

‘BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING’: METHOD IN
CHRISTOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND
T. F. TORRANCE’S FALLEN
HUMAN NATURE VIEW

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ABSTRACT. This essay argues that unlike many contemporary christological anthropologies that begin with protology or eschatology, T. F. Torrance’s christological anthropology begins with the incarnate Christ as he confronts us in the midst of God’s redemptive act. This approach is labeled *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology*. Torrance himself does not develop this anthropological method in a sustained manner; therefore, this essay attempts to develop Torrance’s method by examining his doctrine of Christ’s fallen human nature and his epistemology. After developing Torrance’s *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology* the challenges and prospects of this view are addressed

KEYWORDS: Christological Anthropology, Epistemology, Fallen Human Nature, T. F. Torrance, Theological Anthropology

The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. ‘Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?’ he asked. ‘Begin at the beginning’ the King said, very gravely, ‘and go on till you come to the end: then stop’—Lewis Carroll (1988: 182)

Introduction

The King of Hearts’ famous instructions to ‘begin at the beginning’ in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is humorous because it is so blatantly obvious. What exactly constitutes ‘the beginning’, however, is not always so obvious. This is especially the case when doing theological anthropology, where the question arises: ‘Where do we begin our theological reflection on what it means to be human?’ Generally contemporary theologians offer two types of answers to that question: (1) reflect upon our experiences of being human and (2) reflect upon God himself. This second approach is typified by

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theologians who begin their reflections on human nature by starting with the doctrine of the Trinity or christology (Schwoebel and Gunton 1991). If one chooses to begin with the latter doctrine—christology—one still must ask, ‘What aspect of christology constitutes the proper starting place for christological anthropology?’ In this essay, I argue that unlike most contemporary christological anthropologies that begin with protology or eschatology, T. F. Torrance’s anthropology begins with the incarnate Christ as he confronts us in the midst of God’s act of redemption. Let us call this approach to theological anthropology, *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology*. By adopting this approach, I argue, Torrance makes a unique contribution to the method of christological anthropology.

This essay proceeds as follows. In part one I distinguish between *Protological Christological Anthropologies* and *Eschatological Christological Anthropologies*. I then draw attention to representative examples of each. In parts two and three, I turn to Torrance’s doctrine of Christ’s fallen human nature as a way of exploring his christological anthropology. By focusing on this aspect of Torrance’s christology we will see that for him theological anthropology begins in the midst of the incarnate Christ’s salvific actions. In part four, I raise one puzzle that Torrance’s fallen nature christology creates for the task of Christological anthropology. I conclude by commenting on the promise that Torrance’s *Soteriological-Christological* approach holds for theological anthropology.

Christological Anthropology

Most Christian theologians want to claim that our understanding of human nature is ‘shaped in some way by their beliefs about Jesus Christ and God’s relation to him’ (Kelsey 2009: 8–9). This conviction, however, does not warrant calling a particular anthropology ‘christological’ because this conviction is consistent with the belief that there might be something more essential to understanding human nature than christology. To be a truly christological anthropology, an account of human nature must claim that christology is in some way essential to adequate knowledge of the human person. Thus, I suggest the following definition of christological anthropology:

Christological Anthropology: The approach to theological anthropology according to which christology warrants important claims about what it means to be human.

Based on this definition we can draw a number of distinctions within christological anthropology. For example, we might draw a distinction between the potential scope of christological anthropology:

Narrow Christological Anthropology: Christological anthropologies that claim that christology warrants important claims about what it means to be human across a narrow range of areas.

Broad Christological Anthropology: Christological anthropologies that claim that christology warrants important claims across a broad range of anthropological topics.

Narrow Christological Anthropology typically limits itself to making claims about the image of God and/or ethics whereas Broad Christological Anthropology expands beyond these two subjects to discuss how christology can inform areas like the significance of the human body, human constitution, gender, sexuality, freedom of the will, race, ethnicity, etc. Broad Christological Anthropology claims that christology may even shed light on many aspects of human existence that have not been traditionally associated with Christian spirituality (Cortez 2016: 3). [Marc Cortez uses different terminology to describe the distinction I labeled Narrow Christological Anthropology and Broad Christological Anthropology (Cortez 2018: 21).]

We can draw another distinction based on the question: 'What makes it the case that Christology warrants important claims about anthropology?' Marc Cortez correctly suggests that the incarnation alone cannot be the ground for such claims. The reason being that 'simply affirming Christ's *full* humanity would not explain the uniqueness of his anthropological centrality since presumably all humans are fully human' (Cortez 2018: 171). Therefore, something else is needed to explain why Christ's humanity is the epistemological key to understanding our humanity. Typically, two kinds of answers have been given as to what explains the epistemological significance of Christ's humanity for understanding our humanity. The first is based on protology and the second on eschatology. Thus,

Protological Christological Anthropology: Christological anthropologies which claim that christology warrants important claims about what it means to be human because Jesus' humanity is the eternal paradigm of humanity.

Eschatological Christological Anthropology: Christological anthropologies which claim that christology warrants important claims about what it means to be human because Jesus fulfills the eschatological destiny of humanity.

Although these distinctions, Protological/Eschatological, are not explicitly named in recent christological anthropologies they are helpful categories for understanding contemporary approaches to christological anthropology. In what follows I illustrate the distinction by surveying four representative works of christological anthropology and classify them according to these two categories. [There is logical space for another possibility, one in which Christ

is the paradigm of all human beings (protology) and the ‘blueprint’ for how human beings will be in the eschaton. See for example Thomas Flint’s essay, ‘Molinism and Incarnation’ (2011: 187–207).]

Eschatological Christological Anthropologies

Two important examples of Eschatological Christological Anthropology—that also happen to be Narrow Christological Anthropology—can be found in the works of Wolfhart Pannenberg and his student Stanley Grenz. Pannenberg, for example, explains that in Christ ‘we see our destiny as individuals and as species’ (1991: 176). According to Pannenberg, humanity’s destiny is fellowship with God. This fellowship is definitively realized in the incarnation of the Son. Furthermore, this destiny of fellowship ‘confers inviolability on human life in the person of each individual. It is the basis of the inalienable dignity of each person’ (Pannenberg 1991: 176). The subject of the dignity of humanity, grounded in its destiny is the subject of the *imago Dei*.

Addressing his approach to the *imago Dei* Pannenberg explains that the subject deserves to be addressed in connection with ‘the doctrine of creation on the one side, and christology on the other’ (1991: 180). Pannenberg addresses Old Testament creation passages that characterize humans as creatures created to be ‘God’s vicars preparing the way for his own dominion in the world’ (1991: 203). Moving past Old Testament claims that address our divine likeness Pannenberg turns his attention to Pauline statements that call Jesus the image of God. He explains that ‘the idea of Jesus Christ as the image of God in which believers have a share through the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18) has a general anthropological significance that the New Testament statements develop’ (1991: 208). How does Pannenberg develop his understanding this significance? He does this in two ways. First, Old Testament claims about the image of God are now read in the light of the claim that Christ is the image of God. Second, New Testament claims about the future of humanity are now read in light of christological claims. These Old Testament and New Testament claims lead Pannenberg to think that ‘in the story of the human race, then, the image of God was not achieved fully at the outset. It was still in process’ (1991: 217). How can we come to understand the goal of this process? By looking to Jesus. In Jesus see how humanity’s destiny is proleptically fulfilled. Or as Pannenberg himself says, because Christ who is the image of God proleptically fulfills humanity’s destiny of fellowship with God, ‘our creation in God’s image was related from the very outset to his fulfillment that has come, or broken in, in the history of Jesus of Nazareth’ (1991: 225). Thus, for Pannenberg, Jesus of Nazareth, who proleptically fulfills the eschatological destiny of humanity as the divine image, is the key to reflection upon what it means to be the *imago Dei*. This conviction places Pannenberg’s anthropology in the Eschatological Christological Anthropology category.

Much like his *Doktorvater*, Pannenberg, Stanley Grenz's christological anthropology is both narrow and eschatological. This is especially clear towards the end of *The Social God and the Relational Self*. For instance, in a section titled, 'The *Imago Dei* and the True Human', Grenz highlights the point that the New Testament writers elevate Christ as *the* image of God and, by extension, declare that 'the believing community shares in this new Christocentric anthropology' (2001: 204). While agreeing that the Genesis narrative sets forth the idea that humankind is created in the image of God, he believes that Genesis 1:26–27 does not define the *imago Dei* in detail, rather it 'opens up the door to the possibility of the answer emerging from the broader biblical narrative in which the creation story is in place' (Grenz 2001: 223). The broader biblical narrative, according to Grenz, actually points to Jesus Christ who is not only the divine image but also the 'head of a new humanity destined to be formed according to that image in fulfillment of God's intent for humankind from the beginning' (2001: 224). As such, reflecting on how Christ is the fulfillment of humanity's eschatological destiny is the key to understanding what it means to be made in the image of God.

Protological Christological Anthropologies

If Pannenberg and Grenz are representative of Eschatological Christological Anthropology, then Karl Barth and Marc Cortez are representative of Protological Christological Anthropology. Barth's christological method of theological anthropology can be found in *Church Dogmatics* 3.2 Section 43, 'Man as a Problem of Dogmatics'. There Barth asserts that theological anthropology asks, what kind of beings are we who stand in a covenantal relationship before God? (1960: 19) Barth explains that there are other ways to answer the kind of question that takes into account 'man as a phenomenon' (1960: 25). Barth, however, believes that a 'phenomenal' approach that attempts to answer the question of theological anthropology via speculation or the sciences is a dead end. The reason speculative and purely scientific approaches do not contribute to theological anthropology can be encapsulated in the following argument (which is not explicitly presented by Barth in the form of a logical argument):

- (1) Theological anthropology is the study of humanity in its relationship to God.
- (2) Humanity's relationship to God can only be known by the Word of God.

Therefore,

- (3) Any approach to theological anthropology that does not begin with the Word of God will not yield answers concerning Humanity's relationship to God. (Barth 1960: 26)

Premise 1, however, is problematic because ‘the revelation of God does not show us man as we wish to see him, in the wholeness of his created being but in his perversion and corruption’ (Barth 1960: 26). In other words, the picture of humanity we see in Scripture is a picture of humanity as sinful; therefore, we have access to humanity’s relation to God only in a fallen or corrupt state; we do not see humanity in its true relation to God. Barth poses the problem in this way: ‘If we know man only in corruption and distortion of his being how can we even begin to answer the question about his creaturely nature?’ (1960: 27) Barth’s solution to this problem is to point out the notion that sin presupposes a covenant, and thus that the covenant of God with humanity is primary, even ultimate (1960: 32). From this Barth concludes that God ‘created man to be His covenant-partner’ (1960: 40). If God created humanity to be his covenant-partner then we must look to the one whom God elected to be his covenant-partner. This elect-one who was elected prior to God’s decision to create is none other than Jesus himself. God has eternally elected Jesus to be his covenant partner, and in Jesus God has elected the rest of humanity to be covenant-partners (Barth 1960: 42). Because Jesus is the eternally elected covenant-partner, we ought to look to Jesus alone as the key to theological anthropology (Barth 1960: 43). Jesus alone reveals what our nature as covenant-partners was eternally elected to be.

Building on the notion that Jesus alone reveals our human nature, Barth explains that ‘in our exposition of the doctrine of man we must always look in the first instance at the nature of man as it confronts us in the person of Jesus, and only secondarily—asking and answering from this place of light—at the nature of man as that of every man and all other men’ (1960: 43). Thus, because Jesus alone reveals human nature as God created it, any topic in anthropology which is properly theological must be grounded in christology. This principle necessarily places Barth in the Broad Christological Anthropology camp. That is, if we will reflect theologically on topics like sexuality, race, gender, embodiment, freedom of the will, or the mind-body debate, we must begin by looking to Jesus. [Barth applies the principle that theological anthropology begins with christology in his discussion of the mind-body problem in CD III/2 section 46 and the topic of the beginning-end of life in CD III/2 section 47.]

Another theologian who follows the protological approach—and ends up with a Broad Christological Anthropology—is Marc Cortez. Cortez’s work on anthropological method can be found across a number of works but his own constructive proposal is found in his most recent work, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Life of Christ*. There he proposes a ‘comprehensive Christological anthropology’, that is, ‘one in which (a) Christology warrants ultimate claims about true humanity such that

(b) the scope of those claims applies to all anthropological data' (Cortez 2018: 21). [See also Cortez 2008 and Cortez 2015: 15-26.]

One part of Cortez's project is to ground the epistemological centrality of Jesus by arguing that his humanity is ontologically fundamental for the existence of all other humans. He proposes three ways that one could go about doing this. First one could argue that the eternal Son just is the paradigm of humanity. Thus, 'it is really the eternal Son who is the true *imago Dei*' (Cortez 2018: 124). The incarnation then becomes the epistemological key to theological anthropology because the ontological ground for humanity has become flesh. Cortez finds this option problematic because it is difficult to reconcile this view with the inherently embodied language of the *imago Dei*. A second way to ground Christ's ontological fundamentality for other humans is to argue that 'the son himself is God's eternal *idea* of what a true human should be' (Cortez 2018: 124). Under this account—which finds precedent in Schleiermacher and support in James Dunn—the Son is God's paradigm for a true human, and this paradigm has existed eternally in the mind of God (Schleiermacher 2011 and Dunn 1980). Cortez rightly points out that such a view creates large difficulties for maintaining historical Trinitarian theology. The final view, and the one that Cortez affirms, is one in which the eternal significance of the Son's humanity is found in identifying it as that which grounds the eternal identity of the Son (2018: 125). Such an account bears obvious similarities to Karl Barth's theology of the Son's identity. Under Barth's account, the Son is personally existent from all of eternity, but somehow the identity of the Son is determined by his historic existence. How that identity is understood has been a hotly contested issue in Barth studies. In the literature addressing the topic one can find a range of interpretations; stronger versions emphasize the strict identity between the incarnate Son and the eternal son and hence find no use for the *logos asarkos* while weaker versions affirm the conceptual value of the *logos asarkos* because it enables us to say that the incarnation was a free gift of God's grace. Ultimately Cortez does not double down on any of the range of options made available by Barthians, rather, Cortez lands on a version which draws on the substance of Barth's protological anthropology, saying that,

Jesus just is God's eternal determination of what it means to be human. His humanity has ontological significance for that of all other humans simply because Jesus is the one in whom God establishes what it means to be human (Cortez 2018: 172).

Building on the ontological and epistemological significance of Jesus, Cortez concludes that any reflection on what it means to be human—including reflection on gender, embodiment, race, and death—must be grounded in Jesus Christ. [For a range of interpretations regarding Barth's views about the

logos asarkos see, for example, McCormack 2000:92–110 and Hunsinger 2008: 179–98.]

Summary

By means of examples we have seen that a number of christological anthropologies can be classified as Protological or Eschatological. In what follows, I argue that Torrance develops a version of christological anthropology that does not fit either category: *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology*. In order to see how this is so we will examine his account of Christ's fallen human nature.

T. F. Torrance and Christ's Fallen Nature

In recent decades a number of theologians have begun to ask whether Jesus assumed a fallen or an unfallen human nature upon the incarnation. Those who advocate for the fallen view include Karl Barth—who argues that if Christ did not assume a fallen nature, then Christ could not *really* be like us—and Colin Gunton—who argued that Christ was conditioned by fallenness both in hereditary and in social relations (Barth 1957: 153, Gunton 2002: 99, 101–2, and Gunton 2005: 50–52). Yet, in recent literature the theologian who has received the most attention for his fallen human nature view is T. F. Torrance.

Jerome van Kuiken, among others, has argued that Torrance's understanding of Christ's fallen human nature develops over the course of his theological career. In his 1938–1939 Auburn lectures, Torrance taught that Christ assumed fallen flesh which was sanctified in the moment of assumption. When Christ became a part of the human race he entered into solidarity with sinners, thus falling under the curse of God's wrath. On this view, 'Christ's flesh, while holy, is 'fallen' in the sense of suffering divine judgement upon the sin of which Christ himself is innocent' (van Kuiken 2017: 35). What does this suffering consist of? It consists of the enmity of God against sin as well as the enmity of Satan and sinners against him. In this way he represents sinful humanity before God, yet unlike the rest of humanity he offers perfect obedience to God despite having a fallen nature. Daniel Cameron summarizes Torrance's early view saying,

In the incarnation, God comes 'near to sinful man, inasmuch as he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh', and in doing so he assumed the suffering of infirmity and temptation, the enmity of God against sin, and the enmity of Satan against sinners (Cameron 2016: 16, cf. Torrance 1941: 133).

Torrance's view, however, evolved. In his Edinburgh lectures he argued that the Son assumed a fallen nature and sanctifies it. Jesus experiences the agony of obedience and identification with sinners, opposition from sinners and

Satan, as well as opposition from God against his vicarious sinfulness. In these areas the earlier and latter doctrines are continuous. The discontinuity, however, arises concerning Torrance's understanding of original sin. Van Kuiken explains,

At Auburn he [Torrance] had followed Brunner in locating original sin in one's personhood and so denied original sin to Christ on the basis that the Logos had assumed human nature but not a human person—the person of Christ was the divine Logos. In later writings, however, Torrance relocates original sin to the human nature. This move allows him to affirm that in assuming a fallen nature, Christ assumed original sin, only to annihilate it upon assumption (van Kuiken 2017: 38).

How Torrance develops his doctrine of Christ's fallen nature leaves us with two versions of the fallenness doctrine: the early view and the late view. Given that the latter view represents his more mature thought, we will focus on this second view. In light of his mature view, we can ask two questions: What motivates Torrance's adoption of this doctrine? What 'work' does it do for his doctrine of redemption?

Motivations for Adopting the Fallen Human Nature View

In what condition do human beings find themselves as they stand before God? And what needs to change? According to one strand of Christian tradition humanity's condition is marked by sinfulness. Because of this condition humans deserve the judgement and wrath of God. In the Reformed tradition this has typically been understood in terms of a 'penalty'. Thus, Christ dies on the cross, fulfilling justice for the penalty that would have befallen those who have transgressed God's laws (Torrance 1992: 40). This understanding of humanity's predicament and its solution leads Torrance to say that 'in Western Christianity the atonement tends to be interpreted almost exclusively in terms of external forensic relations as a judicial transaction in the transference of the penalty for sin from the sinner to the sin-bearer' (Torrance 1992: 40). Torrance sees this way of understanding humanity's predicament and the solution as overly juridical. Furthermore, he sees them as operating with an external rather than internal solution. Torrance deems this 'gospel of external relations', where Christ's passion is understood in juridical terms as a transaction between Christ and the rest of humanity, the 'Latin heresy' (Torrance 1986: 461–82). In the 'Latin heresy' the incarnation becomes instrumental. It is a means rather than an end. Not only this, but the external understanding of the gospel cannot address what Torrance thinks is humanity's major predicament: alienation before God in terms of mind and will. [Torrance argues the Latin Heresy that marks much of the Western tradition arrives in a different, albeit similar, form in Roman Catholic theology.

In Roman Catholicism, he says, sin is dealt with through the transfer of grace merited by Christ and dispensed by the church through the sacraments (Torrance 2002: 203).]

According to Torrance the human mind is perverse. It is ignorant and requires labor to learn truth in a sin-darkened world (Torrance 1965: 132, Torrance 1988: 166–7). It is subject to temptation (Torrance 2009: 112). It is diseased and stands in enmity and violence against God’s reconciling love, it turns God’s truth into lies (Torrance 1992: 39–40). Not only is the mind in need of healing, the will stands in opposition to God’s will and needs to be healed as well. This, Torrance believes, is illustrated in the history of Israel. As God moves closer towards Israel, Israel’s will resist God more vigorously. Torrance explains,

The closer God drew near the more the human self-will of Israel asserted itself in resistance... the more fully God gave himself to this people, the more he forced it to be what it actually was, what we all are, in the self-willed isolation of fallen humanity from God (Torrance 1992: 28).

For Torrance Israel is a microcosm of humanity; in its resistance to God’s will and its alienation from him despite his love for it, Israel embodies the human predicament before God.

If the human predicament were merely juridical it could be dealt with a merely extrinsic solution, however, Torrance is convinced that the human predicament is also internal and thus an external gospel is inadequate. If the fallen minds and wills of humans are to be dealt with, God will have to take it and deal with it from the ‘inside-out’, so to speak. Christ will have to assume human nature as it stands after the fall—with its fallen and depraved mind and will—because that which is not assumed is not healed, i.e. ‘that what God has not taken up in Christ is not saved’ (Torrance 1992: 39). This internal solution will need to address the problems of the mind and the will, problems that are ontological rather than forensic. Thus, concerning the mind Torrance says: ‘It is the alienated *mind* of man that God had laid hold of in Jesus Christ in order to redeem it and effect reconciliation deep within the rational center of human being’ (1992: 39). Concerning the will Torrance explains: ‘From within our alienation and in battle against our self will’, Christ casts himself ‘in utter reliance upon God the Father’ (Torrance 2009: 117). Christ prays, ‘Not my will (that is, not the will of the alienated humanity which Jesus has made his own), but they will be done’ (Torrance 2009: 118). From our own humanity, Christ offers ‘perfect filial obedience... from within man’s alienated life’ (Torrance 2009: 118). In order to accomplish this kind of redemption, Torrance argues, Christ needs to assume our fallen humanity. Thus, we can say that his understanding of the human predicament, paired

with the *non-assumptus* principle, drives his adoption of the fallen nature view of Christ's humanity.

Before proceeding with an explanation of how Christ accomplishes redemption from within a fallen human nature, we ought to say something about Torrance's use of the *non-assumptus* principle. Ian McFarland has argued that to appeal to the *non-assumptus* principle as the grounds for claiming that Christ had a fallen human nature is to misunderstand Gregory Nazianzen's famous maxim: 'the unassumed is the unhealed' (2008: 406). Gregory was concerned with the assumption of a *whole* human nature. If Christ did not have a human mind, he had not assumed humanity in its fullness. McFarland argues that having a mind is an essential part of being human but having a fallen mind is merely a contingent part of being human. Thus, Gregory was concerned with the completeness (the essential parts) rather than the quality (the contingent aspects) of Jesus' humanity. This may be true, but it does not invalidate Torrance's use of the principle. Torrance appeals to the fallen nature view because he repudiates a gospel of external relations. Salvation has to be worked out from *within* Christ. In the case of the mind and will, the healing of both features will have to occur from within Christ or else they cannot truly be healed. To use a medical analogy, someone with malaria can only be healed of malaria if that person has malaria. Similarly, the fallen mind and will can only be healed if the person being healed actually has a fallen human mind and will. Therefore, if fallen human nature will be healed, the one in whom the healing occurs must have a fallen human nature. Without Christ's assumption of a fallen human nature, human nature remains unhealed. Thus, 'the whole man [in its essential and contingent properties] had to be assumed by Christ if the whole man is to be saved... the unassumed is the unhealed... what God has not taken up in Christ is not saved (Torrance 1992: 39).

The Assumption and the Sanctification of Human Nature

Orthodox christology holds that Christ assumed a fully human nature. Torrance is in line with orthodoxy but adds that the human nature that Christ assumes is the 'concrete form of our human nature marked by Adam's fall' (Torrance 2009: 61). Just as we stand before God in our sin-laden, corruptible, mortal humanity the Son entered into this same state of humanity. Christ, Torrance says, 'entered into complete solidarity with us in our sinful existence in order to save us, without becoming himself a sinner' (Torrance 2009: 62). What redemptive action does assuming a fallen human nature accomplish? The answer comes in two parts: (1) what the initial assumption of a fallen nature does to human nature and (2) what the assumption of a fallen nature allows Christ to accomplish over the course of his life.

Immediately upon assuming fallen a human nature Christ sanctifies it. Thus, Torrance says, 'In the very act of assuming our flesh the Word

sanctified and hallowed it, for the assumption of our sinful flesh is itself atoning and sanctifying action. How could it be otherwise when he, the Holy One took on himself our unholy flesh' (2009: 63). When Son's divine nature is united to a fallen human nature, the divine nature is not defiled by the fallen human nature. Rather, it sanctifies what has been marred and unites it again to the purity of God (Torrance 2009: 100). In *Theology in Reconstruction* he explains, 'in his holy assumption of our unholy humanity, his purity wipes away our impurity, his holiness covers our corruption, his nature heals our nature' (Torrance 1965: 155–156). [Contra the claim that when Son's divine nature is united to a fallen human nature, the divine nature is not defiled by the fallen human nature see Oliver Crisp in *Divinity and Humanity*. There he argues that the joining of the Word to a fallen nature is impossible on moral grounds (Crisp 2007: 112).]

How is the initial act of union of between divine and human natures sanctifying and salvific? Answering this question has generated controversy partly because Torrance does not carefully spell out exactly what aspect of human nature is being sanctified upon assumption. One way to understand this initial act of sanctification is that upon assumption of a human nature Christ deals with the problem of original sin. This, as we have noted above, seems to be the hallmark of his mature view of the fallen nature. Yet we might still ask, what does it mean to say that Christ 'dealt with' original sin upon assuming fallen human nature? To make sense of this question we might distinguish between original sin as corruption and guilt. Let us define original sin as 'corruption' as the part of original sin that 'involves a propensity or proneness to actual sin, but it is not the same as actual sin' (Crisp 2007: 97). Let us define original as guilt as the 'culpability aspect of guilt that accrues to Adam's first sin' (Crisp 2011: 437). Although (in traditional Western theology) these two aspects of original sin go hand in hand, they are (at least) logically separable. What does Torrance mean when he argues that the assumption of our fallen nature deals with original sin? We can rule out original corruption being dealt with at the assumption of human nature, because, as we will see below, Christ needs to bear a corrupt humanity for redemption to occur. This leaves us with original guilt. We can summarize this interpretation of Torrance's account as follows: At the moment of assumption Christ cleanses his fallen nature of guilt but retains the corruption of human flesh. Therefore, Christ is not culpable for original sin, but he bears the kind of corrupt nature necessary to accomplish the redemption of human nature.

Christ's Life and the Sanctification of Human Nature

In *Theology and Reconstruction* Torrance writes that Christ sanctifies our fallen human nature both 'in the very act of assumption and all through his holy life he lived in it from beginning to end' (1965: 155). Torrance, it seems, is

suggesting that the corruption that comes from having a fallen human nature is precisely what is redeemed over the whole course of Christ's life. What does this corruption consist of? This corruption consists of a mind and will that are hostile to God. Christ, deals with the corruption of our mind by 'converting it' and by living in 'holiness and purity'. He deals with our corruption of will by beating 'his way forward by blows' and 'bending' back the wayward will of humanity into submission to the will of God (1965: 132). He overcomes the temptations that arise due to a corrupt will and 'resists its downward drag in alienation from God' and converts 'it back in himself to obedience toward God, thus sanctifying it' (Torrance 2009: 205). He overcomes the opposition and enmity of our fallen nature to God 'and restored it to peace with God first in glad and willing submission to God's judgement' (Torrance 2009: 205). He offers 'the amen of truth from within our humanity to the word and will of God's eternal truth' (Torrance 2009: 123). He stands 'in the place of Adam and all mankind', standing in the gap 'created by man's rebellion and reconciled men and women to God by living the very life he lived in the perfection of obedience' (Torrance 2009: 123). Christ's whole life—his baptism, repentance, confession, struggle with temptation, obedience, prayer, death, and resurrection—serves the purpose of healing the corruption of the fallen nature that he assumed. The corruption of human nature due to original sin is dealt with over the whole course of Christ's life, which is lived in perfect conformity to God's will for humanity.

Torrance's Christological Anthropology

Like others who are inclined towards christological anthropology Torrance expresses interest in approaching theological anthropology in light of the person of Christ. However, an in-depth examination of Torrance's theological anthropology is difficult because he rarely addresses questions of theological anthropology—let alone anthropological method—in a sustained manner. Thus, Eric Flett notes that Torrance's writings on theological anthropology are sparse 'because Torrance's creative powers were never fully turned upon the subject matter as a whole' (2011: 117). Yes, Torrance occasionally wrote about the *imago Dei*, human depravity, and the body-soul relation, but he did not address these topics with the depth of engagement given to his other dogmatic interests. [By addressing theological anthropology in a limited manner he follows his observation that, 'Reformed theology has always been shy about erecting an anthropology, not because it lacked a view of man, but because such a view cannot be enunciated as an independent article of faith as if it could of itself condition or contribute to our knowledge of God' (Torrance 1965: 99).]

Given the sparsity of Torrance's writings on the doctrine of humanity, how might he have developed his theological anthropology? Flett suggests that

additional material for developing Torrance's theological anthropology 'may be gleaned from his workings on the person and work of Christ' (2011: 117) Colyer concurs, saying,

Torrance argues that a Christian anthropology is properly 'formed in light of the humanity of Christ and in accordance with his redemptive purpose in the regeneration of mankind'. The incarnation entails the Son of God assuming our actual human being and nature in order to heal, restore, and fulfill it in accordance with the divine telos for humanity of union and communion with God. Thus, Torrance views the humanity that the Son of God assumed from us in the incarnation, healed in body and soul and restored to proper relation with God and others as of *archetypal* significance for all human beings. In Jesus Christ we 'discern what the basic structure of humanity is and ought to be' (Colyer 2001: 173–4, Torrance 1998: 309).

Dick Eugenio makes this same claim more pointedly, explaining that for Torrance, 'what constitutes humanity can only be known in light of who Christ is and what he has done, not the other way around' (2014: 43). The claim that the proper starting place for theological anthropology is christology is not unique. As we have seen, Barth, Cortez, Grenz, Pannenberg, and countless others would agree that theological anthropology is grounded in christology. However, what is unique about Torrance's theological anthropology is that theological anthropology begins with Christ's human nature as we are confronted by it in Christ's saving act, which according to Torrance is a fallen human nature. Thus, unlike christological anthropologies that begin with protology or eschatology, Torrancian christological anthropology begins by discerning what it means to be human by *first* looking at the actual human nature of Christ—which happens to be a fallen and sanctified nature—rather than some putative human nature.

That christological anthropology would begin with who Christ is and what he has done—especially in his fallen human nature—instead of protology or eschatology should not be surprising given Torrance's epistemology. The idea that we know Christ's human nature only through the reality that we have access to, namely the fallen and sanctified human nature he assumes for the sake of salvation, bears much similarity to how Torrance believes we know God as Trinity.

According to Torrance, 'we know things in accordance with their natures, or what they are in themselves; and so we let the nature of what we know determine for us the content and form of our knowledge' (1980: 8). That is, we know things, *kata physin*. This epistemological principle applies to all realms of knowledge ranging from the natural sciences all the way to theological science. That knowledge is *kata physin* is the unifying methodological principle for all scientific investigation, theology included. Furthermore, the *kata physin* principle entails that knowledge of objects begins with being

confronted by that object. Because of this conviction, Habets explains, Torrance is critical of the use of *a priori* notions in both science and theology (Habets 2013: 47). *A priori* modes of investigation do not take seriously the fact that the knower has been confronted with the object of knowledge. When the science of theology functions in an *a priori* manner, it operates as 'a system of ideas laid down on the ground of external preconceptions and authorities' and it no longer operates out of 'the actual knowledge of the living God as he is disclosed to us through his interaction with us in our world of space and time' (Torrance 1980: 15–16). And once theology moves away from interaction with God as he has disclosed himself to us in space and time it loses its *kata physin* and thus scientific manner of investigation. This means that theology as a science is necessarily an *a posteriori* activity; knowing begins with the givenness of the object being studied. This concept is important for Torrance's Trinitarian theology. In accordance with the *kata physin* principle, Torrance claims that knowledge of God must be revealed by God, and so our theology is also *a posteriori*. Knowledge of God cannot be arrived at by means of *a priori* reflection; rather it can only be arrived at by being confronted by God himself. For Christians, being confronted by God occurs in Scripture and Tradition, but ultimately occurs in the person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, God reveals himself as he is. This is why the concept of *homoousion* is so important for Torrance. If Christ were not *homoousios* with God, we would not have genuine knowledge of God. The *homoousion* guarantees that there is no other God behind Christ's back. When Torrance applies the *kata physin* to Trinitarian theology it results in a multi-leveled approach to theology. The first, and the most basic level for thinking about the Triune God, is dubbed the 'evangelical and doxological level'. This is the level of experience and worship, 'in which we encounter God's revealing and reconciling activity in the gospel' (Habets 2013: 31). All other reflection upon the Triune God is developed from this foundational level (Torrance 1996: 90).

If, as Torrance claims, things are only known in accordance with their natures, or what they are in themselves, then humanity is only known *kata physin* as well. This, Torrance would say, entails that we cannot know what human beings are by means of *a priori* reflection; scientific knowledge of what it means to be human is *a posteriori*. Much like our knowledge of God rests on the fact that Christ is *homoousios* with the Father, knowledge of humanity rests on the fact Christ is *homoousios* with us. As the Chalcedonian symbol says, Christ is 'consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood'. Thus Christ, as he confronts us forms the basis for knowing what it means to be human. [We could very well apply Torrance's stratification of knowledge to our knowledge of humanity as well. The first, and most foundational level for theological reflection about humanity occurs at the 'evangelical' level. It is the encounter of the

God-man in his reconciling activity of the gospel that forms the ‘*sine qua non* of other levels of doctrinal formulation developed from it’ (Torrance 1996: 90).]

The claim that Christ forms the basis for knowing humanity is consistent with Protological and Eschatological Christological Anthropology, so why would Torrance reject both of these approaches? The reason is simply that we have not been confronted with the protological or eschatological Christ in the gospel. The only Christ that we have access to is Christ as he confronts us in salvation history, i.e. the one who was born of Mary. Let us call this approach *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology*. Under this approach, we might infer protological or eschatological claims about Christ, but we cannot ultimately ground claims of who Christ is apart from the reality we currently have access to, namely as he has confronted us in salvation history. This means that for Torrance we might be able to infer God’s protological and eschatological purposes for humanity from Christ’s humanity *only* as he confronts us in the midst of salvation history. However, we cannot ultimately ground our knowledge of what it means to be human apart from Christ’s human nature which, prior to the resurrection and ascension, is a fallen human nature because we do not have access to any other humanity.

Moving from Christology to Anthropology

That Christ is the basis for theological anthropology is simple enough, but how does one move from Christology to theological anthropology? Moreover, how does one move from Christology to theological anthropology while maintaining a *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology* approach? This is not an easy task, especially because Torrance’s fallen human nature Christology raises a significant puzzle for *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology*. Under an influential interpretation of Torrance provided by Kevin Chariot it seems as though the kind of will that Christ has in his fallen nature is significantly different than the will of our fallen nature. If Chariot’s interpretation is correct then Christ’s human nature does not tell us anything significant about our human nature, at least when it comes to our wills. Now if this is true, then *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology* is undercut because Christ as he confronts us in the midst of salvation history does not actually inform our theological anthropology.

If *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology* is correct then the fallen nature, including the fallen will, that Christ assumes at the incarnation must be the same as ours. So what kind of will does Christ’s fallen human nature have? Considering this issue Chariot lists three options for how we might describe Christ’s human will within his fallen nature: (1) Christ’s human will is *healed* so that it is no longer fallen, (2) Christ’s human will is *regenerated* so that it is equivalent to our redeemed but sub-eschatological will, (3) Christ’s will is

enabled so that it is equivalent to our pre-fallen humanity in its ability to deliberate without the constraints of a corrupt nature (2013: 100–101). Chiarot concludes that Torrance is working with something like the third option, since this option allows the humanity of Jesus to 'bend back' the fallen will of humanity to conformity with the divine will. Chiarot, however, finds this problematic. The main reason this view is problematic is that a will that has the ability to freely deliberate without the constraints of a corrupt nature is not the will of our concrete human experience. Christ in other words, has a human will that is radically different from ours. This radically different will is at best a pre-fallen humanity or at worst a semi-Pelagian will. Because of this conclusion, Chiarot concludes that Torrance's fallen nature view is simply wrong. I agree with Chiarot that options one and two do not fit with Torrance's theology. But unlike Chiarot I want to reject option 3 for an additional reason, namely that, if Torrance's view leads us to say that Christ's will really is like option 3, then we would be undercutting the *Soteriological-Christological* approach. Why? Because we would be saying that humanity is best revealed by a pre-fallen humanity that we do not actually have access to, moreover Christ's human will does not reveal what our will is actually like.

Contra Chiarot, I do not think that these are the only three options for understanding the features of Christ's will in his fallen nature. A fourth option is that Christ, still has a fallen (i.e. corrupt will) after the initial act of assumption. The grounds for this are a reading of Torrance in which to say that human nature is sanctified in the act of assumption is to say that original guilt is removed, rather than original corruption. Under this reading, which I defended above, we can maintain that Christ's will is like ours, that is, corrupted. Christ does not have the equivalent of a pre-fall will or a semi-pelagian will. This is highly significant otherwise *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology* is undercut. The reason being that we Christ's humanity as he has confronted us in salvation history would significantly different than our humanity. Under Chiarot's reading of Torrance, Christ has a human will that looks like X while everyone has a human will that looks like Y. Christ, in this reading does not reveal anything significant to us about the nature of our fallen nature. Under the reading of Torrance, I have proposed in this essay, however, Christ has a human will that looks like X and all other humans have a human will that look like X. Thus, the idea that Christ as he confronts us in salvation history accurately reveals something about our nature is salvaged. Additionally, this understanding of fallenness makes sense of the apparent contradiction that arises from the conjunction of Torrance's beliefs that Christ has a fully sanctified human nature but somehow simultaneously 'bends back' the fallen will of humanity to conformity with the divine will, thus effecting the healing of the human will. [One could appeal to pneumatology to help

explain how Christ's corrupt will does not in fact sin. See Myk Habets's monograph, *Theology in Transposition* (2013: 194).]

If my reading of Torrance regarding the removal of original guilt, but not original corruption is correct, then the supposed puzzle raised by Chiarot's reading of Torrance slips away and one challenge to Torrance's *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology* is avoided.

Conclusion

Over the course of this essay, I have argued that unlike a number of recent prominent christological anthropologies Torrance's christological anthropology does not begin with protology or eschatology, rather, it begins with who Christ is as he confronts us in his saving act. This for Torrance implies, that Torrance's christological anthropology begins with the notion that Christ bears a fallen human nature. Thus, Torrance's view stands apart because it is a *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology*.

One of the major strengths of Torrance's *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology* is that it can be further developed as a Broad Christological Anthropology. Torrance's fallen nature doctrine leads us to ask a number of questions that are anthropologically significant, for example: Is the will located in the nature or the person? Does fallenness apply to natures or persons? What is original sin? Can a person bear original corruption and not bear original guilt? What is the relation between original guilt and corruption? What is corruption? What sort of thing, metaphysically speaking, must a human nature be if Christ is going to sanctify human nature itself? Is human nature a concrete particular, an abstract particular, or an abstract universal? If our reflections on humanity begin by reflecting on the concrete particularities of the incarnate Christ, how does Jesus's particularities as a 1st century Jewish male living in the context of empire affect our understanding of race, gender, and oppression? These and many more questions arise from Torrance's christological anthropology. Thus, we can say that even though Torrance himself did not explore a wide range of anthropological questions, other theologians might look to his anthropological method for additional areas of research.

Before concluding, we ought to ask a question that might be on the mind of some readers: Must we adopt the fallen nature view to reap the benefits of *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology*? We do not. What I have called the *Soteriological-Christological* approach need not include a fallen nature. One could reject a fallen-nature view and still choose to begin reflection on what it means to be human based on whatever account of salvation one holds. To hold *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology* one only need to agree with Torrance regarding the *kata physik* and *a posteriori* nature of the sciences, specifically the theological science of humanity. This latter conviction, not the presence of a fallen-human-nature-Christology is what sets *Soteriological-Christological*

Anthropology from other approaches to theological anthropology. Thus, the insights of Torrancean theological anthropology might be applied towards the developing other versions of *Soteriological-Christological Anthropology*. Engaging in this project might prove to be a helpful alternative to the commonly employed protological and eschatological approaches.

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