potest Non Peccare,' 200.

⁷⁹*CD IV/1*, 501.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 502.

that can never determine reality as it is. As Webster asserts:

One important consequence is that Barth is led to speak of sin as ‘an impossible possibility’ (III/2, p. 146)- if to be human is to be united to Christ, then sin cannot be definitive of human being. Barth’s point is not that sin is not a real fact of our existence; it is that sin is a contradiction of the very constitution of human being. To decide for sin is not to decide for a possibility which, however dreadful it may be, is equally as real an actualization of human being as the life of obedience to God. To decide for sin is to negate what one inescapably is as a human being, and therefore to adopt an impossibility as if it were merely one more way of being a creature.⁸¹

Therefore, the question of responsibility, guilt, and pollution are less relevant than what it was for the Post-Reformation. Given that neither Barth nor Torrance (or anyone surveyed for this dissertation for that matter) affirmed that Christ actively sinned, but that only that his flesh or human nature was tainted by sin, *prima facie*, Barth’s theology of sin escapes the charge of pollution entailing guilt.

Nonetheless, the articulation of sin as impossible possibility, with pastoral solidarity, and actualism must account for the coherence of the biblical testimony in exegesis. Theological logic does not guarantee biblical fidelity. Theology must preserve the judgements of Scripture even when it uses different concepts. Romans 5 is a key text on how to articulate the relationship of Christ, Adam, and sin. It does not mean, however, that Barth had no interest in the exegetical movements of Romans 5, but because he views Adam’s representation through Christ then he is committed to read the passage in a certain way. Creative reality (Adam, obviously, included) provides the external basis of the covenant of grace. Barth states:

The covenant whose history had still to commence was the covenant which, as the goal appointed for creation and the creature, made creation necessary and possible, and determined and limited the creature. If creation was the external basis of the covenant, the latter was the internal basis of the former. If creation was the formal presupposition of the covenant, the latter was the material presupposition of the former. If creation takes precedence historically, the covenant does so in substance. If the proclamation and foundation of the covenant is the beginning of the history which commences after creation, the history of creation already contains, as the history of the being of all creatures, all the elements which will subsequently meet and be unified in this event and the whole series of events which follow; in the

⁸¹J. B Webster, *Barth* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 102.

history of Israel, and finally and supremely in the history of the incarnation of the Son of God.⁸²

Therefore, it is inappropriate to speak of Adam's precedence or equal representation because the covenant is only present in the Christ's gracious election. "For there is *re vera* only one covenant, as there is only one God. The fact that Cocceius and his followers could not and would not say that, is what one should not follow them in, not in the older form, and even less in the modern form."⁸³ The dangers of covenant theology as explored in the above exposition of Romans 5:12 is that it leads to a historicism of grace or even Pelagianism according to Barth.⁸⁴

These commitments of Barth, though they can make sense of Christ's assumption of fallen flesh regarding original sin, hardly explain the order of creation. As in previous chapters, order of revelation cannot contradict ordering *ad intra*. The typological move "Adam then Christ" presupposes that Christ comes in created reality and becomes a man. Although it is true that Christ tells us what it really means to be human, his humanity is derived in creation. Taking its cues from a fear of abstraction, Barth's movement asserts that we can only know God and the things of God from what has been revealed in the work of Christ. Two "mega-doctrines" direct the way for this

⁸²CD III/1, 231-232.

⁸³Rinse Herman Reeling Brouwer, "Karl Barth's Encounter with the Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius: Prejudices, Criticisms, Outcomes and Open Questions," *Zeitschrift Für Dialektische Theologie*. Supp. Series 4 (2010): 167.

⁸⁴See also, Cornelis P Venema, "Recent Criticisms of the 'covenant of Works' in the Westminster Confession of Faith," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 9, no. 2 (1993): 165-98. Venema states, "In the development of Barth's theology of the covenant of grace, it is evident that he can find no place for a covenant of works, in distinction from the covenant of grace, that precedes in history the fall into sin and that does not express the saving grace exhibited in the gospel of redemption. Not only does Barth regard the biblical account of creation and fall to be non-historical saga, but he also resists any suggestion of a transition in history from wrath to grace subsequent to the fall into sin. From the beginning, God's dealings with the creature are pre-eminently and exclusively gracious. There is no change that occurs in history in the relationship between God and the creature because of the fall into sin. Furthermore, consistent with his view of the covenant of grace as the internal basis of creation, Barth rejects any ordering of law and gospel in which the gospel does not have the first (and as well, the last) word. At no point in God's dealings with the creature does the law precede or antedate the gospel. Not only in eternity, but also in history, the triumphant "yes" of God's grace has the first and definitive word. To suggest that, prior to God's gracious dealings with his covenant people in the history of redemption, there existed another covenant relationship, a covenant of works, is to introduce a concept that betrays the most fundamental feature of all of God's dealings with humanity - the free turning of God toward humanity in Christ"

movement: Trinity and christology. Sanders, however, notes that work of John Webster reverted attention to two distributive doctrines that tend to correct the emphasis given in this movement: Trinity and creation. Without a proper doctrine of creation to refer to God's saving action "the existence and history of created things may be assumed as given, quasi-necessary."⁸⁵

In conclusion, once Barth establishes creation as the external context of the covenant, then Adam's place is less significant for the location of original sin. Christ's human nature easily absorbs sin in a history that reflects God's movement of condescension. The problem with this movement is that, as Webster said,

The Christian doctrine of creation treats three principal topics: the identity of the creator, the divine act of creating and the several natures and ends of created things. These topics are materially ordered: teaching about the identity of the creator governs what is said about his creative act and about what he creates. In early Christian developments of the doctrine of creation out of nothing, much turned on the perception that God's radical perfection requires extensive revisions both of how the act of creation is to be understood (it can have no material cause) and of the natures of the beings created by this act. Of course, the order of inquiry does not necessarily conform to the material order: reflection on the doctrine of creation may take its rise with any one of the topics. But reflection will not reach its term.⁸⁶

Once one subsumes created reality into whatever form of Christology, then Redemption

⁸⁵Fred Sanders in "These Three Atone: Trinity and Atonement." in *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement* ed. Adam J. Johnson (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 26.

⁸⁶John Webster, "'Love Is Also a Lover of Life': Creatio Ex Nihilo and Creaturely Goodness," *Mod. Theol.* 29, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 157. Moreover, Webster states that "Disarray results from the hypertrophy or atrophy of one or other element (as, for example, in theologies which reduce the doctrine of creation to teaching about created things, without adequate consideration of the creator and his work). Further, misperception or misapplication of one or other element will deform the whole, whose force depends in part upon the integrity of its constituents. It would be possible to trace how modern theologies of creation have often suffered a series of such misperceptions and misapplications, on the part of proponents as well as despisers. Here I address one such misperception: the anxiety that the pure non-reciprocal gratuity of God's creation of all things out of nothing debases the creature, for a being so radically constituted by another as to be nothing apart from that other is a being evacuated of intrinsic worth. The anxiety is misplaced, sometimes destructively so. Showing why this is the case involves dispute about the elements of the doctrine of creation, that is, exposure of points at which habits of thought are contradicted by faith in God the creator. This is not, it should be noted, a peculiarly modern task, forced upon theology by hostile circumstances. The doctrine of creation has proved a permanently contrary article of Christian teaching, requiring the release of thought from inhibiting assumptions about God and created things (Lactantius's account in the *Divine Institutes* or Thomas's in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* are classical exercises in extracting the Christian doctrine of creation from inherited misapprehensions). For all that, polemics or elenctics are subsidiary undertakings. The primary theological task in this matter is the dedication of intelligence to devout indication and description of Christian verities, whose goodness, once known and loved, dispels anxiety and draws both intellect and affections to satisfaction."

is somehow prior to creation. This artifice however, as shown by Webster entails a form of identity that is incoherent with the order in God himself.⁸⁷

T. F. Torrance

The danger of externality is once again brought to the fore in Torrance's theology of original sin. From the very start, he is critical that federal theology has opted for a contractual view of God's relationship to the world. Torrance fears that the *homoousion* principle is damaged once one treats the relationship of God and the world (Adam in this case) as a set of preconditions.

The *homoousion* principle is not necessarily related to God and the world being of one and the same nature. It is, however, related to our knowledge of God and his relationship to us in the fact that it cannot be of a different order. Taking his cues from Karl Barth himself, Torrance claims that our knowledge is kataphysical, instead of mainly metaphysical. Just like in science, Albert Einstein proposed a certain revolution in how we come to understand things only as they relate to each other and to us; theology has a scientific approach by letting the object of study determine the method. So, our knowledge of God is according (*kata*) to what God chooses to reveal to us and our receptivity to that revelation.⁸⁸

⁸⁷See Richard A. Muller, "A Note on 'christocentrism' and the Imprudent Use of Such Terminology," *WTJ* 68, no. 2 (2006): 253–60. Muller states "Redemption is somehow prior to creation, just as, in the Barthian perspective, grace is prior to law, despite the clearly different order and arrangement of Calvin's Institutes, and (despite some neo-orthodox argumentation to the contrary) the very clear statements of Calvin to his theological intentions on the issue. Klooster wisely remarked that "while Calvin is indeed christocentric—christologically theocentric is more accurate—his christocentrism is certainly not that of neo-orthodoxy." But even here, in this fundamentally accurate observation, we are confronted with a problem of definition: Calvin's "christocentrism" is not the "christocentrism" of Barth and to identify both of these theologians as "christocentric" is either to create a demand that various christocentrisms be distinguished or to lapse into a muddled equivocation."

⁸⁸I owe this summary to Kevin Vanhoozer, "T. F. Torrance's Kataphysical Poetics: How the Incarnation Relates Science to Theology | Henry Center," Henry Center for Theological Understanding (blog), February 2, 2018, <http://henrycenter.tiu.edu/resource/t-f-torrances-kataphysical-poetics-how-the-incarnation-relates-science-to-theology/>. See also Darren Sarisky, "T. F. Torrance on Biblical Interpretation," *IJST* 11, no. 3 (July 2009): 332–46. "His goal, to borrow the words of Albert Einstein, one of Torrance's heroes in science, is to grasp 'the real in all its depth'. This requires what Torrance refers to as a stratified understanding of truth or doctrine, which he adapts from Einstein and Polanyi. By this he means a system which begins with an intuitive, informal apprehension of God and proceeds to a more refined set of conceptual tools which express the nature of divine reality more fully. The drive toward

Federal theology, according to the Torrances “distorts the nature of the Father, presenting Him primarily as a Judge and Lawgiver and only a Father to those who satisfy the requirements of the Law.”⁸⁹ It is a theology that distances itself from true knowledge of God as Father and our relationship as sons and daughters to favor a certain dualistic relationship of law and obedience. “Federal Calvinism presents a covenant of works for all and a covenant of grace only for the elect. This means that God is related to all of humanity in terms of law, but only to some in terms of grace.”⁹⁰ For Torrance, to treat the relationship of God and Adam as legal means that God acts with creation in abstract terms “as though it were the acting out of a plan.”⁹¹

Also taking cues from McLeod Campbell, Torrance insists that the sonship of Christ must be understood in perfect harmony with the law, because the law is the expression of God’s love as is also the Son. As Torrance said, “God’s law is God’s own heart *come out in the shape of a law*’. It is the law of Love”⁹² This move is what has been known in Torrance as the preference of the *filial* over the *legal* approach.⁹³ By preferring

higher levels of doctrine is a movement toward a few concepts which have maximal extension or range. . . This is the strata of devotion and religious experience. The experience in question is corporate, not private. Its orientation is to Jesus Christ as the New Testament presents him and, secondarily, toward the reality of God manifest in the apostolic church as recorded in the Bible.”

⁸⁹Alexandra Sophie Radcliff, “The Claim of Humanity in Christ: Salvation and Sanctification in the Theology of T.F. and J.B. Torrance” (PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2014), 24.

⁹⁰Radcliff, “The Claim of Humanity in Christ,” See also a more critical description of another Torrance, J. B. Torrance’s idea of covenant of works in Venema, “Recent Criticisms of the ‘covenant of Works’ in the Westminster Confession of Faith,” 174. “A second critic of the WCF who follows a line similar to that found in Barth is James B. Torrance. Torrance also regards the federal theology of the seventeenth century, especially as this is set forth in the WCF, to be a “rationalistic” departure from the early Scottish tradition of Knox, the Scots Confession, the pre-Westminster confessions, and the theology of John Calvin. It is evident that Torrance believes the source for a growing legalism in Scottish theology and practice, confirmed in the so-called “Marrow Controversy,” lay in an increasing emphasis upon the federal scheme and the *conditional* character of the covenant between God and his people. The idea of “conditional grace” was introduced into Scottish theology, according to Torrance, by means of the route of federal theology.”

⁹¹Thomas F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000), 292.

⁹²Ibid., 298.

⁹³Ibid.

filial language, Torrance is able to assert that the atonement is better understood as essentially moral, spiritual, and physical.⁹⁴ Only a propitiatory movement that takes place within the “mediatorial Person and obedient Life of Christ from his birth . . . to his death and resurrection” is able to avoid transactional and external views of the atonement. Because the atonement is not an external reality, the Son bears in his life the “wrath of God and his righteous judgement against sin.”⁹⁵ And he does so even physically because Christ rendered this “expiatory confession . . . in our name.”⁹⁶

One problem with Torrance’s filial over federal schema is that it has to first account for the exegesis of Romans 5. A second problem is that you still have to deal with the totality of human nature. The way that Torrance talks about Adam, Jesus, and humanity in its “kataphysical poetics” rejects the causal and logical relation between God and the world. According to Torrance, this is due to a dependence to Aristotelian metaphysics that sees a ready reference between God and the world as a movement from down to up. For Torrance, human nature, correctly has to be identified with Jesus Christ. The problem is that it seems that human nature in *toto* and not only in its specifics or concrete realities is identified with Jesus. So, even the reality of original sin is engulfed by the Son, as he is one who in a sense “is” us—as Chiarot has pointed out, whatever it means that Jesus takes human nature in its totality (in a concrete or abstract sense) it is still a complex issue to state that the *assumption carnis* deals also with the assumption of particular human persons.

Concluding Thoughts on Original Sin and the *Non-Assumptus*

The issue of original sin is debatable because it is the only part of Christian

⁹⁴Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 298 .

⁹⁵Ibid. 299.

⁹⁶Torrance, *Scottish Theology*, 299.

theology that can be proved. Plain observation all around confirms the reality of sin. The manner of transmission invokes even more heated debate because it summons to the conversation the problem of responsibility.

By resourcing Herman Bavinck, in this chapter I aimed to use his organic motif in order to first, avoid the charge of arbitrariness on how sin is transmitted. And second, to demonstrate how the unity-in-distinction provides a good *theolegoumena* in order to speak of Jesus's solidarity with man and avoid the assumption of sin. Jesus's solidarity with us bespeaks of the essential features of what constitutes human nature without actually resorting to sin as part of that. By refuting realistic impulses that conflate transmission of sin with physical procreation, Bavinck is able to indirectly provide a language that avoids the pitfalls of complete solidarity that entails the assumption of sin. Nonetheless, at the same time he was able to speak of a complete humanity in the savior.

Karl Barth and Thomas Torrance's rejection of federalism puts them at a compromising position on how to ascribe to Jesus and Adam any kind of meaningful representation. By diminishing this representation of Adam they are unable to keep the coherence of created reality: that the Son comes in the context of creation to restore man from the guilt of Adam.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The thesis of this dissertation is that those who argue for the Son's assumption of a fallen human nature are mistaken because they either work with a faulty notion of the nature of the hypostatic union, or revert Trinitarian order, or work with a defective notion of original sin. In order to prove these mistakes, I set out on each chapter to provide a positive way to talk about the incarnation. Each chapter contributes by creating a theological fence, so-to-speak, on how to talk about the act of assumption.

It is not my intention to charge anyone with heresy. Both Barth and Torrance were theologians who strove to speak about the Son with great measure of respect even though when some metaphysical revisions were happening. Moreover, both Barth and Torrance affirm the Nicene-Constantinople formulation. The major differences happen on the implications of the Trinitarian action once you have a different metaphysical framework. So, for example, when Barth reworks God's activity in actualistic fashion, we have to take Barth at his own words and scheme. And even though at times we compare Barth with Thomas, or Torrance with the Post-Reformed, these comparisons serve only the purpose to evaluate the coherence of their own methods. I am not necessarily comparing something very foreign to Barth or Torrance. Barth's actualism has to make sense of Trinitarian action somehow.

So, when discussing the inseparable operations of the Trinity, first one has to make sense of how the church has historically made sense of this activity as it relates to the incarnation. It is not three happenings, but one, or that an act to be properly construed has both passivity and activity embedded in it. When Barth's theology is evaluated on its own terms it has also to account for one happening or some sort of inseparable action.

His theology seems to fail when the determination of the human essence assumed by the Son is the Godhead who surrounds this man like a garment (something external to the condition of this man).¹ This position yields a rejection of any *inward* disposition of the Son caused by himself or it also fails to account for a theology of missions, but as I said before, if we follow Thomas' concepts of invisible missions as a corollary of the *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, then the *inward* disposition of the Son is breathed out from himself with the Spirit yielding a certain disposition and state of blessing. This is because the Spirit is sent by the Son into himself and that invisible mission is consistent with the work of the Spirit—who comes as the perfecter and finisher of something started by the Father and the Son.

The chapter on grace of union and habitual grace follows the chapter on inseparable operations clarifying some of its key insights. The use of habitual grace supplements the theology of inner dispositions as a corollary of the divine mission of the Holy Spirit and the *an-en-hypostatic* distinction. Retrieving Thomas Aquinas, I showed that “the mission of the Son is prior, in the order of nature, to the mission of the Holy Spirit, even as in the order of nature the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, and love from wisdom.”² Hence, the grace of personal union precedes habitual grace because God's actions in time cannot contradict his life *ad intra*. With this in mind I engaged the fallen Christ proposal and demonstrated that Barth and Torrance worked with some measure of growth in grace and sanctification that ultimately would render the personal union viable. In doing that, even if unwillingly, they have logically placed some sort of habitual grace in front of personal grace.

The discussion on the doctrine of original sin aimed to build another way in which one can talk about the human nature of Christ *vis à vis* sin. A Post-Reformed

¹*CD* IV/1, 94.

²*ST* III. Q7. A13. co.

doctrine of original sin, especially seen through the lens of Herman Bavinck, provides a unity-in-distinction manner in which we can talk about Jesus's relation to human nature in general. Jesus is representative of man, insofar they are ingrafted in him through faith, but he is not physically united to man *as if he has* to inherit the same mistakes of Adam or his progenitors. Following a purely realistic, mediative view of the transmission of sin would only render that one would be responsible and actually guilty for the sins of all his previous generations.

These dogmatic reflections served as a humble way to provide the church with a certain apparatus to think on the humanity of Christ and his relationship to sin. Even though through the course of the dissertation a polemical note struck some force, it is with the hope that the *loci* of Trinity, christology, sin, and sanctification might better interact with each other that this dissertation was written. It is only when we give up doing systematic theology on a blank sheet of paper in which each *locus* receives some proof-texts that we can move beyond the “he-said, she said” theological debates. Although Barth receives his fair share of critiques in this work, I can still remember one cannot but be awe-struck by how he brought every *loci* to bear on another. There were simply no isolated *loci* as also there is no independent discipline. As C. Kavin Rowe states,

[T]he kind of unity in interpretive practice upon which we want to insist is not a unity of two independent tasks, as if in good Gablerian fashion biblical scholars could simply hand their descriptive work over to the systematic theologians for contemporary construction, thereby “linking” the two separate projects together. Rather, the unity envisaged here operates at a much deeper level in that it calls for a subtle permeation or interpenetration of exegesis and dogmatics in the act of interpretation. In this way—to take two examples from my own ecclesial tradition—the unity of the interpretive enterprise is akin to what one senses in the prefaces to Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion (ICR) or in the programmatic criticisms expressed over three centuries later in Adolf Schlatter’s brilliant essay “The Theology of the New Testament and Dogmatics”[. . .] dogmatics is something primary (*ein Erstes*) which influences all our looking back to what has happened.³

³Christopher Kavin Rowe, “For Future Generations: Worshipping Jesus and the Integration of the Theological Disciplines,” *Pro Ecclesia* 17, no. 2 (2008): 205.

Dogmatics is primary but never isolated, because it furnishes the language that the church needs to speak properly about the Trinity, Christ, sin, and sanctification.

The concepts retrieved and developed here are in the service of the church *vis-à-vis* the rising of recent challenges to Christ's human nature. As stated many times before, this is not necessarily a battle of heresy vs. orthodoxy, but an attempt to provide the church with better and more sophisticated vocabulary to talk about the incarnation.

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ABSTRACT

“THAT WHICH IS NOT ASSUMED IS NOT HEALED”: A DOGMATIC RESPONSE TO RECENT FORMULATIONS OF THE SON’S ASSUMPTION OF A FALLEN HUMAN NATURE

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This dissertation contends that those who argue for the Son’s assumption of a fallen human nature are mistaken, because they work with a faulty notion of the nature of the hypostatic union, or revert Trinitarian order, or work with a defective notion of original sin. By retrieving the Thomistic categories of grace of union and habitual grace, together with the Patristic notion of inseparable operations, and the Post-Reformed theology of original sin, I show that the formulations that assert that the Son assumed a fallen human nature are out of step with faithful biblical, theological, and historical articulations. The chosen conversation partners are Karl Barth and Thomas Torrance. After the introduction, chapters 2 and 3 interact with these major influencers of twentieth-century theology and their proposals for Christ’s assumption of a fallen human nature.

Chapter 4 will start the constructive part of the dissertation. After surveying some initial articulations and developments of the doctrine of inseparable operations, most of the argument depends on scholastic distinctions of real relations, missions and acts, and visible and invisible missions. Such distinctions allow one to understand what exactly “assuming” means and its relevancy for the moral status of Christ’s human nature.

Chapter 5 discusses the relationship of grace and nature as they relate to the incarnation. The entry point into this section will be the somewhat recent Roman Catholic

kerfuffle over the existence of pure nature. Interacting with Herman Bavinck's work, I argue that although Bavinck's conception that grace is only opposed to sin and not nature is correct, some scholastic distinctions on the relationship of grace and nature in the incarnation are helpful. Here, I appeal to grace of union and habitual grace. Through a robust notion of how the Son's human nature is actually sanctified, one can avoid the errors of those who propose Christ's assumption of a fallen nature. In a way, this chapter is borrowing some conceptual apparatus from chapter 4. Since I clarify that created reality does not contradict God's inner order, then I will argue that proposing an assumption of fallen nature needs to suppose that habitual grace is occurring "before" the actual personal union.

Chapter 6 is on the doctrine of original sin. Although the doctrine has major developments in the early church, the focus of this chapter is on Calvin and developments of the doctrine of original sin after the Swiss Reformer. After discussing a recent interpretation of Calvin's doctrine of original sin, I propose a *via media* between this recent interpreter and some other established scholars. Nonetheless, Calvin's doctrine still needed some development. And again, with the assistance of Herman Bavinck's organic motif, I show how federal headship avoids not only the charge of arbitrariness in the transmission of sin, but also avoids the assumption of a fallen nature in Christ.

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