

The missional nature of divine-human communion: Thomas F. Torrance and the Chinese church

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PREFACE

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All Bible quotations in this thesis are from the 2002 English Standard Version, London: HarperCollins.

Chinese transliterations from the T.F. Torrance Manuscript Collection have been left in their original form with the exception of the references to the Ch'iang people who are now known as the Qiang, using the *Pinyin* transliteration system. Place names are given in the original form on the map provided in the Annexure.

ABSTRACT

This thesis evaluates the conjunction of dogmatics and mission practice in the Torrance corpus by considering the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's published works in the light of unpublished archive materials relating to his mission engagement with China. It shows that the previously noted holism of Torrance's theology has practical outcomes both in terms of its understanding of the integral nature of the theology of mission within dogmatics and in terms of his individual "call" to practical mission involvement with the Qiang peoples of Western China. Its major contribution to Torrance scholarship is that it locates his theology firmly within his persona in such a way that it considers Torrance's life and intellectual output as one and so challenges the tendency to intellectualise Torrance's theology to the neglect of his mission engagement. This has further implications for the conjuncture of dogmatics, biblical theology and biblical theology of mission.

The thesis proceeds by evaluating previous research into aspects of divine-human communion that suggest missional outcomes. It establishes a biblical framework for evaluation using Torrance's theory of the threefold stratification of knowledge that moves from the exegesis to biblical theology to dogmatics. It then evaluates Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion in the light of the biblical evidence before appraising unpublished sources relating to the practical involvement of the Torrance family in mission in China from 1895-1994. The thesis concludes that Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion is premised on the covenantal obligations of Israel and the church to be a "royal priesthood" among the nations. The missional obligation of Israel and the missional calling of the church of the new covenant in Christ come together in the mission history of the Torrance family through the purported Israelite origins of Qiang people of the upper Min valley. The *missio Dei* that sent the Qiang to China in ancient times, sends the Son to the world in the fullness of time and thereafter sends the Torrance family to the Jewish Qiang to bring the good news that the Saviour has come. The unitary nature of mission practice and theology saturates Torrance's work on divine-human communion with missional purpose and gives it a particularly strong sense of the church's mission to the Jews.

Key words

mission, church, covenant, Israel, China, divine-human communion, incarnation, gospel, Qiang.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There have been a number of studies focusing on the theology of divine-human communion in the work of Thomas F. Torrance (Banman, 2011; Eugenio, 2011; Gifford, 2010; Habets, 2009; Templeton, 2006; Lee, 2003; Rankin, 1997; Kruger, 1990). These studies use the words “union”, “communion” or *theosis* to explain the concept of the unity of Trinity and church in Christ in Torrance’s thought. Other studies, concentrating on different aspects of Torrance’s work, assess the concepts of union and communion as part of their analysis of the central understanding of the composition of Torrance’s thinking (Chung, 2011; Molnar, 2009; Ho, 2008; Dean, 2005; Stamps, 2007; Colyer, 2001a; Colyer, 2001b; Heltzel, 1997). The main purpose of all these studies is to evaluate the written theology of Thomas F. Torrance in a way that is generally abstracted from the personal nature of his faith and practice. Little attention, if any, has been paid to his personal biography or the mission background that gave rise to his theological thought, especially his thinking on the union between the Trinity and the church.

A brief perusal of Thomas F. Torrance’s biographical details serves to show how deeply mission was rooted in his upbringing. Torrance was born in China in 1913, the first son of Scottish missionaries, Thomas and Annie Torrance, who had left Scotland in order to preach the gospel in the Chengdu area of Sichuan, Western China. Their eldest son, Thomas, spent the early formative years of his life in an atmosphere of evangelical devotion to the propagation of the gospel in a foreign country. During these years, he accompanied his father, Thomas Torrance Snr, into the mission field, attending evangelistic meetings and participating in daily prayer for the fledgling churches. These early experiences seem to have left a lasting impression on the young man. Even after the family’s return to Scotland in 1927, letters to his father who returned to China, show that the young Torrance’s zeal for the evangelization of the Chinese people had not abated.

It is clear from his own writing (Torrance, 2001b:304) and from a subsequent biography written by his brother David Torrance, that these formative mission experiences had a lasting influence upon Torrance (Torrance, D., 2001:5). As a young man, he felt “called” into mission and entered New College, Edinburgh, in order to prepare himself for mission work in Western China and Tibet. When the Second World War and then the Chinese Cultural Revolution prevented him from carrying out his intention, he diverted his attention to the evangelization of the whole of Western culture (Colyer, 2001a:36). His call to mission in China, however, never faded

(Torrance, D., 2001:29). After his retirement from ministry and teaching, Torrance renewed his interest in the Chinese church and on several occasions visited the churches his father had planted. In between visits, he worked hard at raising support for the distribution of the Chinese Bible and the development of theological education in the Sichuan region.

As Torrance himself acknowledges the missional roots of his theological thought, it would seem important for researchers to reflect this orientation in their analyses of his scholarly work. However, it appears that this aspect of Torrance's work has largely been ignored. Perhaps anticipating this neglect, in his intellectual biography of Thomas F. Torrance, Alister E. McGrath (1999:238-239) warned of the danger that future Torrance scholarship might concentrate on the intellectual nature of Torrance's work and overlook the significance of the personal issues out of which his theology developed. Two years later, Torrance scholar, Elmer Colyer (2001a:51), highlighted the missionary sensibility of Torrance, the man, describing him as an "evangelical missionary who became a theologian without ceasing to be an evangelist". However, neither Colyer nor McGrath have, to date, followed up on this area of research, although Colyer has established the intensely practical nature of Torrance's theology (Colyer & Faezel, 2012). Other scholars who have seen a link between Torrance's scholarly work and his missionary background include Hesselink (1984:49, 60), Ziegler (2008:23) and Habets (2013:par. 381). Yet, despite this, the evangelistic and missionary bias of Torrance's theology has not been fully explored.

The lack of research into the missional nature of Torrance's theology presents a serious lacuna in Torrance scholarship as it means that current research is being undertaken without fully taking into account the powerful influence of his call to China on the development and direction of his theology. With the recent availability of manuscript evidence in the Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection at Princeton Theological Seminary, research into his personal papers and correspondence with the Chinese church can now be done in order to help situate Torrance's theology more holistically within his persona.

Torrance's theological output, spanning six decades, is vast. Many of the papers and published works are the fruit of a lifetime of lecturing and there remains a plethora of unpublished works. To consider the missional nature of the entire corpus would be outside the scope of this work. For this reason, the study is of necessity limited to an aspect of Torrance's theology that, to some extent, may serve as a representative sample of the whole. As Torrance's "evangelical" passion is at its height in his discussion of the oneness of the Trinity and the church, this study concentrates on the missional nature of divine-human communion in his theological writings, looking

particularly at *prothesis* (the eternal purpose of God), *mysterion* (hypostatic union in Jesus Christ) and *koinónia* (communion in the Holy Spirit; Torrance, 1960a:82-92). This study uses the term “divine-human communion” to refer to Torrance’s theology of the assumption of humanity into the divine life in Jesus Christ through the Spirit (Torrance, 2009:230). The distinctions between the terms “union”, “communion” and *theosis* are thus considered under this general designation. The adjective “missional” is used to express “something that is related to or characterized by mission, or has the qualities, attributes or dynamics of mission” (Wright, 2006:24-25).

It would be possible to examine Torrance’s life and ministry in detail to trace the practical outworking of his theology of divine-human communion in his ministry in the Scottish church, in the lecture room, in ecumenical circles and in all areas of his life. However, once again, the vast nature of this enterprise would be too large for one study. While it does not ignore the missional nature of Torrance’s professional life, the focus of this work is Torrance’s involvement with the church in China at both the beginning and the end of his life. This delimitation serves to focus the study of the missional nature of divine-human communion on the mission enterprise of his nascent childhood theological formation and the mission work of his mature theological years, which Colyer (2001a:51) understands to act as missional “bookends” to his life.

1.2 Problem Statement

At the heart of the research problem, is the nature of relationship between Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion and his mission practice. Understanding the nature of this relationship is essential if Torrance scholarship is to situate Torrance’s intellectual work more holistically within his persona. It is also important for the mission of the church today as the church focuses on practical outcomes of the Trinitarian foundations of mission as *missio Dei* (Wright, 2006:62-63). The main research question that arises from this research problem is how Thomas F. Torrance’s mission work in China demonstrates the practical and missional nature of his theology of divine-human communion. The subsidiary questions that stem from this main question are:

1. What is the current state of scholarship on the practical and missional nature of Torrance’s understanding of divine-human communion?
2. What are the Scriptural and theological foundations for the practical and missional nature of divine-human communion?
3. How does Torrance’s theological discourse on divine-human communion link theology and mission practice?

4. How does Torrance's Chinese mission experience and work demonstrate the relationship between theology and mission practice?

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this thesis is to investigate the evidence for the practical outworking of Thomas F. Torrance's theological understanding of divine-human communion in his life-long interest and involvement in mission in China. Thus the objectives of the research are:

1. To critically assess the existing contributions to studies on the practical and missional nature of Thomas F. Torrance's theology of divine-human communion.
2. To provide biblical and theological evidence for the practical and missional nature of divine-human communion.
3. To critically assess the practical and missional nature of the concept of divine-human communion in Thomas F. Torrance's theological writings.
4. To use manuscript evidence to search for the practical and missional outworking of Torrance's theology in his involvement in mission in China.
5. To consider the practical implications of divine-human communion for the mission of the church.

1.4 Central Theoretical Argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that Thomas F. Torrance's theology of divine-human communion is by nature both missional and practical and this is demonstrated in his life-long passion for mission in China.

1.5 Methodology

The research design is archival, focusing on the collection and analysis of data from text-based primary and secondary sources (Vogt *et al*, 2012:87). As archival research is not value free, depending on value-laden decisions as to selection and processing of materials, the research is of necessity qualitative. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2008:28), there are three interconnected generic activities that define the qualitative researcher. These are firstly, the researcher's personal biography, secondly, the researcher's personal framework (theory/ontology) and thirdly, a set of personal questions (epistemology). These form an interpretative framework or paradigm (Denzin

& Lincoln, 2008:31). It is therefore incumbent on the qualitative researcher to specify these activities at the commencement of a research plan.

The interpretative framework from which this study is undertaken is empirical with low control of textual material (Mouton, 2001:144-145). The personal biography of the researcher is female, white, Western and educated with a family background in evangelical mission and current personal engagement in theology and intercultural mission practice. This link between evangelical theology and mission practice is the source of the interest in the practical and missional nature of Thomas F. Torrance's theology of divine-human communion. This background produces a positivist ontology based in a Reformed epistemology that holds to a sense of "immediacy" and "vitality" in human knowledge of God (Hoitenga, 1991:xiii). It is from this theoretical background that the research design has been constructed and the research methodology has been chosen.

The methodology of the study uses several different research tools. The second chapter uses tools from literary analysis (review of literature). This covers key scholars and their works, debates concerning Torrance's work, arguments and counter-arguments, Scriptural interpretation and a critique of the strengths and weaknesses of various authors (Smith, 2008:190-191). As there is currently no debate on the missional nature of Torrance's theology of divine-human communion, the selection of materials for this area of research has been determined by their proximity to the topic and their usefulness in answering the primary research question (Vogt *et al.*, 2012:88).

The third chapter of this study uses tools from historical-grammatical exegesis and biblical theology to evaluate the biblical and theological roots for the missional nature of divine-human communion. The purpose of this approach is to use a method that approximates Torrance's (2009:25-26) own theological method of sifting the Old Testament background in order to gain an understanding of the New Testament and to "clarify and check interpretation in accordance with 'canon of truth'" (Colyer, 2001b:65). Following Torrance's (2001a:73-111) three tier approach to the stratification of knowledge, it moves from exegesis of select passages on the first level, to building a biblical theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion on the second level and ends with considerations for dogmatics on the third level. The purpose is to establish a biblical framework against which Torrance's work and mission practice is reviewed.

The fourth chapter of this study uses tools of literary or archival research. It considers the corpus of Torrance's published writings as primary research materials through which it explores the missional nature of his theology of divine-human communion. It is acknowledged that, although

an attempt have been made to cover Torrance's work to 'saturation' (Vogt *et al.*, 2012:200), the fact that there are still a number of unpublished sermons that are currently not available to researchers for publication purposes means that the work covered is, to some extent, a sample of the whole.

This fifth chapter of this study employs tools from historical research methodology. This involves archival document study at Princeton Theological Seminary that focuses on the personal papers of the Torrance family relating to Torrance Snr's mission work in China, T.F. Torrance's early years in China and his visits to China during his retirement years. These are unintentional but direct sources (Howell & Prevenier, 2001:18) comprising personal correspondence, reports, pamphlets, newsletters and unpublished biographical material. The purpose of the archival research is to search for evidence of the practical outworking of Torrance's theology of divine-human communion in the mission context in China. This method is *particularist* in that it concentrates specifically on the evangelistic nature of Torrance's mission practice (Sarantakos, 2005:294-296).

The final chapter lays out the conclusions from the research, engaging critically with Torrance's theology and practice in the light of the biblical witness. It considers the extent to which Torrance's theology of divine-human communion was influenced by his background in China, at the same time acknowledging the "open-ended" nature of any such historical research (Brundage, 1989:76). It also considers the strength of the evidence that Torrance's theology of divine-human communion finally found its practical outworking in the renewed China mission at the end of his life. Finally, the thesis evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of Torrance's theology and mission practice in order to determine relevance for the contemporary mission of the church and the future of Torrance scholarship.

2.0 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the work already done on the missional nature of Torrance's theology of divine-human communion. As noted in the Introduction, there have been few such studies and so this chapter examines works that approximate the subject matter in order to draw pointers for further investigation. In spite of the paucity of materials on the missional nature of any aspect of Torrance's theology, there are a significant number of published works, journal articles and theses covering a wide range of issues relating to the Torrance corpus. Significant among these are comprehensive publications by Colyer (2001a; 2001b) and Molnar (2009), from which aspects of Torrance's missional leanings can be inferred and which form a scaffold for this review. A further supplement to these works is a thesis on union and communion in the Torrance corpus by Korean theologian, Kye Won Lee (2003), which Torrance scholar, Robert Walker (2003:139), describes as a balanced and comprehensive account of the whole Torrance corpus.

A number of theses relating to different aspects of Torrance's theology have been written, especially in the last ten years. As noted in the Introduction, in many theses the purpose has been to look at aspects of Torrance's theology in an abstract way that is disengaged from practice and especially from the practice of mission. The majority of especially earlier theses deal with the link between Torrance's theology and science. These include theses by Gray (1975), Harink (1979), Sansom (1981), Achnert (1990), Weightman (1994), Wong (1994), Simmons (1995), Achtemeier (1997), Stratton (1997), Luoma (1999), Hanna (2004), Munchin (2011), and Yom (2013). For the purpose of the argument of this thesis, the focus in these theses on the scientific philosophy undergirding Torrance's work rather than on the missional nature of divine-human communion means that they do not contribute particularly to the argument being developed. Other theses dealing with the relationship between Torrance's theology and science include Newall (1989), which compares C.S. Lewis' concept of theology as art and Torrance's conception of theology as a science, as well as Trook (1986) and Brown (2012), both investigating concepts of time and eternity in Torrance's scientific theology. Miller (1986) and Kirby (1992) investigate cosmological issues surrounding Torrance's scientific theology. Again, these theses tend to focus on the scientific and philosophical rather than practical and missional outcomes of Torrance's theology.

Various theses have been written focusing on different aspects of Torrance's Trinitarian theology. Some of them contribute to the development of this thesis and so are covered in more detail. Others examine issues arising from Trinitarian theology that add to the general understanding of Torrance's Trinitarian theology but do not particularly assist in evaluating the missional nature of divine-human communion. Dean (2005), for example, has written a comprehensive thesis on Torrance's particular vision of the Trinity, comparing it with Karl Barth's work. Other theses that arise from Torrance's Trinitarian theology cover areas such as pneumatology (Shin, 1997), perichoresis (Heltzel, 1997), the eternal procession of the Spirit (Clotfelter, 1999), the doctrine of creation (Richardson, 1993; Spjuth, 1995), the passion of God (Scandrett, 2006), human personhood (Lucas, 1997), the *consensus patrum* (Radcliff, 2013), grace and human personhood (Ziegler, 2014) and anthropology (Wei, 2014). Theses with a Christological focus include Kang (1983), an exposition of Torrance's theology of the vicarious humanity of Christ, Yeung (1993) looking at the link between Christology and epistemology, Guthridge (1967) and Brandos (1996) on reconciliation, Redding (1999) on the priesthood of Christ and Davis (2012) on the mediation of Christ. While these make valid points, their arguments do not contribute particularly to the discussion of the missional nature of divine-human communion under investigation in this thesis.

Further areas covered include works of a more general nature on ecclesiology that use Torrance as one of several authors under investigation (Agnew, 1972; Olson, 1992; Baron, 1994; Kovács, 2012). The general nature of these works makes them less significant for this thesis. Studies in epistemology also form a large part of Torrance research and make for significant background reading. These include Bower (1987); Kruger (1989); Morrison (1993); McPake (1994); Bannocks (1994); Thomson (1996); Kim (1999), Gill (2007) and Miller (2013). Nigh's (2013) treatment of Torrance's approach to hermeneutics is equally useful. Another interesting area of research is a comparative historiography between N.T. Wright and T.F. Torrance / Søren Kierkegaard (Adams, 2014).

More noteworthy are theses that deal with Christology, specifically union with Christ. Rankin (1997) was the first to examine Torrance's theology through the lens of Christological union, focusing on his early Auburn lectures (Chung, 2011:18). Lee (2003) acknowledges Rankin's work and extends the study into the full corpus. Gifford (2010) and Banman (2011) in turn build on Lee's work but without acknowledging Rankin's earlier study. At this point it should also be noted that Torrance's work on union with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit and communion with God in Christ through the Spirit are often dealt within in the literature as a unified concept viz. "union and communion". Within the Torrance corpus, however, there is clarity of distinction

that is not always acknowledged in secondary materials (Torrance, 1980b:160; Torrance, 2008:164f; Torrance, 2009:231). Thus this study uses “union and communion” in combination only as a means to evaluate the contribution of a particular author who uses it in this way.

Further relevant theses covering aspects of divine-human communion as well as the practical and missional nature of Torrance’s theology are covered in the course of the review under subject headings, rather than as individual theses. The evaluation covers four main areas, namely, what may be loosely termed Torrance’s Trinitarian theology, Torrance’s rejection of dualism, the practical and missional aspects of divine-human communion and lastly, criticisms of Torrance’s work that are of relevance to the subject area.

2.2 Torrance’s Trinitarian Theology

2.2.1 Introduction

Molnar (2009:31) writes that for T.F. Torrance, the doctrine of the Trinity is *the* central doctrine around which all other Christian doctrines revolve and through which all doctrines become comprehensible. In Torrance’s own words, the Trinity is the “*ultimate ground* of theological knowledge of God and the *basic grammar* of theology” (Torrance cited in Molnar, 2009:32). It would therefore seem appropriate to commence this evaluation of the literature relating to the missional nature of divine-human communion with an analysis of aspects of Torrance’s Trinitarian theology, a theology that begins from a centre in God and is controlled by the reality of God. Nonetheless, even at this level of inquiry, Torrance’s theology does not remain abstracted from reality. Colyer (2001a:287) observes that for Torrance, the doctrine of the Trinity is fully coordinated with the evangelical and doxological life of the church. It is never abstract but always participative because the Trinity can only be known evangelically (from God) and doxologically (towards God) through transformative encounter. Thus at the commencement of this evaluation of the literature, it is already evident that the roots of Torrance’s theology are illuminated by missional themes.

2.2.2 Torrance’s Onto-Relational Framework

Colyer (2001b:130) claims that the essence of the nature of doctrine for Torrance is a realist interpretation of God’s self-revelation. Thus, the fundamental axiom of Torrance’s theology is that the nature of the object/subject determines the method. Ontology and epistemology unfold together (Colyer, 2001a:322). Molnar (1997:319), for example, shows that Torrance rejects

outright Rahner's attempt to build logical bridges from experience to revelation, maintaining that revelation remains identical with God's historical actions in Jesus Christ. For Torrance, revelation can never operate from a base within the self but is always external to self, referring to Christ as the centre (Molnar, 1997:319). In an article on the epistemological significance of the *homoousion* in Torrance's theology, Kang (1992:545) notes its onto-relational structure, pointing out that the epistemological significance of *homoousion* cannot be separated from the saving significance of *homoousion* as there is no disjunction between the revelation and reconciliation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus without reconciliation, there can be no revelation and without revelation, there can be no reconciliation. The act of God in revelation and reconciliation is the same. This theme is so common through Torrance literature that it should constitute a normative starting point for an evaluation of the Trinitarian basis of Torrance's thought on the missional nature of divine-human communion.

Deddo (2008:34) describes Torrance's onto-relational theology as a "paradigm shift" in theological thinking. He contends that to read Torrance is to allow him to critique not just thought but the way thought is processed. That is, theology must be determined by the nature of its object, namely God revealed in Jesus Christ according to Scripture. Deddo (2008:40) maintains that Torrance's paradigm begins in the Trinity by conceiving of God in onto-relational terms through grounding theological thinking in Christology, that is, in a biblical and theological understanding of who Jesus Christ is. Deddo (2008:36) traces Torrance's onto-relational thought patterns back to Athanasius who called on the church to think of God "from a center not in ourselves", in order to avoid mythologizing. He also notes that the central conviction in Torrance's thought, arising out of this shift in the locus of theology, is that there is a need to think "onto-relationally" about God. God exists in relationship and conversely, relationship is essential to the Being of God (Deddo, 2008:38). Failure to do this, leads away from Nicene Christology back into the ancient heresies of adoptionism, Docetism, mythology or Apollinarianism (Deddo, 2008:40). For Torrance, the only way to avoid these heresies is to develop an onto-relational frame of mind so that the oneness of God is conceived of as communion within the eternal Being of God (Deddo, 2008:41). The early church conceived of this as *perichoresis*, a mutual indwelling, co-inherence or "in-existence" (Deddo, 2008:41). In terms of soteriology, this leads to a radically different understanding of God's relationship with believers in Jesus Christ. Not only is Christ *homoousios* with the Father but he is also *homoousios* with believers, a double *homoousios*. Therefore, the centre of the Christian life is not found in human will or action, but in union with Christ (Deddo, 2008:44).

Deddo's (2008:36) article is useful in the way it shows how Torrance's onto-relational epistemology moves naturally to Christology and union with Christ as the centre of Christian life, a move that represents a "paradigm shift" in the way theology is done. For Deddo (2008:45), the onto-relational framework of Torrance's Trinitarian theology changes the perspective on all aspects of Christian life including prayer, worship, obedience, ethics, vocation, ministry, evangelism, mission and salvation. Lee (2003:218) makes a similar comment in his work on union with Christ. Thus from the outset, there are indications that the Trinitarian "grammar" of Torrance's theology leads to both practical and missional outcomes within the life of the church.

2.2.3 The Stratification of Knowledge

The link between the ontological and practical (or evangelical) in Torrance's theology can be further traced through his use of different levels or stratification of knowledge, adapted from the thought of Hungarian scientist and mathematician, Michael Polanyi. Colyer (2001a:292-301) observes that for Torrance, the levels of knowledge are an *a posteriori* response to an evangelical truth comprehended spiritually because the Triune God is never abstract but always personal and so the three levels function not just on the epistemic but also on the personal level.

Myers (2008:6-8) examines the threefold stratification of theological knowledge in Torrance's theology, which posits a movement from a basic understanding of the Trinity through intuitive worship (the "evangelical and doxological level") to a theological or scientific level in which attempts are made to organise the intuitive, and finally to the third or metaphysical level in which theoretical account is given to the epistemological and ontological structure of knowledge of God. He observes that for Torrance it is the *homoousial* union of Christ with God which enables a movement from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ at the most basic or doxological level to knowledge of the economic Trinity and from there knowledge of the ontological Trinity (Myers, 2008:1). In and through these layers of theological understanding, Myers (2008:6) observes that Trinitarian thinking enters into the "inner fabric" of Christian worship and knowledge of God. Significant for the purposes of this study, is the fact that all levels are based on a foundation of personal encounter with Jesus Christ, which is the focus or purpose of mission. Thus for Torrance, the "ground level" of evangelical experience is the basis of the other levels of doctrinal formulation, all of which develop from it (Myers, 2008:7).

Davis (2010) builds on Myers' work and observes that in Torrance's stratification of knowledge there always remains a vital correlation between the different levels of thought so that the levels

never become detached from the overall structure. The *homoousion* always remains decisive and Jesus Christ always remains the focal point of all theological thought. Davis thus highlights a fundamental link between the evangelical, theological and ontological levels of knowledge through empirical experience. As this is closely tied into Torrance's understanding of the nature of incarnation and atonement, it is to the relationship between Christology and soteriology that this evaluation must now turn.

2.2.4 The Relationship between Christology and Soteriology

In *Thomas F. Torrance: an intellectual biography*, McGrath (1999:154) outlines his understanding of the relationship between Christology and soteriology in Torrance's theology. He traces the movement towards a relationship between the two doctrines from Schleiermacher in the nineteenth century, through Ritschl, Gore and Tillich, to Pannenberg. However, he contends that Torrance's approach is different in that his fundamental theological concern, based on his understanding of Barth's position on the inner connection between revelation and reconciliation, is a full integration of the doctrines through the *homoousion*. It is the vicarious humanity of Christ that is seminal to Torrance's thought (McGrath, 1999:156). This leads Torrance to an inseparable link between substitution (Christ as the representative of believers at redemption) and incorporation (Christ incorporates believers into himself; McGrath, 1999:157). Thus, McGrath contends that Christology and soteriology are inseparably linked through the incarnation.

In the same way, Pratz (1998) discusses the soteriological importance of the relationship between incarnation and atonement in Torrance's theology. He traces Torrance's discussion of Christology to the influence of Athanasius and the Nicene theologians in their effort to defend the soteriological nature of the doctrine against Arian and Apollinarian heresies, showing how the soteriological base of Nicene Christology is found in the concept of the *homoousion*. Pratz (1998) describes the twofold movement from God to humanity and from humanity to God through the mediation of Christ and comments that it is in this principle that Torrance finds the soteriological significance of the Nicene *homoousion*. He comments that for Torrance, this is the essence of the gospel because the incarnation has to be seen as redemptive and redemption has to be seen as incarnational. Without this emphasis, there is a loss of the saving significance of the incarnation. Thus for both McGrath and Pratz, there is an inherent, possibly missional, link between Torrance's Christology and soteriology.

In a later study on Torrance's soteriology, Cass (2008) examines further the relationship between the incarnation and the atonement in the vicarious humanity of Christ. He sees the Father-Son relationship as the ontological framework of Torrance's soteriology, whereby the Son, through the incarnation, assumed fallen humanity into the hypostatic union and the eternal triune Being for the salvation of his people (Cass, 2008:318). Thus for Cass, the *homousios* is a unifying doctrine which transforms into the atoning union and the ground for the atoning exchange. Although Cass does not make the connection between Torrance's soteriology and mission, he does give some hints that he knows that there are practical outcomes. He notes that Torrance's approach to the atonement is Trinitarian and Christocentric as well as integrative and holistic but other than a consideration of the ecumenical possibilities arising out of this he does not explore what the integrative and holistic side of Torrance's soteriology might mean (Cass, 2008:318). He concludes his thesis with a positive evaluation of Torrance's soteriology and ends with a hint of a possible practical outcome, suggesting to ministers and theologians of the Christian church that Torrance's work not only gives the church a radical understanding of the atonement, gospel and salvation, but also gives instruction on ways to preach the gospel to a lost world (Cass, 2008:323). However, Cass does not explore the way that Torrance's soteriology gives instruction on what is essentially mission, the preaching of the gospel to the world.

In a thesis on the Trinitarian nature of Torrance's soteriology, Eugenio (2011:4) argues that Torrance's Trinitarian theology is explicitly soteriological and his soteriology is explicitly Trinitarian because he follows Barth's argument that God's Being and Act are inseparable and because he considers the Trinity as the "ground and grammar" of theology. He shows that Torrance's soteriology follows both a scientific and an evangelical procedure that is grounded in the content of revelation, based on 2 Cor 13:14 "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit". He describes the doctrine of the Trinity as the "canon" by which Torrance engages all theological traditions (Eugenio, 2011:10).

Eugenio (2011:10) points to what he sees as the lack of a soteriological link in Molnar and Colyer's works on Torrance's Trinitarian theology. He seeks to prove that Torrance's "robust and biblical doctrine of salvation" is Trinitarian and as a result, soteriology forms the basis of Torrance's theology of union and communion because salvation means union with Christ and adoption as children of the Father into the communion with the Holy Spirit (Eugenio, 2011:141). He claims that for Torrance, salvation is oriented towards the Triune God precisely because the goal of salvation is communion with the Triune God (Eugenio, 2011:154). However, this criticism would seem unfounded in both cases. Molnar operates from the assumption that

Torrance thinks within a Trinitarian framework (Molnar, 2009:31), while Colyer (2001b:180-187) asserts that for Torrance all doctrine ultimately focuses on the doctrine of the Trinity. Soteriology is thus implicit within their understandings of Torrance's Trinitarian theology.

Eugenio (2011:10) is critical of the analyses of Torrance's soteriology by Lee (2003) and Cass (2008), accusing them of not taking into account Torrance's holistic Trinitarian orientation. However, he commends Habets (2009) for his soteriological treatment of *theosis*, but accuses him, nonetheless, of binitarianism in his failure to cover fully the person of the Father (Eugenio, 2011:11-12). For Eugenio, Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology is gospel oriented and this is precisely what makes it "evangelical". However, at no point in his thesis does Eugenio make the link between the theological nature of Torrance's "evangelical" and Trinitarian soteriology and the practical or missional outworking.

Walker (2012), writing in *Participatio*, the journal of the Torrance Society, also explores the link between Christology and soteriology (incarnation and atonement) in Torrance's theology. He connects Torrance's passionate exposition of the doctrine to his personal passion for the gospel and evangelism. For Torrance, the core of the gospel lay in "the incarnational-atoning love for the world" (Walker, 2012:3). Walker contends, therefore, that all of Torrance's activities and publications had one evangelistic purpose that flowed from his understanding of the link between Christology and soteriology, incarnation and atonement.

A final significant area of Torrance soteriology concerns his understanding of the salvation history of Israel as the precursor or "womb" of the incarnation. Colyer (2001a:55) explores this in his chapter on the mediation of Christ, looking at Torrance's thought as he examines Jesus Christ in terms of his relations with the history of Israel and in terms of his relations with God. Colyer links this with Torrance's "holistic" theology that rejects dualism and leads to a realist interpretation of God. The point that Colyer (2001a:61) makes is that for Torrance, divine revelation is anchored in human history as the people of Israel were shaped by trial into a holy people of God. Torrance understands their intense suffering as a prehistory of the crucifixion and resurrection, enacted in space-time. During this period, God provided a way of response for Israel in terms of liturgy, worship and atoning sacrifice, in the same way that he has provided a way of response for the church in terms of its own practice (Colyer, 2001a:63). Although he does not make the link into practical theology or mission at this stage, Colyer here highlights the unified nature of Torrance's theology that equates concept and practice.

Chung (2011:6) also examines Torrance's theology of revelation and mediation from the "womb" of Israel to the incarnation through the "tool" of covenant, noting, with Colyer, that for Torrance, Jesus Christ cannot be abstracted from Israel and its vicarious mission. Thus for Torrance, covenant is not just between God and Israel, but embraces the whole world in its mission (Chung, 2011:7). Christ is the perfect "tool" or the perfect covenant, because in him is found unity of person, word and act in revelation and mediation (Chung, 2011:30).

This link between covenant and mission leads to Torrance's theology of divine-human communion. Habets (2009:15-18) observes that these concepts are commonly described by Torrance as "union and communion", "participation", "transcendental determination", "reordering", "humanizing" and "atoning exchange". Pratz (1998) shows that atoning reconciliation and redemption in Jesus Christ (Christology and soteriology) are seen as operating within the Being of God in Torrance's theology. They are an act of God's love, delivering humanity from evil and death and drawing humanity into the communion of love that God is in himself. Thus, he contends that for Torrance, union and communion with God are essentially soteriological and soteriology is essentially about union and communion. It is to this that this evaluation now turns.

Colyer (2001a) and Lee (2003) claim that the overarching structure to Torrance's work lies primarily in Christology. For Colyer (2001a:25; 28), there is an "architectonic holism" of which the *homoousion* is the "lynchpin". For Lee (2003:2), there is an "architectonic beauty" of the Christological analogy of union with Christ. However, for Molnar (2009:351), the overarching structure is derived from the doctrine of the Trinity, around which all other doctrines revolve and from which all, including Christology, are derived. This movement of thought may show a progression of understanding of the fundamental nature of union and communion within Torrance commentary and criticism.

Early work on union and communion in Torrance's corpus was undertaken by Kruger (1990). He maintains that the key to Torrance's doctrine of the knowledge of God as communion with the Father in the Spirit is found in his understanding of the fulfilment of the believer's communion with God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. This takes place in church, Word and sacrament (Kruger, 1990:369). For Kruger, the double emphasis on "fulfilment in Christ" and "participation in Christ in the Spirit" forms the basis of Torrance's soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology and his doctrine of the knowledge of God. Thus, the central axiom of Torrance's theology is Jesus Christ (Kruger, 1990:370). Writing twenty years later, Walker (2012:51) makes

the same claim, describing Christ's vicarious humanity the "theological lens" through which Torrance views Christology and the gospel.

For Kruger (1990:371), there is a basic simplicity to Torrance's theology in the twofold motifs of fulfilment in Christ and participation in Christ. It gives Torrance's theology a threefold emphasis. Firstly, antecedent to the incarnation is the communion of the Trinity. The relation between Father and Son was a closed relation but through the incarnation, it became grounded in humanity. Secondly, the incarnation from birth to death was actualised within fallen humanity. Thirdly, in the Spirit believers are made partakers of Christ and all his graces (Kruger, 1990:373). Kruger (1990:374) concludes that Torrance's theology is inherently Trinitarian because it is a theology of communion that arises out of the communion between the Trinity. Without the Trinity, he claims that Torrance's work falls apart.

Lee (2003) adds to the understanding that union with Christ is the unifying principle in Torrance's work. He shows that in Torrance's theology, union in Christ is the ontological reality that is actualised by union with Christ as believers are united to Christ through the Spirit (Lee, 2003:3). He observes that for Torrance union with Christ has three levels viz. epistemic union with Christ through faith, personal union with Christ through the Word and corporate union with Christ through the sacraments. Thus, Torrance links union with Christ with ecclesiology and sacramentology. Lee (2003:3) links union with Christ as Christological and soteriological concept together with Torrance's ecclesiology, which promises on first glance to bear fruit as far as the practical and missional nature of divine-human communion is concerned, with two chapters devoted to the relationship between Christ and the church. The subtitle of the thesis, *The practical theology of Thomas F. Torrance* suggests that it is in the relationship between Christology and ecclesiology that the missional nature of divine-human communion may be found but Lee's work remains for the most part on the level of abstraction as he examines the doctrinal rather than practical implications of this conjuncture. A few cursory suggestions for the Korean Reformed Church at the end of the work reveal that the purpose of the subtitle had been to suggest how Torrance's concept of the all-encompassing nature of union with Christ might bring about reform in a stultified Korean church, rather than a consideration of the missional and practical nature of union and communion in Torrance's theology.

However, Lee's work contributes significantly to an understanding of Torrance's position on union with Christ through his examination of the terms *prothesis*, *mysterion* and *koinónia*. He explains that for Torrance, *prothesis* speaks of the setting forth of the union between God and

humanity in Jesus Christ within God's own eternal decision making, *mysterion* speaks of the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ and the incorporation of the church into the body of Christ through the atonement and sacraments and *koinónia* speaks of the "creating room" of union with fallen humanity by incorporation through one body into Jesus Christ including both vertical and horizontal dimensions (Lee, 2003:197-199). Thus Lee (2003:200) observes that for Torrance, Jesus Christ is the setting forth of God's eternal election purposes and it is in union with Christ and through participation in this eternal election that the church is created and sustained as the sphere of *koinónia*.

Banman (2011:56) argues that Torrance builds his theology of union and communion on the basis that God alone can reveal God. Therefore, the self-revelation of the persons of the Trinity can only be accomplished through their unity and communion, which is mediated to believers through the work of the Holy Spirit. Banman (2011:70) shows that Torrance's view of the atonement is not external or forensic, but internal as Christ fully assumed sinful nature throughout his earthly life, sanctifying humanity through his righteous life. God was personally present in the crucifixion, so that the whole of redemption can be said to be the work of God himself, out of the fullness of his love. Christ thus becomes the believer's mediation, justification, reconciliation and redemption (Banman, 2011:82). This is all achieved by faith through the work of the Holy Spirit (and is thus Trinitarian). Although Banman ends her thesis at this point, her conclusion suggests that the study has opened up to her the realisation of the potentially practical and missional nature of the subject under investigation. She acknowledges that the "journey" into understanding union and communion is "intensely personal" and "overwhelmingly life-changing" and creates in believers a well of thanksgiving of the kind that "permeates our beings" and overflows "into our acts throughout the whole course of our lives" (Banman, 2011:141-142). Banman leaves the reader with the suggestion that there appears to be an inherently personal, as well as practical dimension to divine-human communion.

Following on from union and communion are works that look at the concept of *theosis* (deification or divinization) in the Torrance corpus. Union with God in Christ has falsely been understood as a kind of ontological deification of humanity. Colyer (2003:167) explains that Torrance argues that the Nicene theologians did not use the word *theosis* in the sense of deification or divinization but rather in the sense of union with Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit. *Theosis* thus has a bearing on the examination of the missional nature of divine-

human communion, a theme that is also explored by Hart (2008), Habets (2009) and Molnar (2009).

Hart (2008:79) considers Torrance's soteriology in the light of his understanding of "deification", arguing that the term represents the best way in which Torrance's soteriology can be understood. He notes Torrance's preference for the Greek terms *theosis* or *theopoiesis* rather than "deification" because the locus of his theology is not creation but rather the doctrine of the Trinity. This is because Torrance refuses to see a distinction between atonement and reconciliation. They are ontologically linked to the human being through the vicarious humanity of Christ from conception to ascension (Hart, 2008:81). Thus atonement is retrospective, looking back to the cross, but also prospective, focusing on the eschatological destiny of the believer (Hart, 2008:82).

Hart sees it necessary to link soteriology to the doctrine of revelation in Torrance's thought. To know God is to have an intimate personal knowledge. Thus, revelation and reconciliation are inextricably linked. Hart (2008:83) regards Torrance's understanding of salvation as the work of the Holy Spirit in drawing men and women to share in the self-knowledge of God. To know God, therefore, is to share by the Spirit's power in the eternal relationship that the Son has with the Father. The theology of revelation is of necessity a theology of redemption that is firmly grounded in a theology of Trinitarian union and communion (Hart, 2008:83). This inevitably leads Torrance to the language of *theosis*. At the same time, Hart understands that to share in the Trinitarian life of God, humans must be in a state of reconciliation with him as one cannot be in a state of union and alienation simultaneously. Where knowledge of God is obstructed by sin, the obstruction must be removed. Hart (2008:84) notes that at this point, the theologies of revelation and salvation overlap, or as Torrance puts it, their spheres of influence are concentric.

The locus of this coinherence is in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ. Hart (2008:85) stresses that Torrance does not speak of atonement or reconciliation apart from the person of Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus Christ that God and humanity become one, coexisting in a communion within the incarnate Son's life. The key to this is Torrance's reaffirmation of the double *homoousion* where Christ is one with the Father and Spirit in his eternal onto-relations and one with humanity through his vicarious life and death (Hart, 2008:86-87). Hart (2008:89-90) sees this as the valid basis for Torrance's doctrine of "deification", where *theopoiesis* is not a direct communion with the Father or Spirit but is mediated via the believer's union with the incarnate Son. Union and communion, *theosis*, are thus realised through the Trinitarian nature of knowledge of God. Hart

clearly sees the link between revelation and reconciliation in Torrance's theology but does not move from there to the missional nature of that theology which reaches out to lost humanity with a message of reconciliation.

In a well-received work on *theosis* in the work of Thomas F. Torrance (Goroncy, 2011:113), Habets (2009) speaks much the same language as Hart. He links *theosis* with soteriology and the atonement, observing that through the incarnation the Son unites humanity and divinity together to effect a "deification" of human nature through the work of the Holy Spirit and links it to Calvin's "wonderful exchange" (Habets, 2009:1). Thus for Torrance, *theosis* is fundamental to explain the theology of salvation. Habets (2009:60-61) claims that *theosis* is central to Torrance's theology as through both the *homoousion* (the oneness of Christ with the Father and with believers) and the hypostatic union (Christ's divine and human nature) communion between God and man is made possible by means of the incarnation. Thus, *theosis* has a soteriological function, which brings Habets implicitly, rather than explicitly, near to the missional nature of divine-human communion.

Molnar (2009) deals with *theosis* in a similar way, insisting that for Torrance *theosis* is the activity of Christ in adopting us as "sons of God" and making us one with him through the work of the Holy Spirit. Grace is thus God directly acting in His Son to restore believers to communion with the Father. There is no element of "transferrable divine quality" or deification in Torrance's understanding of *theosis* (Molnar, 2009:199). Thus, Molnar sees Torrance's understanding of *theosis* as conformity to the incarnate person of Christ and through him, participation in the life of the Trinity.

2.2.5 Pneumatology

If *theosis* means participation in the life of the Trinity through the work of the Holy Spirit, then Torrance's pneumatology must have significance for the examination of the missional nature of divine-human communion. Colyer (2001a:211) describes Torrance's pneumatology as "The communion of the Holy Spirit" and the "completion" of Torrance's Trinitarian theology". Colyer (2001a:214) observes that for Torrance, the Holy Spirit renews the life of God's people and lifts them up with Christ in a life of worship and witness, thereby linking divine-human communion and mission (witness) through the work of the Holy Spirit. Colyer further shows that the Holy Spirit participates in the mediation of Christ. He is mediated to believers through the Son and therefore the reception of the Holy Spirit can only take place through union with Christ and the

Father. The Spirit then raises believers up for communion with God “in faith, obedience, worship and prayer” (Colyer, 2001a:225). Once again, Colyer points to the link between Torrance’s pneumatology and the practical aspects of lived-out theology.

Colyer (2003:162) focuses on Torrance’s concept of the “blessed exchange” in which Christ transferred the sinful humanity of his children to himself and transferred his life and relationship with God, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit, to believers. This was made possible only through the suffering of Jesus who took upon himself the fallen humanity of the believer. This means that in Torrance’s theology, Calvary and Pentecost are inextricably linked (Colyer, 2003:163). Thus, the Holy Spirit is forever clothed with Christ (Colyer, 2003:163). For Colyer, therefore, Torrance’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit belongs to the centre of his soteriology.

Colyer maintains that the core of the gospel for Torrance is the mediation of Christ throughout God’s *oikonomia* (economy, pattern of saving activity in history especially in Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost) and his *ordo salutis* (his order of salvation realised in the believer’s life). It is the Holy Spirit who is poured out, who sheds the love of God abroad and unites believers to Christ and through Christ to the Father in worship and witness (Colyer, 2003:164). Again, here is the practical nature of the theology where the only response to God’s *oikonomia* is the corporate life and witness of the church.

Molnar (2009:189) also highlights the interrelationship between incarnation, atonement and Pentecost. He argues that just as atonement cannot be separated from incarnation, so incarnation cannot be separated from Pentecost. Before the Fall, the Spirit could only come to humanity in judgement. At Pentecost, the Spirit came after reconciliation and peace were established because Jesus Christ experienced vicariously in his life the divine judgement that should have been poured out on believers. At Pentecost, the church therefore becomes the created space in which reconciliation is realised and God becomes present in history (Molnar, 2009:194). This suggests a link between pneumatology and ecclesiology in Torrance’s theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion.

Chung (2011) emphasises the work of the Spirit in Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion. It is only by the communion of the Spirit that humanity can come before God in Christ so that God creates a relationship with himself within the Christian. This relation of God to God through the Spirit is a kind of “epistemological dependence” on the Spirit (Chung, 2011:95). For Torrance, the controlling centre of the knowledge of God is Jesus Christ, not the Spirit, because it is the Spirit who reveals the hidden truth of Christ (Chung, 2011:95). Therefore, the

parousia of the Spirit in Torrance's theology is to enable rational knowing by leading believers into the communion of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Chung, 2011:110). The Spirit therefore has a missional function.

In a work on Torrance's pneumatology, Shepherd (2012) considers the salvific content *homoousion* of the Holy Spirit. He shows that, especially in Torrance's later works on the Trinity, both the ontological bond between the Son and Father as well as the ontological bond between the Holy Spirit and the Son are necessary if the gospel is to have salvific effect (Shepherd, 2012:110). He points out that for Torrance, whatever can be said of the Son, can be said of the Spirit (except "Son") and a denial of this leads to a denial of the essential triunity of God (Shepherd, 2012:115). For Torrance, to deny the *homoousion* of the Spirit is so serious that the gifts of God remain ineffectual because it is only as the disobedient sinner is brought to faith by God through the Spirit that the work of the Son's incarnation and crucifixion is accomplished. Without it, the work of Christ remains ineffectual (Shepherd, 2012:116). Thus Shepherd sees the *homoousion* of the Spirit with the Son as essential to Torrance's theology precisely because without it there can be no personal transformation. Here Shepherd alludes to, but does not highlight, the missional nature of Torrance's theology.

2.2.6 Resurrection and Ascension

A further area of Torrance's Trinitarian theology is the link between the resurrection, ascension and faith. Colyer (2001a:93) shows that for Torrance the resurrection and ascension are the events by which believers are lifted up through Christ to share in communion with God, that is, in God's Trinitarian life. Molnar (2009:219) claims that the resurrection is the starting point for Torrance's theology because it is an ontological event. It is, however, an event that must be interpreted by faith because it can only be understood in terms of the "new order" that it has already inaugurated (Molnar, 2009:222). Thus, the resurrection is the starting point for an evangelical response to the gospel. He points out that for Torrance, the whole purpose of the preaching of the gospel is to inform people of their place in the new order as a result of the events of the resurrection and urge them to participation in it (Molnar, 2009:222). Thus, both Colyer and Molnar see the events of the resurrection and ascension as having evangelical and missional significance.

For Torrance, everything pivots on the empty tomb, on the historical and theological reality of the resurrection. The events of the resurrection precede faith and are the starting point for the reality of Christian faith (Molnar, 2003:158). It is precisely because Christ is the incarnation that

believers are able to know God with truth and certainty because their thinking is grounded in God himself. What God is towards believers in the economic Trinity, he is in himself. That is why Torrance insisted on taking stand with Athanasius, “It would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father than to name Him from his works alone and call Him Unoriginate” (Torrance cited in Molnar, 2003:159).

Molnar (2003:159-160) compares Torrance’s stance with that of Haight, for whom the centre of faith is human experience of faith, without any historical reality. He shows that Jesus dictates the meaning of faith for Torrance (Molnar, 2003:160). Christ’s resurrection did not take place for himself but “for us whom he had assumed into a unity of nature with himself, so that in a profound sense we have already been raised up before God in him” (Torrance cited in Molnar, 2003:161). Torrance states that there is always a subjective counterpart to what has already taken place objectively in the reality of the resurrection. Thus, Torrance draws a clear distinction between the resurrection and its counterpart in the believing community (Molnar, 2003:161). Outside faith, the historian can only perceive the fallen condition of man but inside faith, linked to the reality of the events, he perceives the new creation because Christ lives (Molnar, 2003:166). Thus for Torrance, although the resurrection happened in history as a historical event, it continues to live. The whole of the life of Jesus must be interpreted both historically and theologically precisely because of its unique subject (Molnar, 2003:167). There is therefore a relationship between Word and faith (Molnar, 2015:par. 356).

Colyer (2001a) and Lee (2003) both link events of the resurrection and ascension with the mission and purpose of the church. Lee (2003:130) observes that the ascension marks the point of elevation of human life to God and the point at which the Holy Spirit brings the life of Jesus into the sphere of space-time. The ascension is the event that established the church in history and established its pattern of life and ministry through its relation to Christ (Lee, 2003:132). Colyer (2001a:107) sees the events of Pentecost, following the resurrection and ascension, as the time when the church is “joined to the mind of Christ” and starts to reflect that mind in its life and witness. This indicates that there may be a link between union with Christ and the mission of the church through resurrection, ascension and Pentecost.

David Fergusson (2012) examines Torrance’s theology of the ascension, showing how it builds on and goes beyond the theology of his mentor, Karl Barth. Barth saw the ascension as the completion of Christ’s ministry on earth, enabling him to fill all things and to be present with his followers across space and time (Fergusson, 2012:94). Torrance, however, while endorsing

Barth's position, goes beyond it to relate the ascension to the doctrines of the church, sacraments and ministry, consequences that are alluded to by Colyer, Molnar and Lee above (Fergusson, 2012:95). Fergusson (2012:96) notes that Torrance, in his comments on the ministry of the ascended Christ, has a stronger ecclesiology, sacramentalism and eschatology than Barth. Firstly, through the Spirit, Christ is himself present and active in the church's acts of proclamation. The ascension represents a withdrawal of physical presence for the enabling of spiritual presence, an "eschatological pause" or a time of anticipation of the fully manifested work and presence of Christ in which the mission of the church in history is to be carried out (Fergusson, 2012:101). Thus Fergusson, although he does not stress the point, has illuminated the missional nature of the purpose of the ascension in Torrance's theology. He observes that for Torrance, the ministry of Christ continues through the ascension, church, sacraments and ministry (Fergusson, 2012:102).

Secondly, Fergusson notes the sacramental nature of Torrance's theology of the ascension. Torrance sees the ascended Christ as instituting the royal priesthood of the whole church, with some set aside for the distinctive ministry of Word and sacrament and through whom Christ's own ministry on earth continues. He observes that the ascension is not a resting place for the Son of God but rather the sphere of God's continuing ministry (Fergusson, 2012:102). This may be another indicator of the missional nature of Torrance's theology.

Thirdly, Fergusson (2012:103) highlights the role of the sacraments in Torrance's theology of the ascension. It is through the sacraments that the distance between the ascended Christ and his church in the world is bridged through the work of the Holy Spirit. Both baptism (once-for-all participation in Christ) and Eucharist (continuous participation in Christ) point to a sacramental continuation of the ministry of Jesus in the life of the church, linking up with the ongoing promise of the presence of Jesus with his people (Fergusson, 2012:103-104). Again, although it is unstated, the underlying missional imperative of the theology of divine-human communion played out through the doctrine of the ascension is almost tangible. Lee (2003:132) also makes this connection. He observes that for Torrance, the ascension is related to the royal priesthood of Christ and is bound up with the church. It established the church in history and now determines the patterns of the church's life, mission and relation to Christ in space-time. Thus, the church has historical, sacramental and eschatological relation to Christ through the ascension.

It is particularly in the doctrine of church and sacraments that the practical and missional nature of Torrance's theology begins to take shape in the literature. Because of the unitary nature of Torrance's theology, there is an inevitable overlap between his theology and practice, which

makes it difficult to compartmentalise his theology. However, for the purpose of this evaluation, ecclesiology and sacramentology are dealt with under Torrance's practical and missional theology. Torrance's eschatology is now considered.

2.2.7 Eschatology

Neither Colyer (2001a, 2001b), nor Lee (2003) consider Torrance's eschatology. Molnar (2009) does not devote much space to the subject, considering it briefly at the end of his chapter on Resurrection and Ascension. However, MacLean (2009) investigates the eschatological implications of Torrance's theology of union and communion. In a thesis looking at the eschatological orientation of Torrance's early theology, he observes that there is an organic connection between eschatology and ecclesiology (MacLean, 2009:186). For Torrance, eschatology is essentially about Christ (the *Eschatos*) but it also centres on the church that is the body of Christ (MacLean, 2009:186). If the church loses sight of the eschatological element of its faith, then it loses sight of its union with Christ and exists only as a social or institutional reality (MacLean, 2009:186).

Although MacLean (2009:179) does not make an explicit connection between eschatology and the mission of the church in his conclusions, he does make the point in the body of this work that for Torrance, union and communion are the foundation of the world's hope through the work of the Holy Spirit who seals the church's union with Christ. MacLean (2009:179) observes that although for Torrance the Spirit does not bring universal salvation, he does bring the effect of salvation into the world through the sending of the church in mission. Thus for Torrance, the church is dynamic and MacLean sees this in Torrance's own ministry. The dynamism comes from the living union of the church with the triune God in and through the hypostatic union in Jesus Christ. The dynamism is played out in baptism and the Eucharist in which the eschatological realisation of full union with Christ is realised in the temporal sphere (MacLean, 2009:123). This is a union that is realised in the living Word of the kerygma and sacrament. MacLean makes an important connection between Torrance's eschatology and its grounding in the church through the hypostatic union. He mentions in passing the "mission of the church" but does not fully see the missional nature of Torrance's eschatology (MacLean, 2009:123, 132, 177). Nonetheless, MacLean's thesis makes a contribution to the subject of this thesis.

Molnar (2009) also alludes to the link between Torrance's eschatology and the church. He observes Torrance's stress on the *parousia* as the real presence of Christ in space-time, both in

the first and second advents (Molnar, 2009:260). Nevertheless, while Torrance considers both advents as one, the time between the first and second advents are seen as “an eschatological pause” in the heart of the *parousia* that creates a space for the church to preach the gospel so that all might have opportunity to believe (Molnar, 2009:260). Therefore, for Molnar, Torrance’s eschatology points to the mission of the church.

2.2.8 Conclusion

Research on the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance’s theology can be gleaned from works that examine various aspects of his vision of the Trinity. Chief among these have been Colyer (2001a), Lee (2003) and Molnar (2009) but also a significant number of scholars who have written theses and articles that refer to the subject in question. This section has noted works dealing with onto-theological relations and the doctrine of the *homoousion*, the link between Christology and soteriology through the incarnation, the focus on union and communion together with the concept of *theosis*, Torrance’s pneumatology, his doctrine of the resurrection and ascension as well as his eschatology. Overall, the emphasis has been on the church as Christian community in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit and on personal faith as a response to Christ. These ideas have been subsumed under the doctrine of the Trinity.

2.3 Rejection of Dualism

2.3.1 Introduction

The rejection of dualism is such a major theme in Torrance’s theology that, as Molnar (2009:40) observes, it would be a major undertaking to document every reference. Most Torrance critics, focusing on Torrance’s scientific theology, provide sections that describe Torrance’s frequent summaries of the history of dualism in the history of philosophical and theological thought (Molnar, 2009:39). It is not the intention of this evaluation to provide an overview of such descriptive passages. Instead, the aim of this section is to provide an evaluation of comment on Torrance’s rejection of dualism as far as it elucidates the missional nature of divine-human communion and illuminates the practical nature of Torrance’s theology.

2.3.2 Torrance's Scientific Theology

The foundational proposition of the analysis of the Torrance corpus by Colyer (2001a:16; 2001b:60; 2012) is that his theology is always undergirded by holism. Theology is only done by indwelling the subject matter holistically, so that the entire revelation of Christ and not just part, gives clues to the nature of the field of inquiry. Munchin (2011:5) states that in order to find a method for doing this, Torrance looked to the field of natural sciences, observing that recent changes in modern natural sciences, most notably relativity theory, and less positivist approaches to the philosophy of science, such as those of Polanyi and Popper, offered Torrance the possibility of a unitary theory of knowledge that rejected the dualism that had undergirded scientific and theological enterprise over the past thousand years.

The historical development of Torrance's work on the relationship between theology and the natural sciences is ably traced by McGrath (1999:195-236). He concludes that the quintessence of Torrance's scientific theology is the affirmation that every reality is to be investigated *kata physin* or according to its own distinct nature in an *a posteriori* manner. This means that theology must be scientific, faithfully reflecting real knowledge of God given in Jesus Christ (McGrath, 1999:236). Thus Torrance's theology is both realist (God revealed in Christ) and unitary (through Christ who is the centre of God's revelation). In a thesis on the mediation and revelation of Christ, Chung (2011) concludes with McGrath, that for Torrance, the main problem with dualism lies in its *a priori* separation of the world from God so that God can have no relations with it. Dualism therefore renders the incarnation impossible and distorts the hypostatic union of Christ and the *homoousion* with the Father. Thus in the Arian and Newtonian frameworks, mediation and revelation through Jesus Christ are disrupted and it is only scientific realism that can repair this brokenness (Chung, 2011:50-51).

In an article on Torrance's scientific theology, Schubert (1984:132) observes that the supreme point of confrontation between divinity and humanity (and therefore the source for theological science) is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He shows that Torrance believes that the "receptacle" understanding of space and time inherited from Plato and Aristotle led to a dualism that resulted in a separation between God and humanity (and therefore science) which was shattered in the twentieth century by Einstein's concept of relativity in physics (Schubert, 1984:133). This led to a new scientific paradigm that was characterised by relatedness, which proves to Torrance that a God of "pure energy" could have become "matter" in the incarnation. Torrance likens this interaction of God in space and time to a coordinate system between the horizontal dimensions of

space and time and the vertical dimension of relation to God through his Spirit (Torrance cited in Schubert, 1984:134). God incarnate in Jesus Christ in real space and time, revealed by the work of the Spirit.

This concept, however, is not above criticism in the literature. Schubert himself disagrees with Torrance's evaluation of the conjunction between theology and science, suggesting that Torrance's suggested elimination of dualism through the incarnation is itself overthrown by Einstein's physics. He contends that Einstein allows for any form of incarnation, not just the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Schubert (1984:134) therefore suggests that, following Einstein, transubstantiation and merited grace could be possible alternatives to the incarnation.

The question of where Torrance derived his unitary scientific theology is dealt with at length in the literature and is pertinent to the research question of this thesis only insofar as it may help to isolate the historico-theological genesis of the proposed concurrence between mission and divine-human communion. Much research has been done into the patristic and philosophical influences on Torrance's rejection of dualism in his scientific theology. For example, Marley (1992) looks at the influence of the Nicene theologians through the concept of the *homoousion*. He concludes that the essence of Torrance's fight against dualism is the need for a fundamental change in outlook to allow the universe to be an "open" and a "disclosing system" (Marley, 1992:18). What is then revealed is that the creator God loves the universe and has joined himself to it in union with his Son, through the work of the Spirit. This allows for the reuniting of science with theology so that the ancient beliefs of the Nicene theologians can form a new paradigm through which to understand the gospel. Marley claims that rejection of dualism in Torrance's work allows for an authentic response to the gospel, which Torrance terms the "reconstruction of the foundations of the culture" (Torrance in Marley, 1992:19). Thus, Marley has isolated a link between Torrance's rejection of dualism, union with Christ and the gospel.

Wigley (1993) traces the influence of Anselm on Barth and subsequently on Torrance and Jüngel. Baker (2010:5-6), on the other hand, sees Irenaeus as the forerunner of the "Athanasius-Cyril axis" of Nicene-Ephesine theology which Torrance counts as major influences in the development of his own Christology. Baker asserts that the influence of Irenaeus' realist Christology can be seen particularly in Torrance's theology of the incarnation and atonement, baptism and hermeneutics but he notes that in the development of these areas of his theology, Torrance relies on a much wider base in the Fathers than Irenaeus alone. Nonetheless, Baker's isolation of the Irenaean basis of Torrance's realist Christology could have important

ramifications for considering the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's own theology. The elimination of theological dualism in a Christo-realism means the unity of God's Being and Act, or to put it another way, the unity of theological reflection on the nature of God and soteriology. From this unitary perspective, there can be no distinction between the nature of God and the mission of God.

Again, the unitary nature of Torrance's realist scientific theology leads to the elimination of dualism in all areas of doctrine and practice. Molnar (2003) considers the resurrection by means of a comparison between the "faith community" view of Roger Haight and the realist views of Torrance. He contends that Haight, and those who think like him by insisting that the reality of the events of the New Testament lies in the created faith constructs of the early Christians, actually end up thinking about the resurrection in dualist and Docetic terms. This is because they do not seek meaning in the reality of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus but in the experiences of those who believe then and now (Molnar, 2003:161). He states that the bond between the resurrection and the life of Jesus is broken by this dualist thinking because it refuses to see Jesus as the unique Son of God but only as a member of humanity. It leads Haight to a Pelagian view of salvation because Jesus' divinity becomes dependent on the faith of the community, a view that Torrance claims disturbs the very foundations of the Christian faith (Molnar, 2003:161-162). Torrance insists that the resurrection cannot be divorced from Christ himself because it must be judged according to person of Christ. For Molnar (2003:162), it is "terribly important" to understand that in Torrance's theology the events of the resurrection cannot be separated from God's redemptive purpose in the incarnation. Thus, Molnar isolates the link between the concrete events of incarnation and resurrection and God's redemptive purposes in Christ received by faith, pointing to a fundamental union between faith and reality in Torrance's theology.

Kruger (1990:370-371) notes that for Torrance, revelation and reconciliation are held together in three ways: in Israel, in the incarnation and in the believer's knowing of God. Kruger links this with Torrance's theology of union and communion. For Torrance, knowledge of God arises from the sharing of the incarnate Son's communion with the Father in the Spirit, or sharing with the incarnate Son's communion with the Father in the Spirit (Kruger, 1990:368). He notes that there is a double emphasis in Torrance's theology: the fulfilment of salvation in the person of Jesus Christ and sharing in his fulfilled communion through union and communion with Christ in the Spirit through church, Word and sacrament (Kruger, 1990:369). This double structure of fulfilment in Christ and participation in Christ in the Spirit forms the basis of Torrance's

soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology and doctrine of knowledge of God. Thus, Torrance's theology is "unitary" rather than "dualist" because he does not separate theology and actual knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. It is also realist but it is a realism that is based on the work of the Holy Spirit who actualises knowledge of God in Jesus Christ (Kruger, 1990:387-388).

Molnar (2003:162) also points out that for Torrance the resolution of dualism in Christology is solved by the theology of union and communion. Christ the mediator came into a situation where communion between God and man was broken and distorted so that even the union between God and believers in Christ's person came under attack. However, seeing that Christ is Emmanuel (God with us) these forces of evil are overcome by his life of perfect obedience to and communion with the Father (Molnar, 2003:162). Christ therefore achieved for believers the "union between God and man that constitutes the heart of the atonement, effecting man's salvation and restoration to communion with God the Father" (Torrance cited in Molnar, 2003:163). Although he does not make the link, Molnar touches here on the inherently missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's thought.

The concept of miracle and the incarnation is examined by Samms (2008). He proposes that Torrance's unitary theological science enables an "open up" view of the universe in which the rationality of the universe is not imposed on the universe by scientific methodology as it is in dualist systems. Instead, the rationality of the universe is contingent on the rationality that is God in Christ (Samms, 2008:56). He shows that Torrance seeks to understand God as both Creator and Redeemer in a unitary and coherent fashion that is centred in Christ (Samms, 2008:60). This is a thought that is again reiterated by Myers (2008) in his work on the stratification of knowledge. He suggests that Torrance's model of the stratification of knowledge offers a way to move beyond dualist thought patterns to a unitary vision of theological truth as all theological knowledge is concentrated on the objective centre that is God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ (Myers, 2008:12).

Thus, there is some indication in the literature that Torrance's rejection of dualism and his realist scientific theology leads to a convergence between faith and reality, a convergence that is found in essence in the union between God and man in the person of Jesus Christ. As faith and reality converge, so the concept of a universe open to a relational God suggests a link between divine-human communion and the gospel of reconciliation, which may be otherwise termed mission.

2.3.3 Torrance and Natural Theology

Debate over Torrance's understanding of the role of natural science is dealt with in more detail in section 2.5.6 considering criticisms of Torrance's theology in general. Nonetheless, the coverage of Torrance's approach to natural theology is significant enough to warrant an overview of the works that deal with it in a more descriptive fashion because Torrance's approach to natural theology could have soteriological implications in the face of non-Christian religions. Among these are McGrath (1999:193) who notes that for Torrance, as with Barth, the primary problem with traditional natural theology lies in its dualist foundations that presume that there are two distinct ways of knowing God. This immediately divorces God from his Act in Jesus Christ and declares that there are ways of knowing God other than in his Triune self. McGrath (1999:194) shows that for Torrance, it is essential to restore the unity of form and being that was found in classical Christian theology.

Colyer (2001a:193) shows that Torrance sets out to reformulate natural theology in the light of his understanding of the role of natural science. He claims that it is Christology that forms the link between natural science and theological science. Natural theology cannot build a bridge from the world to God and on this basis there cannot be two types of revelation, but only one (Colyer, 2001a:194-199). Gill (2007:160) observes that Torrance sees natural theology as a product of dualistic philosophy that has particularly blossomed during periods of history in which a cosmological dualism has been the dominant worldview. Gill (2007:162) also notes that Torrance firmly rejects the dualistic perception of the universe that leads to attempts to "build bridges" between God and nature, insisting instead that all knowledge of God is founded on God's self-revelation in Christ. This again could have implications for Torrance's approach to mission among those of non-Christian religions.

Molnar (2009:94) describes Torrance's attempts to reformulate natural theology in terms of natural science. He shows how, in Torrance's unitary system, there is an inherent connection between theology and nature, or the spiritual and natural, so that Torrance admits to some kind of "new natural theology" that is at the same time grounded in the world but in some way open to God (Molnar, 2009:97). Molnar (2009:97) himself is not convinced of the success of Torrance's approach, believing that it infers some assumption of knowledge of God's Being apart from revelation that would have been unacceptable to Barth.

2.3.4 Practical Implications of the Rejection of Dualism

The elimination of dualism has practical implications for researchers concerned with areas of practical theology. While this is covered in more detail in section 2.4, it is worth considering the effect Torrance's non-dualist theology has had upon adult education practitioners. Shults (1991) appears to have made the first connection between Torrance's unitary epistemology and education theory. This enables him to view adult education as an "open system" in which personal, ecclesial and societal systems are seen as interconnected. Thus, there is a link between theological reflection and praxis. Martin (1995) also uses Torrance to offer an alternative approach to Christian education. However, he sees Torrance's scientific theology as opposed to the concept of adult education as praxis. He analyses Thomas Groome's concept of "shared praxis", concluding that the methodology reflects a "closed anthropocentric system" that cannot account for the ontological ground of human epistemology and provides no ontological basis for belief in God (Martin, 1995:79). He claims that Groome's liberation approach to soteriology is based on a dualistic framework that separates humanity from the objective reality that is God, which he believes to be harmful to faith (Martin, 1995:151). Martin (1995:128) contends that what is needed is not praxis, but Christopraxis as per Torrance.

Prasadam (2005:335), writing from the context of the Indian subcontinent, also uses Torrance's unitary theology for praxis, this time to critically engage the caste system. Like Martin, he understands the scientific nature of Torrance's theology as having implications for personhood and humanity as well as community (*koinónia*; Prasadam, 2005:378). Christian education in the Indian context must involve humanization and transformation in the context of the worship of the Triune God. Jesus Christ, the divine-human mediator, provides for him the framework for a theology of transformative Christian education that through the power of the Holy Spirit goes beyond traditional conscientisation models to the challenging of caste distinction in the Indian church and society (Prasadam, 2005:389).

For all three educationalists, the elimination of dualism in Torrance's theology enables them to link theology and practice. However, they come to different conclusions. For Shults (1991) and Prasadam (2005), Torrance's unitary scientific theology leads them to the concept of education as praxis. For Martin (1995), it leads away from the traditional understanding of education as praxis to a centre in Christ, that is, education as Christopraxis. Nonetheless, they all establish a link between Torrance's unified scientific theology and practical theology, which must be noted.

2.3.5 Conclusion

The elimination of dualism in Torrance's scientific theology is a major focus of his work, underpinning his Christology and soteriology and rooting it in union with Christ. From this unitary view of the world, come practical implications for mission as it leaves him with an essentially Barthian approach to natural theology that assumes that God can only be known as he reveals himself in Christ and not through the natural world. However, the elimination of dualism has also led researchers into consideration of the unitary nature of adult Christian education and its implications for praxis, either using it to develop or to condemn praxis as a method.

2.4 Missional and Practical Theology

2.4.1 Introduction

Although the purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the missional nature of divine-human communion, in the process, it must also examine the practical nature of Torrance's theology. To do this, it is first necessary to define more clearly the use of the terms. As observed in Chapter 1, the adjective "missional" has been used to express something that has the qualities of mission (Wright, 2006:24-25). For Wright (2006:23), mission means the, "committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world, for the redemption of God's creation". It is in this sense that the adjective "missional" is used with reference to Torrance's theology of divine-human communion. The linking of "missional" with "practical" stems from a basic understanding that to be involved in mission means to be involved in the world, which equates practical theology. It is not the purpose of this thesis to participate in the debate over the place of missiology in practical theology, but rather to work on the assumption that a missional theology is a "living theology" that must of necessity relate to practice (Anderson, 2009).

The missional and practical nature of Torrance's theology lies at the heart of the argument of this thesis. It would have been presumptuous to consider it at all, had there not been evidence of the missional and practical outworking of Torrance's theology in his own biography. It is therefore in biographical and autobiographical comments that this thesis begins its evaluation of comment on the missional and practical nature of divine-human communion. However, it must be noted that most comments relating to Torrance's biography and ministry are to be found in eulogies, tributes or introductions, rather than articles, books or theses on the subject. Colyer (2001a, 2012),

however, has a distinct perception of the missional and “holisitic” nature of Torrance’s theology and Anderson (2009), as mentioned above, has a particular understanding of the practical nature of Torrance’s theology.

Works that relate to the missional and practical nature of Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion have been organised thematically, looking at their contributions to the area of practical theology, ecclesiology, evangelism and theological education. The purpose throughout the section is to trace and evaluate elements in the literature that support the contention that Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion is missional and that this is borne out in his life and ministry.

2.4.2 The Missional Nature of Torrance’s Biography

It has previously been noted that McGrath (1999:237) warned that there was a danger that Torrance studies might concentrate on his intellectual achievements and neglect the personal concerns that shaped his life and theology. As a result, McGrath (1999:241) ends his *Intellectual Biography* by narrating the story of Torrance’s mission trips to China in the years following his retirement. Although McGrath ends his biography on this note and does not examine the practical nature of Torrance’s theology, he leaves the field open for further research into the missional nature of Torrance’s life and doctrine. Colyer (2001a) introduces his seminal work on Torrance’s theology two years later precisely at the point that McGrath left his Epilogue, although he does not reference McGrath’s work but uses primary sources as well as interviews and autobiographical extracts. He comments that Torrance’s trips to China at an advanced age offer a rather “unusual image” but they are important because they offer an insight into the evangelistic and missionary perspective that informed his life and theology (Colyer, 2001a:35-36). Indeed, Torrance himself admitted that this mission perspective remained with him throughout his life (Torrance cited in McGrath, 1999:13).

The issue of Torrance’s missional focus is taken up by his brother David (Torrance, D., 2001). His declared intent is to write a biographical account that focuses on the source of the “missionary zeal” which characterises Torrance’s life as a minister of the gospel (Torrance D., 2001:1). He cites the influence of their missionary parents, Thomas and Annie as highly significant, something that Torrance himself recognises in his response to the article (Torrance D., 2001:304). David Torrance (2001:5) also records his brother’s life-long desire to take the gospel to the peoples of China and Tibet. In a response to his brother’s article, Thomas F.

Torrance agrees with his analysis, citing his enduring desire for the evangelism of the Chinese as proof of his devotion to mission (Torrance D., 2001:304).

Other researchers, both during Torrance's lifetime and posthumously, have recognised this mission focus in Torrance's worldview. In the introduction to an essay in honour of Thomas F. Torrance's ecumenical work, Newbigin (1976:288) links Torrance's mission awareness with his concern for Christian unity. It is interesting to note that for Newbigin, writing in the Seventies, Torrance's ecumenical work is the key to his mission sensibility. This idea is later taken up by Chaplits (2006), who uses Torrance's concept of cosmic redemption through union with God as a basis for an ecumenical approach to mission in the Ukraine, although he does not explore Torrance's biography in any way.

Following his death, a number of friends and colleagues published comments and personal anecdotes that attest to Torrance's personal passion for mission and evangelism. These include friends such as Samuel Moffett (2008:21), who remembers Torrance as "enthusiastically mission-minded". They also include reflections from colleagues in the Church of Scotland, such as David J. Randall (2011:151), who recalls that Torrance's calling was to be a theologian who could support mission and evangelism in the church. There are also reflections from Torrance's nephew, Robert Walker (2012:3), who remembers that Torrance's central calling was to the ministry of the gospel and to evangelism. Other scholars have noted Torrance's missional zeal, including Ziegler (2008), Thimell (2008), Eugenio (2011) and Habets (2013).

2.4.3 The Practical Nature of Torrance's Theology

A missional focus leads naturally into practical outcomes. In an interview for *Grace Communion International* in 2012, Colyer claims that Torrance's theology is "inherently practical" because of the practical nature of the love of God incarnated in Christ. As believers indwell Christ, his presence indwells every moment of their lives so that life and faith are integrated in a holistic way. In a tribute to Torrance, Simpson (2011:145), a former student, claims that Torrance had a problem with practical theology as a discipline. He recalls that Torrance once said in response to a question about practical theology, "What other kind of theology is there?" Simpson (2011:146) adds that Torrance's theology is practical because it shows that believers are not alone but, in Christ, they have been joined to God as he makes space for them within his divine life.

Thus for Torrance, theology and life were the same and this can be seen both in his academic work and his pastoral life. Spiedell (2013:1), Stamps (2007:xv) and Banman (2011) claim that

Torrance's theology was always integrative, scholarship and spirituality were not divorced. Radcliff (2014:14) acknowledges the practical and pastoral nature of the theology of both T.F. and J.B. Torrance. And throughout his commentary on Torrance's dogmatics lectures at New College (1952-1978), Walker (2011) highlights the intrinsic unity of Torrance's life and pastoral career, as evidenced in that particular corpus.

Gunton (2001:16) had earlier identified the pastoral bent in Torrance's theology, claiming the influence of Scottish theologian McLeod Campbell on Torrance's theology of the incarnation. He contends that it was pastoral motivation that led him to stress Christ's identification with humanity and led him to develop a theology of the universal significance of the incarnation (Gunton, 2001:116). It is interesting to observe that it is again practical theology that led Campbell, and Torrance following him, to a theology of the incarnation and of divine-human communion. Gunton observes that those who accuse Torrance of intellectualism need to allow that first impression to be qualified by the firm evangelical and missionary orientation of Torrance's thought. He observes, with others mentioned previously, that Torrance's missionary origins never left him and comments that all his writing about God breathed a concern that the truth and rationality of the gospel be communicated in and to the world (Gunton, 2001:117). From his personal acquaintance with Torrance, Gunton affirms, along with Colyer and McGrath, the essential practical and missional nature of Torrance's theology.

In an article on the connection between dogma and practical theology in Torrance's work, Anderson (2009:52) shows how Torrance goes beyond Barth to demonstrate how the self-revealing Word of God through Christ (as dogma) is the basis for the ongoing priestly ministry of Christ (as praxis). For Anderson, the Christological foundations of Torrance's work are as significant for the practical theologian as for the dogmatic theologian. It is into this dual accountability between church and theologian that Anderson (2009:55) brings Torrance's "living theology" of the reality and presence of Christ. Anderson (2009:55) observes that Torrance's Christology is linked with the concrete daily life and activity of humankind as it cannot be abstracted from the concrete act of Christ.

Anderson (2009:55) infers from this that the task of practical theology is to examine theological understanding in the light of what he calls "God's redemptive moment *in the present*" because for Torrance, the truth of revelation cannot be abstracted from the person of Jesus Christ as experienced through the Holy Spirit's activity in the lives of those who hear and obey. The mediatorial role of Christ works from both sides of the revelatory event so that saving knowledge

of Christ is both subjective and objective. It brings the objective reality of God's Word into the contemporary situation so that the praxis of the Spirit is actually the praxis of Christ that is worked out through the praxis of the church (Anderson, 2009:58). Thus, the Holy Spirit mediates the person of Christ to the believer and so the whole of Christ's earthly life becomes the ontological basis for the life of faith. As the church is the body of Christ, it participates in Christ's ongoing ministry of revelation and reconciliation. Consequently, the incarnation becomes the basis for the practical theology of the church (Anderson, 2009:58-9).

Anderson (2009:62) points out that Torrance's incarnational theology leads to a theology of pastoral care and to a concern for the role of Christ in the mission of the church. This concern is firstly, "evangelical", in that is concerned with the saving significance of the humanity of Christ but secondly, missional, in that is concerned with the continuing ministry of Christ in the world through the ministry of the church in and to the world (Anderson, 2009:62). The church exists in the world for the sake of the world so that the mission of the church is an indispensable component of its being in the world. Anderson (2009:64) concludes that practical theology done Torrance's way calls theology and the church back to its roots as a fundamentally missionary church with a particular role in the world. Anderson's work is thus significant for the subject matter of this thesis.

Deddo (2007:136) refers to Anderson's lifetime of work on practical theology in his consideration of what he calls the "proper foundation" of practical theology. Taking his cue from the theology of the Torrance brothers, he proposes that foundation as Jesus Christ, in the reality of believers' union with him and in their participation in his continued mediation and ministry for them and on their behalf (Deddo, 2007:137). In terms of the former, Deddo (2007:144) notes that for the Torrances, union with Christ is personal and requires "interrelationship", that is the relationship of the person with God in and through Christ. In terms of the latter, Deddo explains the concept of participation in the ministry of Christ through the use of the concept *koinónia*. Christians participate in the ministry of the risen and ascended Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit so that whatever is done in the practical sphere is actually a participation in the ministry of Christ (Deddo, 2007:146-147). Thus, Deddo makes a link between Torrance's theology of union and communion and practical theology through the concept of *koinónia*.

Kirkpatrick (2009) takes a practical approach to Torrance's theology of divine-human communion, using it to form the basis of an approach to renewal in two congregations of the United Methodist Church, Iowa, USA. After a year of failing to bring renewal to the church by

means of programmes, she undertook a D.Min project to investigate renewal at the local church level. Through reading Torrance, she came to understand that the key to renewal is the divine-human relationship (Kirkpatrick, 2009:7). By this, she means the covenant relationship between God and his people (individual and corporate) that is grounded in the divine-human relationship in Christ through which the people of God are ontologically bound to the Triune God (Kirkpatrick, 2009:6). Although she did not use the word, this is *koinónia*, as per Deddo (2008).

Kirkpatrick finds the link between mission and Torrance's theology of union and communion through the work of Newbigin who links union with Christ, baptism and mission, showing that believers are baptised into the mission of Christ (Newbigin in Kirkpatrick, 2009:53). For Newbigin, this is the inevitable outcome of the fact that God is a missionary God who calls people into his service through union with them in Christ. Kirkpatrick (2009:77) shares Newbigin's conviction of the missionary nature of God, seeing it as inherent in the self-giving "agape" love of Trinitarian interrelationships that extend outwards in acts of reconciliation. These acts are those that create the church, the community of God that exists in relationship with God and with one another. She quotes Torrance's statement (although with no reference) that if it is the church that concretely embodies the community of God, then it must be inherently missional. Thus for the purposes of Kirkpatrick's (2009:78) quest for renewal in the local church, "missio" and "communio" are two sides of one coin. Moreover, Kirkpatrick (2009:83) infers from her study that the deposit of faith is Christ incarnate and therefore, because the church participates in Christ through the Holy Spirit by union with the Father, it embodies the "communion" of God and is sent into the world.

In her quest for renewal at the local church level, Kirkpatrick links Torrance's theology of divine-human communion with the mission of the church through Christian education. The Christian education programme that she devised has resulted in some measure of renewal. It remains to be seen whether her concretisation of Torrance's theology of union and communion in the context of church renewal gives a key to the practical and missional nature of divine-human communion. As Torrance was himself engaged in Christian education in both church and seminary, Kirkpatrick's work suggests that Christian education may have missional implications in Torrance's thought and practice.

Another thesis using Torrance's theology of incarnation for the purpose of Christian education is Fredrickson (2000). Her concern is to consider the validity of the use of icons in Christian education, working from the presupposition that Torrance's "Nicene theology" points to a reality

that is open to God in the same way that icons perform this function (Fredrickson, 2000:12). She argues that in the Orthodox tradition the saints are living icons, or windows onto the reality that is God through their participation in Christ (Fredrickson, 2000:206). In the same way when both learners and teachers are considered as living icons and creators of icons, participation together in Christ leads to greater understanding of the reality of God, which is the task of Christian education (Fredrickson, 2000:10). Fredrickson (2000:12) acknowledges that her use of Torrance for this purpose might be considered misplaced, but reflects that it might do Torrance a disservice not to apply his work to a broader context. Although Fredrickson does not point to the missional nature of divine-human communion in this thesis, her work nonetheless points to the practical capacity of Torrance's theology.

2.4.4 Ecclesiology

An examination of the literature relating to the practical nature of Torrance's theology leads inevitably to Torrance's ecclesiology, as it is always in the church that *koinónia* is worked out. Colyer (2003:108) explores the concept of the church as social coefficient of knowledge, the place where *koinónia* is worked out through vertical relationship with God in Christ and horizontal relationship with each other as the body of Christ in the Spirit. Habets (2009,1; 83) shows that for Torrance, the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father is the essence of worship and the locus of worship is the church, or the *koinónia* of the saints in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit. *Koinónia* in turn finds its expression in the acts of community: baptism, Eucharist, prayer and worship (Habets, 2009:189). Thus, Habets contends that the church is vital to Torrance's theology.

The Holy Spirit is key to *koinónia* as the practical, church based side of divine-human communion. Thus Colyer (2001a:243) explores Torrance's doctrine of the church through his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who unites believers to Christ, mediates Christ's vicarious humanity to them and creates communion with the Trinity and with the corporate body of Christ, which is the church. In a later article on Torrance's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Colyer (2003:161) says that Torrance's theology should never be seen as an abstract process that is cut off from the evangelical and doxological life and ministry of the church in the power of the Holy Spirit. Colyer shows that for Torrance, knowledge of this Trinitarian God can only be participatory knowledge because God comes to believers through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and transforms them from sinners to sons and daughters of God. For Torrance, this encounter with the living God takes place within the day-to-day life and ministry of the church in the Spirit.

Kettler (1986:110) claims that it is the practical nature of the vicarious humanity of Christ that leads Torrance to his doctrine of the church. Thus, the church is the “effective operation” of the humanity of Christ in the world and as such, there should be no dichotomy between physical and spiritual unity of the church with Christ (Kettler, 1986:133-134). It is the vicarious humanity of Christ that provides both a foundation for and a critique of the church in the world.

Eugenio (2011:134-135) links Torrance’s theology of the church with his soteriology, examining it through union with Christ in the Spirit. He observes that for Torrance, the church is the communion of the Holy Spirit or the place where union and communion with Christ are actualised (Eugenio, 2011:135). As with Colyer (2003), Eugenio (2011) understands that for Torrance, the church is the *koinónia* of the Spirit or the place where Christ’s union with believers is played out. He says that this inevitably leads Torrance to a practical Christology and pneumatology that is realised in the mission of the church as it calls people into union with Christ and with his body, the church.

Gatewood (2008:9) also explores Torrance’s theology in relation to the Spirit and the church. He does so in order to answer the question of how the church can live and witness in the world in a way that is both fresh and countercultural. He examines the Torrance brothers’ assertion that primacy needs to be given to the question of who God is and what he has done in order to answer the question of how to make the gospel relevant in daily life. He concludes that, ultimately, for the Torrance brothers, it is only when the church conforms itself to the triune life of God and people are transformed through union with the God in Christ that the church can really seek to be relevant in the world (Gatewood, 2008:10).

Chung (2011:147) argues that Torrance, by observing the normative pattern of union and communion of the divine and human action of mediation and revelation, can affirm that an ecclesial mediation takes place. He uses the image of the “body” of Christ to give him the language of the church in union and communion with Christ. Quoting from Lee (2003), Chung (2011:149) observes the closeness of Christ and the church in Torrance’s theology. It is through the Spirit that the church lives in union with Christ, grows to fulfil its missionary vocation in Christ and fulfils the ministry of Word and sacraments (Chung, 2011:150). This is achieved through the *koinónia* of the Spirit, as in Eugenio’s work. Therefore, the church becomes the crucial medium for the unfolding of the revelatory presence of Christ, surmounting the peril of dualism in the process.

Chung criticises Torrance for the lack of practical mission discussion in his theology. Although Torrance's ecclesiology is mission focused, Chung (2011:150, 157) maintains that Torrance is too "noetic" or intellectual and too occupied with the vicariousness of Christ to have engaged in much mission work. He concedes that Torrance's work is not completely without praxis, but contends that Torrance has not addressed the issue of ecclesial praxis as well as he should (Chung, 2011:157). It would seem, however, that these criticisms stem from an over-dependence on research into Torrance's theological corpus and a failure to investigate the manuscript evidence relating to his ministry and practice. It is the purpose of this thesis to address this research lacuna. As Torrance devoted his life to the elimination of dualism, it would seem uncharacteristic for him to admit dualism the core essentials of his life and ministry.

Ziegler (2008) looks at three areas that he believes Torrance's theology contributes to the life of the church. Firstly, he believes that the church shares in the ministry of Christ and serves his mission in the world (Ziegler, 2008:24). By this, he means that the church serves Christ's ministry of reconciliation together with Christ but in a subordinate and obedient relationship. Secondly, he notes that the church's life is unceasing fellowship with Christ. All her responses of faith, including her mission, are a "knowing *with*" and a "sharing *in*" the mission and ministry of Christ (Ziegler, 2008:24). Thirdly, he notes that mission flows from union and communion. This is an onto-relational union that is brought into effect by adoption into the Father-Son relationship, an active relationship that has to be worked out in the life for the church through the Spirit (Ziegler, 2008:25). Thus, Ziegler (2008:25) sees Torrance's theology as a call to the church to recognise its true nature and purpose in Christ with God as a sharing in the actual mission and ministry of the living Christ. Although Ziegler does not explore how mission flows out of union and communion, he indicates that for Torrance the mission of the church is intricately bound with the mission of Christ.

Discussion on Torrance's doctrine of the church leads to discussion on his understanding of the nature of the sacraments, as has already been noted. Both Colyer (2001a:262) and Molnar (2009:295) indicate that Torrance's doctrine of the sacraments is grounded in the incarnation and the vicarious humanity of Christ. The resultant incorporation of the church into the body of Christ means that the sacraments have to be seen as *koinónia* or participation in the mystery of Christ through the Holy Spirit (Colyer, 2001a:262; Molnar, 2009:295), thus linking them through a theology of union and communion.

Colyer (2001a:263) and Molnar (2009:296) explain that for Torrance, baptism is not just an external rite, but also the living work of Christ that brings about the union of the believer with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. This resonates especially with Colyer's understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit in Torrance's ecclesiology. Both authors also comment on Torrance's "stereoscopical" understanding of baptism in the Scriptures (Colyer, 2001a:264-265; Molnar, 2009:299). This refers to Torrance's view that Jesus's vicarious baptism by John, his baptism into death and the baptism of the church by the Holy Spirit have to be held together as one. Jesus' baptism on behalf of believers in the Jordan identified him with sinners and pointed to his sacrificial life and death on their behalf in an atoning exchange that simultaneously pointed towards his transformation and exaltation. This was announced by the coming of the Holy Spirit on Christ at baptism, pointing to his anointing as king with divine authority (Colyer, 2001a:265). Both authors note the link between baptism, the exercise of divine authority and the sending of the church through the commission to baptise into the Trinity and to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 (Colyer, 2001a:265; Molnar, 2009:297). Thus, they both see a direct link between baptism and mission in Torrance's theology of baptism.

Another link between baptism and mission in Torrance's theology explored by these authors is his comparison of the word *baptisma* (as the reality signified by baptism) and *kerygma*. For Colyer (2001a:264), there is a link between *baptisma* and *kerygma* in Torrance's thought because both operate on the same two levels. Just as *kerygma* refers, not only to the act of proclamation but also to the reality proclaimed, so *baptisma* refers not only to the act of baptism but also to the reality, who is Christ. Thus both terms have as primary significance the whole saving act of Christ, and as secondary significance the practical activity of the church in baptising and preaching the gospel (Colyer, 2001a:264). Molnar (2009:297) highlights this aspect of Torrance's theology of baptism and stresses the reality of the whole saving act of Christ but does not explore in any detail the missional implications. Nonetheless, for both authors, there is a strong missional sense surrounding Torrance's theology of baptismal union with Christ.

More has been written on Torrance's theology of the Eucharist than on his theology of baptism. In a thesis on the Eucharistic theology of Torrance, Robert Stamps (2007:xv) observes that for Torrance, Christ is the primal sacrament and the physical objectivity through which God speaks and interprets his Word to humanity. Thus it is Christ who makes the sacraments efficacious and the only worthy response of man is praise (Stamps, 2007:170). Colyer (2001a:266) examines Torrance's Eucharistic theology through his doctrine of union and communion, observing that while baptism is the once-for-all incorporation into union with Christ, the Eucharist embodies

ongoing union with Christ. Molnar (2009:306) makes the same point, calling the Eucharist (or “Lord’s Supper”) “the sacrament of our renewal in Christ”. Hunsinger (2008:105), also examined by Molnar (2009:311), isolates three significant areas in which Torrance contributes to the theology of Eucharistic sacrifice. They are, firstly, the development of an integrated conception of Christ’s person and work so that the cross and Eucharist are held together in a pattern of unity-in-distinction, secondly, the way the vicarious humanity of Christ allows *participatio Christi* to be grounded in grace alone and thirdly the connection of the Eucharistic sacrifice with the ascension (Hunsinger, 2008:105). It is especially Hunsinger’s examination of Torrance’s connection between the ascended Christ’s eternal benediction and the sending of the Spirit through whom the gifts of union and communion with Christ are achieved that is pertinent to the missional aspect of divine-human communion. As Hunsinger (2008:108) observes, the sending of the Spirit is a gift that creates communion with Christ. However, at this juncture, Hunsinger does not pursue the missional implications of Torrance’s Eucharistic theology.

Colyer (2001a:267) observes the holistic nature of Torrance’s theology of the Eucharist. In the same way that Christ participated vicariously in bodily form in the Eucharist in the upper room, the apostles participated in bodily form with him. They were the representative nucleus of the community of the redeemed. From that point on, all who believe in Christ through the apostolic witness and are incorporated into Christ through baptism, come to share in the mystery of Christ in both a physical and spiritual way (Colyer, 2001a:268). Thus there is a sense, although not well developed, of the missional nature of the church in bringing the redeemed through baptism into communion with the triune God through the Eucharist.

Molnar (2009:288) isolates the influence that Torrance’s theology of the Eucharist has on his ecclesiology and his notion of ministry within the church. He links Torrance’s sense of the communion of the church with Christ in the Eucharist with the sending of the church into the world (Molnar, 2009:288). This is achieved through examining two important aspects of church order, viz. the historical succession of the church in the world and the sending of *charismata* upon the church. Molnar (2009:289) notes that Torrance sees the *charismata* as signs of the new divine order by which, through Word and sacrament, the church constantly breaks through into the world. As the church is united to Christ in the Eucharist, so it becomes in its fullest sense the body of Christ and as such, it obediently carries out his commands. However, Molnar (2009:289) does not explain how the church does this but moves into an examination of the ecumenical significance of Torrance’s Eucharistic theology.

2.4.5 Evangelism

This chapter has observed that a significant number of secondary sources explore Torrance's ecclesiology in the context of his doctrine of union and communion, best expressed as *koinónia*. It has seen that a mission imperative, or a necessity for the church to continue Christ's mission by engaging in evangelism, seems to flow naturally out of this. Thus, this section examines authors whose primary focus is on conversion and evangelism in the Torrance corpus.

This evaluation has already noted Deddo's claim that to do theological science Torrance's way requires a paradigm shift. Schubert (1984:126), writing significantly earlier than Deddo, had already observed the link between conversion and paradigm shift in Torrance's theological science. He summarises Torrance's paradigm as, "God revealed in Jesus Christ ... the subject matter of theological science" (Schubert, 1984:130). As the Hebrew worldview was auditory, based in hearing the Word of God, Schubert (1984:130) observes that in Torrance's thought, it is only possible to hear God in listening for Christ. Thus, the reality of theological science is only available to those who have undergone "paradigmatic conversion" and understood that it is only in Jesus Christ that God is revealed (Schubert, 1984:131). However, Schubert (1984:132) fails to follow up on his observation that there is a "personal nature" to Torrance's theological science, accusing him of being closed to the possibility of other sources of theological science outside of Jesus Christ. It is this personal nature of paradigmatic conversion that is explored in this section.

Throughout his writings, Torrance uses the word "evangelical" when he refers to the gospel. Colyer (2001a:11) freely uses the word "evangelical" in his works on Torrance's theology but does not define what he, or Torrance, means by it. On the other hand, Eugenio (2011:26) defines Torrance's use of "evangelical" as an "evangelizing movement". He quotes Torrance: "Evangelical theology is an evangelizing theology for it is concerned with the winning and transforming of the human mind through conformity to the mind of Christ..." (Torrance cited in Eugenio, 2011:26). Thus, Eugenio (2011:26) sees that Torrance's theology has as its essence what Torrance calls the "evangelical task". Eugenio then links Torrance's evangelical and evangelizing theology to his scientific theology whereby knowledge of the Triune God is evangelical because it is grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ, obeying the Father's will and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Torrance's "evangelical" theology is Christocentric and operates on a Christological basis (Eugenio, 2011:27).

The missional nature of Torrance's theology is further explored by those who examine the evangelistic thrust of Torrance's writings. Myers' (2008) analysis of the Trinitarian nature of the stratification of theological knowledge has already been noted. Equally significant is Myers' perception of the experiential base on which Torrance builds theological knowledge. The first level of intuitive theological understanding, the "evangelical and doxological level", operates at the level of personal encounter with Jesus Christ and is played out in the daily experience of worship and prayer in the fellowship of the church. Most importantly, this foundation level is entered into as a personal response to the proclamation of the gospel (Myers, 2008:6). It would seem, therefore, that proclamation of the message of salvation, or evangelism, forms an essential entry point for Torrance's theology.

Furthermore, Myers (2008:8) notes that Torrance's second theological level is entered into when a person comes to understand that he/she has entered into personal union and communion with Jesus Christ. Understanding this "bond" clarifies for the believer that fact that his/her personal experience of Jesus Christ is grounded in the ultimate reality of God's own Being. For Myers (2008:9), the *homoousion* expresses the most basic understanding of God, namely that God is inherently in himself what he is towards believers in Christ. The move from the first to the second and then the third level of theological knowledge is therefore firmly rooted in personal encounter with Jesus Christ that forms the foundation of the pyramid.

McSwain (2010) is an evangelist dedicated to proclaiming a Christocentric gospel based on the Trinitarian theology of the Torrances, as well as the doctrines of grace expressed by Barth and Bonhoeffer. McSwain focuses especially on the holistic theology of T.F. Torrance in which God's Being and Act interpenetrate each other so that Christ became sin for the sake of humanity so that humanity might be lifted up as children of God. Realising that this might lead to a universalism or over-realised eschatology, he stresses the need for "evangelical repentance" which, following Barth, bears God's "No" to sin inside God's "Yes" to humanity (McSwain, 2010:3). The positivity of McSwain's (2010:4) evangelistic message is derived from Torrance's theology of *theosis* that McSwain sees as providing the Trinitarian basis for the proclamation of the gospel. This is an approach to evangelism that has a high view of the role of the Holy Spirit in effecting the response to the message. He calls his approach, a "grace-based evangelism", one that proclaims the adoption of the believer into the life of God and urges participation in Christ in that relationship by the power of the Holy Spirit (McSwain, 2010:7). The strategy for evangelistic preaching developed by McSwain (2010:5-63) is firmly based in Torrance's soteriology and

appears to flow out of an understanding of the evangelical (missional) nature of divine-human communion as expressed by Torrance's exposition of the concept of *theosis*.

Habets (2008b:335, 337, 351) also considers the evangelistic nature of Torrance's theology. He shows how Torrance's doctrine of election, understood as the electing activity of God in Jesus Christ, leads to an evangelical proclamation of the gospel. For Torrance, election is an *a posteriori* work of grace situated in the inner life of the Trinity which is expressed through the two essential unions viz. carnal union and spiritual union (Habets, 2008b:338). For Torrance, all are elect in Jesus Christ and at the same time all are judged. Election is not a question of prior condemnation or grace. Rather it is a matter of decision either to obey and find that election has already taken place in Christ, or decision to disobey and find that condemnation has always been operative. Thus for Torrance, both election and damnation are in Jesus Christ (Habets, 2008b:341). As it is the Holy Spirit who is the link between the Divine and human decision, Torrance's theology of election has a bearing on the proclamation of the gospel. Habets (2008b:345) notes that the fact that Christ died for sinners means that the minister of the gospel is able to offer free salvation to all. Thus for Habets, Torrance's doctrine of election, which is based in Torrance's theology of Trinitarian union and communion, leads to an evangelical proclamation of the gospel. Torrance's theology has an essential missional direction, although he does leave the reader with the thought that Torrance has not fully explained how the work of the Holy Spirit fully effects salvation subjectively in the life of the believer (Habets, 2008b:354).

Other works consider the implications of Torrance's theology of divine-human communion for personal transformation. Gill (2007:43) investigates the unity of revelation and reconciliation in Torrance's theology, noting the focus upon the incarnation in which Christ is not simply an agent of reconciliation but he is in himself that which he mediates to believers. He sees Torrance's theological focus as the salvific significance of the incarnate life of Jesus Christ (Gill, 2007:43). Although Gill (2007:49) does not use the word "mission" in his thesis, he observes that Torrance's doctrines of revelation and reconciliation are complementary because true knowledge of God is not propositional but a personal encounter. People are not saved through their response to divine grace but by Christ who is divine grace in revelation and reconciliation (Gill, 2007:50). Gill thus inadvertently touches upon the inherently missional nature of Torrance's theology.

Colyer (2001a:88-89) considers the personal nature of salvation in Torrance's theology through what he calls "incarnational redemption". He states that Torrance's doctrine of atoning reconciliation which takes place in the person of Christ leads to an "intense personalisation of

salvation”, which is in turn linked to Torrance’s understanding of the *homoousion* in which person, being and activity cannot be separated (Colyer, 2001a:89). Thus, the human response to the gospel message is one of faith in what Christ has already done (Colyer, 2001a:114). He notes that for Torrance, conversion always requires a personal response of faith, always in the acknowledgement of the regeneration that took place in the incarnation and which will be completed at the *eschaton* (Colyer, 2001a:115). Thus Colyer (2001a:116) observes that Torrance requires the gospel to be preached in such a way that it is not dependent on human response (which is “unevangelical”) but in a way that gives full place to the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ.

Buckles (2001) explores the perichoretic nature of divine-human communion as a means to personal formation and transformation, linking the theology of incarnation with the practical nature of personal transformation. Using the theologies of James E. Loder and Thomas F. Torrance, she explores the meaning of “union with God”, “life in Christ” and “being filled with the Spirit” through an exploration of the “perichoretic dynamic” (Buckles, 2001:21). She looks at the way Loder links the perichoretic with the Holy Spirit as a means of grounding the human in the life of God, which leads to spiritual growth (Buckles, 2001:70). She then uses Torrance’s incarnational theology to expand Loder’s perichoretic theology into a fully Trinitarian theology, particularly through the way Torrance portrays the Spirit as mediating the life of Christ from birth to ascension (Buckles, 2001:80-108). Thus, it is Christ who “humanizes humanity” as humanity shares his own life, which was itself transformed by the Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit to divinise believers in Jesus (Buckles, 2001:124). As believers are taken up into the fellowship of the Son with the Father, they are born into a new creation that is rooted in God (Buckles, 2001:124).

Buckles’ (2001:109) thesis is promising in that it touches on the mission of Jesus and of the Spirit to return all creation to the Father. However, instead of moving from her analysis of divine-human communion into the mission of the church, she digresses into the *Ignatian exercises* as a means to practising personal indwelling of Christ through the Holy Spirit and therefore as a means to personal growth (Buckles, 2001:221). It is regrettable that Buckles focuses only on the personal to the neglect of the communal, which, as this evaluation has shown, is well attested in the literature on the Torrance corpus.

2.4.6 Conclusion

Thus, there is significant evidence in the literature that there are both a missional and practical outcomes from Torrance's theology of divine-human communion. The church seems to come to the fore as the locus of Torrance's practical theology, held together in Christ by the Spirit through the concept of *koinónia*. The practical implications of this lead into considerations of the evangelistic imperative of the church and the practical outworking of Torrance's theology of union and communion by Christian educationalists. Nonetheless, there are detractors who see Torrance's theology as "missing the mark" in some way. These are examined in the next section.

2.5 Criticisms

2.5.1 Introduction

A number of significant criticisms of Torrance's theology need to be answered in order to make the case for the missional nature of divine-human communion. Among these are criticisms that relate to the nature of his doctrine, criticisms of reductionism, challenges of incipient dualism, debates regarding his treatment of natural theology and a perceived tendency towards universalism and lack of missional or evangelistic thrust in his writings. It is not the aim of this evaluation to answer any of these criticisms at this stage, but to present them in such a way that evidence for their validity can be considered at a later stage.

2.5.2 Theological Method

Although early critiques of Torrance's theology tended to be focused on his methodology (Harink, 1979; Sansom, 1981), it was not until Colyer's (1992) comprehensive thesis on the nature of doctrine in Torrance's theology that Torrance's method was significantly derived from his publications and lectures and presented as an integral method. The thesis, plus insights gleaned from further reflection, was published in 2001 as *The Nature of Doctrine in T.F. Torrance's Theology* (Colyer, 2001b). At the end of Chapter 3, Colyer examines some "critical questions" about Torrance's method posed by Daniel Hardy (cited by Colyer, 2001b:77). Chief among these is Hardy's criticism that Torrance's method "verges on the private and publicly inexpressible" because Torrance's method argues for an empirico-theoretical knowledge in which human beings respond to the self-presentation of reality, that is, his method requires participatory

knowledge (Colyer, 2001b:77). Thus, Hardy claims that Torrance's theology is "privileged", "occasionalist" and "exclusivist" (Colyer, 2001b:78).

Colyer (2001b:78) attempts to answer these criticisms by showing that the integration of form in Torrance's thought is not just "bare occurrence" but occurs over time through a complex process of indwelling. Moreover, understanding is not ephemeral but permanent because it is linked to reality through the *homoousion*. However, Hardy's criticisms are potentially serious for an examination of the missional nature of divine-human communion, as that which is private and thus "publicly inexpressible" has no missional significance. Colyer is critical himself of Torrance's failure to press his theological method to its limits and suggests that the only way to circumvent Hardy's criticism is to think of Torrance's theological method in "dynamic and ontological terms" rather than statically, as Hardy wishes to do (Torrance cited in Colyer, 2001b:80). It must be noted that Colyer does not attempt to answer either the criticism of "privilege" or "exclusivism" raised by Hardy and his defence of the "occasionalist" character of Torrance's method is lacking in vigour (see Colyer, 2001b:79; 83). These are criticisms to which this thesis must return if it is to prove the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology.

2.5.3 Reductionism

In a chapter on criticisms of Torrance's theology, Molnar (2009:325) begins with what he sees as the "extreme end" of Torrance's critics, viz. those who claim that Barth and Torrance were "Christomonists". The idea behind this claim is the suggestion that in some way, because Barth and Torrance after him equated God's Being and Act through the incarnation, they reduced or collapsed God's Being into his revelation. From this idea flow criticisms that Torrance has an overrealised Christology, that his concept of spiritual and temporal union is unclear and that he escapes the need to explain his position by taking refuge in mysticism. These criticisms are pertinent to Torrance's theology of union and communion and thus to the missional nature of divine-human communion because of its centre in the *homoousion*.

The claim that Torrance has reduced soteriology to Christology by identifying the work of Christ with his person is addressed by Pratz (1998). He shows that the underlying issue behind this criticism is the question of whether the atonement takes place in the life or death of Jesus Christ. Pratz sees this question as arising from a false understanding of Torrance's soteriology. The issue is not one of where the atonement takes place but rather one of understanding the atonement

through the Reformed doctrine of the active and passive obedience of Christ and the believer's union with him (Pratz, 1998). He shows that in Torrance's theology, a failure to understand the interrelation between incarnation and atonement in the person of Christ is to take the saving essence out of the gospel (Pratz, 1998).

Rehnman (1998:287) claims that Torrance adopts Barth's "monistic" view of the Bible, which interprets the entire Word of God in the light of Jesus Christ as "the incarnational event". Consequently, he accuses Torrance, together with Barth, of allowing dogmatics to determine exegesis, thereby ending up with a positivist approach to the Bible similar to that of the nineteenth century theologians that they eschewed. With an ironic sweep of his pen, Rehnman (1998:276) accuses Torrance of designating Barth as "the great theologian of our age" because Barth had worked out the "evangelical implications of God's revelation in his word and in Christ". The irony appears, however, to be double-sided. Rehnman has failed to understand that Torrance's perceived reception of Barth's "Christomonist" structure is influenced by Torrance's own missional concerns for the soteriological implications of the gospel. In missing the missional motivation of Torrance's soteriology, Rehnman's (1998:295) assessment of Torrance as a "Barthian epigoni" somewhat misses the mark.

MacLean (2012:199) takes a different approach to his criticism of what he calls Torrance's "relative neglect of the work of the Holy Spirit" and "over-determined Christology" through which all things are fulfilled in Christ. He claims that Torrance may have pressed the image of the "Body of Christ" too far in his eschatology so that the relationship between Christ and the church becomes too close and the doctrine of final judgement is left debilitated (MacLean, 2012:196). He criticises Torrance for giving the impression that all judgement is past and there is no reserved judgement (MacLean, 2012:197). He particularly criticises Torrance's use of the *anhypostasis* and *enhypostasis* couplets to emphasise the concept of Christ as the church. He contends that if Christ is the church, then the eschatological nature of the church's "becoming" is eliminated and hope is diminished (MacLean, 2012:197-198). MacLean's criticism of Torrance's Christology in its eschatological implications could have a bearing upon the missional nature of divine-human communion. If, as MacLean claims, hope were diminished, then there would seem no value in the proclamation of the gospel.

Further implications of the criticism that Torrance has a reduced soteriology relate to the doctrine of union with Christ. McGowan (2004:13) claims that Torrance understands union with Christ in terms of his Barthian (Athanasian) leanings. It has already been observed that Torrance divides

his theology into two unions, viz. universal incarnational union with all humanity by virtue of the incarnation and particular spiritual union between Christ and believers. McGowan (2004:13) claims that Torrance does not make it clear how one moves from the first union to the second or why unbelievers fall out of the first union. He claims that the whole purpose of Torrance's theology of union is to dispense with the need for a forensic explanation of the atonement (McGowan, 2004:13). The purpose of McGowan's (2004:17) article is to prove that a non-forensic understanding of the theology of union with Christ cannot be termed "Reformed" because it does away with the *ordo salutis*. For the purpose of this research into the missional nature of divine-human communion, there are several claims here that need investigation. The first is the relationship between universal and spiritual union, the second is the contention that Torrance does not have a forensic understanding of the atonement and the third is that Torrance dispenses with the *ordo salutis*.

Molnar (2009:328) observes that there are those for whom Torrance's "reductionism" leaves God detached from history and the human situation so that he advocates a kind of dualistic mysticism that is not rooted in Scripture or context. If these criticisms were valid, then this would have a profound effect on this thesis' contention that there is a practical outcome from Torrance's theology of divine-human communion. This criticism, however, has been well countered. Molnar (2009:229-331) points out that Torrance is sceptical of mysticism because he grounds all his theology in the historical fact of the incarnation and the ongoing high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ precisely through the *enhypostatic* and *anhypostatic* aspects of the incarnation. He insists that it is Jesus Christ himself and not mystical experience that is the bridge between the reality of God and the reality of the world (Torrance cited in Molnar, 2009:332).

Habets (2008a:102; 2013:par. 2949-3069) argues however, that Torrance's rejection of mysticism is so strong that it leads him to overemphasise the cognitive element of union and of communion to the relative neglect of mystical and spiritual union in his theology. He argues that in his complete rejection of mysticism, Torrance's articulation of Christian life, theology and spirituality is weakened (Habets, 2008a:102). He claims that Torrance has adopted an inaccurate definition of mysticism, which leads him to exclude the mystical elements of theology (Habets, 2008a:102; 2013:par. 2949-3069). He contends that Torrance's openness to sacramental knowledge, as the truth of God that is communicated in the form of mystery is nothing other than traditional Christian mysticism. He accuses him of wanting to preserve the ontological gulf between God and humanity while at the same time maintaining relational unity through Jesus Christ (Habets, 2008a:103).

Habets (2008a:103) contends that the answer to Torrance's dilemma lies in the adoption of the attitude towards mysticism as seen in Athanasius and Gregory of Nyassa who did not reject mysticism outright but only those elements of mysticism not compatible with the gospel. Habets (2008a:104; 2013:par. 2958) calls for a more sustained treatment of mystery within Torrance's work because he sees in Torrance a mysticism *sui generis*. The point to note here is that, as Habets (2008a:99) explains, Torrance deals with mystery through the concept of *theosis*. Therefore, it is incorrect for Habets to accuse Torrance of neglecting mystical and spiritual union in his theology because, for Torrance, like Calvin before him, the *unio mystica* forms the epistemological basis for spirituality (Chin, 2003:202). Were this accusation true, Torrance would not have stressed the personal nature of the response of faith. Habets has missed this point.

A final criticism in this area is the claim by Ho (2008) that revelation through Israel is actually disregarded when, as with Torrance's position, revelation is through Christ alone. In a critical review on Ho's book on Torrance's theology of the incarnation, Taljaard (2011:240) notes that Ho criticises Torrance's focus on the incarnation and claims that it creates a lack of balance between revelation in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Taljaard (2011:240) rightly points out that Ho's position is not representative of mainstream criticism. It seems to be grounded in his uneasiness with Torrance's understanding of the nature of faith and what Ho sees as a lack of rationality in Torrance's work (Taljaard, 2011:240). Nonetheless, as this criticism centres on the faith-response nature of Torrance's theology of the incarnation, it needs investigation.

2.5.4 Dualism

In the preceding section, it was observed that Torrance is criticised for allowing a dualistic mysticism to enter his theology. Indeed, there is some irony in the claim that Torrance, who so criticised all aspects of dualist thought in science and theology, should himself be accused of an incipient dualism. In an article on Torrance's rejection of dualism in evangelical theology, Morrison (1995:66) highlights what he sees as a disjunction in Torrance's own thought. Torrance's theology leads to difficulty in the actual knowing of God because God is unapproachable and inaccessible in his divine light and transcendence. Morrison (1995:66) interprets this as a "remaining Kierkegaardian-Barthian transcendentalism" in his thought and claims that it has forced a schism between the divine and the human at the point of space-time relation in the world. Thus seeking to know God through the Christ-event has been relegated to the realm of "mystical theology" (Morrison, 1995:66). Morrison asserts that this has happened

because disjunctive assumptions in Torrance's own theology have in fact worked against the holistic theology that is necessary for Torrance's own rejection of dualism. He therefore accuses Torrance of being "Alexandrian" in his theological goals but "Antiochene" (or even Nestorian) in terms of the historicity of the Word. This means that Torrance's theology causes God to recede from the historical into the non-historical, non-objectivity of another time (Morrison, 1995:67).

In 1995, Morrison suggested that Torrance had two choices to correct this disjuncture. He could go the way of Paul Tillich in understanding the revelatory role of historical religious symbols which do not merely mediate the divine but participate in Being itself while not being confused with it, or he could choose to go the way of John Calvin, using Calvin's theological and historical "textuality" as a way of finding historical-human anchorage for the divine-human relation necessary for human understanding (Morrison, 1995:67). Morrison (1995:68) claims that this would more faithfully reflect Torrance's strong Trinitarian position by giving more place to the role of the Holy Spirit through the Word in the self-disclosure of God towards the world.

Morrison also claims that Torrance's theology leads to the Word becoming disjointed from revelation and therefore beyond the grasp of the human. Morrison (1995:68) sees this as a weakness as the divine actually participates in the human in the incarnation. If it does not, there is no redemption. In addition, in his thesis, Morrison (1997:361) argues that Torrance should see the historical scriptures as the realist aspect of God's self-revelation. He suggests that it is only in this way that Torrance can overcome his latent dualism. Morrison's criticisms have relevance for the study of the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology. If indeed there were a disjoint between the Christ event and knowledge of God, this would have implications for evangelism and would work against the missional nature of Torrance's theology. God could not be known through Christ and the Christ could not be the full revelation of God so that there might indeed be an unseen side of God, hidden behind the cross.

Another critic of Torrance's "dualism" is Reformed theologian, James J. Cassidy (2008:165-166). He criticises Torrance for situating all the traditional *ordo salutis* objectively in Christ, claiming that Torrance eliminates the subjective aspect of personal salvation by replacing personal faith with Jesus' vicarious faith and faithfulness (Cassidy, 2008:192). He claims that this leads Torrance back into dualism. In order to build his case against the majority of Torrance's interpreters who fail to see the "dualism" created by Torrance's realist soteriological objectivism, Cassidy (2008) surveys the work of three theologians on Torrance's theology of union and communion. He begins with Colyer, finding what he sees as an inconsistency in Colyer's analysis

of Torrance's theology. He claims that Colyer fails to understand the absolute objectivism of Torrance's soteriology and thus falls back into a dualist subjective/objective position. The second theologian to come under Cassidy's scrutiny is Lee (2003). Although Cassidy (2008:172) commends Lee for understanding the centrality of the incarnation in Torrance's thought, he also accuses him of introducing a subjective element into Torrance's soteriology by asserting that Christ's incarnational union with man must be applied to become an existential union in the individual. Cassidy (2008:172) attributes this to Lee's reading of his own theological persuasion into Torrance's work.

The third theologian, however, is dealt with more sympathetically. Cassidy (2008:173) approves of Rankin's analysis of Torrance's soteriology because he stands consistently against any subjectivity in Torrance's thought. Rankin argues that Torrance destroys the distinction between the subject and objective nature of union and communion by collapsing the subjective into the objective under the banner of the incarnation (Cassidy, 2008:173). Rankin does recognise that Torrance has a place for the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer but he stresses that both the subjective and objective sides of union with Christ are actualised in the incarnation. Thus Rankin understands Torrance to mean that both and soteriological union are realised in Jesus Christ. For Cassidy (2008:174), this perception helps to defend Torrance's work against charges of dualism in the objective/subjective soteriological debate.

Cassidy's (2008:176) own understanding of Torrance's soteriology is based on the premise that all Christian doctrine must be expounded from the starting point of revelation, which is Jesus Christ. Thus, all doctrine is concrete and flows out of the incarnation (Cassidy, 2008:176). God's reconciliation is not dependent on an individual's acceptance but is effected in the incarnation, which is "biblical union" with God in Christ (Cassidy, 2008:176). However, Cassidy does admit that there is some imperative in Torrance's thought to individual appropriation. In spite of this acknowledgement, he continues to state that there is no space for a subjective appropriation of the benefits of Christ, neither is there any space for an individual response to the gospel in Torrance's thought (Cassidy, 2008:178). However, Cassidy (2008:183) notes that in later works, Torrance does admit to the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting the church to Christ, but again this is seen objectively as being effected at Pentecost. He concludes that there is no conception in Torrance's work of the believer being united to Christ in his life history by faith and thus transitioning from a state of wrath to a state of salvation (Cassidy, 2008:184).

The question for this study on the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology is whether Torrance's avoidance of dualism through the incarnation actually leads to a failure to preach acceptance of the gospel. Does the vicarious faith of Jesus Christ lead to universalism and so obvert the missional aspect of the gospel? This is a question to which this study must return.

In an evaluation of the humanity of Christ in Torrance's theology, Chiarot (2012:239) concludes that the concept of "the unassumed is the unhealed" as it is adopted and developed by Torrance actually leads to a dualism, or a split in Torrance's thought because Christ assumes fallen nature in general in a way that is abstracted from the reality of fallen human persons. Chiarot (2012:239) suggests that the only way to salvage Torrance's *non assumptus* theology from this error is to move it in a more forensic direction, reflecting perhaps the substance of the criticisms by MacGowan and Cassidy, noted above. If Chiarot is correct in this, then Torrance's theology of divine-human communion would not have a strong evangelistic thrust as the vicarious humanity of Christ would have somewhat weakened soteriological implications.

2.5.5 Universalism

Torrance's assertion that all are included in the incarnational union with Christ leads to claims of universalism in his soteriology (Rehnman, 1998:280). This has an implication for mission, for if all are saved through the incarnation, then the missional implications of divine-human communion would indeed be nonexistent for there would be no need to preach the gospel or to expect a response of faith from hearers. Hence, criticisms that Torrance's theology is not evangelistic or missional in that it does not allow for a faith response.

Habets (2008b) counters the criticism that Torrance is a universalist through Torrance's doctrine of election. Torrance understands carnal union as the ontological union between Christ and all humanity through the incarnation, which leads him into a position of universal atonement (Habets, 2008b:339). However, Habets (2008b:340) points out that Torrance should not be seen as a universalist. Torrance's understanding of spiritual union leads away from a universalist position because it espouses both objective and subjective elements. While election is objective in terms of the incarnation, it is only "consummated" subjectively by the work of the Holy Spirit (Habets, 2008b:340). Habets observes that the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in Torrance's doctrine of election, enabling him to maintain a commitment to universal atonement but not to universal salvation.

Watts (2012:40) also approaches the criticism that Torrance is a universalist through the doctrine of election. In an article on universalism in the theology of Torrance and P.T. Forsyth, he sets out to disprove the argument that universalism is a more theologically coherent position than the doctrine of election. To do so, he compares the positions of Scottish theologian, P.T. Forsyth with that of Thomas F. Torrance. While Watts (2012:40) contends that the later writings of Forsyth raise questions on whether he is a “universalist in disguise”, Torrance, in contrast, holds a position consistent with that of Karl Barth that is “systematically opposed” to any form of dogmatic universalism.

Watts (2012:42-43) asserts that while Torrance accepts the universal significance of the death of Christ, he rejects universalism as “heretical” on the basis that it reduces the efficacy of the cross to human rationalism. Rather, he points out that the theological foundation for Torrance’s understanding of election lies in Barth’s assertion that election is predicated on the complete action of God’s eternal love in Jesus Christ, who is both the object and subject of salvation. While all humanity is elect in Christ, Watts (2012:43), together with Habets (2008b:340) and Molnar (2009:335), concludes that it is the work of the Holy Spirit that actualises this salvation and makes it efficacious. Thus, any attempt to assume universal atonement by human logic is to replace the biblical God of love with the scholastic God of absolute will (Watts, 2012:44). It should be observed, however, that Yeung (1993:274) concludes exactly the opposite, claiming that the major weakness in Torrance’s theology is pneumatology and that greater place should be given to the work of the Holy Spirit.

For Torrance, the central point in this argument is that the union of God and humanity should be understood soteriologically, which he does by making use of the doctrines of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* (Watts, 2012:44). Watts (2012:44) explains that for Torrance, *anhypostasia* means that the humanity of Christ has no independent existence apart from the incarnation of the eternal Word while *enhypostasia* stress the reality of the concrete humanity of Christ. These two doctrines must be held together, showing that there can be no separation between the person and work of Christ. The tensions between the universality of the cross and the particularity of the human response are thus resolved (Watts, 2012:45). The key is the human response of faith by the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus for Torrance, dogmatic universalism is a “form of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” (Torrance cited in Watts, 2012:46).

Flowing out of claims of universalism are further criticisms that Torrance’s theology does not allow for a faith response, some of which have already been reviewed under previous section

headings. In a simple and yet well-written article on the theology of faith in Torrance's work, Thimell (2008) answers the criticism, flowing from the accusation of universalism, that Torrance's theology removes the necessity for a human response of faith. He shows that Torrance's theology of faith is based entirely on the faithfulness of Christ (Thimell 2008:27-28). While Thimell acknowledges that faith must be a human act, he underscores the fact that in Torrance's theology human faith is underpinned by the believing faith of Christ on behalf of the believer. For Torrance, human faith is participation in the faithfulness of Jesus, the High Priest (Thimell, 2008:28). This is a point reiterated by Davis (2012:327, 353-354), who notes the objectivity of faith for Torrance.

Thimell (2008:30) points out the tendency of evangelical and Reformed theologies to make faith a condition of grace but responds that for Torrance, actions are not conditions of grace but responses to grace. Faith for Torrance does not create a new reality but is a response to and a participation in a completed event by the faithfulness of Jesus. Thus, Torrance's doctrine of faith must be seen in the context of the participation in the faithfulness of Christ in his role as our High Priest. However, there remain criticisms that Torrance's theology does not communicate well with non-believers (Yeung, 1993:274) and that it does not take human personhood into account (Bevan, 2002:216).

2.5.6 Natural Theology

Torrance's approach to natural theology has already been examined in literature relating to the elimination of dualism. In this section, therefore, the intention is to consider criticisms levied at Torrance for his "new natural theology" and to consider the implications that they might have for an investigation of the missional nature of divine-human communion. Pertinent to the subject of this thesis are the soteriological implications that arise from natural theology, especially as relates to the proclamation of the gospel among those of non-Christian religions.

In an article on the natural theology of Barth and Torrance, Molnar (1995) points out what he sees as the inconsistencies in Torrance's position. He observes that Torrance fundamentally agrees with Barth that natural theology cannot be a *praeambula fidei* but differs from Barth by arguing for a proper natural theology that is shaped by the content of Christian revelation (Molnar, 1995:53). Torrance calls this a "new natural theology". In this natural theology, the universe recognises that there is something outside itself that gives reason for its ground of being but this cannot be explored because, as noted above, there is no bridge into the "beyond". For Torrance,

the only link has been provided by God through his self-revelation in the incarnation (Molnar, 1995:58). It is here that Molnar sees inconsistencies in Torrance's position. Torrance's natural theology requires adaptation to its proper object, namely the triune God. As such, it becomes a revelation based theology rather than the "new natural theology" that Torrance claims it to be (Molnar, 1995:71). Molnar (1995:74) claims that Torrance is ambiguous in that he insists that "new" natural theology is dependent on revelation while at the same time insisting that natural theology can assist in the quest for God aside from revelation. This is a criticism also shared by Morrison (2001:60-61) and Gill (2007:128-132).

Molnar (1995:74) observes that while Barth will not accept that natural theology is in any way a partial condition of faith (because God cannot be partitioned), Torrance differs from Barth by conceding that natural theology is a necessary but not sufficient condition. For Barth, knowledge of God is an event hidden within the mystery of the Trinity alone while for Torrance, there is an element of knowing an "aspect" of God's Being through natural theology, although he does concede that this knowing must be Trinitarian in nature (Molnar, 1995:75). Molnar (1995:78) criticises Torrance's position as a "conflict with grace" as natural theology tries to make grace and revelation conform to general ideas constructed from religious experience. For Molnar, this points to the heart of the ambiguity in Torrance's position. Torrance tries to limit natural theology to the role that he has delineated for it without taking into account the sinful nature that always tries to control revelation (Molnar, 1995:79-80). He thus transforms natural theology into a theology of revelation, which he then uses to interpret the natural world. In this way he avoids dualism but at the expense of using natural theology as a means of uniting scientific theology and natural science (Molnar, 1995:80). This stands in contrast to his previous assertions that there are no concepts that are true in themselves because truth is dependent on God making himself known (Molnar, 1995:80).

McMaken (2010), however, seeks to prove that Molnar has in fact misunderstood Torrance's reformulated natural theology. He claims that there is no contradiction in Torrance's natural theology because he does not reintroduce the possibility of natural knowledge of God, but rather reinterprets the meaning of natural theology (McMaken, 2010:319-320, 340). For Torrance, epistemology forms the basis of natural theology (McMaken, 2010:320). Natural science cannot lead to knowledge of God because creation itself, *ex nihilo*, is contingent and therefore God cannot be known through the created order (McMaken, 2010:328). Knowledge of God is according to its proper object i.e. God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ (McMaken, 2010:325). This knowledge is Trinitarian by nature and operates by grace through reconciliation and renewal

in Jesus Christ, resulting in a response of worship, prayer and adoration (McMaken, 2010:325). This is the essence of Torrance's reformulated natural theology.

However, unlike traditional natural theology, Torrance's reformulated natural theology is a consequence of revelation and not a precursor to revelation (McMaken, 2010:339). Thus, McMaken (2010:335) contends that Torrance's reformulated natural theology can only be understood in the light of his understanding of mission. Knowledge of the natural world and scientific investigation can enhance human knowledge of God but can never lead to knowledge of God. McMaken (2010:339) claims that Molnar has misunderstood the essence of Torrance's reformulated natural theology because for Torrance human knowledge of God is a secondary and human form of God's self-knowing mediated through Jesus Christ and based on the mutual self-knowing of the Trinity given to believers through the communion of the Holy Spirit. Thus, McMaken asserts that for Torrance, natural theology is the use of scientific method to enhance knowledge of God already given by grace. It operates within a framework of revelation rather than acting as a pathway to revelation. He claims that this understanding proceeds from Torrance's missional orientation as a missionary to Western scientific culture.

Molnar's criticism of Torrance's approach to natural theology also stands in contrast to an espousal of the approach by McGrath (2009). For McGrath (2009:72), Torrance's relocation of natural theology within the scope of revelation shows that a scientific engagement with nature is not diametrically opposed to the self-revelation of God. In contrast to Molnar, McGrath sees Torrance's relocation of natural theology within the Reformed and Barthian heritage as one of his greatest achievements. The reason for this is that Torrance has managed to foster a dialogue between Christian theology and the natural sciences by showing that natural theology has a proper and significant place within the context of revealed theology (McGrath, 2009:75). Torrance's natural theology is a subordinate aspect of revealed theology that is legitimated by revealed theology. For McGrath (2009:76), therefore, Torrance offers a Trinitarian construal of natural theology which offers "an interpretative grid" by which he asserts that other traditions may be addressed on the common issues of the Christian faith". McGrath therefore sees in Torrance's natural theology a missional framework for the evangelism of people of other faiths.

Holder (2009), on the other hand, claims the reverse. He criticises Torrance for not seeing that natural theology is a "useful apologetic tool" to get people thinking about God (Holder, 2009:293). He concludes that Torrance's new natural theology denies Christians the opportunity to engage with the non-believer on rational grounds (Holder, 2009:293). The ambiguity of

Torrance's position on natural theology could call into question his whole approach to the presentation of the gospel in the context of non-Christian religions. This evaluation of the literature on Torrance's approach to natural theology shows that the subject is controversial. Diametrically opposed analyses of Torrance's position lead either to the suggestion that his natural theology hinders evangelism among non-Christians or that it provides an interpretative framework for leading people to Christ. It is the task of this thesis to explore "new natural theology" in the light of Torrance's theology of divine-human and mission practice in order to ascertain whether there is any substance in either aspect of the debate.

2.5.7 Conclusion

The criticisms levelled against Torrance in this section are significant for this thesis in so far as they threaten to impinge on the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology and practice. A theology that verges on the "publically inexpressible" might have little missional significance in the world if it cannot be understood. In addition, if Torrance's theology is found to be universalist in nature and lacking in a sense of divine judgement, it might lack motivation for mission. In the same way, a "new natural theology" that is nothing more than traditional natural theology in disguise, might lack the imperative to preach the gospel in the world. Claims of "Christomonism" and dualism have the potential to undermine Torrance's Trinitarian doctrine of incarnation and atonement with its centre in the *homoousion*. Attention is therefore given to these criticisms in the evaluation of Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion in Chapter 4.

2.6 Summary

In spite of the paucity of research into the missional and practical nature of divine-human communion in the T.F. Torrance corpus, a significant amount has been gleaned from works focusing on other areas of Torrance study. The impression gained is that Torrance's writings are saturated with missional and practical implications, which seem to flow naturally from his theology of divine-human communion. The studies considered have unearthed both commendations and criticisms of Torrance's theology and have suggested leads for research as well as criticisms, which need to be countered.

Among the authors considered there seems to be a consensus that Torrance's highly Trinitarian theology is always participative and linked with the doxological life of the church. This is

because revelation and reconciliation are the same. Thus, understanding the onto-relational nature of Torrance's theology necessitates a paradigm shift in which the participant undergoes a radical change of perspective. This acts as the entry point into the first level of theological knowledge and penetrates theological understanding to the third or ontological level. In mission parlance, this would be known as conversion.

The key to understanding Torrance's theology for many authors is found in the link between Christology and soteriology, which has its focus in the *homoousion*. It leads to a theology of the vicarious humanity of Christ in the incarnation, something that was first concretised in the vicarious suffering of Israel and realised in Christ. This appears to lead Torrance to an approach to the atonement that is both holistic and practical because it is centred in the vicarious life and death of Christ, and is not simply forensic (although the forensic is included).

The unifying principle in Torrance's theology is situated in his theology of union with Christ, a union that is both universal and individual in its appropriation. Various authors have linked union and communion with Torrance's understanding of *theosis*, which, in the light of his pneumatology, leads to an ecclesiology that is focused on *koinónia* as the space of intersection between God and man and man and man within the body of Christ, the church. The resurrection is the historical event on which the creation of the New Testament church is based and the ascension and Pentecost events are those, which send the church out in mission.

It has been noted that Torrance's stress on the humanity and substitutionary life of Christ leads him away from the dualism of the prevailing Western culture into a unitary vision of theology that links theology and practice. Torrance rejects the purported split between dogmatics and practical theology, understanding all theology to be practical in an integrated life. Friends and biographers have noted Torrance's passion for mission and evangelism that led him in his own life to engage in practical theology, both in the pastorate and in later life, back in the mission fields of China where he had grown up. This can clearly be seen in the practical nature of his ecclesiology and his doctrine of the sacraments.

Among the most significant criticisms of Torrance's work for the subject matter of this thesis are those that accuse him of universalism and therefore detract from the thesis that Torrance's theology of divine-human communion is by nature missional. Significant in this area are criticisms of Torrance's "new natural theology" with debates either side of the argument on whether it opens the way for mission among those of non-Christian religion or closes the door

into an “occasionalism” and “exclusivism”. Other criticisms of “Christomonism” need to be explored, as do claims that his theology is dualist and mystical.

It seems therefore, that there is sufficient coverage in the literature to make a case for the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance’s life and practice. The next question to be addressed is whether there is sufficient biblical evidence for this concept and whether Torrance himself has exegeted the Scriptures correctly in this area. Walker (2009:45-46), for example, sees Torrance’s theology as jumping too readily to conclusions from his own Christological perspective and failing to observe the historical context of other theologians. As this is a criticism of Torrance’s method, it is therefore the biblical-theological evidence for the missional nature of divine-human communion that concerns the next chapter.

3.0 THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE MISSIONAL NATURE OF DIVINE-HUMAN COMMUNION

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter concluded that there is sufficient evidence in the secondary literature to permit an investigation into the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology and mission practice. The purpose of the present chapter, therefore, is to evaluate the biblical evidence for the missional nature of divine-human communion in order to create a standard against which Torrance's treatment of the relationship between divine-human communion and mission can be evaluated. In order to do this, it is necessary to employ a theological method that brings to light the biblical theological evidence for the missional nature of divine-human communion and enable Torrance's theological writings to be evaluated against the same. This is a complex operation which needs to take into account firstly the researcher's own situatedness within the diverse world of biblical theology, secondly the historical multiplicity of approaches to biblical theology before thirdly, a relevant methodological approach can be proposed to take this chapter forward to the realisation of its goals.

3.1.1 The Researcher's Situatedness

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, in qualitative research, personal biography informs both the ontology and epistemology of the author (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:28). It is therefore incumbent on the researcher to acknowledge that her personal interpretative framework includes a bias towards an evangelical biblical theology of mission, crafted through over fifteen years of practical experience of mission, through studies in mission and theology as well as further studies into theology and context. These experiences have brought the researcher to the conviction that mission and theology should not be treated as separate entities, unconnected to one another, as has been the tendency in the past. Indeed, the researcher stands with J. Andrew Kirk (1997:3) in her conviction that mission and theology are inextricably linked both in theory and practice and it is this that has led her towards an evaluation of the integral nature of theology and mission in the life and work of T.F. Torrance.

This bias situates the researcher in the world of what can be called "whole Bible theologians of mission". These are theologians whose basic presuppositions include: the primacy of revelation, the inspiration of Scripture, the unity of the Bible, a traditional Protestant understanding of the

extent of the canon, the diversity of genre, the normativeness of Scripture for faith and an overarching missional hermeneutic. However, the missional lens through which such theologians approach the Bible (e.g. Köstenberger & O'Brien, 2001:19; Wright, 2006:48; Redford, 2012:xv) leads them to be classified separately from the wealth of biblical theologies of the Old and New Testaments (and of both testaments) under the general heading of Biblical Theology, as if there were a dividing line between a missional hermeneutic and biblical theology. In addition, the tendency of such biblical theologians of mission to call for a distinction between biblical theology and systematic theology means that they separate themselves from the world of dogmatics as well (Köstenberger & O'Brien, 2001:21; Redford, 2012:8). This has led to what the researcher sees as false divisions between the worlds of biblical theology of mission, biblical theology and dogmatics.

It is the contention of this thesis that there is an integral link between dogmatics, biblical theology and mission in the writings and practice of Thomas F. Torrance and that this is evident in his treatment of divine-human communion. Thus, any method that the researcher employs to evaluate the biblical basis for the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology and practice must take into account the integral nature of the three disciplines. There is currently no method that can be imported into this research that adequately does this. Thus, this chapter proceeds by brief evaluation of recent history of biblical theology and biblical theology of mission and proposes an alternative, blended methodology that takes into account both the missional nature of the biblical material and the interaction between biblical theology and dogmatics. There is no intention for this to be a comprehensive evaluation of all Old and New Testament theologians of the twentieth century but rather a critical evaluation of select methods that are of relevance to the development of this chapter.

3.1.2 Evaluation of Recent Historical Approaches to Biblical Theology and Biblical Theology of Mission

In the centuries following the Reformation, biblical theology had generally been subsumed under the task of dogmatics and biblical theology of mission had not yet been conceived. However, at the end of the eighteenth century and under the influence of the Enlightenment, Johann P. Gabler changed the face of theological studies by calling for a distinction to be made between what he saw as the historical task of biblical theology and the didactic task of systematic theology (Sandys-Wunsch & Eldridge, 1980:493-502). Following this appeal, nineteenth century theologians began to produce historical works on individual biblical books and authors to the

extent that by the end of the nineteenth century, European biblical theology had generally become a historical science, sharply distinguished from dogmatics (Gilbert, 1895:358). This represented the first move of separation of biblical and systematic theology on the European continent. However, at the same time that this was happening in Europe, in Princeton Theological Seminary in America, B.B. Warfield (1896:par. 250-268) was moving in an opposite direction, declaring biblical theology to be the “ripest fruit of exegetics” and linking with dogmatics in a threefold movement from exegesis to biblical theology to systematics. Thus while the continental theologians were executing Gabler’s proposal for a separation between biblical theology and dogmatics, Warfield was moving for integration. The fundamental dividing line between the two positions lies in the influence of the Enlightenment principles of Hegelian philosophy on historical criticism and a divergence in understanding of the role of revelation for understanding the biblical texts (Guthrie, 1981:23).

It is at this point that a separation of biblical theologians into those who held to biblical theology as a historical and scientific study and those who held to an integrated, exegesis-based biblical theology occurred in the twentieth century. They were further divided into two “streams” viz. biblical theologians of the Old and New Testaments who generally, but not exclusively, approached their biblical theologies as discreet historical units within the testament in question, and biblical theologians of the whole Bible who held to the unity of the testament. They would become known as scholars of the “Biblical Theology movement” (Hayes & Prussner, 1985:209). Generally speaking, the movement from exegesis to dogmatics through biblical theology presented by Warfield was only held by theologians of the latter group and then only in the early twentieth century, as for example, Geerhardus Vos (1902; 1948).

Early twentieth century biblical theologies of the Old Testament were primarily influenced by Karl Barth’s (1886-1968) dialectic theology that emphasised the centrality of God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Hayes & Prussner (1985:158) rightly observe that Barth did not impact Old Testament theology directly, but created an environment that gave it validity. In 1920s, the growing influence of Karl Barth led Otto Eissfeldt (1887-1972) and Walther Eichrodt (1890-1978) to engage in debate over the relationship between the history of Israel’s religion and Old Testament theology. Eissfeldt maintained the dichotomy between intellectual understanding and religious faith but Eichrodt (1961:14) warned against the separation of history and revelation (Hayes & Prussner, 1985:159). Under the influence of Barth, he proposed the theme of covenant as a central concept of Old Testament theology and maintained the unity of the testaments through the theme of the irruption of God’s kingship into the world (Eichrodt, 1961:13, 26).

Although Eichrodt's theology was sympathetic to evangelical presuppositions, it was not rooted in detailed the exegesis that Warfield had proposed, neither did it feed into dogmatics (Eichrodt, 1961:27). The distinction between biblical theology and systematic theology was thus maintained.

The influence of Karl Barth was also present in the New Testament theologies of the early twentieth century. Like Barth, Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) broke with the traditional historical-critical approach of the past generation but he disagreed with Barth on the extent of the critical task. While Barth held to the authority of the exegetical task, for Bultmann, theological exegesis (*Sachexegese*) was subject to theological criticism (*Sachkritik*). Thus Bultmann's form criticism could attempt to separate the *kerygma* of the early church from the "message of Jesus" through a process of demythologizing the New Testament (Bultmann, 2007:3), which was essentially a historical-critical task. Bultmann's New Testament theology was therefore not based on a traditional understanding of biblical exegesis, nor did it feed into dogmatics.

In the fifties there was a proliferation of journals and works that held to the more conservative and evangelical principles of the "Biblical Theology Movement" that included: the unity of the Bible, the distinctiveness of Hebrew and Greek thought, the value of linguistics, the particularity of Old Testament thought and the necessity of divine revelation (Hayes & Prussner, 1985:213-216). Dutch theologian Th. C. Vriezen's Old Testament theology (1958:150-151) examined the kerygmatic nature of the Old Testament through the writers' witness to God in terms of their relations with him and proposed that the central element binding Old Testament theology together was the relationship of communion between God and man. Like Geerhardus Vos (1948), Vriezen (1958:181) presented Old Testament biblical theology as the history of revelation, so that it is the salvation history of Israel that reveals the development of communion with God. Vriezen divided his chapters into sub themes relating to communion with God but at no point based his work in detailed exegesis or made any attempt to link his Old Testament theology with dogmatics. Thus although Vriezen's central concept of communion with God is helpful for the subject matter of this chapter his methodology lacks the discipline of exegesis to undergird it.

As the twentieth century progressed, the division between the historical-critical tradition and the revelation based tradition was maintained in both Old Testament and New Testament theologies. On the historical-critical side, Old Testament theologian, Von Rad (1975:105), argued for a far greater critical engagement with Israel's own testimony about YHWH than traditional exegetical methods had allowed and Wright (1969:13) called for the rejection of the "Christomonism". For

Wright (1969:224-225), the Christ-centred theology of the whole Bible theologians was inadequate for the task of interpreting the historical experience of the Bible. New Testament theologian, Kümmel (1973:13), argued against the unity of the testaments and called into question the unity of the theology of the New Testament. In Britain, Morgan (1973:66-67) focused on trying to find an intersection between historical study and the theology of the New Testament through the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith debate.

On the other side of the debate, Brevard Childs' (1979; 1984; 1992) canonical methodology was an example of an attempt to breach the gap by combining the descriptive historical task and the overarching thematic task of theology. He claimed that the major task of biblical theology was to reflect on the whole Christian Bible (canon) with its two voices, in the light of the subject matter who is Jesus Christ (Childs, 1992:78). In *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (1992), he took themes from the realm of dogmatics and then considered the Old Testament witness to those themes by surveying the historical-critical scholarship relating to them. He then did the same with the New Testament witness, before engaging in biblical theological reflection and making suggestions for dogmatics. In Childs, for the first time since Vos, an attempt was made to move from biblical theology into dogmatics, but again Childs' work lacks a strong exegetical base. James Barr (1999:401) was critical of Childs' approach, claiming that his canonical Biblical theologies were nothing more than dogmatic theology with biblical proofs and personal religious confession. In fact, Child's (1992) method looks more like a survey of historical criticism on the theme in question than the dogmatic theology with biblical proofs claimed by Barr. Nonetheless, Childs' work, for all its perceived weaknesses, was to have an impact on canonical biblical theologies and canonical biblical theologies of mission that were to follow.

During the early second half of the twentieth century, a concern with the justification of the mission enterprise in the field led to the rise of early theologies of mission. Missiologist Charles Van Engen, (2012:xii) claims these early attempts were really works presenting proof texts to justify the engagement of the church on the mission field, rather than biblical theologies of mission. Van Engen's assessment of the situation may be somewhat of a generalization. Montgomery (1929:8), for example, wrote of the essential and expressed "missionary character" of the whole Bible and Peters (1972:i), attempted to write a biblical theology of God's missionary purposes, neither of which can be said to be "proof texting" in the strict sense of the word. They were, nonetheless, precursors of a new approach that began to look for a deeper biblical base for the theology of mission. These included David Bosch's (1991) work on biblical paradigms of

mission and. Arthur Glasser's (2003) narrative approach to the story of mission in the Bible. These theologies of mission all held to foundational evangelical principles and called for a greater engagement with the biblical text as the authority for mission but were not based in exegesis nor did they pay attention in any way to the concerns of dogmatics.

At the same time, the influence of Childs could be seen in the rise of evangelical whole Bible theologies at the end of the twentieth century. Among these was Walter Kaiser (1978a, 1978b, 1998, 2000) with a focus on promise and fulfilment in the Old and New Testaments and Graeme Goldsworthy (1991, 2000) with a focus on the eschatological fulfilment of the kingdom of God. At this point fuller biblical theologies of mission also started to appear. Köstenberger & O'Brien (2001:20) had already attempted to build a biblical theology of mission that was distinct from either a systematic theology or a "mission treatise". This was more successful in the former goal than the latter, as it is probably unrealistic to deny a missional interest in a work that uses mission as an interpretative framework and draws conclusions that have implications for mission practice (Köstenberger & O'Brien, 2001:269). In 2006, Christopher J.H. Wright's *Mission of God* provided an attempt at a complete biblical theology of mission with an exegetical base, although with no attempt at linking it to dogmatics. In all of these biblical theologies and biblical theologies of mission, the constants were synonymous with an evangelical hermeneutical approach that is canonical, author-centred and normative for faith. However, unlike Childs' work, none of these biblical theologies attempted to use categories from or draw conclusions for dogmatics.

A counter-balance to this orthodox evangelical biblical theology was the Old Testament theology of Walter Brueggemann (1997). For Brueggemann (1997:730), Old Testament theology existed within the world of Jewish testimony and did not easily point to Jesus or to the New Testament, thus differentiating him from whole Bible theologians such as Childs. Brueggemann's method of "testimony, dispute and advocacy" offered a dialectical approach to the text that was in essence different from the text to life dialectic espoused by Karl Barth and those influenced by him. In Brueggemann's work, the source of Old Testament theology was the rhetoric of Israel in her testimony and counter-testimony about YHWH. The process of hearing the evidence and making a judgement was described as a metaphor of the courtroom where arguments must be weighed and balanced and judgements made (Brueggemann, 1997:xvi). However, unlike the whole Bible theologians, the outcome of such analysis was not assured because there are always other metanarratives available in a pluralist world (Brueggemann 1997:742). For Brueggemann (1997:xv), the "assured results" of critical consensus that undergirded twentieth century biblical

theology had no place in the pluralism of thought at the end of twentieth century. Brueggeman's (1997:85).work was replete with rhetorical analysis and as such is entirely text-centred but he resisted any attempts to systematise theology on the basis that this must lead to reductionism.

In the twenty-first century, sociological approaches to biblical theology, deconstructionist and post-colonial readings have replaced the historical critical methods of the twentieth century. At the same time, orthodox theologies of the Old and New Testaments have continued to be written. Among these is the work of Bruce Waltke (2007) *An Old Testament Theology: an exegetical, canonical and thematic approach*. Waltke (2007:31-32) admits his indebtedness to Childs and holds a predictable position on the canon, the unity of the Bible, the inspiration of Scripture, the normativeness of Scripture for faith and the centrality of Jesus Christ in the two testaments. However, he differs from Childs in his use of exegesis as the basis for a "canonical" and "thematic approach". Far more than Childs, Waltke (2007:144-146) engages in exegesis of text in order to illuminate his over-arching theme of the irruption of the kingship of God into the world of the Old Testament and its fulfilment in the kingship of Jesus. Unlike Childs, however, he does not use categories from systematic theology, although he rather abstractly acknowledges the necessity of the "interpenetration" of biblical theology and systematic theology to present the full power of theological concepts (Waltke, 2007:31).

Finally, the past decade has seen an interesting overlap between orthodox whole Bible theologies and theologies of mission, to the extent that at times the distinction seems to have been lost. I. Howard Marshall (2004:24-25) presents New Testament theology as a missionary theology. Beale (2004) and Beale and Kim (2014) present a theology of the temple and the church's mission, building a biblical theology of mission around this one theme. Again, Beale (2011:par. 141) traces Old Testament eschatology through the New Testament with implications for the mission of the church, Ashford (2011) writes a biblical theology that calls for an integration of theology and the practice of mission and Goheen (2011) explores the implications of a biblical theology for the mission of the church. (An exception is Schreiner (2013:493-497) whose theology focuses on the kingdom of God and only has a small section on mission in Luke-Acts). In all of these, biblical theology and mission are presented in an integrated way so that there seems to be little distinction between biblical theology and a biblical theology of mission. The amount of exegetical work done varies, but none of these works make any attempt to integrate their research with dogmatics.

Thus, it can be seen that biblical theology has traversed a wide and varied path. Following Gabler's call for the separation of dogmatics from the task of biblical theology, it has moved along a twin trajectory that can roughly, but not exclusively, be divided along orthodox and liberal lines. These two lines comprise opposing positions on epistemology, ontology, historicity and faith, which lead not surprisingly, to different methodologies. One of the methodological questions is the relationship between biblical theology and dogmatics, which has in some cases been assumed and in others ignored. Another methodological question is the relationship between historical-critical methods, exegesis and biblical theology. In some cases, exegesis has been seen as the basis on which biblical theology is built and in others, only lip service has been paid to rigorous, systematic exegesis. Finally, it has been observed that the increasing awareness of a biblical theology of mission in biblical theology has produced over the past decade a virtual synthesis between biblical theology and theology of mission.

3.1.3 A Method for Evaluating the Missional Nature of Divine-Human Communion

The question that this section posed at its outset was whether it is possible to find a method that lends to this research tools for the evaluation of the missional nature of divine-human communion in the Bible and from there a method for the evaluation of the concept in the work of Thomas F. Torrance. Bearing in mind Torrance's threefold epistemology that moves from doxology (basic knowledge of the Trinity from church practice), to theology (understanding derived from the history of revelation as the economic Trinity), to ontological statements about the triune God, a method would need to be found that would match this threefold progression in knowledge (Torrance, 2001a:88-107). This method could approximate a movement from exegesis (as biblical preaching) to biblical theology (as revelation in the history of Israel and the church) to dogmatics (as ontological statements about the nature of God). Given Torrance's realist ontology, already outlined in Chapter 2, the philosophy of the method would need to hold to orthodox theological principles, which, as we have already noted, belongs more to the whole Bible theologians than to the individual book historicists.

Among the whole Bible theologies evaluated, the only threefold method moving from exegesis through biblical theology to systematic theology was that proposed by Warfield (1896) and followed by Vos (1948). Such a line of progression may be able to approximate, in some way, the threefold progression in theological knowledge in Torrance's thought, although Vos did not distinguish clearly between biblical theological and dogmatic observation. Childs' (1992) movement from Old and New Testament witness, to considerations for biblical theology and

considerations for dogmatic theology also approximates this threefold movement but would be inadequate as a methodology for this research in that it relies on a survey of historical critical methods, rather than exegesis, for its biblical material. Waltke's (2007) programme of exegesis, canon and theme delivers the required level of exegetical skill but stops short in its consolidation of canon and theme into one unit, with no reference to dogmatics.

This research has therefore adopted a threefold method that begins with historical-grammatical exegesis (focusing on factors that yield results for divine-human communion and mission), then extracts from the results themes relating to biblical theology and finally relates the biblical theological reflections to the ontological level that is dogmatics. This results in a procedure that approximates the approach proposed by Horton (2002:238-243) in which he calls for a reintegration of biblical exegesis and systematic theology through a biblical theology of the covenant. Horton's (2002:238) concern is to turn away from what he sees as the fragmentation of biblical theology to find a unitary approach by uniting exegesis with systematic theology through the eschatological drama of redemption. It is not the intention of this chapter, however, to impose a framework of eschatological fulfilment of the covenant on the texts but rather to attempt to allow the structure and argument of the passages to suggest the themes. It is thus an attempt at exegesis rather than *eisegesis*. It is acknowledged that the practical application of the methodology is a risky enterprise in that the work at exegetical level can only ever be representative, given the impossibility of exegeting the entire canonical corpus. It acknowledges also that the task of extracting themes for biblical theology assumes the unity and integrity of the testaments and admits that using biblical themes for reflections on dogmatics assumes a normative role for the biblical text. Nonetheless, this method gives the research a tool for the evaluation of the biblical basis for the missional nature of divine-human communion that, in turn, enables Torrance's treatment of the missional nature of divine-human communion to be evaluated against the same.

The two Old Testament texts chosen for exegetical study are Gen 12:1-3 and Exod 19:3-8. They have been selected because they are foundational to the "promise-plan of God" outlined by many of the whole Bible theologians, especially those with a missional emphasis (Bosch, 1999:18; Kaiser, 2000:18, 22; Wright, 2006:200). They are also important for recent Old Testament theologians: Brueggemann (1997:430-439) and Waltke (2007:305). It should be noted at this stage that neither text can or should be expected to provide an extensive insight into the missional nature of divine-human communion, Rather, as they serve as representative samples of texts that

suggest themes that develop out of the missional nature of divine-human communion for further exploration at the biblical theological level.

Gen 12:1-3 introduces a paradigm shift from the universality of the history of human relationship with God in Gen 1-11 to the particularity of the narrative from this point forward concerning the history of one man and his descendants, the history of the patriarchs. It is in the promises of the inception of the covenant relationship that the genesis of the missional nature of divine-human communion can be studied. That is not to say that the missional nature of divine-human communion cannot be found in the early history of creation and the Fall or in the subsequent history of Israel, but only that the themes are concentrated in the call and blessing of Abraham in Gen 12:1-3. In examining the foundations of the Abrahamic covenant through exegetical study of this passage, conclusions can be drawn for the outworking of the implications of the covenant throughout the biblical text. It has, therefore, been chosen as a key passage for interpretation of divine-human communion as covenant in the history of Israel through all the genre of the Old Testament and into the New Testament.

In the same way, the introduction to the Sinaitic covenant in Exod 19:3-8 is a significant moment in the history of Israel in that it represents a point of partial fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 as the Lord confirms the great nation that he has made through his act of deliverance from the hands of Pharaoh. It is a significant moment because it summarises in essence, the future of God's relationship with his people, both in the immediate and pointing forward into the new era when it would be fully realised in Christ. There are other passages (such as Deut 28:9-10; Isa 44:1-8; Ezek 37:26-28) that could and perhaps should be exegeted, but the interests of the purpose of this research and the space available Exod 19:3-8 as covenant renewal prior to the giving of the *torah*, serves as a foundational text for the missional nature of divine human communion in the Old Testament. Brueggeman's (2003:34) claim that the passage is "programmatic" for Israelite faith is echoed by missiologists Senior and Stuhlmüller (1983:9-11), who commence their work on the biblical foundations for mission by reflecting on the interplay between the centripetal nature of Israel's relationship with YHWH and the stirrings of a centrifugal, opposite movement away from Israel to the Gentiles in Exod 19:3-6. The missional stirrings of this text both point back to Gen 12: 1-3 and point forward through the history of Israel to the crucifixion, resurrection and sending of the church to all nations in the New Testament (Matt 28:18-20; Jn 20:21-23; Acts 1:8). It has therefore been chosen for its significance for understanding the missional role of Israel.

In the same way, the New Testament contains much material that could yield results in so far as the missional nature of divine-human communion is concerned. Consideration of the concept of being “in Christ” in Pauline theology alone could (and has been) the subject of countless books. The union of the believer with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in John’s Gospel is again another area that could yield results. However, again in the interests of purpose and space, this thesis examines only two passages: 1 Pet 2:4-12 and 1 John 1:1-7.

The 1 Pet 2 passage is integrative in that it interprets Exod 19:3-8 in the light of the Christ-event, giving a direct link between the Old and New Testaments in terms of the exploration of themes for biblical theology. As the task is to evaluate the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance’s theology, there is a need to explore the link between divine-human communion in the Old Testament and the practical mission situation of the early Christian church in the New Testament. This passage examines the eternal nature of the covenant relationship through election in Christ (and damnation for those outside Christ) through the lens of the foundational concept of the missional nature of divine-human communion introduced into Israelite faith at Sinai (Exod 19: 3-6). It is particularly significant for exploration of Torrance’s Christology, which rests on the concepts of election (*prothesis*), mystery (*mysterion*) and fellowship (*koinónia*), as well as for Torrance’s missiology, which is built on the missional role of Israel in both the Old and New Testaments.

The fourth passage, 1 John 1:1-7, has been chosen because of the way it presents the New Testament concepts of *mysterion* and *koinónia*. Although the word *mysterion* is not used, the passage is concerned with the revelation (*phaneroō*) of mystery through the incarnation. The centrality of the incarnation in Torrance’s theology can therefore be examined through exegesis of this passage. In the introduction to this thesis, it has already been observed that Torrance’s (1960a:88-91) use of the concept of *koinónia* is fundamental to the way he perceives the fellowship of the Spirit within Trinitarian relations. It is therefore important to establish whether there is a missional element to *koinónia* within the first Epistle of John, in order to build a justifiable biblical framework against which to evaluate the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance’s work and practice.

3.2 Exegesis of Selected Texts

3.2.1 Old Testament Text 1: Gen 12:1-4

3.2.1.1 *Introduction*

Gen 12:1-4 has been chosen to serve as a foundational text from which to evaluate the missional nature of divine-human communion in the Old and New Testaments. This is because it marks a paradigm shift in the narrative, moving from the universality of God's relations with humanity in Gen 1-11 to the particularity of his relations with one man and his descendants in Gen 12-50 (Vos, 1948:76; Von Rad, 1975:154; Wenham, 1987:27; Wright, 2010:64-66). Although there are differing foci in terms of the exegesis and interpretation of this passage among Old Testament scholars, the blessing of Abraham and the question of whether that blessing is extended to the world has been widely considered (Calvin, 1965; Keil & Delitzsch, 1951:81-82; Kaiser, 1998:43; Goldingay, 2003:214). This is not to presuppose that there is no evidence for the missional nature of divine-human communion in the universal narratives from Gen 1-11, or even that there is no evidence in the subsequent narratives. The purpose of this focused study of Gen 12:1-4 is to examine the missional implications of blessing (and curse as its antithesis) in the call of Abraham in order to ascertain whether there is a universal missional imperative inherent in the divine-human relationship between the YHWH and Abraham at the inception of the particular salvation-history of Israel.

3.2.1.2 *Exegesis*

The call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-4) comes at dark point in the history of the world's relations with God. Throughout the primeval history of God's relationship with humanity in the post-Fall world between Gen 3 and Gen 11, God holds out to humanity the offer of gracious intervention in the face of judgement (Gen 3:15; 4:25-26; 6:8; 9:1-17). However, by 11:1-9, in spite of the cleansing and purification of humanity through the Flood and the universal covenant of Gen 9, it seems that humanity has rejected God's ways and has brought judgement on itself through pride and refusal to submit to the lordship of God (11:9). Unlike the other points of judgement where some measure of hope is held out (3:15; 4:15; 6:18), at this point in the narrative, God's gracious relationship with the nations seems to have lost all chance of restoration. Brueggemann's (1997:431) comment that YHWH has no antidote for the recalcitrance of the world in Gen 3-11 takes this idea too far, however, because it fails to take into account the sovereign plan of God

evidenced in the promise of Gen 3:15. There is still hope, although how it will be realised is unclear after the judgement of Babel.

The genealogy of Terah, descendent of Shem, intercepts the narrative and introduces Abram and his wife Sarai (Gen 11:27-30), whose names will later be changed to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 17:5, 15). At the beginning of chapter 12, God's call to Abraham to leave his home and extended family marks a new departure in the narrative and signifies a change in the relationship of the Creator with his created beings. God's gracious intervention is seen again and a new creation motif appears which entails the creation of a relationship between God and one chosen man. The question, right from this starting point, is whether the particular relationship with Abraham signifies an exclusive restoration of relationship with only one family, as in the Noah epic, or whether the rest of the world, now under the darkness of post-Babel judgement, will benefit from God's gracious intervention through this new relationship. Thus, the primary question is whether there is a missional perspective in the new development of divine-human relationship.

The suggestion is that the call of Abraham and Sarah establishes a new pattern for divine-human communion in a post-Babel world. This has already been hinted at in the immediate preceding context of the narrative (11:27-32). There is a marked contrast between Abraham and his sibling, Haran. Haran died in the "face" (*pan.im*) of his father Terah in the old land but Abraham outlives Terah and is called to move to a new land that is in the "face" of the Lord because it is the land that the Lord "sees" (*ra.ah*. 12:1). When Abraham is called into the land of the presence of the Lord, he is told to "walk before [the Lord] and be blameless" (17:1). The face of the Lord is later linked with the concept of presence (Exod 33:14f) and blessing (Num 6:24-26). Eichrodt (1967:36) notes the metaphorical use of the word *pan.im* in the Old Testament as a synonym for life lived in the presence of YHWH as an experience of inward communion with him. It is apposite that the reference to the land under God's gaze in Gen 12:1 should lead to an exposition of the blessing coming from living in his presence in verses 2 and 3.

Gen 12:1 commences with the spoken word (*a.mar*) of God who commands Abraham to leave the land of his birth, his nation and extended family for a land under the blessing of the Lord but yet unknown. The vav-consecutive form of the Hebrew verb plus the imperfect indicates a new beginning, or a new departure in the narrative, "Now, the Lord said", a position maintained by ESV, RSV, NRSV, ERV, NASB translations. However, this has been disputed in translation history. Calvin translated Gen 12:1 into Latin using the past perfect, *Dixerat autem Jehova ad Abram* ("the Lord *had said* to Abram"), a translation followed by the KJV, AKJV, NIV and NLT.

Calvin (1965) justifies his position by considering the migration of Terah and his family in Gen 11:31-32 as evidence of the primary call of Abraham in Ur, and thus considers the move into Canaan in Gen 12 as evidence of his obedience in fulfilling the previous call. However, the use of the past perfect here cannot be easily justified in light of the LXX translation of the verb form into Greek as *eipen*, an aorist active indicative (3rd person, singular). This is usually translated into English as the simple past. Thus for the purpose of this study, Gen 12:1 is considered as the word of the Lord to Abraham, purposefully moving the narrative on to a new phase.

Therefore, in 12:1, the word (*a.mar*) of the Lord initiates the new phase, or the breaking into the history of the generations (Gen 10; 11:10-30). The verb *a.mar* (to speak) in relation to God has already been used forty times in the narratives of Gen 1-11: in the Creation narratives (Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,22,24,26,28,29; 2:16, 18) in the account of the Fall (Gen 3:3, 9,11,13,14,16,17,22), in the murder of Abel (Gen 4:6, 15), the Flood narrative (Gen 6:3; 7:1; 8:15; 9:1,8,12,17,25,26) and the Babel history (Gen 11:6). God, the Creator, has been communicating with his creatures throughout primeval history, speaking either words of creative or recreative blessing (as in Gen 1-2; 9) or words of judgement and curse (as in Gen 3:4, 11). Now, in 12:1-3, the word of the Lord comes to a descendent of Shem as an unsolicited word of promise and blessing, contingent on a response of obedience that has the potential to deliver either blessing or curse for the rest of the world (12:3). This time the word (*a.mar*) of the Lord comes to a couple whose marriage is barren (11:30), indicating that a new creative word/act will be needed to ensure its fulfilment. The guarantee of the fulfilment of the spoken promise to create a “great nation” from this one man and his barren wife is the already proven ability of the word of God to deliver either blessing or curse, as evidenced in the creation stories (Eichrodt, 1967:71). Abraham does not hesitate but takes God’s word as reliable and obeys (12:4). The New Testament interprets this as a response of faith leading to righteousness (Gal 3:8; Heb 11:8; Von Rad, 1975:171).

The pattern of God-man-woman-obedience in these verses (12:1-4) seems to echo the pattern of God-man-woman-obedience in the creation narrative of Gen 2. This has been observed by Longman & Dillard, (2007:217), although they fail to note the recreation motive played out between the two narratives. In Gen 2, God issues a negative command, forbidding Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16). In Gen 12, by contrast, God issues a positive command, instructing the couple to move to another land. In both cases, it is faith in the reliability of God’s spoken word that is being tested. In Gen 2, the man and woman are in the newly created land which is the sphere of God’s blessing but through disobedience and lack of

faith, they are ejected from that place of fellowship and communion (Gen 3:23-24; Beale, 2007). In Gen 12, the man and woman are outside the land of fellowship and blessing but by the obedience of faith, they journey into the land and participate in the new creation of relationship with God and blessing.

The concept of God-man-woman-obedience in Gen 1-2 and Gen 12:1-3 can also be interpreted in terms of divine-human communion. The faithless act of disobedience in Gen 3 leads to the breaking of the creation bonds of communion between God and humanity (divine-human communion), which leads eventually to the uncreation of death in the Flood (Dyrness, 1977:27; McKeown, 2003:85). Gen 12:1-4 signals a reversal in this pattern through the establishment of a relationship with a man (referring back to Gen 3:15) that is entirely dependent on God's word of promise for its fulfilment. The promise is to restore the divine-human relationship through a response of faith for a blessing that will encompass not only Abraham's family but also the entire world and the means for this will be the inheritance of the blessing promised to Abraham.

The concept of blessing is central to the poetic section in Gen 12:2-3, as evidenced in the fivefold repetition of the root "bless" (*b-r-k*; Wenham, 1987:275; Wright, 2006:208). The primary Old Testament understanding of the Hebrew root *b-r-k* is to "bend the knee" or to kneel in homage before someone while presenting a gift (Benner, 2007:189). By implication, this means to bless God as an act of adoration and to receive blessing as a benefit. Thus, the concrete picture that the use of the Hebrew root *b-r-k* gives is that of a vassal kneeling in an act of fealty before a suzerain. Meredith Kline's (1972:125-126) suggestion that the call and blessing of Abraham is similar to a Hittite suzerain-vassal relationship sealed by oath is borne out by this sovereign-vassal picture of the Hebrew root *b-r-k*. The blessing that Abraham receives and gives is from its outset in 12:1-4 promulgated in terms of a covenant relationship, although the formal covenant will only be ratified later in the Abraham narrative (Gen 15). Kline (1972:126) maintains that YHWH's relationship with Abraham was primarily a declaration of divine lordship manifested in blessing or curse, as in the sovereign-vassal treaty, but the difference with ANE treaties and YHWH's covenant with Abraham lies in the grace that will ensure that blessing is realised.

Wright (2006:208-209) deals with the covenant nature of the relationship with Abraham but misses the significance of the sovereign-vassal covenant relationship in this passage. He maintains that in the Gen 1-11 accounts, blessing is material and of necessity includes the concept of multiplication, which he acknowledges is surprising given the barrenness of Sarah. He correctly sees in the promises of Gen 12:1-3 an additional relational aspect to blessing that

includes both vertical and horizontal aspects as directed towards God and the nations. However, his claim that all that can be said about relationship with God from Abraham's history is that those who are blessed know that blessing comes from YHWH and so seek to live a faithful relationship him because "we do not know as much as we would like about the personal religious faith and practice of the ancestral families of Israel," means that Wright (2006:209-210) fails to root his missional perspective deeply in the formal covenant relationship. This would suggest that Wright could make a stronger case for the missional nature of divine-human communion.

In terms of the structure of 12:2-3, Wright (2006:211) assumes that the primary imperative "Go" (12:1) is linked with the second imperative "be a blessing" (12:2-3), thus giving missional purpose to the verses. This position is widely held by biblical theologians (Kaiser, 2000:18; Peskett & Ramachandra, 2003:90-106; Goldingay, 2003:213). Wright's thesis is based on an *a-b-a-b* structure proposed by Goldingay (2003:213), in which the second half of the 2b line is in the imperative:

2a so that I may make you into a great nation

2b and make your name great – *be a blessing* (own italics)

3a so that I may bless people who bless you and I will curse anyone who belittles you

3b so that all the families of the earth will find blessing through you

Goldingay (2003:213) justifies his translation of the imperative in 2b as a vivid poetic way of conveying a promise and a "fudge" of the distinction between grace and blessing. The "fudge", which implies the necessity of Abraham's complicity in the blessing, may be a result of incorrect translation, possibly arrived at because of scrutinizing the vocalization of the Masoretic text. Alter (1996:50) points out in the footnotes to his translation, that this vocalization makes the Hebrew syntax problematic as it can also read "and it will be a blessing", meaning that it is the "great name" that the Lord will give to Abraham that will be the source of the blessing, not Abraham's response in going and being a blessing. As a result, it would be unjustifiable to make a case for the missional nature of divine-human communion on a questionable imperative. Rather, a chiastic arrangement of the verses gives structural credence to the suggestion that the purpose of the Abrahamic blessing is missional:

A¹ I will make of you a great nation

B¹ I will bless you and make your name great

C So that you will be a blessing
 B² I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonours you I will curse
 A² And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

The A¹-A² couplet links the concept of the “great nation” that YHWH will build through Abraham and Sarah with the blessing of all the nations of the earth. The Hebrew word “nation” (*goy*) in 12:2 is usually used in the Old Testament of pagan nations or national groups on the outside (Girdlestone, 1983:281-285). The word for “families” in 12:3 (*mispachah*) refers to intimate groupings or clans that constitute smaller people groups (Wenham, 1987:278). Thus, implication of the couplet is that the great nation that God will build in relationship with himself will be the means of blessing for all the tribe and language groups (“families”). In responding to Abraham, and ultimately to the Messiah who was to come through the line of Abraham, the nations would avail themselves of the blessing of fellowship with God. Thus there appears to be a universal missional intention of the blessing of Abraham within the A couplet.

There is however, a case for an alternative translation of the A² couplet, as “all the nations shall bless themselves through you”. This is reflected in alternative readings in the English translations. The problem centres around the assumption that the niphil form of the root *b-r-k* (blessing) in 12:3 is reflexive, a position favoured by Jewish translations who follow Rashi’s commentary (Sama, 1964:89; Zlotowitz, 1977:431). However, Jewish commentator Cassuto (1964:315) disagrees that the reflexive form of the niphil should be used here, claiming that a similar use of the verb in Gen 18:18, which is not in the reflexive, shows that that is should be translated as a passive. The issue for this study is the difference the reading would make to the case for a missional purpose in the blessing. The New Testament Greek usages of this verse in Acts 3:25 and Gal 3:8 are both passive and convey the sense that Abraham’s blessing is mediated through Christ both to Jews and Gentiles. However, if the verb is to be taken reflexively, it is not clear that it would inherently change the meaning. Even Jewish translator and commentator, Cassuto (1964:315), who considers the verb as reflexive, admits that it points to the universal nature of Israel’s faith. Ultimately, the result is the same, whether the translation is passive or reflexive. YHWH mediates his blessings to the nations through Abraham and these are ultimately realised in Christ (Rotenbury, 1958:36; Waltke, 2001:206). Thus, the initial assumption that there is a missional purpose inherent in the A¹-A² couplet remains unchanged.

The B¹-B² couplet links the blessing of Abraham with the greatness of his name. This is expanded in B² by synthetic parallelism in which the second B section expounds the idea contained within

the first. YHWH will make the name of Abraham so great that it will determine the nature of the relationship of other peoples to him. The antithesis to the Babel account of Gen 11 in which humanity sought to make a name for itself is striking. In 12:2, God makes a name for Abraham so that the elevation of the man chosen by God is at his initiative alone. This concept also echoes forward to the covenant with David in 2 Sam 7:9 in which it is God who promises, “I will make your name great”.

The implication of the B¹-B² couplet is that those who are in good standing with Abraham will receive blessing from God. However, conversely, those who are in poor standing with him will be cursed by God. The word translated as “curse” is the Hebrew root *qa.lal*, which literally means to “lighten” or “to make little of”. Ross (1996:263) translates the Hebrew as, “I will bless those who bless you but the one who treats you lightly I must curse”. Alter (1996:51), again relying on the Masoretic text, prefers, “those who damn you I will curse”. Either way the meaning is the same. The implication is that Abraham’s name will be of such significance, that even the slightest element of disdain will bring upon that person or nation the full force of God’s retribution (cf. Matt 5:21-22). Thus at its outset, the blessing of God promised to the nations through Abraham is received in the context of judgement as the reverse of blessing.

The C section is the centre point of the chiasm and contains the main idea of the poetic section. This indicates that the purpose of God’s initiative with Abraham is that he will be a blessing because of God’s determination to bless him and make his name great. Thus, the emphasis is not on Abraham’s act of faith in obedience so much as on the gracious initiative of God in calling and blessing him. It is generally accepted that this line should be translated as imperative and consequentially, “Go (obey) ... so that you will be a blessing”, which has already been noted in terms of Wright’s missional interpretation of Gen 12:1-3. Research by Baden (2010:236-237) suggests that an alternative reading of the Hebrew form of the verbs in 12:1-3 as volitional cohortative, would mean that they should be treated as simultaneous. This would then imply a joint agreement between Abraham and God as partners in which, on the one side Abraham wills to obey but on the other side, God wills to bless (Baden, 2010:236-237). However, in making Abraham and God equals, Baden has failed to take into account the suzerain-vassal relationship inherent in the Hebrew root *b-r-k* already noted and hence God’s sovereign election of a people through Abraham to mediate His blessing to the world. In other words, the divine-human communion that is established at God’s initiative is the basis for the extension of the blessing to the nations and not the “work” of Abraham in obeying. This difference is crucial for

understanding that the missional nature of divine-human communion is rooted primarily in the initiative of God and not the obedience of humanity.

The blessing that will be received by Abraham is from its outset in 12:1-4 promulgated in terms of a covenant relationship that is dependent on the nature of its sovereign. Calvin (1965) sees this in terms of the grace and love of God and speaks of the “extraordinary kindness” of God in condescending to make a covenant with a man. Eichrodt, (1961:56), following Calvin, observes that this relationship is an act of gracious condescension on the part of God who refuses to make it dependent on anything other than his own character. Thus for Eichrodt (1961:14), as for Calvin, covenant is the basis for the maintenance of divine-human communion that is established on God’s initiative and by His sovereign grace. This can be seen as an “intimate bond” between God and Abraham, which forms the core of Old Testament religion and which is the basis for the blessing of the nations (Dyrness, 1977:27; McKeown, 2003:85). At this stage, no indication is given of how the blessing of Abraham will be extended to the nations. However, God’s promise to bless Abraham and through him all the nations of the earth is not idle talk. Sealed by God in terms of an ANE covenant, it will be expanded and further explained as the narrative of Abraham and his descendants progresses through the Old Testament and into the New. All that is needed at this stage is for Abraham to believe God and to act by faith on his word.

The first part of 12:4a, “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him and Lot went with him” must be included in the exegesis of this passage as a corollary to 12:1a. The divine-human relationship established between God and Abraham and ultimately all peoples through the spoken word of promise, requires a response of faith to be demonstrated by obedience. Abraham’s step of faith in Gen 1:4 marks the beginning of a new way of life that is dependent on the word of God as command (Calvin, 1965). In accepting his vassal status, Abraham pays homage to his Lord by trusting him implicitly and obeying him explicitly. As he goes, so the Lord goes with him, confirming his word through progressive revelation of the nature of the embryonic promise given in 12:1-3. However, the essence of the relationship is not Abraham’s act of obedience but the divine initiative that establishes the terms of engagement.

Finally, 12:4b roots the call of Abraham and promise given to him in the context of the “generations” of the previous chapter (11:10-26). There is a purpose to the list of the generations of Shem and that purpose is now made clear. The darkness of the judgement of Babel is not the final word. In the generation of Shem, relationship with God will continue, even though Abraham is seventy-five years old and without an heir. The word (*a.mar*) of the Lord is sufficient to ensure

the perpetuity of the line. At this stage in the narrative, there is no reference to the “seed” who will bruise the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). There is no formal covenant ceremony. However, there is the establishment of a relationship with one man and a promise of blessing for the world (Kaiser, 1978a:88). Failure to understand this as God’s initiative, as God’s way for the world, will result in the continued darkness of judgement and curse in the post-Babel world. As such, Gen 12:1-4 can be seen as paradigmatic for biblical interpretation in both the Old and the New Testaments (Dyrness, 1977:27; Wenham, 1987:274; Köstenberger & O’Brien, 2001:31; Wright, 2006:194).

3.2.1.3 Conclusion

The question that this exegetical study has sought to answer is whether there is a missional nature to the establishment of a relationship between God and Abraham in Gen 12:1-4. With the change in the narrative from a universal history of the nations in Gen 1-11 to the particular history of one descendant of the family of Shem in Gen 12, the question was whether the nations had been abandoned to the judgement that they deserved or whether the Abraham narrative would continue the word of hope for the nations. In order to consider the possibility of a missional basis for divine-human communion in the passage, the study considered the use of the Hebrew root *b-r-k* and noted that the primary purpose of the section appeared to be the restoration of lost fellowship through divine initiative by means of a suzerain-vassal relationship. This relationship approximates ANE covenant treaties of the historical period, although the full covenant obligations are not present in the passage but will be revealed progressively throughout the Abraham narrative.

The missional nature of divine human communion was evident in the central section of the chiasmic structure in which Abraham is told that God will make his name great for the purpose of making him a blessing. In the final line of the poetic section, it was seen that the blessing of Abraham, would have efficacy for the whole world (all the families of the nations), depending on how they react to him. Those who bless him will receive God’s blessing but those who curse or disdain him will themselves be cursed. The entire section reiterates the significance, already established in the Genesis narrative, of a right reaction to the spoken word of God as the means of blessing or judgement. Abraham’s response to the speech of God is one of obedience which the New Testament interprets as a response of faith (Gal 3:7, 9), thereby signalling that a response of faith and obedience to the divine initiative for communion will be the way that the blessing of the

nations will be accomplished. Thus Gen 12:1-4 can be seen as paradigmatic for a biblical theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion.

3.2.2. Old Testament Text 2: Exod 19:3-8

3.2.2.1 *Introduction*

Exod 19:3-8 has been chosen as an exegetical text for the evaluation of the biblical basis for the missional nature of divine-human communion because it both reiterates and also moves forward the themes of the divine-human communion initiated with the call of Abraham in Gen 12:1-4 (Calvin, 1965; Sailhamer, 1992:282; Goldingay, 2003:370). From the perspective of the narrative, the events of Exod 19:1-8 represent the next stage in the fulfilment of the divine promise to make of Abraham a “great nation”, to make him a blessing, to bless those who bless him and to curse those who disdain him. The reasons for this are threefold. Firstly, the opening of the Exodus narrative presents a people who have become the “great nation” that was promised to their forefather, Abraham. Secondly, it is evident from the events of the exodus that the Lord has remembered his promise to Abraham and the patriarchs and has acted in judgement against those who cursed them, namely the Egyptians. And thirdly, the section explains what blessing for the people of God entails and suggests further how, through Abraham, all the nations of the earth might be blessed (Exod 19:4-6). Brueggemann (2003:34) calls the passage the “most programmatic” for Israelite faith and Kleinig (1987:17) defines it as a “pivotal text”. As such, the passage enables this work to evaluate further the missional nature of divine-human communion in the Old Testament.

3.2.2.2 *Exegesis*

The immediate preceding narrative recounts the visit of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law and priest of Midian, to the camp in the desert (18:1-27). Finding Moses overwhelmed by responsibility for judging disputes between the people, Jethro advises Moses to set up an administrative structure that will enable him to delegate responsibility for the more routine cases to “able men” who are “God-fearing” and who “hate a bribe” (18:21). Recent commentators have tended to understand this reorganisation as a concern for justice in society (Bruckner, 2008:167; Hamilton, 2011:288). Certainly, as the Decalogue has not yet been given (20ff), there is need for people, now outside the framework of Egyptian law (1:14-15), to learn how to judge disputes justly. However, justice is not the key issue here. Moses tells Jethro that the people are coming to “enquire of God”

(18:15). They are people ruled by YHWH and need his guidance. Moses is only acting as a mediator. Childs (1974:330) and Durham (1987:252) argue that the real issue is that Israel's justice, its law, has its source in God. The setting up of administrative structures for decentralised community creates an organised community context in which the law of YHWH will be given. Thus, Jethro's advice enables Moses to create an administrative structure for the governance of the people of Israel that will form the structure for the delivery of the word of God by Moses to the people during the Sinai event.

Once Jethro has left Moses, the people move on and fifty days after the exodus, they camp below the "mountain of the Lord" in accordance with the sign given to Moses in Exod 3:12 (19:1-2). Needing no further instruction, Moses ascends the mountain (19:3a). The initiative for communication belongs to the Lord, "The Lord called to [Moses] out of the mountain" (19:3b). The Hebrew root *qa.ra* means to "call, proclaim or read". The use of *kaleō* (call) in the LXX would indicate that the translation of *qu.ra* as "call" in this verse is correct. However, in the context of the giving of the law at Sinai, the verb *qa.ra* is also used to indicate the reading aloud of the Book of the Covenant (Exod 24:7). This would suggest that there is a relationship between the verb *qa.ra* and the words that the Lord gives to Moses on the mountain. In the first case, the Lord calls Moses and assigns him the task of communication of his speech to the people. In the second case, Moses calls out (reads aloud) the words of the Lord in the context of a formal covenant ceremony. In both instances, the action of the verb *qa.ra* involves the speech of God. The significance of the Hebrew word *a.mar* (say) in relation to the speech of God was noted in connection with Gen 12:1. Thus, once again, it is in the context of the speech (word) of God that the message is delivered to Moses on the mountain. Moses' task is to relay that word to the people through the newly organised structure of elders (19:7) for their response (Larsson, 1999:128; Hamilton, 2011:300).

The structure of Exod 3b-8 is poetic, beginning with a parallelism stressing the significance of what is to follow, "say (*a.mar*) to the house of Jacob, tell (*nagad*) the people of Israel" (Bruckner, 2008:171). Motyer's (2005:196, n.2) comment that the parallelism serves as a reminder of Jacob's humble beginnings and of the present nation status of Israel may be reading more into a simple poetic device than is intended. It is a repetition to stress the importance of the spoken word of God. Other commentators such as Gowan (1994:174) and Durham (1987:261), following Muilenburg (1959) Mendenhall (1955) and Von Rad (1975:189), understand the poem to be a set piece used at covenant renewal ceremonies and inserted into the text at this point to serve as an introduction. However, this would make it a retrospective addition to the text rather than a

prospective “setting forth” of the essential principles on which the covenant is to be built (Larsson, 1999:128). Rather, Exod 19:4-6 should be seen as an “executive summary” of the covenant terms to follow (Exod 20-31).

Motyer (2005:196), holding to a prospective view of the section, claims that the central C lines of his chiastic structure reveal prospectively the message of the whole Old Testament:

- A¹ Moses’ ascent, the Lord’s call to Moses (2-3a)
- B¹ Moses commissioned to speak to Israel (3b)
- C¹ What the Lord has done (4)
- C² What the Lord requires (5a)
- C³ What the Lord promises (5b-6a)
- B² Moses commissioned to speak to Israel (6b)
- A² Moses’ descent, Moses’ call to the elders (7-8a)

Motyer’s proposal seems initially convincing. The C^{1,2,3} section forms a pattern of grace (based on what the Lord has done), requirement (obedience) and promise that gives an order of salvation that extends from the old covenant into the new (Motyer, 2005:196-197). However, the inclusion of 19:2-3a in the poetic section, when the poetic parallelism of 3b (already noted) indicates the beginning of the poetic fragment, is inconsistent. In other words, the chiastic structure should be kept within the poetic boundaries delineated by the verbs ‘say’ and ‘speak’ as this puts the covenant summary into to context of the word of God:

Introduction: Say (*a.mar*) to the house of Jacob and tell (*nagad*) the people of Israel (3b)

- A¹. You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians (4a)
- B¹. And how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself (4b)
- C. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant (5a)
- B². You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples for all the earth is mine (5b)
- A². And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (6a)

Conclusion: These are the words that you shall *speak* (*dabar*) to the people of Israel (6b)

The theological theme in A¹ is the victory of YHWH over the kingdom, religion, and rebellion of the nation of Egypt. The destruction of the Egyptians who once held Israel in disdain (Gen 12:2)

stands in contrast to the blessing (Gen 12:2-3) of the people of Israel in the A² section of the couplet. They will now become YHWH's own kingdom of priestly worshippers who are set apart (made holy) as a nation. The B¹ phrase speaks of the personal care of YHWH for his rescued people as he brought them across the desert to his presence at Sinai. This theme is echoed in B² where the special nature of that loving relationship is made explicit. The C section forms the theological centre of the poem, laying out the terms of the relationship as obedience to the covenant within the framework of the word of God. Thus, the structure of the poem illuminates the themes as, (A¹-A²) God's past act of redemption and the resultant future state of blessing, (B¹-B²) God's past care and the resultant future blessing of relationship and (C) God's requirements set out in covenant form.

The similarities between Hittite suzerain-vassal treaties and covenants in the Old Testament have been well-documented (Mendenhall, 1955; Kline, 1963, Hillers, 1964). Objections to the supposed parallels have been equally well presented and analysed, such as McCarthy (1972:10-34, 89) who argues that the concept of covenant in the Old Testament is based on a variety of covenant traditions. The question as to whether the Hebrew word *berit* translated as "covenant" in 19:5a refers to a formal ANE covenant treaty or not is therefore important for the interpretation of this passage. If indeed the Sinaitic covenant follows the pattern of an ANE treaty, this section should be understood as the "covenant overture," which relates a history of past relationship between overlord and vassal and outlines what is required in the future (Mackay, 2001:323, Alexander, 2002:176-177; Schreiner, 2013:34-35). Thus the word *berit*, given a central position in the chiastic structure, could be taken as a hermeneutical key for the interpretation not just of this passage, but also of the entire Sinai narrative and Exodus as a whole (Motyer, 2005:20; Pereira, 2013:1). The previous study of Gen 12:2-3 noted that the verb root *b-r-k* provides a concrete image of a vassal kneeling before his Lord and observed the suzerain-vassal nature of the relationship between Abraham, his descendants and the Lord, thus giving credence to the idea that this section, as a progression in the covenant relationship, follows ANE covenant formula.

This position assumes that the message that Moses delivers to the people of Israel is the prelude to the renewal and deepening of the covenant that had already been established between YHWH and the people of Israel during the patriarchal era (Calvin, 1965; Gowan, 1994:176; Hamilton, 2011:292). That the Israelites are already the people of God is established in Exod 4:22 when the Lord instructs Moses to tell Pharaoh that Israel is his "firstborn son". Gowan (1994:175) understands this expression in terms of adoption, which leads him to dispute the idea of covenant

as the key word in the passage. For Gowan (1994:175-177) the parent-child relationship is a more useful analogy because God and Israel are already in relationship. However, Gowan's (1994:177) thesis breaks down in 19:8 when he is forced to abandon the adoption analogy in the face of the obedience required of Israel, which he admits exceeds the demands of a parent-child relationship. The case for a covenantal basis to the divine-human relationship remains intact.

The progressive nature of the covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel is evidenced further in 19:3, 7-8. These verses mark the first time that YHWH has spoken with and entered into covenant with the structured community of the people of Israel (Exod 18), albeit through Moses as mediator. Throughout the time of the Patriarchs and in the early Exodus narratives, YHWH has spoken to an individual rather than to a nation. Thus, the focus of 19:4-6 is the building of an intimate and binding relationship with the people as a nation. It is based on what YHWH has covenanted to do for them, first through Abraham and then through Moses in redeeming them from Egypt that YHWH now enters into a special relationship with Israel (Hamilton, 2011:292).

The first part of the covenanted agreement of divine-human relationship has already been accomplished in the victory over Egypt (19:4a). The Lord has demonstrated his commitment to the Israelites through acting on their behalf to deliver them from the "disdain" of their enemies (cf. Gen 12:3). The A² parallel explains further the special nature of the relationship between YHWH and the people of Israel that arises as a result. They are to be a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation" (19:6). The exact translation of *mamlakhah kohen* is disputed (Bartholomew (2002:2), after Barth, "priestly royalty"; Davies (2004:1) "royal priesthood"; Childs (2004:242) "priestly kings"). The translation of *mamlakah* as "kingdom" from *melek* has numerous precedents but the relationship of *kohen* to *mamlakah* is not obvious in translation. The English language leans towards the need of either an adjectival or genitive function to link the two words. Brown-Driver Biggs (1996) suggest that this is not permissible and recommends instead that the phrase should be read as two separate functions viz. "kingdom" and "priests", but this would break the poetry of the segment. However, if *mamlakah kohen* is considered as a poetic parallel of "holy nation" (cf. Gowan 1994:177; Larsson, 1999:132; Motyer, 2005:200; Wright, 2006:300, against Durham, 1987:263), then "holy" would parallel "priests" and "kingdom" would parallel "nation", allowing the translation of *mamlakah kohen* to be interpreted by its parallel, "holy nation". *Kohen* would therefore have an adjectival function in the same way that "holy" qualifies "nation". Israel will be a "priestly kingdom" (Brueggemann, 1997:431).

This reading of verse 6a presupposes that “priestly kingdom” and “holy nation” are connected and not separate functions. This study has noted the A¹-A² parallel that contrasts the kingdom and religion of Egypt that has come under judgement with the kingdom and religion of Israel, which will live under YHWH’s blessing. The difference lies in the relationship established between YHWH and his people, which Pharaoh rejected when he hardened his heart (Exod 7:14). The stress in 6a “and you shall be to *me*” (own italics) locates the relationship in YHWH’s person, which Davies (2004:61) observes is reminiscent of the covenant formula, “I will be your God and you shall be my people” (Lev 26:12, Jer 7:23). Although he does not explore it fully, Davies (2004:62) suggests that there is a connection between the concept of God’s presence with his people and the divine Tetragrammaton of Exod 3:14, which could be translated as “I will be present [in relationship] with whomever I will be [in relationship] with” (Kaiser, 1978:107). The point is that, just as Moses was called up the mountain into the presence of the Lord, so Israel is called to live in the presence of the Lord as a “priestly kingdom” and a “holy nation”. It is about relationship or divine-human communion.

The nature of the relationship with YHWH is defined through the words of the parallel phrases. Firstly, as a kingdom, the people of Israel are the sphere of YHWH’s reign. Israel does not yet possess the land, but as YHWH’s own people, they are the sphere of his rule. In the same way, they are a “nation” (*goy*) belonging to the Lord (cf. Gen 12:2). This denotes primarily a special relationship between Israel and the Lord. Secondly, as a kingdom of priests of YHWH, they are also “holy”. The Hebrew *qadosh* is used to denote separation, both physical (Lev 6:26 “it shall be eaten in a holy place”) and ethical (Lev 11:44 “consecrate yourselves and be holy”). The separation of holiness is always in connection with YHWH as in Ps 71:22, “The Holy One of Israel” or of Aaron as high priest of YHWH in Ps 106:16. Thus, Israel will be separated from the nations as his own kingdom of holy priests in special relationship with him.

The B¹-B² couplet expresses the divine-human relationship through the use of the eagle’s wings motif (19:4b) and the image of a treasured possession (19:5b). The Israelites had already experienced the care of YHWH in bringing them through the difficulties of the desert into his presence at Sinai (Kleinig, 1987:17; Durham, 1987:262). In Deut 32:11-12 the Lord’s guidance is the controlling idea of the metaphor, showing how the Lord carried the fledgling nation as an eagle catches its young on its wings and carries them to safety. In Deut 32, the author stresses that it was the Lord himself, as opposed to foreign gods, who did this for his people, thus contrasting

the judgement on the gods of Egypt (19:4a) with the special care of YHWH's chosen people (19:4b). The expression "brought you to myself" emphasises that it was the action of the Lord in guiding the people that brought them to the mountain and not their own initiative. The preposition "to" (*e-lay*) here indicates movement. It is God who invites his people into his presence and into relationship with him (Calvin, 1950; Keil & Delitzsch, 1951:95; Davies: 2004:41). They come into his presence on his terms.

On the other side of the B¹-B² couplet, the Lord states that the people of Israel will be his "treasured possession among the peoples" and proclaims the basis for this as his sovereignty over the world, "for all the earth is mine" (19:5b). The Hebrew word *segullah* "treasured possession", which is also found in 1 Chr 29:3 and Eccl 2:8, means private, royal property (Ryken, 2005:497). Hamilton (2011:303) connects the word with an ancient Ugarit letter in which the king Hammurapi, the last king of Ugarit, is described as "the servant and...friend/personal property/treasure" (*sglth at*) of his god, the Sun". Hamilton suggests that this might indicate the use of *segullah* in Hebrew as a term of endearment. This idea of a loving God calling his people his "treasure" accords well with the eagle's wing metaphor in 19:4b. This special treasure has been chosen out from among the *am* or the nation groups of the world. That YHWH had the right to make Israel his special people is evidenced further in verse 5b by the qualifying statement, "for all the earth is mine". This statement refers back to verse 4a where YHWH's ownership of the nations is seen in his defeat of the powers of Egypt (Strom, 1990:50-51). YHWH has the absolute right of ownership over the earth and so is within his right to choose one people for his own special purpose.

Before an evaluation can be made of the missional nature of divine-human communion, the C centre of the chiasm must now be brought to bear on both the A and B parallels. This study has proposed that the concept of covenant could be used as a hermeneutical key for interpreting the section. The Lord has remembered his covenant with Abraham and redeemed his people from oppression and slavery in Egypt. He has brought them into special relationship with himself, which he promises to continue and expand. However, in Exod 19:5a, a conditional "if" forms a bridge between what YHWH has done (19:4) and what YHWH promises to do (19:5b-6a; Motyer, 2005:200). The conditions for the enjoyment of the relationship, which has already been created, are to "obey" (*sha.ma*) the voice of YHWH and to "keep" (*sha.mar*) the terms of his covenant (*berit*). In terms of the ANE suzerain-vassal treaty already noted, the suzerain promises blessing and prosperity on the vassal as long as the terms of the agreement are kept. Thus,

YHWH calls Israel to live among the nations in special relationship with himself, a relationship that is formally organised by means of a covenant.

It was noted that the poetic section is enveloped by an introduction and a conclusion that put the communication within the framework of words and speech of YHWH (19:3b, 6b). The chiasmic centre, which commands the people to obey and to keep the covenant, thus brings the necessity of a response to the word of God into the centre of the relationship of God with his people. The administrative restructuring of the people of Israel in Exod 18 now gives a framework into which the message of 19:4-6 is delivered. Moses calls the elders of the people and sets before them the words of YHWH (19:7). The elders then speak to the people and report to Moses a unanimous willingness to obey (19:8). However, the people have not yet heard the details of YHWH's laws and commandments (Exod 20ff). They are only aware of his promises to their fathers and of his deeds in the wilderness. What is required of the people therefore is a response of obedience to God's word, a willingness to be his obedient people, whatever he asks of them. In the history of Abraham, this response was noted as a response of faith. The interpretative centre of this section also requires of the people a response of faith to the word of God.

This section has established that the relationship between God and Israel is predicated on a response of faith to his word, expressed in obedience to his covenant. However, the purpose of Israel's special relationship with YHWH in 19:1-8 has not yet been determined, and it is to this question that the final exegetical task must turn. The case for the missional nature of divine-human communion in 19:1-8 turns around 19:5-6. Biblical theologians with a missional hermeneutic commonly link 19:6 with Gen 12:1-3 and see the role of "priestly kingdom" and "holy nation" as an extension of the Abrahamic blessing to the world (Kaiser, 1978a; 1978b; 1998; 2000; Köstenberger & O'Brien, 2001; Wright, 2006, 2010). Biblical theologians who do not necessarily have a missional hermeneutic have claimed missional roles for Israel in two categories viz. 1) Israel as display people showing the ethical obligations of the kingdom to the nations (Dumbrell, 1988:35; Fretheim, 1996:213; Wells, 2000:55-56; Bartholomew, 2002:2; Waltke, 2007:407; Schreiner, 2013:36) and 2) Israel as priestly mediators between YHWH and the nations (Kleinig, 1987:22; Goldsworthy, 1991:181; Brueggemann, 1997:431; Block, 2000:71-72; Mackay, 2001:328; Childs, 2004:367 Hamilton; 2011:302). Their conclusions are not without detractors. Gowan (1994:177), for example, sees no role for the Israelites other than to be the recipients of blessing. Goldingay (2003:374) and Motyer (2005:199) insist that there is no mediatorial role among the nations for the "kingdom of priests" and Davies (2004:238), with

Motyer (2005:199), limits the priestly function to Israel's right of access into the divine presence. A case for the missional nature of divine-human communion therefore needs to be made.

The first point to be considered is whether Exod 19:5-6 is an extension of the promise of blessing to Abraham's descendants in Gen 12:2-3 as suggested by many commentators (Brueggemann, 1997:431; Mackay, 2001:326, Goldingay, 2003:374). It has already been noted that it is on the basis of the covenant with Abraham that the Lord calls Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egypt (Exod 2:24) and it is presumably on the basis of the promise to curse those who hold Israel in disdain that the forces of Pharaoh and his gods are defeated (Exod 19:4a). It would therefore seem plausible to expect that the promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham should find some form of fulfilment in 19:3-8. However, the universal context of the nations in Gen 3-11 should not be forgotten. Abraham is called to be a blessing in a world of disobedience and curse. Israel's role is no different. Israel has a vocation to be a "priestly kingdom" and "holy nation" (19:5-6) in the context of the nations (Brueggemann, 1997:430-434).

Following on from this, the missional nature of Israel's role as a "priestly kingdom" and a "holy nation" can be evaluated. Keeping the universal history of the rebellion of the nations in the in view, the question is what Israel's role might be in mediating blessing to the world. In Gen 12:2-3, the precise details of what this might look like had not been made clear. In 19:5-6, YHWH indicates that his people, living in formal covenanted communion with him through faithful obedience to his word, will be a treasured people with a special purpose. They will be set apart (made holy) from the other nations, serving as priests of King YHWH. Schreiner (2013:6-7, 36-37) compares the priestly role of Israel in Exod 19:6 with the priest-king role of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Just as Adam and Eve's mandate was to extend God's reign over the whole earth, so Israel now has a mandate to bring YHWH's blessings to the world. The problem with this view is that the concept of the priest-king is predicated on the assumption that humans are God's vice-regents in the world (Wright, 2010:50). However, if Israel is considered as YHWH's "kingdom" or the sphere of his rule, as noted earlier, then the issue is not so much their call to rule as kings but their call to submission to the rule of YHWH through their covenant relationship with him. It is in this context that they exercise their priestly function, although their role as the "true Adamic humanity" is not to be negated.

Israel, therefore, is a nation of the presence of God, a presence that is maintained by faithful obedience to his spoken command. When Israel quickly turns away and makes a golden calf

(Exod 32), the Lord declares that his presence will no longer go with them (Exod 33:3). Israel understands the withdrawal of the Lord's presence as a "disastrous word" (Exod 33:4) and Moses intercedes, asking the Lord to consider, "that this nation is your people" (Exod 33:13). For Moses, if the Lord does not bless him and the people with his presence, then they will be no different from the nations: "Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth (Exod 33:16b)?" The distinctness of Israel is a direct result of the presence of God with them. The word translated as "distinct" (*pa.lah*) is a verb in the Niphal form meaning, "to be separated". It is also used in Exod 11:7 to show the separation of the Israelites from the Egyptians in the context of the plagues and in Ps 4:3 to show the separation of the righteous from the ungodly. It is in their separation from the surrounding nations that Israel has a missional role.

It is as God's treasured possession, his priestly kingdom and holy nation, that Israel is a light to the nations (Isa 42:6; 49:6; Kaiser, 2000:60). This would indicate that Israel's role among the nations is as "display people", witnessing to the world what it means to live as the people of God's presence. It becomes evident as the law is revealed in the following chapters, precisely what being distinct means as the Lord gives to Moses the pattern for creating the tabernacle of his presence and lays out the regulations for cultic holiness of priest and people. Brueggemann (1997:431) suggests that Israel may be called to act as priests, not only to YHWH, but also as mediator and intercessor for the nations, although he admits that this idea is only hinted at in the text. However, there is little evidence in the Old Testament of Israel performing this role among the nations. Even Jonah complains bitterly about the Lord's mercy in saving the Ninevites from judgement, although the Lord's concern for the nations remains (Kaiser, 2000:70). Rather, Israel as the people of God, witnesses to the nations by drawing them into the sphere of God's rule through maintenance of his ethical standards in all areas of life: political, economic, social and spiritual (Wright, 2006:268-272). Thus, the *torah* (law and prophets) which regulates the life of Israel forms the backbone of the ethics of the kingdom of God.

In his exploration of the intercourse between God and humanity in the Old Testament, Vriezen (1958:249f) examines the significance of the word and law in revelation. He compares the suddenness of the direct speech-acts of God with the "continuous contact" of the formal law, which gave the Israelite constant instructions (*torah*) on how to live his life. *Torah*, as instruction from God, was normally given by the priests, prophets and teachers of wisdom. It marked the Israelites out as separate from the nations, which depended on omens from their gods, because it

implied constant communication between YHWH and his people in a relationship of communion (Vriezen, 1958:254). Thus, the divine-human communion has at its centre, obedience to the *torah* as the revealed will of God for participation in the blessings of the kingdom. The “holy nation” is set apart by means of faithful obedience to a *torah* that displays the nature of the divine King and the “priestly kingdom” is the sphere in which his people have freedom of access into his presence through obedience to the cultic requirements laid out in the *torah* (Motyer, 2005:200). Obedience to the law as the written word of God is thus the key to the missional role of Israel among the nations, not in going out to the nations, but in attracting the nations in to the sphere of YHWH’s rule (Bosch, 1991:17).

3.2.2.3 Conclusion

Exod 19:3-8 marks a key moment in the history of Israel when, as a prologue to the giving of the law at Sinai, YHWH calls on the newly structured nation of Israel for a response of faithful obedience to his word. It is in the context of a response to the speech of God that the poetic section is set. The covenant, placed at the centre of the chiasmic structure, provides a hermeneutical key to the interpretation of the events at Sinai. Historically, Sinai does not mark the creation of a new covenant but represents a further unfolding of the meaning of the covenant already made with Abraham and the patriarchs. YHWH’s faithfulness to that covenant is remembered in his deliverance of the people from Egypt and his care for them in the wilderness. Now, as he draws them into relationship with himself, he calls on them to declare their own commitment to the covenant by means of an act of faith in stating their willingness to obey whatever he commands. If they undertake this, they will be a special people, singled out from all the nations that belong to God to be his “treasured possession”, blessed by his presence.

As God’s special people in communion with himself, Israel will be a “priestly kingdom” and a “holy nation”, marked out as separate from others through his presence and consequent obedience to his revealed word that is about to be promulgated as law or instruction (*torah*). Israel are not yet in the Promised Land, yet they are to become YHWH’s “kingdom” with the priestly mandate of living out the ethics of the kingdom in the presence of the peoples. It is in this role that they will mediate the blessings of Abraham to the nations by providing a “model” of kingdom ethics as a *torah* that reveals the nature of its sovereign. At this stage in the history of Israel, there is no evidence of an imperative to go out to the nations with the word of God and there is no evidence of a priestly mediatorial role for Israel among the nations. Rather, as Israel lives in an obedient

covenant relationship of divine-human communion, its witness will attract the nations to YHWH. However, if it fails to live in obedience, the presence of the Lord will no longer mark it out as distinct and it will lose its distinctive role in the world. Ultimately, it is divine grace that keeps Israel in relationship with YHWH. Thus, there is evidence of the missional nature to divine-human communion in Exod 19:3-8, but its effectiveness is dependent on faithfulness of Israel to keep its covenant obligations.

3.2.3 New Testament Text 1: 1 Pet 2:4-12

3.2.3.1 *Introduction*

The third passage for exegesis has been chosen for its potential to build a bridge between Exod 19:3-8 and the New Testament. If there is a case for the missional nature of divine-human communion, it must be evaluated through the Old Testament into its New Testament context. The Old Testament usage in the 1 Pet 2:4-12 pericope creates links between Petrine thought and the Hebrew mind that stretch back through the Prophets and the Psalms to the Pentateuch and the events of Sinai. This would suggest that the text could be used as a means for evaluating of the outworking of the potential future missional nature of divine-human communion in the Exodus text previously under consideration. Thus, the primary purpose of this exegetical study is the evaluation of the *missional* nature of divine-human communion. This requires it firstly to establish the nature of divine-human communion in the text and secondly, to evaluate the missional significance, if any, of divine-human communion as presented in the passage.

3.2.3.2 *Exegesis*

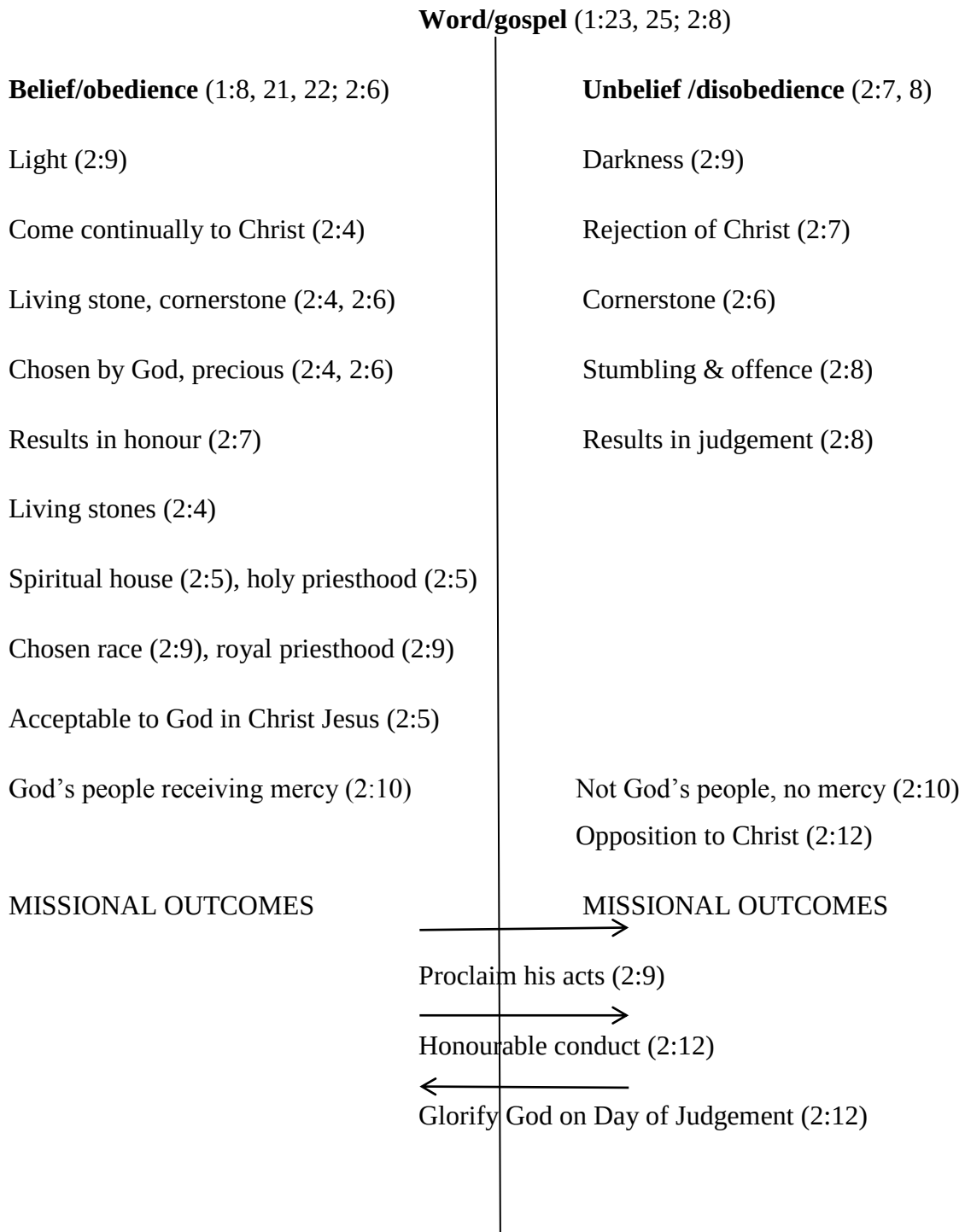
The first task is to confirm the scope of the text by placing it within the context of the Epistle. 1 Pet 1:3-2:2 introduces the “new birth” through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:3) and “salvation” as an outcome for those who have believed (1:5, 8, 9, 10). In the second half of the first section (1:13-2:3), the believers are exhorted to live lives that are in conformity with the holiness of the God who has saved them (1:15). This includes living a life of reverent “fear” (1:17), “obedience” (1:22a) and “love” (1:22b) in accordance with the truth of God’s word, or the gospel that was preached to them and to which they have responded (1:25). Conversely, they are to put aside negative practices of “malice”, “deceit”, “hypocrisy”, “envy” and “slander” (2:1) so that they can “grow up” into “salvation” (2:2). The repetition of the word “salvation” in 1 Pet 2:2

leads via the idea of the experience of the Lord's goodness in providing salvation, into 1 Pet 2:4-12, in which the full "honour" of the salvation won for them in Christ is spelled out.

There are precedents for assuming that 1 Pet 2:4-10 is an integral unit with its own internal structure, separated from 2:11-12 (Elliott, 2005:48-49; Slaughter, 1995:84; Jobes, 2005:142-143). Certainly, as long as mission is not under consideration, this would seem to be plausible. 1 Pet 2:4-5 speaks of the believers being built into a spiritual house (following on from the image of "growing up" into salvation in 2:2), 2:6-8 is a set of Old Testament texts to show why the believer should have faith in Christ and 2:9-10 ends the unit by affirming the status of the believers in Christ. This type of structural arrangement assumes that 2:11-12 marks the beginning of a new section and is not part of the thematic idea of the preceding verses. However, biblical theologians of mission, reading the section with a missional hermeneutic, propose that the injunction to live exemplary lives among the Gentiles as a means of bringing glory to God (2:12) follows on from the proclamation of the "excellencies" of the God of their salvation in 2:9 and therefore necessitates the inclusion of 2:11-12 in the section to complete its missional thrust (Volf, 1994:24; Senior & Stuhlmüller, 1983:299; Köstenberger & O'Brien, 2001:239; Wright, 2006:389). The difference between the two approaches to the structure of the passage is in the hermeneutical framework used for interpretation.

As this research evaluates the missional nature of divine-human communion, it will propose a structure that allows for a missional reading of the passage. In 2:11, the author addresses the readers as "Dear friends" (*agapētoi*) whom he "urges" (*parakalō*) to live holy lives among the Gentiles. These words have often been seen as transition markers, announcing the beginning of a new train of thought relating to the need to live godly lives (Grudem, 1988:45; Perkins, 1995:45; Thurén, 1995:131; Jobes, 2005:167). However, this study rejects this idea and proposes instead that there is an integral link between 2:4-10 and 2:11-12 through the missional nature of divine human communion. This is more than McKnight's (1996:124) suggestion that verses 11-12 function both as a summary of what has gone before and a thematic summary of what is to come. 1 Pet 2:11-12 is, in fact, integrated with 1 Pet 2: 4-10. This structure may be further presented schematically as follows:

Figure 3.1 Structure of 1 Pet 2:4-12



The hermeneutical key for 1 Pet 2:4-12 is the “word” or the “good news” which was introduced in 1:23-25. The Old Testament quotations in 2:6-8 revolve around a response to the word that is identified as either belief and obedience (1:8, 1:21; 2:3, 2:6) or unbelief (2:7) and disobedience (2:8). Those who believe have been transferred into the “kingdom of light” (2:9) but those who

disobey remain in the “kingdom of darkness” (2:9). The Old Testament quotations (2:6-8) distinguish the people of God from those who are not God’s people (2:10). The people of God receive honour (2:7) because, by his mercy, they have believed in God’s “chosen and precious” cornerstone (2:6). This “honour” is hinted at in 2:4-5, and elaborated further in 2:9-10 through the use of the epithets of Exod 19:5-6. By contrast, those who reject the gospel and thus Christ, find him to be a “stone of stumbling” and a “rock of offence” (2:8). This is their destiny as people who have not received mercy (2:8, 10). The implication is that they will remain in the darkness of unbelief and in opposition to the people of God (2:12). However, there are missional outcomes to being the people of God. Firstly, the believers have been saved in order to declare his “excellencies” by proclaiming his wonderful acts of redemption (2:9) and secondly, they have a responsibility to live in a way that will bring glory to God (2:11-12). Their proclamation and way of life will have an impact on the unbelievers who, though they oppose Christ and his followers, will give glory to God on the day of judgement.

1 Pet 2:4-5 begins with the phrase *pros hon proserchomenoi*, which has been variously translated as “As you come to him” (NIV, ESV, ISV), “And coming to him” (NASV), “To whom coming” (KJV) or “unto whom coming” (ASV, ERV; cf. Elliott, 2000:406, “Continuing to come to him”). The verb *proserchomenoi* is a present participle middle or passive (nominative, masculine, 3rd person plural), which is difficult to translate into English as there is no direct grammatical correspondence. Historically, linguists have seen the middle voice as part way between active and passive moods, but an academic study by Cline (1983:58) proposes that there is insufficient evidence to support this theory. He suggests that the middle voice, depending on the historical usage and present context of the verb, should not be translated as a passive, but rather as an intensification of the relationship between the subject and the action, in this case between the pronoun “you” and the present participle “coming”. Intensification in English can only be represented by the use of the reflexive, “you yourselves are coming”, which makes for interrupted style. Thus, the context in which the verb is used needs to be brought into play before a translation decision can be made on Cline’s proposal.

In the preceding verses (2:2-3), the author has urged the readers to “crave” (*epipothēsate*) pure spiritual milk so that they “might grow” into salvation (*auxēthēte*). He then adds a condition, “If you have tasted (*egeusasthe*, aorist, indicative middle, 2nd person plural) that the Lord is good”. The verb “tasted”, extends the milk metaphor of verse 2, linking it to “the Lord” as the interpretative key to the verses, a position that is strengthened by comparison between 1 Pet 2:1-3 and Ps 34:8 (LXX Ps 33:7, “if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good,” Jobes, 2002:8).

Jobes (2002:13-14) proposes that 1 Pet 2:2 counsels the believers to understand that the word of God mediates experience (“taste”) of God. She says that it is God in Christ alone who is the source and sustainer of spiritual life and therefore it is Christ whom they should crave (Jobes, 2002:12). Although Jobes does not abandon the idea that the pure spiritual milk refers to the word of God, she correctly extends the interpretation of the metaphor to its logical Christological conclusion showing that the readers are to crave the Lord, and by implication his word (*rhēma*), which is the gospel (1:25). This sets the framework for the interpretation of 1 Pet 2:4-12 in the context of a response to the Word of God, who is Christ.

This is also the interpretative context in which *pros hon proserchomenoi* in 1 Pet 2:4 should be translated. The believers experience the living Lord as they respond to the word of the gospel (1:25), therefore, they are people who are in a constant state of “coming” spiritually into his presence. A paraphrased translation would read, “...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good, to whom you yourselves come constantly”. Here, the intensification of the middle voice is represented by the emphatic reflexive pronoun and the regular nature of the action is represented by the present simple with a time modifier. This renders into English the notion of a constant access into the presence of the Lord, such as might be expected of the priesthood in the Old Testament. In the Septuagint, the verb *proserchomenoi* is used for drawing near to God in worship (Lev 9:7-8), and coming into his presence in the tabernacle (Lev 10:4-5) suggesting that the use of the verb here indicates a coming into the presence of God, or into communion with him (Hort, 1976:104; Grudem, 1988:97).

The rest of 1 Pet 2:4-5 begins to outline the “honour” (2:7) of being God’s people in communion with him (2:10) and living in his “marvellous light” (2:9). In 2:4, the risen Christ is represented metaphorically as a “living stone” (*lithos zōnta*). Here, the adjective “living” creates a paradox with the noun “stone”. A stone is of necessity inanimate, yet the Lord is both stone and alive at the same time, showing figuratively that the Lord to whom they are coming is the resurrected Lord Jesus (1:3; Schreiner, 2013:103). A second paradox in the verse contrasts the rejection (*apodedokimasmenon*) of the living Lord by humanity with his acceptance by God. This allusion to Ps 118:22 is quoted by Jesus (Matt 21:42) and by Peter (Acts 4:11) in connection with the rejection of the Messiah. Contrary to his rejection by humanity, Jesus Christ is in fact “chosen” (*eklelton*) by God and precious (*entimen*). These words “chosen” and “precious” are repeated in a parallel section, taken from Isa 28:16, in 1 Pet 2:6 in relation to Christ the cornerstone (Elliott, 2005:20). The repetition of these words may also indicate that the author has the theological implications of Exod 19:4-6, in mind throughout the section, especially in the light of the

dominance of the passage within the framework of Old Testament Hebrew thought (Elliott, 2005:39; Brueggemann, 2003:834).

A simile moves the figurative language forward and expands it in 2:5 by means of a comparison between the “living stone” and the believers as “living stones” (pl). The use of an emphatic reflexive pronoun at the beginning of the comparison “you yourselves” mirrors the emphasis of 2:4, “to whom *you yourselves* come constantly”, thus highlighting the corporate nature of the “building up” (Michaels, 1988:93). In 2:3, the believers were enjoined to “grow up” into salvation through the metaphor of ingesting spiritual milk. Now in 2:5, they are reminded through the use of the present indicative passive (*oikodomeisthe*) that it is the Lord (2:3) who is building them up. In both images, the focus is on the growth of the believers into maturity through coming to Christ.

The image of the “spiritual house” (*oikos pneumatikos*) is a reference to the temple which was commonly called the “house of God” in the Old Testament (1 Kgs 5:5; Isa 56:7). Although this understanding is contested, most notably by Elliott (2005:162) who claims that *oikos* means “household”, the fact that that Jesus referred to himself as the “temple” (John 2:19-21) would seem to lend credence to the idea that the “spiritual house” is intended to refer to the temple (cf. Selwyn 1949:160; Goppelt, 1993:141 & Davids, 1990:87 who all trace the use of the temple image in 1QS5:6). Those who are coming to him and are being built up in him, form the “living stones” of his spiritual temple (Grudem, 1988:99; Beale, 2004:331).

Within the precincts of the spiritual temple are found the people of God, living in union with Christ and growing into him as they function as a “holy priesthood” (*hierateuma hagion*). The concept of the priesthood of the people of God again seems reminiscent the programmatic understanding of Exod 19:5-6 within the Hebrew mind (Schreiner, 2013:96). By means of transference of epithets, the “holy nation” and “priestly kingdom” of Exod 19:6 have been conflated into a “holy priesthood” in 1 Pet 2:5. The concept of holiness as a reflection of the character of God has already been introduced in 1:15-16. Now the author explains the metaphor of the priesthood of the people of God within the temple that is Christ Jesus. Because of their figurative nature, the “spiritual sacrifices” (*pneumatikas thysias*) which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, are not the physical cultic sacrifices. The believers do not offer sin or guilt offerings as these have already been met in Christ (Heb 10:12-14). Instead, they come to God with a fellowship offering brought to God in the context of holiness (Lev 19:2). This implies a fellowship in which both God and the priesthood participate of the same food who is Christ, the

living stone and this is the reason that they are acceptable to God (2:5b; Harink, 2009:66). Paul further elucidates the spiritual nature of “sacrifice” as a life dedicated to God (Rom 12:1-2) and the writer to the Hebrews speaks of the “sacrifice of praise” (Heb 13:15). Thus to draw near to God in Christ implies a holiness of life and service that finds its expression in ethical living and the proclamation of praise.

1 Pet 2:6-8, begins with the phrase, “For it says in Scripture” to introduce the three quotations from Isa 28:16, Ps 118:22 and Isa 8:14 that follow. The purpose of the insertion of the quotations is to contrast the benefits of belief and obedience to the gospel for the Christians (1:25; 2:6) with the shame of disbelief and disobedience for those who persecute the Christian community (2:7-8). This would suggest that the author’s purpose for the inclusion of the texts is not to use them as proof texts for 1 Pet 2:4-5 (Michaels, 1988:102; Grudem, 1988:101; Jobes, 2005:151) but rather to encourage the believers from the Jewish Scriptures, interspersed with what Elliott (2005:22) suggests may be a midrash-like commentary on the verses. Thus, the Old Testament quotations form an integral part of the argument and thought of the entire section under scrutiny.

A comparison between the vocabulary used by the author and the LXX shows some variations. Selwyn (1949:163) claims that this indicates that the author has not used the LXX directly but is dependent on either a hymn or a documentary source outside the LXX, which Hort (1976:116) had previously suggested may be of Pauline origin. However, the author’s selection of language in the use of the quotations would suggest that their purpose is to take forward his theological teaching and so this is not a fragment from another document, but rather text used for theological emphasis (Schreiner, 2013:109). In 2:6, the LXX translation from Isa 28:16 of *ya.sad*, “to lay a foundation” is *emballó*, “to cast or to lay”, whereas the 1 Pet 2:6 quotation uses *tithēmi*, which is commonly translated as “I lay in Zion” (ESV) but which can also have the sense of to “assign” (Matt 24:51, Luke 12:46, 1 Thess 5:9). The same root, *ethēsan* (destined), is used in 2:8 with the meaning “to appoint”, leading to the conclusion that the theological purpose of the alteration might be to stress the election of God both in the sending of Christ and in the appointing of those who reject him to damnation (Schreiner, 2013:109).

Thus, the theological emphasis of 1 Pet 2:6 is that those who believe in Christ should never be ashamed. Indeed, if God himself has appointed Christ as the “chosen” and “precious” cornerstone promised in the Old Testament Scriptures, then belief in him will bring value and preciousness (*timē*) to the believers as well. This is picked up again in 1 Pet 2:9 where the blessings of the covenant people of God are applied to those who believe in Christ using the epithets of Exod

19:5-6. However, at this stage the author brings into play, using Psa 118:22, the contrasting state of those who do not believe that Christ is God's appointed "cornerstone" (2:7). The fact remains that whether Christ is accepted or not (2:7b), he remains the "cornerstone". When he is not received by faith, then the author shows from Isa 8:14 that the act of rejection of Christ will bring appointed judgement on unbelievers, leaving them in the state of spiritual darkness in which they have lived since the Fall (2:9). The reason for this is disobedience to the word of God (*logos*), previously designated as the "good news" of Jesus Christ, God's salvation (1:25). Thus, the question of acceptance or rejection of God's chosen cornerstone is at the heart of the argument of 1 Pet 2:4-12. Indeed, the question of a right response to God's word is one that concerns Isa 28 and the question of a right response to God's salvation is one that also concerns Psa 118. The choice is one of either building through faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ, God's "chosen and precious" one, or rejecting him through a response of disbelief (2:7). This marks the crucial dividing line between those who receive the blessings of God through Christ and those who remain outside the blessings of his grace. This is contra Boring (1999:97), who states that the fundamental contrast in 2:6-8 is between human rejection and divine retribution. These two states are not in contrast in this passage because being under divine retribution is the "natural" state of the disobedient (2:8, 12).

The conjunctive particle *de* in 1 Pet 2:9 marks the beginning of a contrastive statement, following on from the dishonour of unbelief in 2:8. The author returns to his exposition of the "honour" of being in communion with God through Christ, the cornerstone, started in 2:4-5. Using both Isa 43:20-21 and Exod 19:4-6, he applies the designated status of the people of God under the old covenant to all those who, through obedience to the word of the gospel, are in union with Christ under the new covenant. In 2:4-5, the believer "draws near" into fellowship with the living, resurrected Christ in a way that was represented typologically in the Old Testament by the peace offering. That fellowship with God in Christ is represented figuratively by the concept of being built into a spiritual house, as a holy priesthood offering acceptable spiritual sacrifices (2:5). In 2:9, the concept of the people of God in union with Christ is taken further by means of a theological synthetic parallelism with 2:5 to encompass the idea of a new *ethnos* or a new people with a distinctive identity (Horrell, 2011).

The people of God in Christ are a "chosen race" (*genos eklekton*; 2:6), in the same way that Christ is "chosen and precious". This is a reference taken from the "chosen people" mentioned in Isa 43:20. In addition, they are a "royal priesthood," picking up the idea of a "priestly kingdom" from Exod 19:6 but also linking with the "holy priesthood" of 2:5. Just as in Exod 19:6 the

reference to the “kingdom” of priests was in contrast to the “kingdom of Egypt”, so in the same way the author uses the adjectival form of kingdom, *basileion* (“royal”) in 2:9 to contrast the kingdom of light (the rule of Christ) with the kingdom of darkness (the rule of Egypt; 2:9b). As the kingdom of darkness in New Testament theology is commonly linked with the exodus from Egypt (Col 1:13) it may be concluded that the author’s underlying theology of divine-human communion here has second exodus undertones. These may be further understood in terms of the eschatological expectations of the Old Testament, especially with reference to Zech 9-14 in which much of the imagery of Exod 19:4-6 and Isa 43:20 is present (see Liebengood, 2014:208 for a comparative study on Zech 9-14 and 1 Pet 1). Flowing out of the second exodus theme is the idea of a return from exile in Babylon, which is strongly present as a motif in the Epistle (cf. “exiles” in 1:1 and “Babylon” 5:13; Mbuvi, 2007:28). Thus, the context in which the believers receive “honour” is the same as the “honour” of the Israelites coming out of Egypt by the mighty hand of God and the spiritual return of the exiles from Babylon to rebuild the eschatological temple (Ezek 12-40).

The “holy nation” is drawn directly from Exod 19:6 and links with the concept of holiness already noted in 1 Pet 1:15 and 1 Pet 2:5. The concept of the “holy” is integral to divine-human communion in 2:9-10 and to the missional implications of divine human communion expressed in 2:11-12. The final epithet, “a people for his own possession”, recalls the *segullah* or “treasured possession” of Exod 19:5 and the “jewels of a crown” of Zech 9:16.

The reference to God’s people and “not God’s people” refers to the covenant theology of the prophecy of Hosea in which the people of Israel, through disobedience to that covenant, lose their status as the children of God and are called “no mercy” and “not my people” (Hos 1:6-9; Feldmeier, 2005:10). Yet, God has mercy on them, depicted through the role play between Hosea and his unfaithful wife, and brings them again into a restored covenant relationship with himself (Hos 2:23), linking again with the idea of return from exile and the promise of restoration (Jobes, 2005:164). The author equates the promised restoration of the people of Israel with the salvation of the Gentiles, showing that their status, based on the mercy of God in Christ, equates that of the Old Testament people of God. Thus, they are a new and holy people in communion with God through Jesus Christ (Wells, 2000:227).

However, being in communion with God through Christ is not an end in itself. 1 Pet 2:10b shows that it has missional implications. The purpose of the “honour” afforded to the people of the covenant is to proclaim God’s praise. The source for this theology is again Isa 43:20-21 where the

Lord delivers his chosen people “that they might declare my praise”. In 2:10b this has become “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”. Marshall (2003:76-77) interprets “excellencies” (*areté*) as the wonderful deeds of God in both the exodus and the return from exile in Babylon, reflected by the imagery of darkness and light in the same verse. However, he misses the moral implications of the word, in the sense of the “virtues” of God derived from his character. The purpose for which God has brought people into communion with himself through Christ is for them to make known to others both what he has done for them in his Son (cf. 1:3-9) as well as who he is in his holiness (1:15-16).

Thus, the proclamation of the marvellous character and deeds of God is declared to be the purpose of the salvation which the believers have received, giving their witness a missional purpose (2:9b; Volf, 1994:24; Köstenberger & O’Brien, 2001:239; Wright, 2010:250). Michaels (1988:111), Grudem (1988:112) and Wells (2000:229), however, are too narrow in limiting this response of praise to worship within the church with no missional implications because the context of the passage in Isa 43 is one in which the Lord declares to Israel that “you are my witnesses” (Isa 43:10, 12) among the nations. Although Israel failed in this task, Christ as the “servant” (Isa 43:10), bears perfect witness to the world. The only fitting response of the people of God to its calling, election and blessing through union with Christ is one of praise. However, as praise is exercised in the face of the nations, by its very nature, it draws people to Christ (Wright, 2010:250).

The missional outcomes of divine-human communion in this passage are achieved not only through proclamation but also through ethics that reflect the nature of God. In 1:12-2:2 the consequence of new birth in Christ was changed or holy living. In 2:11-12 the missional nature of holiness is now evident. The people of God are to “abstain from the passions of the flesh” (2:11) and to “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable” (2:12). They are reminded to live holy lives so that they bear witness to the glory of God in eschatological hope (2:12). Volf (1994:18-24) describes this missional outcome of holy living as “soft difference” or a missional way of living among the Gentiles, with the purpose of proclamation through meekness. It is a way of life that lives out the theology of divine-human communion through living the life of suffering of the crucified Christ in anticipation of sharing in the glory of the resurrected Christ. In the face of the world, its purpose is to enable others to “see” Christ in them through their “good deeds” and so that the Gentiles will also declare the praises of God and be found in him on the last day (2:12b).

Finally, the theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion in 1 Pet 2:4-12 is Trinitarian. It is God (the Father) who chooses his Son to be the “cornerstone” (2:4) and determines that those who believe in him through the proclamation of the word should become the people of God (2:10). The word of God, which is the message of Christ crucified and raised to life, is the “cornerstone” against which all will stumble, unless they receive his mercy and enter into relationship with Christ the eternal Son in a response of belief and faith that flows out in obedience. Communion with God through Christ is achieved spiritually, through the work of the Spirit (2:5).

3.2.3.3 Conclusion

The missional nature of divine-human communion has been seen in this text in several ways. Firstly, divine-human communion is a result of a response to God’s word as revealed in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, commonly referred to as the gospel. Those who, by his mercy (1:3; 2:10), believe and are born into a “living hope” have put their trust in the one chosen by God to be the “cornerstone”. As a result, they receive the “honour” accorded to the Old Testament people of God, which the author designates in terms of an elaboration of and teaching on the “programmatic” declaration of YHWH in Exod 19:5-6. This includes being built as “living stones” into the spiritual temple that is the church of Christ, becoming a “holy priesthood” offering sacrifices pleasing to him in Jesus Christ, becoming a “chosen race” in him, a “holy nation”, God’s own possession which is in fact, the covenant people of God (“God’s people”). These are those who have undergone a second exodus from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light or who are forgiven exiles returning from Babylon to rebuild the spiritual temple.

On the contrary, those who do not obey or believe the word proclaimed about Christ the “cornerstone” remain in the spiritual darkness, which is their natural state. Their rejection of God’s means of salvation, which is Christ the cornerstone (and by implication his people), is evidence of their natural or destined state of judgement. However, not all is lost. Those who are in communion with God through Christ, by the Spirit, have been saved to proclaim his character and his acts of salvation in the exodus and return from exile. As they declare what God has done, their message reaches out to those still in darkness and opposition to God’s “chosen and precious” one. Moreover, as they live out their lives as a “holy priesthood” their holy conduct will bring glory to God among those who reject his way of salvation and lead them to praise him in the eschatological future, perhaps leading them to receive his mercy too.

Thus, in 1 Pet 2:4-12, a case has been built for the missional nature of divine-human communion. Those who believe constantly come to Christ, the “living stone”. As a result, they produce spiritual fruit and are built up into his temple. They receive the blessings of God in Christ as they live in covenant relationship with him and they do so with the purpose of reaching out to others as they live to praise him by proclamation and glorify him through holy living. Divine-human communion is Trinitarian in nature, involving the electing work of the Father, the saving work of the Son and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As such, the missional nature of divine-human communion can be seen to flow out of the Godhead.

3.2.4 New Testament Text 2: 1 John 1:1-7

3.2.4.1 Introduction

The second New Testament text to be evaluated is 1 John 1:1-7. Following the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-4), the Sinai statement (Exod 19:3-8) and its New Testament implications (1 Pet 2:4-12), this opening section of 1 John evaluates the Johannine perspective on divine-human communion and its missional implications through the concept of fellowship (*koinónia*). This is important for the evaluation of the missional nature of divine-human communion in the theology and practice of T. F. Torrance, given the stress that he lays on *mysterion*, *prothesis* and *koinónia* in his ecclesiology. The word *koinónia*, as a derivative of *koinonos*, is used frequently in the New Testament, and could be studied in a variety of New Testament contexts (such as Campbell, 1932; Davies, 1956). The reason for the selection of the opening section of 1 John for this particular study of *koinónia* is twofold. Firstly, it is the only place where *koinónia* with the Father is mentioned, thus giving a Trinitarian focus to participation in Christ (Panikulam, 1979:6). Secondly, it enables a study of the relationship between divine-human communion and mission through the concept of *koinónia*.

Although 1 John is not commonly used by missiologists as a “proof text” for a theology of mission in the New Testament (Senior & Stuhlmüller, 1983:293-294), the text is theologically rich in the way it interweaves the themes of divine-human communion and mission into their fulfilment in the New Testament context. 1 John brings a different perspective to the theme of the blessed covenant people of God in Christ engaged in proclamation (as praise) and witness (as ethical living) examined in the previous text. In 1 John, the “children of God” (5:2) are those who hear the witness to the incarnation proclaimed by the apostles and are brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3). This fellowship has ethical implications, expressed in terms of walking in the light and confession of sin, which is provided for by the atonement (1:7).

Thus in 1 John 1:1-7, *koinónia* as an expression of divine-human communion is entered into by means of a response to proclamation and is maintained by means of ethical living based in the atonement.

3.2.4.2 *Exegesis*

The structure of the passage is difficult to ascertain following logical and hierarchical argumentation typical of Western discourse. Instead, this study proposes a spiral structure in which the ideas are presented in a series of circular arguments that almost bring the reader back to the starting theme, but progress through the introduction of a slight alteration that enables a transition and movement of thought (Du Rand, 1981:2; Schnackenburg, 1992:11). Claims have been made that this type of structural arrangement is unsatisfactory because the spirals do not progress by means of logical thought patterns (Westcott, 1966:xlvi; Marshall, 1984:22). However, in 1:1-7 there is a clear progression of thought between the two spirals by means of two distinct outcomes. The ideas of the first spiral (1:1-3) move by means of repetition of words with increasing information and meaning in each turn of the spiral that eventuates in an outcome of “fellowship” and “joy” in 1:3b-4. The ideas of the second spiral (1:5-6) arise from the outcomes of the first spiral and present another threefold circular movement that results in a second outcome of “fellowship” and “cleansing”. Recent scholarship adds credence to this proposal for the organisation of ideas as spirals of thought with outcomes. Van der Merwe’s (2013:2) discourse analysis posits a relationship between linguistic and semantic analysis in 1:1-4 that proceeds by means of outcomes that look similar to the spiral structure with outcomes as proposed above. Tollefson (1999) uses dialectical discourse that identifies a series of antithetical ideas such as “darkness and light” and subsidiary ideas such as “truth and lie,” that moves the thought forward by means of antithesis. This is also similar to the spiral movement of thought in 1:5-7.

Figure 3.2 Structure of 1 John 1:1-7

First Spiral

Inside circular movement: heard, seen, looked upon, touched, concerning the *Word of life* (1:1)

Second circular movement: *life* was made manifest, seen, testify, proclaim to you, (1:2a)

Outside circular movement: *eternal life* which was with the Father, made manifest, seen, heard, proclaim to you (1:2b-3a)

Outcome

fellowship and joy (1:3b-4)

Second Spiral

Inside circular movement: heard, proclaim to you, God is *light*, no *darkness* in him (1:5)

Second circular movement: claim fellowship with him, walk in *darkness*, lie, not truth (1:6)

Outside circular movement: walk in *light*, he is in the *light* (1:6a)

Outcome

fellowship and cleansing (1:6b)

The first spiral argument in 1:1-3 follows a progression in revelation that moves from what appears to be a position of non-comprehension in the first cycle (1:1) to full and personal revelation by the third cycle (1:3; Westcott, 1966:3-6). The progression of revelation described in this section appears to follow closely the epilogue of John's Gospel (John 21) in which the word "revealed" (*phaneroō*) is used three times (21:1a, 1b, 14) and the word "testimony" or "bear testimony" (*martureō* and *marturia*) is used twice (21:24a, 24b) in connection with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the first two verses of 1 John, "revealed" (*phaneroō*) is used twice (1:2a, 2b) and "testimony" (*martureō*) is used once (1:2a), thus creating a lexical link with the end of the Gospel. The subject of the last chapter of the Gospel is testimony to the resurrected Lord, which is the very point at which the first Epistle begins. Thus, there appears to be a continuity of theme between the two works regarding the apostolic testimony to the resurrection.

The theme of 1 John 1:1-7 is essentially the establishment of a relationship with the deity, who is introduced in the first verse of both the Gospel and the Epistle as the "Word" or *logos* (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1). The opening words of the Epistle introduce the eternal deity objectively, using the neuter pronoun, "That (ὅ) which was from the beginning" (1:1) which suggests that the reference is to the divine Being in his eternal existence and not in his act of creation, as in John 1 (Marshall, 1978:100, Schnackenburg, 1992:57; Burge, 1996:52-53). There appears to be nothing personal about the *logos* in the opening words of the Epistle but by means of antithesis in the first sentence, the writer declares this remote "Being" to be tangible, something that the writer and his companions had experienced with their senses, had "heard", "seen" "looked at" and even "touched" (1:1). The perfect tense of these Greek verbs is correctly translated using the English present perfect "have heard" etc., indicating an action that began in the past and continues into the

present. This creates a striking paradox between the eternal existence of the deity indicated by the imperfect active indicative of the verb “to be” (*ēn*) and the temporal appearing of that deity, with continued implications, indicated by the use of the perfect tense (in Greek). In the Old Testament worldview, to “hear” the deity was the first and most important factor in the establishment of a relationship with the people (Westcott, 1966:5; cf. Torrance, 1969b:23-24). The fact that the deity had been heard, as well as seen and touched, immediately signals to the reader that something extraordinary has taken place, of which the apostles are witnesses. The climax of the first cycle of the first spiral is the identification of the deity as the “word of life” (*logos tēs zoēs*). The genitive “of life” refers not only to his title, but also to his ability to give life (Stott, 1964:60; Marshall, 1984:103; Schnackenburg, 1992:61). In one concise phrase, the first cycle has identified the eternal God as the resurrected Christ who gives life to the world, using the designation “word of life”.

In the second cycle, the word “life” is repeated, this time describing the word as “the life”. Westcott’s (1966:8) claim that 1:2 is entirely parenthetical would not make any difference to the spiral structure introduced by “the life” in the second circular movement, nor does it make it “slightly awkward” because it interrupts the author’s line of thought (Marshall, 1978:103). The beginning of the parenthesis purposefully repeats the climatic word of the first section, “life”, and explains it further. The “life” was “made manifest” or revealed (*phaneroō*). This would suggest the incarnation but also the resurrection as *phaneroō* is used in John 21 to indicate the way Jesus revealed himself after the resurrection (Smalley, 1984:9). Moreover, John repeats that he and the other apostles have “seen” the manifestation of the “word of life” but omits in this segment that they have “heard” him. Instead, it is the recipients of the letter who now hear the witness of the apostles (*marturoumen*, present indicative active, “we bear witness”) and listen to their proclamation (*apangellō*). There has been a subtle shift from the historical “hearing” and understanding of the apostles to the present hearing and understanding of those to whom the knowledge of the incarnation is proclaimed.

The content of the proclamation by the apostles becomes more precise in the third cycle. The stressed word “life” is repeated for a third time, now prefaced by the epithet “eternal” (1:2), thus linking the third cycle of the spiral with “that which was from the beginning” in the first. Furthermore, the identity of this “eternal life” is clearly presented as the one who was with the Father (in eternity) and has been revealed in time (*phaneroō*) to the disciples. Smalley (1984:10) correctly notes the high Christological content of this statement with its allusion to the preexistence of Christ and shows the theological similarities with John 1:1-14. The “eternal life”

which has been perceived in the flesh, is in fact, the eternal God. Hence, John repeats the verbs “we have seen” and “we have heard” but this time a personal note is introduced. The purpose of the experience of the apostles is to “proclaim” (*apangellō*) or to announce it to others.

The significance of the first spiral is therefore seen to be the establishment of the validity of the witness or testimony of the apostles to the incarnation and by implication to the deity and humanity of Christ. The verb “witness” (*martuoumen*) implies the act of giving testimony in a law court on the basis of personal experience, especially that of “seeing”, but not excluding the other senses (Köstenberger & O’Brien, 2001:213). In the Old Testament, the metaphor of the law court is used to describe Israel’s call to give testimony to its experience of YHWH (cf. Brueggemann, 1997). In the Gospel of John, the Father, the work of Jesus and Jesus himself all give testimony to who Jesus is (John 5:30-37; John 8:17) and Jesus tells his disciples that they bear witness to him because they have been with him “from the beginning” (John 15:27). Indeed, John indicates in his gospel that he is bearing witness to the works of YHWH by means of his written testimony to the events of the incarnation, passion and resurrection (John 19:35; 21:24). Consequently, in 1 John 1:1-4, the apostles bear witness to their living, historical experience of Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, by means of proclamation (*apangellō*).

Westcott (1966:9) sees a progression from “seeing” to “bearing witness” to proclamation in 1:2, which he interprets as a movement from personal experience to responsible affirmation and authoritative announcement. This would imply that there is a difference between bearing witness and proclamation, as if in some way there is an intermediate stage between experience and the verbalization of that experience. Stott (1964:61-62) suggests that the difference is to be found in *martuoumen* as a personal eyewitness experience and *apangellō* as a derived commissioning from Christ. However, there is no indication in the text that this is what the author had in mind. The repetition of “seen and heard” followed directly by *apangellō* in the third cycle, without the repetition of *martuoumen* in between, may indicate that testimony and proclamation are synonymous. The book of Acts records the apostles as bearing witness by means of proclamation. When Peter and John stand before the Sanhedrin and declare that Jesus is the only way of salvation, the council members have to accede that they “have been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13), alluding to their eyewitness evidence. When the apostles are commanded not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, they reply, “we cannot but speak (*laleō*) of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20), thus linking their eyewitness testimony directly with proclamation. There is no intermediate stage of personal approbation. Bearing witness to Christ means proclaiming him to others, which is an act of mission. Hence, the mission theologian, David Bosch (1991:116) can

declare that the words “apostle” and “witness” are synonymous, for to be with Christ is to bear witness to him by proclamation.

The apostles have experienced the incarnation and resurrection and bear witness to it by proclaiming the historical life of the Word of God to those who have not had eyewitness experience, in this case, to the recipients of the Epistle. Smalley (1984:9) rightly observes that this is an act of evangelism, (although he incorrectly argues for a progression from experience through attestation to evangelism). Because the object of the proclamation is the “word of life”, the implied outcome of reception of this spoken testimony is eternal life in fellowship with the apostles in the Trinity and a fullness of joy, just as Jesus had promised his disciples before his Passion (John 16:20-21; 1 John 1:3b-4; Stott, 1988:69-70; Van der Merwe, 2013:2). Consequently, the proclamation of the word of life can be seen as a prerequisite to entry into divine-human communion. The apostles witnessed to Christ “so that” (*ina*) their readers could enter into *koinónia* and participate in full union with God in Christ. Johnson (1993:27) is incorrect in arguing that *koinónia* is fulfilling because it “extends the circle of fellowship to others”, implying that joy is found in seeing missional outcomes for *koinónia*. In 1:3-4, the missional nature of divine-human communion is not an outcome but rather the prerequisite for entry into communion with the triune God.

Thus, the outcome of the proclamation of the incarnation is a dual fellowship (*koinónia*) with the apostles and with God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ (1:3b-4). The historical context of the letter indicates that those who denied the deity of Christ were infiltrating the church group and persuading the Christians to reject the apostolic testimony about the person of Christ (2:22-23). John writes to assure them that if they hold on to the teaching that they had “heard from the beginning”, then they will “abide in” the Son and the Father and receive eternal life (2:24-25; McKenzie, 1976:212; Lieu, 1991:41-44; Schnackenburg, 1992:64, 99; Jones, 2010:179-180). In 1:3b, the concept of “abiding in” is expressed through the idea of “fellowship” (*koinónia*).

The Hebrew root of *koinónia* is the stem *h-b-r*, which implies human relationships of sharing (Prov 21:9), binding or joining together (Exod 26:6), companionship (Eccl 4:10) or marriage (Mal 2:14). In the intertestamental period, a *haber* was a member of a Pharisaic society and a *heberim* was a group that shared together in the study of Scripture or participated in table fellowship (cf. Neusner, 1960, 1961 for background research into *heberim*). In the New Testament period, the uses of *koinónia* are varied, but generally express the idea of participating in what is common or shared (as in Acts 2:42). Perkins (1983:634) and Kruse, (2000:61) note the

similarity between legal associations called *societas* and New Testament fellowship groups based around a shared understanding of Christ and indeed, this may be the source of the use of the word *koinónia* for church groups. However, in 1 John 1, *koinónia* expresses more than a gathering of likeminded people. It is an intensely theological concept expressing the ontological reality of participation in the “word of life” to be a sharing together in the eternal communion of the Trinity. John declares that the purpose of the apostles’ proclaimed witness to the incarnation and resurrection is *koinónia* both with the apostles and with the Trinity (Father and Son, the Holy Spirit is implied, see 1 John 3:23). Thus, *koinónia* in this verse is a participation in the eternal life of the Son, as a state that is common to both the apostles and the believers.

Akin’s (2001:57 n.40) proposal that John could have as easily written “we have eternal life” instead of “we have *koinónia*” is too narrow because *koinónia* is essentially a relational concept. The purpose of the apostles’ proclamation of the historical reality of the incarnation is so that the “world” (1 John 2:2) might participate relationally in the union with God through Christ, who is the eternal life and thus participate in eternal life. Entry into the fellowship is means of response to the testimony and proclamation of witnesses to the incarnation and resurrection of the Son. This means that fellowship is both vertical (divine-human communion), linking with the concept of “abiding in the vine” in John 15 (Dillow, 1990) and horizontal (human-human communion through the divine) linking with the concept of the new commandment to love one another (John 13:34-35; Marshall, 1978:111; Van der Merwe, 2013:1,7).

Entry into Second Temple *haber* fellowships required members to change their behaviour patterns. In the same way, entry into fellowship with God through Christ has behavioural or ethical implications (Akin, 2001:57, Edwards, 2001:70-72). The root *koin* (common), from which *koinónia* is derived, also gives the adjective *koinos* which means common or ceremonially defiled (Acts 10:14-15). Under the Old Testament law, that which was common and not “set apart” or holy, was ritually unclean and not acceptable to YHWH. However, in the New Testament concept of *koinónia*, the incarnation has made what is “common” to be holy through the cleansing blood Jesus Christ (Heb 2:14), thus making a *koinónia* between the holy God and unholy humanity possible (Davies, 1956:7). In 1 John 1:3, *koinónia* with God and by implication with the apostles is only possible in a state of holiness that arises from “abiding in” the love of God (John 15:10; 1 John 4:16).

The second spiral of ideas (1:5-7) expands the concept of *koinónia* by examining its practical implications. John now announces the “message” (*angelia*) that the apostles had “heard” from

Christ, thus emphasizing that their witness is not only to what they have seen but involves the transmission of the oral teachings of Jesus too. This oral witness is proclaimed (*anagellomen*) with an antithetical statement regarding the nature of the God with whom believers have fellowship: “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). The repetition of the negative (*ouk-oudemia*) serves to contrast the polarised natures of light and darkness, reminiscent of Paul’s question, “What fellowship can light have with darkness (2 Cor 6:14)?” There is nothing in common between them.

The figurative language of contrast between light and darkness is common in Jewish as well as Gentile literature. Pagan religions commonly used the image of light to depict entry into mystical ecstasy in the case of mystery religions (Schnackenburg, 1992:74) and to contrast the forces of good and evil as in Zoroastrianism (Westcott, 1966:17; Marshall, 1978:109). Jewish images of light from the Scriptures begin with creation (Leithart 2009:par. 295) and continue figuratively throughout the Old Testament as images of God’s self-revelation through his word (Ps 119:105), and symbols of righteousness (Isa 5:20). They are continued in the New Testament as an image of the revelation of truth (John 1:1-14) but also as a means of pointing to the moral implications of “walking” in God’s ways (John 3:19; Stott, 1964:71). This study has already observed the use of light and darkness in 1 Pet 2:9 to express salvation through Jesus Christ in terms of exodus/new exodus, exile/return motifs. This wide range of semantic allusion stirred by the use of light and darkness at the beginning of the second spiral has led to differing opinions on the purpose of the images and therefore needs to be evaluated in terms of the context in which it is used.

The immediate preceding and subsequent contexts for the use of the contrasting images are given by the word *koinónia* (1:3, 6). If *koinónia* is communion with the Father and the Son, then “light” expresses the ontological nature of God that determines the conditions for that communion. The condition for *koinónia* is the “blood of Jesus [that] cleanses us from all sin” (1:7) leading to the conclusion that the statement “God is light” speaks of the holiness of God. The implication is that those who enter into fellowship with God must behave in a way that matches his holiness, and this is only possible through the atoning blood of Christ (1 Pet 1:15-16). The ethical or moral implications are clear. Fellowship cannot be maintained where a person’s lifestyle (“walk”) is not commensurate with the character of the person with whom there is fellowship. It makes no sense for the person who claims to be in fellowship with God to “walk in darkness” i.e. to live a life of habitual sin (1 John 1:6). Such a person is a liar and a hypocrite (one who does not “practice the truth”).

Leithart(2009:par. 281), however, claims that walking in the light is not an ethical obligation but rather a temporal/eschatological condition pertaining to those who have fully accepted the light of the new covenant and are waiting for its eschatological fulfilment. Judaisers who seek to keep the ritual obligations of the old covenant and refuse to come into the exposure of the light of the new covenant are those who walk in darkness. Certainly, Leithart brings a refreshing new perspective to the Judaising nature of the opponents of the gospel in 1 John, but in 1:5-7 the theological significance of *koinónia* as the context in which the light/darkness images are used would suggest that the ethical requirements of living under the new covenant are in view here. Holiness is a fundamental tenet of living a life in fellowship with the Father and the Son.

The second spiral ends with a recapitulation of the concept of walking “in the light” as a corollary of the nature of God. Attached to the decisive act of ‘walking’ in God’s light is a second outcome. Those who live in this way, have mutual fellowship under the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, which has the effect of cleansing (*karthizei*) them from the unholiness of sin which would render them unable to continue in fellowship (1:7). The verb *karthizo* implies the concept of making the unholy pure. Here it acts on sin (*hamartias*) as a singular concept, implying that the blood of Jesus cleanses the believer not only from individual sins (2:2) but also from the impurity of the sinful nature (Stott, 1964:76). This is more than Houlden’s (1973:61) argument that John is trying to bridge the moral gap between the ideal of walking in the light and the human reality of failure. The work of the “blood of Jesus” is to maintain *koinónia* with the Father and the Son and, by implication, with the church. The blood of Jesus is the essence of the apostle’s witness and proclamation because it is at the heart of the gospel. Smith’s (1991:43) observation is appropriate. Fellowship and cleansing are not prior to “walking in the light”, but Jesus’ sacrificial death makes walking in the light and fellowship possible. The sacrificial work of Christ is the basis for divine-human and human-human communion.

This concept of ceremonial cleansing from sin is repeated in the next spiral of ideas in 1:8-10 and the concept of the righteousness of Christ is continued into 2:2. Although it is outside the scope of this study to consider 1:8-2:2 in detail, a contextual reading of 1:1-7 needs to follow the implications of the cleansing nature of the blood of Christ through to its logical conclusion in 2:2. It is apparent that the means for the maintenance of fellowship in the church is centred on the *logos* introduced in 1:1 and revealed through the proclamation and witness of the apostles in 1:2. The same word that gives life (1:1) is the second person of the Trinity (1:3) who maintains fellowship through his person (1:3) and work (1:7b). The precise nature of the work of Christ is expanded in 1:9-2:2 through the concept of faithfulness to the covenant (1:9), ceremonial

propitiation (*hilasmos*; 2:1) and the fulfilment of the Abrahamic blessing by extension of the work of Christ to the whole world (*kosmos*; 2:2). Here the issue at stake is not so much universal salvation (Akin, 2001:84 n.168) as the scope of the effectiveness of the propitiation of Christ (Westcott, 1966:45; John 3:16; 4:14).

If the world is the scope of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, then the proclamation of the historical events of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection by the apostles (1:1-3) must be universal in its scope too. It is the message that “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all” that leads to the need for the proclamation of the historical events of the incarnation. They contain the act of God in his Son Jesus Christ that enables cleansing from sin and entry into a relationship of fellowship with God through his Son and in the Spirit. In an article on the incarnation in 1 John, Minear (1970:295) proposes that confession of Jesus as incarnate (1:1-3) is intrinsically related both to fellowship (and abiding in Christ) as well as to confession of sin. It is regrettable that Minear (1970:297) does not explore these proposals, as they would take him on a road to understanding the missional nature of divine-human communion. Proclamation of the historical events of the incarnation based on the eyewitness of the apostles (1:1-3) leads to union with God in Christ and fullness of joy. This is mission enacted and mission responded to. The idea is then restated in 1:5-7. Proclamation of the message about the nature of God leads to cleansing from sin through the atonement, which in itself is contained in the event of the incarnation. The only proper response to the proclamation is a practical engagement in the nature of God by means of an ethical life as believers walk in fellowship with God in Christ and with one another. However, the experience of cleansing and joy of communion with God is not intended to be kept to oneself or within the church. The propitiation of Christ is sufficient for the whole world and so the cycle of proclamation of the incarnation, entry into fellowship with God in Christ and a life of holiness must continue until the whole world has heard and believed and entered into fellowship with him (John 20:31; 1 John 5:20).

3.2.4.3 Conclusion

1 John 1:1-7 presents the missional nature of divine-human communion through the theological concept of *koinónia* as the new covenant in Christ. Proclamation of the gospel is to bear witness to the historical reality of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ so that those who hear may receive it as the “word of life” that quickens and gives entry into union with the Father through the Son and union with his people, the church. The experience of living in *koinónia* is one of full joy in Christ, a joy, however, that is dependent on cleansing through the blood of

Christ. The believer must maintain a holiness of life that matches that of the triune God and this is only possible through the work of Christ as the atoning sacrifice. The missional outcomes of *koinónia* as divine-human communion are thus twofold: proclaiming Christ's atoning sacrifice, which is sufficient for the whole world and walking ethically in the "light" by means of the cleansing blood.

3.3 Reflections for Biblical Theology

3.3.1 Introduction

The purpose of examining selected Old and New Testament texts has been to extract from them themes for building a biblical theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion in order to give the research tools against which to evaluate Torrance's treatment of the subject in both his work and mission practice. As stated in the introduction, the limited scope of this chapter and the vast undertaking required to build a comprehensive biblical theology, means that evidence from the selected texts can only ever be considered as representative of the entire biblical material. In addition, warnings against reductionism or coming to hasty conclusions on overarching biblical themes need to be taken seriously (Childs, 1992:441; Hafemann, 2002:20). This reflection for biblical theology should therefore be seen as an attempt at moving towards, rather than a definitive evaluation of, the biblical evidence for the missional nature of divine human communion.

A comparative examination of the texts brings to light the repetition of several themes. These include the concepts of divine-human relationship, divine initiative in the establishment of that relationship, the conjunction of God's word and act, a response of faith and obedience on the part of humanity, the promise of blessing and curse and the necessity of witness and proclamation. Working on Torrance's second level of knowledge as understanding the biblical theological implications of concepts derived from exegesis (as study in the church), this section draws out from the words and themes, implications for whole Bible theology. Thus, there is no attempt to move the reflections into the sphere of abstract reflection as dogmatics at this stage, but rather to deal with them as they have appeared in the exegesis, with an attempt to connect them with the greater biblical narrative.

3.3.2 Divine-human Relationship

The purpose of the exegesis of the four texts has been to discover, in the first instance, evidence for divine-human communion in the Old and New Testaments. As divine-human communion will be seen to comprise several related and increasingly complex concepts of covenant and *koinónia* as the history of the Bible progresses, the word “relationship” will be used to express the concept of divine-human communion in broad terms. In essence, this can be seen to be similar to the approach of Vriezen (1958:153f) who builds his theology around the idea that the nature of the knowledge of God in the Old Testament is an intimate relationship between the Holy God and humanity, which he calls “communion” with God. However, it differs from Vriezen’s work in that he does his reflection as a structured theological exercise that is not rooted in detailed exegesis or the progression of the biblical history, both of which are the aims of this work. As relationship is the basis for this study, it will be seen to be the foundation for the reflections on the other themes.

The accounts of creation in Gen 1 and 2 begin the biblical narrative with the history of a relationship between the Creator and his creation, between God and humankind. There is a similarity in the biblical narrative between the divine-human relationship of the Garden of Eden and the concept of the temple as the place of fellowship with God. This is a theme that traverses the biblical narrative and finds fulfilment in the book of Revelation, where redeemed humanity is again in a place of relationship with God in the garden which has become the city of God and in which no physical temple is needed (Rev 21; 22). Adam and Eve are placed in God’s paradise with a task to fulfil (Gen 1:28) and a command to obey (Gen 2:16-17), which are the terms and conditions of their enjoyment of relationship with God. Although at this early stage there is no mention of the word “covenant”, the fact that there is an obligation to obey God’s command would suggest that this relationship might have been an early form of covenant (Beale, 2011:par. 1274). Certainly, the results of the breaking of the relationship through disobedience in Gen 3 would indicate a similarity with the negative consequences of later covenant forms.

Through the early history of humanity in Gen 3-11, it becomes evident that the consequence of disobedience is not an immediate end to the relationship between God and humanity but the beginning of a cycle of God’s interactions with humanity as grace and judgement. It is a theme that involves the promise of the “seed of the woman” who will bruise the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). However, by the tower of Babel incident in Gen 11, it seems that, in spite of the gracious universal Noahic covenant of Gen 9, humanity has finally and decisively opted to reject

God's ways and appears to have brought irreversible judgement on itself. However, the promise of redemption through the "seed of the woman" (Gen 3:15) remains in the background.

It is into this rather bleak picture of the nations under judgement, that the word of the Lord comes to Abraham (Gen 12:1-4) and initiates a new relationship with one man through a threefold promise of land, descendants and blessing. From the universal nature of the relationship of God with man in Gen 3-11, the history moves back to a more particular relationship of God with one man and his family. In some sense, Abraham is a "new Adam" in that he represents a new start in the relationship of God with humanity through one person, in the same way that the original relationship with Adam had been with one person. Schreiner's (2013:631 n.1) comment that Abraham cannot be completely identified with Adam because Adam was at one time sinless fails to see that that Abraham's relationship with God is a reversal of Adam's. Adam's disobedience moves him from a created state of righteousness into a state of sin. When God calls Abraham into relationship with him, Abraham is in a state of sin and idolatry (Josh 24:2). God then brings him into a new relationship based on commuted righteousness (Gal 3:6). Hence, Gen 12:1-4 can be seen as a replay of the events of Gen 2-3.

The relationship initiated by God with Abraham and continued through his life is a covenant relationship. This is seen in the various passages in which the details of the nature of that relationship are revealed to Abraham. It was noted in the Gen 12:1-4 text that the nature of the covenant relationship with Abraham is similar that of a sovereign-vassal treaty of the period, especially in terms the relationship and obligations between a sovereign and his vassal. Thus right at the inception of the special relationship between God and his people, that relationship is given concrete form in the shape of a covenant agreement. The question is the nature of the covenant relationship that, if it follows a suzerain-vassal agreement entirely, would be contractual rather than relational. However, it is here that the nature of grace needs to be understood. Although the divine-human relationship is expressed contractually, it is predicated upon the nature of the mercy and grace of God. Even if the concept of covenant and the rule of God (God's kingdom) are the same, it is a kingdom in which the citizens are of the family of the sovereign. Schreiner (2013:8 n.43) is correct in observing that the covenant relationship with Abraham and the patriarchs as well as the subsequent history of the people of Israel has a familial note to it. They are God's people and God's children living in God's land and under God's rule (Goldsworthy, 2000:54).

The initial covenant relationship established with Abraham is continued in the history of the Patriarchs and is picked up again in Exod 2:24 when the Lord hears the groaning of the now

populous descendants of Abraham in slavery in Egypt. The Lord remembers his covenant with Abraham and calls Moses to lead them out Egypt to worship him in the desert. At this point, the Lord reveals himself to Moses as “I am who I am” (Exod 3:14) or the one whose presence will go with them. As the newly redeemed people of God come to the mountain of God at Sinai, they are reminded of their special familial relationship with YHWH: he is the one who has destroyed the powers of Egypt and has carried them through the desert like fledglings on the wings of an eagle. It is at this stage (Exod 19:5-6) that they are made aware of both the privileges and responsibilities of being a people in covenant relationship with him. As a “treasured possession”, a “holy nation” and a “priestly kingdom”, they are, like Adam in Eden, obligated to “obey his commands” and “keep his covenant”. However, at this stage it is no longer a covenant with one person because Israel has become a nation and so it is into the newly organised structured community of the people of Israel that YHWH delivers his commandments as the obligations of his covenant with the people (Exod 19:1-24:11). The covenant with a person has now become a covenant with a nation.

Brueggemann (1997:183) claims that obedience to the voice of YHWH and the terms of the covenant are the non-negotiable conditions of relationship with him, to which Israel assents in Exod 19:8, even before it knows the details of what YHWH commands. Brueggemann sees the new relationship as one of “bondage to a new overlord” (in comparison with their former bondage to Pharaoh) but acknowledges that the terms of the new sovereign are emancipatory in nature. Although Brueggemann does not consider the covenant nature of the relationship in any detail, his treatment of the primacy of the command at Sinai for Israel’s self-understanding is helpful in understanding the nature of divine-human relationship in Israel’s history. From its centre in the establishment of the covenant relationship with Israel in Exod 19:5-6, the history of the people of Israel moves along by means of an implicit self-understanding of who the nation is in relationship with God until it reaches its fulfilment in Christ when that self-understanding brought into question by the reality of who Christ is.

Although it is outside the scope of this work to consider the history of Israel in detail, the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7) brings the relationship back again to an individual when God covenants to build a relationship with the house of David and raise up a son for David whose kingdom will be eternal (2 Sam 7:12). Here again, the progressive nature of covenant can be seen. The promise to David focuses in on a promise to raise up a descendant of David to rule. Throughout the Prophetic writings, there is a tension between the communal nature of Israel’s failed relationship with God and the promise of an individual who God will raise up to rule in righteousness. Thus,

the prophets constantly call the nation back to the terms of the covenant and back into relationship with God. Relationship and covenant thus become the concept of the present and eschatological kingdom of God (Goldsworthy, 2000:53).

The idea of the kingdom of God is present in the gospels and in the narrative relating to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the “son of David” and the expected Messiah (Luke 1:68-79). The New Testament texts studied enabled the development of the understanding of relationship to be that which is established by the coming of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3) and by coming to Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:4). In the 1 Peter 1 text Christ is presented as the “cornerstone” prophesied in the Old Testament and coming to him is seen as participation in the benefits and blessings of the self-understanding of the people of Israel in terms of Exod 19:5-6. Thus the New Testament church is seen as “God’s people” (1 Pet 2:10) in a special relationship with him through Jesus Christ so that they are in fact, his holy temple, or the place of God’s presence with humanity. In terms of the covenant history of Israel, they are God’s people under the new covenant in Christ Jesus.

In 1 John 1, it is the concept of *koinónia* that brings a deeper level of theological understanding to the New Testament concept of relationship with God. The reality of the incarnation and the crucifixion makes available to those who hear the gospel, the atoning blood of Christ to purify them from the effects of sin that keep them out of fellowship with God. Indeed, it is through Christ that they are brought into communion with the Father through the Son (and by implication through the Holy Spirit), which is in reality a participation in the Trinity. In the concept of *koinónia*, the whole idea of covenant is brought to its fullest understanding. The new covenant, written on the heart, is a *koinónia* in the body and blood of Christ that enables the believer to live in fellowship with God and with one another by means of an active participation in Christ. By means of “abiding” in Christ, the church participates in the work and blessings of Christ until his eschatological kingdom is fully revealed. *Koinónia* is therefore the participation in the present of the future reality of living eternally in the bliss of God’s presence through the atoning blood of Christ, which may be understood as the present and future realities of the kingdom of God.

3.3.3 Divine Initiative

The initiative of God in calling for himself a people to be in relationship with him has been a theme in all the passages. Firstly, in Gen 12:1, YHWH calls Abraham to leave his homeland and family in order to move from the security of the land of his father Terah, by faith, into a land known only to YHWH. This calling is initiated by YHWH who breaks into the history of the

nations of the post-Babel world to create from one barren couple a nation for himself, to be the bearers of his saving word to humanity. Previously, the narrative stressed that God's intervention in human history to save the Noah family from judgement was because Noah is a "righteous man" (Gen 6:9). However, in the calling of Abraham, there is no indication that he is a man who "walked with God" as Noah did (Gen 6:9). Calvin (1965) maintains that Terah and his family were idol worshippers in the land beyond the Euphrates and so Abraham was far from being a natural choice for YHWH's special favour (Josh 24:2). Thus, Calvin sees the call of Abraham as evidence of the "gratuitous mercy" of YHWH in calling a pagan couple into a relationship with himself. If Calvin does not go so far as to use the word "election" in his commentary on Gen 12:1, Vos (1948:76) has no such qualms. He maintains that the call of Abraham proves that the first "outstanding principle of divine procedure with the patriarchs is election". Indeed, Wright (2006:206-221) devotes a whole chapter to election as the basis of God's blessing through Abraham and Waltke (2007:306) sees the election of Abraham as a new divine initiative for the irruption of the kingdom of God. Thus, it appears that the starting point of the history of God's people in God's land is their calling through election into relationship with him

Secondly, in Exod 19:3-8 the divine initiative is again apparent in the calling of Moses to an intermediary role with the people of Israel. Moses is commanded to enter the presence of God and once he has climbed the mountain, then it is the Lord who speaks to him and the Lord who gives him the words to tell the people. Again, it is YHWH who determines the nature of the relationship the people are to have with him and the boundaries of the mountain limits, the commands and terms of the covenant agreement. Moses, like Abraham before him, has nothing "righteous" to commend him, having committed murder in his youth and spent forty years of his life as a fugitive from the laws of Egypt. This shows again the grace of God in calling him and remembering his promise to the people of Israel by calling them to be the "chosen nation" of God.

In the New Testament, it was seen, by means of a comparison with words in the LXX in 1 Pet 2:6, that God had chosen and sent Christ to be the means through which the nations were to be saved. Thus, the divine initiative that acted to call Abraham and Moses and the people of Israel had as its goal the calling and sending of the Son to be the Saviour of the world. In him, God has chosen himself a people to be the recipients of his mercy (1 Pet 2:10). Thus, it is Christ who is the chosen one and the people of God are those who are chosen in him. The same idea is present in 1 John 1:1-7, although seen from a different perspective. John opens his Epistle with reference to the eternal *logos* who "was from the beginning", thus linking his reference to the incarnation

which follows to the eternal decree of the Father before the foundation of the world. Therefore, the message that John and the apostles proclaimed was not the word of man, but the Word of God, chosen in eternity, made manifest in space-time so that he could be seen and heard and touched. Thus, it is God who calls the church into relationship with himself through his Son and this is seen as a gracious act of his mercy.

3.3.4 Word and Act

In all the passages studied, it was evident that the word of God was the primary actor in the establishment of relationship between God and man. The word of God was not seen to be ineffectual at any stage, because the word and action of God are the same. For example, in Gen 12:1-4, the Lord spoke (*a.mar*) to Abraham and that was sufficient for him to obey and to trust that what God had said would be realised. Thus, the word of God is presented as reliable and effective, without any need of further guarantee. Goldingay (2003:196) challenges Brueggemann's (1997:166) claim that the word of God to Abraham is an ancestral narrative of promise because, as Goldingay points out, there is no Hebrew word that means promise. The verb translated as "said" is a statement of intent and not a promise because God's word and act are the same. Therefore, God's spoken communication regarding his intent to bless Abraham is certain because it rests in the faithfulness of his nature to keep his word: a child is born, a nation is built and the people of Israel are brought into the land that God had reserved for them. When the people of Israel had come out of Egypt and Moses went up to God's presence on the mountain, the entire structure of the covenant summary in Exod 19:4-6 is enveloped in an introduction and conclusion concerning the words of God spoken to Moses, which he must in turn relay faithfully to the Israelites. The question was whether Israel would take him at his word and obey.

In the New Testament, the primacy of the word and its fulfilment was noted in terms of the divine-human relationship. In 1 Pet 2:4-12 the "word of God" as the message of the gospel was seen to be the hermeneutical key to the passage and the response to the word was crucial for determining the relational status of those who are God's people and those who are not. God's word is also his act because through Christ the "cornerstone", the one prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures who lived and died and was raised from the dead, God's people are living in relationship with him, being built up as the temple of God, offering their lives as acceptable sacrifices through Jesus Christ.

Entry into relationship with God in 1 John 1:1-7 was seen to be dependent on the proclamation of the word of life as Jesus Christ, the eternal God made incarnate. In this text, the Word of God and the Act of God are one in the person of Jesus Christ. The eyewitness testimony of the apostles to his life, death and resurrection is the sum of the word that is proclaimed to those who have not experienced it so that they may also enter into a living relationship of *koinónia* with the apostles and the Father (through the Son). This relationship is dependent on a response to the proclaimed word about the life and work of Jesus Christ in shedding his blood for the cleansing of sin so that *koinónia* has its base in the proclamation of the incarnation and atonement.

Proclamation based on witness was noted to be the essence of mission in terms of passing on the message to those who are not God's people. Thus, it is here that the missional nature of divine-human communion becomes apparent. The word of God, as the word of life, is passed as trust to the church. The benefit is not for Christians alone but is for the nations, in the New Testament represented as the Gentiles (1 Pet 2:10-12; 1 John 2:2). To enter into a relationship of divine-human communion as covenant relationship based on the initiative of God by the invitation of his word is to take on the responsibility of proclaiming that message to those outside that relationship. This can be seen as a mission imperative of proclamation arising from *koinónia* with God through Christ.

3.3.5 Faith and Obedience

The concept of obedience to the revealed word of God is a theme arising from relationship as covenant with God. In Gen 12:1, God's word to Abraham required a response of faith to act on that word and to do what God had said. It was noted that the pattern of God-man-woman-disobedience in Gen 2 is reversed in Gen 12 with a new pattern of God-man-woman-obedience in Gen 12:1-4, although Abraham's lie to Pharaoh in 12:13 immediately dispels the notion that Abraham is sinless. Abraham's relationship with God is based on grace and not on works of righteousness (Goldingay, 2003:198). Rather, Abraham's faith in terms of his response to the word of God (Gen 12:4; 17:26-27; 22:10) is credited to him as righteousness (Gal 3:6). As Paul makes clear to the church in Gal 3:5, the essence of relationship with God is not obedience to the law but "hearing with faith". It is to hear the word of God and to believe it implicitly so that one acts on it. Thus, the correct response to the hearing of the word of God is belief that translates into acts of faith.

In the same way, the people of Israel are required to hear the word of God and respond to it. It was seen that the chiasmic structure of the poetic section of Exod 19:4-6 brought obedience to God's covenant into the centre of the structure, making it the hermeneutic key for the interpretation of the passage. This was not a new covenant but a renewal of the Abrahamic covenant, not just with an individual but with the structured organization of the people of Israel. They were to agree to obey before they had heard the terms of the covenant obligations and so their response had to be one of faith in the word of God and in the reliability of the character of the God who had delivered them from Egypt and brought them through the wilderness. Bruggemann's (1997:183) assertion that Israel signs a "blank check of obedience" is perhaps an overstatement of the case. Israel is not new to YHWH and has already experienced his gracious care. Its assent to unconditional obedience is based on its knowledge of who YHWH is and the reliability of his loving concern. Faith expressed through obedience assumes a trust in the reliability of the word of God to deliver.

Nonetheless, an assent to obey the word of God and entry into covenant relationship with him has ethical implications. The people of Israel would be a "holy nation", set apart from others in ritual purity and a royal priesthood with the implication of offering ritually pure sacrifices to God. Just as Abraham was to "walk before me and be blameless" (Gen 17:1), so the Decalogue (Exod 20) would require of the people of Israel that their walk with the Lord would be blameless. This is how, out of all the nations, they would be God's 'treasured possession'. Israel had a duty among the nations to be God's display people, making clear to the peoples what the holiness of God required of them. Thus, at the very heart of their relationship with God, was a requirement to display to the surrounding nations the nature of God and his call to repentance from sin. Israel obedience to God's revealed word in terms of their covenant relationship with him had missional implications.

Israel's history shows a failure to keep the terms of the covenant and so, in spite of many warnings, the nation was sent into exile from the land and failed to fulfil its missional role as a light to the nations. In the New Testament passages, obedience to the word of God is couched in terms of hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and believing in him (1 Pet 2:6-7). It is no longer the whole people of Israel who are the "people of God" but a remnant, those who respond to the word by faith and who are chosen by grace (Rom 11:5). A response of belief and obedience to God's word as revealed in Christ the cornerstone was seen to differentiate between those who are God's people receiving mercy and those who are not God's people and do not receive mercy. The natural state of humanity is disobedience to the word of God and unbelief, which leaves them in a

state of judgement as their natural destiny (1 Pet 2:8). However, the responsibility of the people of God both to proclaim his glorious deeds and to live ethical lives has missional impact in the “darkness” of unbelief in which the Gentiles live. The obedience of believers, living in covenant relationship with God through Christ Jesus, will lead the Gentiles to “glorify God” when they see their good deeds, therefore implying that their ethics will have missional impact.

In the same way, the 1 John text showed that entry into *koinónia* with God in Christ requires holiness of life that can only be achieved through the cleansing blood of the Son (1:7). However, the work of Christ in providing propitiation is not for the believers only but has the potential to reach the whole world (1 John 2:2). Therefore, as they proclaimed Christ incarnate and resurrected, they proclaimed the blood of Christ that is sufficient for the cleansing of the whole world. This can be seen as a fundamental missional outcome of divine-human communion expressed in Trinitarian terms as *koinónia*. In addition, as they live in *koinónia* they are to “walk in the light” by matching in their own lives the ethical demands of a holy God (1 John 1:6).

3.3.6 Blessing and Curse

Closely linked to faith, belief and obedience is the concept of blessing and its opposites, unbelief, disobedience and curse. It has already been noted that the state of blessing in which humanity was created was destroyed by the disobedience of the Fall, leading to the cursing of the natural world and the exclusion of Adam and Eve from communion with God in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3). However, the call of Abraham and the word of blessing given to him provide an eschatological framework of hope that stretches from the Old Testament into the New (Wright, 2006:189f). In Gal 3:8, Paul argues that the God’s word to Abraham “in you shall all the nations be blessed” is the “gospel in advance” because those who respond by faith are the “children of Abraham” and inherit his blessing by faith. He shows that the blessing of God stated in Gen 12:3 is no other than the “offspring of Abraham” who is Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). Thus, the ultimate blessing of Abraham is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

The people of Israel as descendants of Israel needed to obey the conditions of God’s covenant in order to participate in the blessing of being the people of God which, as was seen in Exod 19:5-6, involved being his “treasured possession”, “priestly kingdom” and “holy nation”. Although they promised to obey unconditionally, they immediately fell into a state of disobedience through the creation of an idol (Exod 32) and their continued status as the people of God’s presence was dependent on his grace in overlooking their sin and continuing with them on their journey (Exod

33-34). Their continued recalcitrance throughout their history serves to show that the inherited blessing came not as a result of carnal obedience to the law, which proved to be impossible, but as a result of faith in God's provision of righteousness.

Thus, the New Testament makes it clear that the blessing that Israel failed to obtain through disobedience was achieved by Abraham's offspring, Jesus Christ and is available for all those who put their faith in him. Here it is pertinent to look at the similarity between Paul's argument in Romans 9:30-33 and that of 1 Pet 2:6-8. Paul argues that the blessing of Abraham that comes to the Gentiles is a "righteousness that is by faith" (Rom 9:30) which brings them into a favoured relationship with God in Christ so that they become "my people" and "sons of the living God" (Rom 9:25-26). On the other hand, the people of Israel who do not respond by faith to the word of God, have "stumbled" over God's "stone of stumbling and rock of offence" (Rom 9:33) and do not receive the blessing of Abraham. In the same way, 1 Pet 2:4-12 shows that the Old Testament blessings of being God's people come to those who respond by faith to Christ as God's cornerstone. Those who do not receive the message of Jesus Christ by faith and so reject him, on the other hand, have "stumbled" over God's stumbling stone and remain out of relationship with God and in hostility to him (1 Pet 2:8).

In 1 John 1:1-7, the blessing of Abraham is expressed as *koinónia* with the Father through the Son, a state that brings complete "joy". Joy, as the *koinónia* of the church with God in Christ, sums up the essence of both the present and future blessings of the people of God in Christ (John 15:11; John 16:2; John 17:13; cf. Rev 21:4). The blessing of God promised to Abraham is therefore received by faith in Jesus Christ, who in his own person is the fulfilment of all the blessings of the Old Testament people of God. Nevertheless, these are not just for Israel. God's promise to bless the nations through Abraham is entirely missional (Kaiser, 2000:20, Wright, 2006:221). It reaches out across the centuries to its fulfilment in the coming of Jesus Christ and the extension of that blessing of salvation to the Gentiles.

3.3.7 Mission

The final theme, that which has driven the exegesis and biblical theological reflection, is the question of whether there is an inherent missional aspect to divine-human communion. Three aspects of mission appeared to be present. Firstly, there is an ethical imperative to living as the children of God, which in the Old Testament involves living in obedience to the requirements of the covenant so that the ethical requirements of a holy God are displayed to the nations. This is

strongly represented in the holiness requirements of the cult so that Israel's role is to be a "holy nation" and a "priestly kingdom" among the nations. In the New Testament, the people of God in Christ are to live "holy lives" among the Gentiles (1 Pet 2:11-12) so that the Gentiles will come to glorify God. In 1 John 1 they are to "walk in the light" thereby matching the ethical requirements of the holy God with whom they are in relationship in Christ Jesus. The ethical difference between the people of God and outsiders has a missional function.

Secondly, there is a link between relationship with God as divine-human communion and the word of God. In the Old Testament, relationship is formed in the context of the revealed word of God to Abraham or to Moses (or to the prophets) which needs to be obeyed but which also has the nations in view (Gen 12:3; Exod 19:5). In the New Testament, entry into relationship with God through Jesus Christ is in response to the proclamation of God's word (1 Pet 1:25; 2:2; 1 John 1:1-3) which in turn leads to an obligation to proclaim that word to others. In 1 Pet 2:9, that proclamation is the praising of God for his mighty deeds (ultimately in Jesus Christ) which functions to proclaim Christ among the nations. In 1 John 1:1-7, it is proclamation by bearing witness to the historical incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which in turn brings people into a living relationship with him. Response to the proclaimed word is either one of faith and obedience leading to *koinónia* with the Father through the Son, or disbelief and disobedience leading to continuation in a state of judgement.

Finally, the missional centre of *koinónia* as divine-human communion is the work of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ provides cleansing from sin that enables both an entry into relationship with God and maintenance of that relationship on a daily basis. Thus, the blessing promised to Abraham, extended to the nations, is the blessing of cleansing through the death of Jesus Christ and entry into the fullness of joy in relationship with him. This is not for believers alone, but for all who come to him by faith so that atonement in itself is inherently missional.

3.3.8 Conclusion

These limited findings do little justice to the wealth of evidence that there is a missional nature to divine human communion in the biblical witness. Far more could have been investigated such as the love of God, the second exodus, exile and return, the remnant of Israel, the kingdom of God, the full history of Israel, the prophets and wisdom literature and eschatological expectations. However, the themes provide a framework for the evaluation of the missional nature of divine-human communion in the life and practice of T.F. Torrance. Indeed, if these four exegetical

studies have been able to reveal biblical themes of divine-human communion and mission, then it is anticipated that they have been representative in some way of the greater biblical material. It remains then, to highlight a few concepts for dogmatics.

3.4 Considerations for Dogmatics

3.4.1 Introduction

T.F. Torrance's third level of theological understanding is the ontological level, whereby the themes highlighted by reflection on the economic Trinity are translated into a higher form of knowledge and understanding, namely dogmatics. As the purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the biblical evidence for the missional nature of divine-human communion, space does not permit a full dogmatic evaluation of the themes that have arisen out of the exegetical study and biblical theological reflection. However, in order to evaluate Torrance's treatment of the subject matter, as dogmatic reflection on biblical theological evaluation, it is necessary to highlight those areas of dogmatics, which are most pertinent to an exploration of the subject matter in Torrance's work. Arising from the biblical theological themes evaluated above, these are the Trinity, incarnation and atonement, election and grace, covenant, ecclesiology and missiology. In this section, each area is introduced in terms of its relevance for the exploration of the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's work with suggestions for how that evaluative work might proceed.

3.4.2 The Trinity

The Trinitarian nature of divine-human communion was evidenced primarily in the Johannine concept of *koinónia* as fellowship with the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit, although it was also present in the image of the living stones being built into a spiritual temple to offer sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ in 1 Pet 2:5. The Trinitarian nature of these images of divine-human communion can be evaluated in Torrance's work in terms of *perichoresis* and the intratrinitarian relations of God, looking particularly at the mutual indwelling or communion of the persons of the Trinity. The issue is to ascertain whether there is a missional imperative in Torrance's theology flowing out of the heart of the Trinitarian communion towards humanity (as the *missio Dei*; Bosch, 1991:390). Following on from this, is the evaluation of the nature of the hypostatic union and the role of the Holy Spirit in the realization of divine-human communion.

3.4.3 Incarnation and Atonement

Both the New Testament passages displayed a high Christology. In 1 Pet 2:4-12, belief in Christ the cornerstone was the dividing line between those who were “God’s people” living under his blessing and those who were “not God’s people” and living outside the sphere of his blessing. In 1 John 1, the eternal *logos* was declared by a process of witness and proclamation to be God incarnate, the eternal God made flesh in space and time in the person of Jesus Christ. The stress laid in 1 John 1:1-3 on verbal witness to the physical life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for participation in the union with God through Christ (*koinónia*) suggests that there is value in evaluating Torrance’s treatment of the incarnation in order to understand the role that it plays in his theology of divine-human communion. In the same way, in 1 John 1:1-2:2 the atonement was seen to play an essential role in both entry into divine-human communion and maintenance of divine-human communion through cleansing from sin. Thus the treatment of the relationship between incarnation and atonement and the missional outcome of the interplay (if any) between the two in Torrance’s work is important for assessing the missional nature of his treatment of divine-human communion.

3.4.4 Election and Grace

In all the exegetical passages studied, there was evidence of divine initiative in the election of the people of Israel and ultimately Christ to be the means of salvation for the world. This leads to the question of the nature of the election and adoption of the people of God and its opposite, the doctrine of reprobation in the damnation of those who do not believe. As Calvin (1970:489-494) says, these are “great and difficult questions” which inhere in “God’s secret counsel” but which can be partially understood by the Pauline theology of the “remnant” of Israel that will be saved. Pertinent to this study, therefore, is an examination of the role of the grace and the mercy of God in choosing for himself a people in Christ. An evaluation of Torrance’s treatment of these issues elucidates his understanding of the role of human will in salvation, leading to an understanding of the particular or universal nature of his understanding of salvation and thus of the role and function of mission. These aspects are particularly thrown into relief in consideration of Torrance’s theology of the covenant.

3.4.5 Covenant

The biblical theological reflection noted the strong relationship between divine-human communion and covenant throughout the biblical witness. In order to evaluate the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's work, it is necessary to investigate the nature of covenant theology in his writings in order to ascertain whether he attributes a missional role to the covenant relationship. In a sense, all the considerations for dogmatics touch on the nature of the covenant as it represents the concretisation of the divine-human relationship in space-time, first in the history of Israel, then in its fulfilment in the church through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Allen, 2010:34). This is the space of the presence of God, represented by the tabernacle/temple in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament in the person of Christ as the temple in which his people are gathered into fellowship with God. However, there are certain features of the covenant that bear scrutiny as separate issues.

Firstly, this work needs to establish the nature of Torrance's covenant theology in order to determine his position on the unity of the covenants and the continuity or discontinuity of the testaments (Allen, 2010:37-38). This is significant in terms of the role of the history of Israel in revelation and reconciliation. Therefore, it also needs to consider Torrance's attitude to Federal Theology in the light of his Trinitarian theology and his theology of incarnation and atonement in order to ascertain his understanding of the relationship between election and covenant (Van Genderen & Velema, 2008:542-543). This is in order to determine whether Torrance holds a Barthian view on the universal election of all humanity in Christ (Barth, 1957:101-306; Van Genderen & Velema, 2008:222-224). The position held is significant for Torrance's understanding of the role of the preacher/evangelist and the message of the gospel preached.

Secondly, and intertwined with the nature of covenant and election, is Torrance's understanding of the precise nature of the covenant relationship. The question is whether Torrance sees the covenant as a relationship of equals or a gracious sovereign-vassal treaty of a superior with an inferior (Hill & Walton, 1991:143; McCarthy, 1972). This leads to an evaluation of Torrance's understanding of the nature of God in his grace, mercy and love choosing for himself a people in Christ i.e. an analysis of Torrance's position on the covenant of grace (Van Genderen & Velema, 2008:563-567). An evaluation of Torrance's treatment of these issues serves to clarify his understanding of the role of human response of faith in salvation. The question is whether faith is an individual response to God's grace or the gift of God in Jesus Christ (Van Genderen & Velema, 2008:557-558, 618).

Thirdly, the relationship between covenant and revelation as the relationship between covenant and word is of use in assessing Torrance's biblical theology of the covenant as the history of Israel realised and fulfilled in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Robertson, 1980:273; Wright, 1991:xi). Torrance's biblical theology, beginning in creation and ending with the new creation, understood as the progress of divine self-revelation, serves to illuminate his understanding of the missional imperative in the history of Israel in its historical, present and eschatological modes. Coupled with this is the nature of universality and particularity in the covenant as it affects the mission of Israel and the mission of the church.

Fourthly, the covenant was seen to involve promise and demand that involves blessing or curse as outcomes. The role of promise in the progression of the covenants has already been noted among biblical theologians of mission (especially Kaiser, 1978b; 2000). An examination of Torrance's understanding of the role of promise in the Old and New Testaments serves to clarify the universality and particularity of the promise of blessing flowing out of the covenant relationship in terms of the mission history of Israel and the church. In addition, the covenant relationship places demands on the recipients of the promised blessing, which this study has noted in terms of obedience to God's command as the ethical requirements of his holiness. The nature of the relationship between promise and obedience is contrasted with the nature of judgement and the wrath of God as the result of disobedience. This is examined in terms of Torrance's understanding of the nature of the mission of Israel, as well as the role of the prophetic voice in Israel in terms of covenant violation (Hill & Walton, 1991:169). The nature of obligation in the covenant naturally flows out of this in terms of the relationship between law and grace in the Sinai covenant and in the new covenant. Of relevance here is Torrance's position on the gracious nature of the law (Hill & Walton, 1991:149).

Fifthly, the relationship between covenant and reconciliation is seen in the role of the atonement in the Old Testament as compared and contrasted with that of the New Testament. Atonement through the blood of Christ is important because of the significance of blood in the establishment and maintenance of the bond of covenant relationship (Robertson, 1980:7-8). This is significant in terms of the relationship between blood and life and the way in which the pouring out of the lifeblood is portrayed as the only means by which failure to keep the obligations of the covenant can be forgiven (Robertson, 1980:11). Significant under this subheading, is the concept of atonement as both *katallasso*, meaning reconciliation through the restoration of relationship (2 Cor 5:18) and *hilasmos*, meaning reconciliation as expiation (Van Genderen & Velema,

2008:515). The extent of “atonement as satisfaction” is also considered in terms of Torrance’s position on the doctrine of Christ’s active and passive obedience (Grudem, 1994:570).

Finally, this leads to an investigation of the covenant and the people of the God in the Old Testament and the church as the people of God in the New Testament and the relationship between the two. The issue is whether there are missional outcomes flowing from Torrance’s doctrine of the covenant and the church. In addition, the issue of whether the covenant and the people of God coincide or whether there is a distinction between the people of the church and the people of faith has implications for mission practice (Van Genderen & Velema, 2008:567). This is particularly in terms of the relationship between covenant and worship, witness and proclamation, fellowship and sacraments. In the end, the covenantal nature of the church leads to the eschatological implications of being the church as the “already” and the “not yet” body of Christ drawing in the relationship between covenant and the kingdom of God (Horton, 2002:229).

3.4.6 Ecclesiology

The concept of the people of God in communion with him is a communal and not an individualistic concept. Therefore, in the Old Testament, it was seen to be the structured community of the newly gathered people of Israel into which God’s speech regarding the nature of the covenant relationship was delivered by Moses (Exod 18; 19:3-8). This Old Testament community of God’s people gathering before him in communion and worship is typological of the New Testament church at worship (Heb 12:18-24) and points forward to the eschatological picture of the people of God in heavenly worship in the book of Revelation (Rev 7:9-10). In the New Testament passages, 1 Pet 2:4-5 and 9-10 gives a picture of the church of Christ, bearing the epithets of the people of Israel, being built into a holy temple and a royal priesthood to serve God acceptably in Christ. In 1, John the concept of the church of Christ at worship is expressed by both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of *koinónia*. If, therefore, it is the church that is the sphere of divine-human communion, then it is necessary to evaluate Torrance’s ecclesiology for evidence of the missional nature of divine-human communion.

3.4.7 Missiology

In all four exegetical passages, there were missional outcomes from the evaluation of the nature of divine-human communion. Missiology is not generally considered as a category of systematic theology. However, if this work is to evaluate fully the missional nature of divine-human

communion, it needs to take into cognizance Torrance's theology of mission. The introduction to this section noted the tendency of academia to separate mission and theology, leaving missiology to the mercies of practical theology and splitting it from the realm of dogmatics. This typically dualistic approach to mission studies stands in antithesis to Torrance's own unitary approach in which all things are brought to a centre in Christ. It is therefore necessary to consider Torrance's missiology as an integral part of his theological method and assign to it a category of evaluation along with those areas designated above which belong to a more traditional approach to dogmatics.

3.4.8 Conclusion

These categories from the discipline of dogmatics have been determined firstly from the exegesis of the selected Old and New Testament texts and secondly from the biblical theological reflection. The purpose is to give the research into the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology a framework for evaluation. The purpose is not to impose a systematic theological method onto Torrance's theological discourse, but to allow the progression from exegesis to biblical theology to considerations for dogmatics to act as indicators for evaluating the missional nature of divine-human communion in his theology and practice.

3.5 Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to evaluate biblical evidence for the missional nature of divine-human communion in order to assess the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's work and practice. The introduction evaluated recent approaches to biblical theology in order to find a method that would approximate the threefold progression of Torrance's epistemology that moves from an understanding of the Trinity as doxology, to Trinity in its economic mode as biblical theology and from there to the ontological Trinity as dogmatics. It was observed that recent biblical theology, including biblical theology of mission, has tended to follow the lead of historical-critical theologians in separating biblical theology from dogmatics, thus creating a distinction between the two disciplines that is diametrically opposed to Torrance's own unified approach. It was therefore proposed that this research should use the method proposed by Warfield and later Vos and Childs (although not fully implemented by either of them) that moves from detailed textual exegesis to reflections on biblical theological themes and from there to considerations for dogmatics. To this end, four texts were selected for exegesis,

from which considerations for biblical theology were identified in the form overarching themes, before areas of consideration for dogmatics could be isolated.

The primary theme is that of divine-human relationship initiated by God, expressed in terms of a progressive revelation of covenant from a statement of purpose in Gen 12:2-3 through deepening of the covenant relationship in Exod 19:4-6, to the new covenant in Christ the cornerstone in 1 Pet 2:4-12 which is expressed as *koinónia* with the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit in 1 John. Closely associated with this primary theme of divine-human communion as covenant is the word of God as the means of the establishment of relationship and a response to that word as either faith and obedience (as belief), or disobedience and rejection of the word (as unbelief). The blessings of God are shown to flow from the obedience of faith. In the Genesis text, this involves firstly alignment with Abraham as God's chosen person (Gen 12:3) and in the Exodus passage, taking note of the ethical requirements of the holiness of God through his special relationship with the chosen people of Israel (Exod 19:5). In the New Testament, the blessings of God are found through a response of belief in Christ, the "Word of God" as God's "chosen one" for the salvation of the world and coming into relationship with him (1 Pet 2:4, 6; 1 John 1:1, 3, 6). The opposite is unbelief and remaining in a state of condemnation (1 Pet 2:8).

Flowing out of the responses of belief and communion with God and unbelief and hostility to God are themes for mission. The word of God to Abraham indicated that the threefold promise of land, descendants and blessing would have implications of either blessing or curse for the nations. In Exod 19:4-6, the special relationship of YHWH with Israel is in the context of the "nations" and in the New Testament passages, the Gentiles are in view (1 Pet 2:12; 1 John 1:3). The missional role of the people of God in the Old Testament was to live out the demands of the character of God through keeping the word of God revealed to them as *torah* and thus becoming a "display people" to show the nations God's righteous demands. The right response of the nations would be to come into fellowship with Israel through maintenance of the demands of the covenant. In the New Testament, Christ is the fulfilment of the covenant and so the missional role of the people of God as the church of Christ is to go out to the nations to bear witness by proclaiming the incarnation and resurrection (1 John 1:1-3) and praising God for his righteous work of salvation (1 Pet 2:9), with the purpose of bringing people into fellowship with Christ in the church. The basis for this is the atoning blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). In addition, the people of God as the church, the temple of God (1 Pet 2:5) in *koinónia* with the Trinity (1 John 1:3, 6), have a responsibility to reflect the character of the God with whom they live in relationship by living ethical lives as a witness to the Gentiles (1 Pet 2:12).

Following from these biblical theological themes, various areas of dogmatics were highlighted. Primary among these is the Trinitarian nature of divine-human communion as the locus of the mission of God. In addition, the biblical theological themes suggested that election and reprobation, covenant and grace, incarnation and atonement should be explored, together with Torrance's ecclesiology as the locus of divine-human communion and the mission of God in the world. Finally, although missiology is not usually considered as an area of dogmatics, this study needs to consider Torrance's theology of mission in order to ascertain the missional nature of divine-human communion in his thought.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE MISSIONAL NATURE OF TORRANCE'S THEOLOGY OF DIVINE-HUMAN COMMUNION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter attempted to provide a framework from biblical theology and dogmatics for the analysis of the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's work. The biblical theological concept of relationship expressed as covenant together with the missional implications arising from it, was seen to be the primary area of research. However, in order to explore Torrance's treatment of the missional nature of divine-human communion, other research areas from dogmatics were suggested. These included Trinity, incarnation and atonement, election and grace, ecclesiology and missiology. In terms of methodology, it would be inadmissible to use these categories from dogmatics to provide a structure for analysis. The unitary nature of Torrance's theological method leads all his theological reflection to a centre in Christ expressed through union with Christ and communion with the triune God. Attempting to separate these areas of evaluation would necessitate unjustifiable repetition and circular argument. Instead, the categories from dogmatics deduced from the exegetical and biblical theological study in Chapter 3 provide a framework for the evaluation of Torrance's work within an analytical structure that represents the logical flow of Torrance's argumentation.

Consequently, this chapter proceeds using a structure that commences with the Trinitarian foundation of Torrance's conception of divine-human communion as the ontological basis and starting point for his theological thought. This is followed by his treatment of the three categories of the "mystery" of Christ as union and communion viz. *mysterion*, which comprises his Christology (incarnation and atonement), *prothesis* that comprises his doctrine of God (grace and election) and *koinónia* as his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The third section of the analysis considers Torrance's treatment of the mission of the church through his ecclesiology.

4.2 The Trinitarian Foundation

4.2.1 Introduction

Torrance's doctoral work, initially undertaken under the supervision of Karl Barth, was published as *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* in 1947. In it Torrance undertakes an investigation into the nature of grace in the early centuries, concluding that as a result of Judaistic and Hellenistic tendencies towards reliance on ethics, the early Catholic fathers failed to use the

truths of the gospel alone as the basis for salvation. As a result they did not understand the significance of the death of Christ or the truth of the doctrine of grace (Torrance, 2001a:137). This led Torrance (1996b:139) to deduce that there was a failure to appreciate the person and work of Christ as mediator and to understand that God's self-bestowal in grace is equal to the person of Jesus Christ. Torrance (1996b:141) concluded that the early Fathers had a weak Christology and were more concerned with law and obedience than grace, which led them eventually to make grace an attribute of the church which could be dispensed in the sacraments.

This concern with the doctrine of grace and the centrality of Christ as God's self-revelation to the world had already been built into Torrance's theological thought through the influence of his dogmatics professor, Hugh Ross Mackintosh, as well as through his studies in Patristic theology and dogmatics under Karl Barth in Basel (Torrance, 2001a:ix). In addition, Mackintosh (2000:71-72) had convinced Torrance of the intrinsic missionary and evangelical nature of Christology, a focus that resonated well with his mission upbringing in China. Under the combined influence of his family background, his doctoral studies and theological mentors, Torrance became a "Nicene theologian", whose central concern was the theological paradigm of the *homoousion*. Torrance (2001a:x) saw the development of the concept of the *homoousion* as a fundamental event in the "mind" of the early church, giving it a deeper understanding of the apostolic gospel as the internal relation of the incarnate Son to God the Father and by it, an understanding of the ontological substructure and coherence of the gospel. For Torrance (2001a:xi), this was an irreversible moment in the history of Christian theology that shaped the apostolic mind of the church and thus constituted the intellectual and spiritual basis on which the historic church was built. For Torrance, Nicene theology has a role to play in all Christian theology, especially the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity which, as Chapter 2 observed, is the "lynch pin" of Torrance's theology and the starting point for any analysis of his thought (Colyer, 2001a:25, 28).

4.2.2 Rejection of Dualism

The starting point for an evaluation of the Trinitarian nature of divine-human communion and mission lies in the philosophy underpinning Torrance's work as the rejection of dualism in both theology and science (Torrance, 1980b:15). Torrance (1985:29) maintains that the Greco-Roman heritage of Western civilization produced a radical dualism in the relation between body and mind (soul) in which the body was only loosely connected, in a temporary way, with the soul. This was in direct contrast to the Hebrew mind in which body and soul formed an integrated whole. This led to a conflict between biblical culture with its Hebrew roots and Western culture

with its roots in Greco-Roman dualist thought. Platonic thought held a receptacle notion of space that acted as a bridge between the realms of the intelligible and the sensible and contained only copies of the intelligible reality (Torrance, 1969a:5). For Plato, there was no real way to bridge the divide between the world and the objective reality beyond, thus creating a dualist separation of theory from practice in the way space and time were conceptualised (Torrance, 1985:15). In due course, the dualistic outlook of Neo-Platonist Hellenism was given expression in the theology of the church in the West so that God and the world were thought of in a disjointed way (Torrance, 1980a:22).

Much of Torrance's work was dedicated to engagement with the world of science in order to build a unitary vision of scientific theology. Torrance's (1980a:43) concern was with the deistic relation between God and creation caused by Isaac Newton's scientific method, in which God was held to be immutable and impassible in terms of his relation to the natural created world. Torrance saw this combination of deism and dualism as driving a wedge between belief in God, the creation and the rational order of nature, which eventuated in a separation of faith and reason. This dualism was subsequently upheld by the philosophers John Locke, David Hume and Emmanuel Kant (Torrance, 1980a:44-47). Consequently, Western culture developed an anthropocentric worldview that separated the world of natural science from ontology and objectivity. The result was philosophical uncertainty and scepticism (Torrance, 1980a:48). Torrance (1980a:48) maintains that the loss of coherence in scientific method that resulted from this led to the failure of the observationalist subject-object approach and raised a need to penetrate behind the surface into the onto-relations behind.

For Torrance (1980a:50), the answer to the conundrum lay in the scientific method of James Clerk Maxwell, who had combined science and theology in a way that allowed for ontological relatedness in the universe. This involved looking at the natural world in a holistic way by investigating both the phenomena and the Creator behind them, looking for interrelatedness in natural phenomena and seeing the relations between God and his creation and time and eternity (Torrance, 1988:10-12). In due course, Maxwell's approach paved the way for Einstein's theory of relativity, which was premised on the intrinsic comprehensibility of the universe and an external world independent of the perceived subject (Torrance, 1972:235; 1980a:58). The movement to the priority of belief in rational science was explored further by the Hungarian-British scientist and philosopher, Michael Polanyi, who restored the personal coefficient of knowledge to science by showing that human reason always operates within an framework of basic beliefs (Torrance, 1980a:62). The core concept of Polanyi's thinking was that independence

of thought is always related to obligation to transcendent reality, thereby giving an open view of the universe (Torrance, 1984a:176-177). Thus, perception of the structured nature of the universe as a whole will always lead to questions of the relation of God to the universe.

Torrance (1972:235) understood the move towards integration of form and being in science as a “cultural revolution”, leading science and theology away from the abstraction of the embedded cultural approach. The primary axiom in the “new” scientific methodology was that it operates in accordance with the nature of its object, working from an *a posteriori* and not an *a priori* position and *kata physin*, in accordance with its own distinct nature (Torrance, 1969b:112). For Torrance (1980b:30-32) this meant a break with cultural dualism and the methodological unification of science and theology, especially through Einstein’s theory of relativity. However, even within his own lifetime, Torrance (1972:235; 1980b:43) acknowledged that the “transition” of scientific method from Newton to Einstein was a slow process, which had caused dislocation in Western culture. This research has already noted the criticism of Torrance’s purported conjunction between theology and science through Einstein’s physics and the questioning of its usefulness for a Reformed Christology (cf. Schubert, 1984:134). It does, however, represent the core value of Torrance’s scientific theology and the basis on which his incarnational theology is built.

Torrance’s primary concern with the conjuncture of science and theology is with the impact of the “cultural revolution” on theology. Torrance’s (1980a:13-14) contention is that the theology of the Western church over the ages structured itself on the dualistic dominant scientific culture, leading to a rupture in the interrelation of the creation and incarnation. Far from considering the incarnation as the actual place in space and time of God’s self-revelation to humanity, the dualist approach relegated the incarnation to history and divided faith from reason (Torrance, 1982:37). Once faith lost its empirical basis, Christianity became an abstraction and the person of Christ lost any meaning for salvation (Torrance, 2002a:4). This type of purely historical theology with its particular position on epistemology, ontology, historicity and faith was noted in section 3.1.2 as the antithesis to a faith based, whole Bible approach of evangelical biblical theologians. Torrance’s concern with the influence of Western culture on theology can in itself be seen as missional in so far as the intersection of theology with culture across the ages is deemed to have led to different paradigms for mission (cf. Bosch, 1991 for an evaluation of the historical paradigms of mission). Torrance’s passion for the integration of faith and reason, incarnation and creation should therefore be understood as an evangelistic drive to bring the incarnation to the centre of Western philosophy.

Torrance's scientific theology operates holistically, working from the nature of its object, which is God in his self-revelation to humanity (Torrance, 1969b:131). This "philosophy of theology" is positive, dealing with the conceptual interface between knowledge of God through his self-revelation in the incarnation and knowledge of the created world through scientific enquiry (Torrance, 2002b:xiii). However, there is also an epistemological inversion in operation in Torrance's theology. The God who reveals himself is also the subject of his revelation, making God both the subject and object of faith. Therefore faith is that process in which God in his grace comes and reveals himself as personal subject (Jesus Christ), creates the capacity to know him and draws the believer into relation with himself as object (Torrance, 1969b:132-133). In Torrance's unitary theology, there is no division between faith and reason because they are met in God's historical self-revelation in Jesus Christ through the incarnation. It is this unity or holism of Torrance's faith based theology with its centre in the *homoousion* of Jesus Christ (Colyer, 2001a:61), that this work suggests is the basis for his integration of mission and theology through the theology of divine-human communion.

4.2.3 The Onto-Relational Framework

The framework of Torrance's theological method is designed to unify and simplify the whole body of Christian theology across the ages into the conception of the Trinity as its basic grammar (Torrance, 1980b:148). For Torrance, the doctrine of the Trinity contains the minimum of basic concepts derived from revelation and the minimum of secondary concepts derived from theological cognition that allow humanity to come under the power of God's own reality in order to grasp what he is in his inherent unity and simplicity. That is, the immanent relations in God himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the communion of love and knowledge which he sets up with those who are brought by grace, through faith, into union with him (Torrance, 2001a:162).

Torrance (1969b:162) admits that there are cognitive conceptual problems in attempting to understand God as Trinity that can only be resolved as they are correlated with experience of God through the self-revelation of Jesus Christ. As the Christian faith is a disclosure system, God is the source of any knowledge of himself (Torrance, 2001a:265). This means that from the outset, Torrance's theology is predicated on faith as the gift of God in his Son. There must be a Trinitarian character to knowing God that corresponds to the Trinitarian nature of relations in God himself and this is realised in Christ (Torrance, 1980b:148). The centrality of Christ for revelation has led to Torrance being criticised for collapsing the revelation of God into his Being, as a sort of "Christomonism" (Molnar, 2009:325). However, this criticism is entirely unjust.

Torrance (1969b:352) maintains that in dogmatics all theological statements are tested in correlation with their subject to ascertain whether they really speak of God as Trinity. Therefore, the basis for all Torrance's dogmatic reflection is the triune nature of God and his self-revelation in the Son through the Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit to make the relationship between Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity apparent to the eyes of faith (Molnar, 2015:par. 73). This means that for Torrance (2001a:1, 31, 82) the doctrine of the Trinity is the centre of dogmatics and it is in this respect that the accusation of "Christomonism" is to be refuted.

In his insistence on the Trinitarian nature of theological knowledge, Torrance (1980a:178) stands against the Kantian conception that things can only be known as they appear in their external relations. Instead, Torrance (1980b:150-151; 1992:64) argues that God can be conceived of in terms of his inner relations that are disclosed through the hypostatic union of the natures of God and humanity in the incarnation. Using Athanasius' concepts of the *enousios logos* and the *enousios energia*, Torrance (1980b:151-152) shows that if the *logos* that inheres in God's inner Being has become incarnate in Christ, then humanity has cognitive access into the inner Being of God through the incarnation. In the same way, if God's *energia* (Act) inheres in his Being and has become incarnate, then Christ is identical with the action of God in his self-disclosure. This means that what God is as he speaks and acts is identical with whom God is in his Being (Torrance, 1980b:152-153; Kang, 1992:545).

In Torrance's (2008:57) theology, revelation and reconciliation are always interrelated. God reveals himself in such a way that he creates the capacity to receive and comprehend him so that he lifts his people up into the inner communion of his divine Being of love so that they share in the inner relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, thought about God operates from a centre in him and not in humanity (Torrance, 1980b:155). To know God in his condescension towards humanity is to be lifted up in the Spirit to share in all that he is in Jesus Christ. To know God is to be reconciled with God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. In this way, Torrance (1980b:155) claims that the Trinity enters into the fabric of theological thinking so that it becomes the "basic grammar" of knowledge and worship of God. For Deddo (2008:34-36) this is a "paradigm shift" in theological thinking that challenges the foundations of theological thought because it has implications for all aspects of the church's life and mission. As Cass (2008:318) observed, the Trinitarian and Christocentric nature of Torrance's theology makes it both integrative as well as holistic.

In Nicene theology, it is in the incarnation that God in his innermost relations is revealed to humanity through Jesus Christ who is both divine and human. This was the theology of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed in its statements against Arian dualism, which denied the full deity of Christ and threatened to destroy the unity between God and Christ (Torrance, 1993a:48-49). Torrance (1993a:49, 146, 152) argues that the Nicene theologians had to transform the dualist substructure of Greco-Roman thought into a unitary structure that stressed the *homoousion* of the Son and the Father and the primacy of the Father/Son relation over that of Creator/creature in order to maintain the soteriological implications of the doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, for Torrance (1993a:18), the purpose of the Nicene creedal formulation was entirely missional, serving both as proclamation of the truth and as instruction in the truths of the gospel. Thus, the inner relations of the Son to the Father became the basis for the faith of the church and determined its understanding of everything else (Torrance, 1993a:56). Consequently the theology of the incarnation in the *homoousial* relation of the Son to the Father had inherent within it a soteriological principle which translated into a missional imperative in the formulation and use of the creed in the church.

The term *homoousion tō patri* was formulated by the Nicene theologians to express the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father in Being and Act (Torrance, 1993a:137; 2001a:94). The issue was that what Jesus Christ is in his inner relations with the Trinity, is exactly what he is in his Act. There is no difference between the Being of the Father and the Son, and there is therefore no difference between the Act of the Father and the Son. Expressed in dogmatic terms, this means the immanent Trinity (as God in himself) is exactly the same as the economic Trinity (as God for us; Torrance, 1996b:7). Torrance (1980b:161) states, “what God is towards us in his saving economic activity in space and time through Christ and in the Holy Spirit, he is antecedently and eternally in himself”. This also applies to the Holy Spirit, so that to know God in himself is to know him as Trinity and unity and at the same time as unity and Trinity (Torrance, 1980b:165; 2001a:24). The only way in which God has revealed this is through the incarnation, which throws into relief the Trinitarian nature of God through the *homoousial* relation of the Son to the Father. This again has soteriological implications for Torrance because if there is no “bond” between the economic Trinity in its evangelical implications and the ontological Trinity in its theological implications, there is no divine validity in the doctrine of the Trinity or the message of the gospel (Torrance, 2001a:7-10).

The *homoousion* therefore plays the key role in soteriology. If God can only be known as Trinity in unity and unity in Trinity, then all forms of Theism, Unitarianism and polytheism need to be

rejected because there is no way of thinking about God other than in Jesus Christ. This means that the oneness in Being and Act between Jesus Christ and the Father is at the heart of the gospel, designating all other approaches to God “behind the back of Jesus” as invalid (Torrance, 2001a:24-25). Thus, the whole doctrine of the Trinity is implicit in and revealed through knowledge of Christ (Torrance, 2001a:26). This implies that the Trinitarian structure of Torrance’s theology necessitates an exclusive approach to soteriology, which would deny any possibility of revelation in non-Christian religions (Torrance, 2001a:25). In 2.5.2 Colyer’s (2001b:79, 83) defence of Torrance’s “exclusivist” position in the light of criticism by Hardy was seen to lack vigour. This may be because Torrance makes no claims to pluralism or inclusivism. His realist, positivist position with its centre in the *homoousion* can lead him to no other conclusion. Either, Christ is God and the only means of revelation and reconciliation, or theology slips back into a dualist framework where the historical Jesus is divorced from the ontological Jesus. Torrance’s method is neither “private nor publically inexpressible”, nor “occasionalist” as Hardy claims (Colyer, 2001b:77). It rests on a continuity of integration of form through the incarnation that gives it an exclusive, evangelical character.

Theological understanding of the internal relations within the Trinity was further given expression by the Nicene theologians through the notion of mutual coinherence or *perichoresis*. This speaks of the dynamic interrelations within the “eternal communion of love” that is the Trinity in itself and in its relations with humanity (Torrance, 2001a:171). By this Torrance (2001a:172) implies the interrelatedness of the persons of the Trinity in which all three are distinctive persons with their own incommunicable properties and yet dwell intimately with each other. This concept of the *perichoresis* of the persons of the Trinity is the ground for divine-human communion as it is situated in the mystery of the church’s participation in the divine nature through Jesus Christ. In Christ and through the communion of the Spirit, the church enters into communion with the Father and enters into joyful relationship with the eternal communion that is God in his inner relations (Torrance, 2001a:172; cf. 1 John 1:4). Thus *perichoresis* expresses the wholeness of the Trinity and gives rise to the axiom that the Trinity may only be known on its own terms and out of itself in a circular movement that begins in God and ends in God (Torrance, 2001a:28, 174).

Ultimately, the wholeness of the Trinity leads Torrance (2001a:180-194) to an understanding of the procession or mission of the Son and Spirit from the divine Monarchy. The Spirit proceeds from the Father *in* the Son in a unity of purpose. Torrance’s conception of the divine Monarchy has been criticised for lack of scriptural subordination in the economy of the Son and the Spirit

(Letham, 1994:370). Hunsinger (2015:28) comments that the relation between the ontological and economic Trinity in Torrance's theology is one of correspondence, not dialectical identity. The issue of the obedience of the Son to the Father in the economy of the incarnation is not downplayed in Torrance's theology (Torrance, 2008:80). Rather, Torrance (2001a:194) is concerned with onto-relations and the love of God as the source of economic condescension. He does not read the ontological Trinity fully into the economic Trinity, preferring to relegate full ontological comprehension to the realm of apophatic reverence.

The self-giving of God through Christ in the Spirit is an act that draws the church into communion with the divine communion in a relation of *theosis* (Torrance, 1993a:141). However, this does not imply a "deification" of the human person, but rather that the believer, who remains human, is brought into communion with God through the humanity of Christ (Torrance, 1993a:189). At the same time, by means of his own divinity, Christ acts in grace, drawing people to himself and enabling them to participate in himself and through him in God (Torrance, 1993a:139). Moreover, *theosis* is intrinsically related to the work of the Holy Spirit who indwells believers, enabling them to partake of the divine nature (Torrance, 1993a:139). Torrance (1993a:141) stresses that *theosis* is always a matter of divine initiative as God in his grace gives the gift of the Word (as the Son) and Spirit. The saving acts of Jesus Christ, his works of healing and redemption, find their significance in what Torrance (1993a:141) terms the "evangelical *homoousion*" because they are all done out of an unbroken oneness and communion between Jesus Christ and the Father into which the church is drawn by the Spirit. Without this, the "saving essence" goes out of the gospel. As a result, there is an integral link between the evangelical *homoousion* and *theosis* at the heart of Torrance's Trinitarian theology of divine-human communion. Hart's (2008:83) reflection on the soteriological impact of Torrance's theology of *theosis* is thus apposite here.

A final area for consideration in terms of the onto-relational framework of Torrance's Trinitarian theology is the relation with creation. The Nicene theologians rejected the Platonic receptacle notion of space by asserting the doctrine of the creation of the world out of nothing, thereby asserting God's supremacy over time and space (Torrance, 1969a:11). Therefore, all relations in creation have to be understood dynamically through God's creative power. They did this through the relation of the *homoousion* to the creation. Through the incarnation, Christ is fully present in space-time and yet at the same time he is the eternal God (Torrance, 1969a:14). Thus, Christ is "in" us while at the same time as being God (Torrance, 1969a:18). This leads to a closed, horizontal understanding of space from the side of humanity as it relates to the present world, but

an open vertical relation into the infinity of Being that is God (Torrance, 1969a:18, 21; cf. Samms, 2008:56).

Torrance comments that in the Nicene Creed, belief in God as sovereign Creator is presented along with belief in the triune God and the saving incarnation and work of the Son. For Torrance (2001a:203-204) this implies that the doctrine of the Creator is integral to the gospel because all things were created in and through Christ and therefore it is only in Christ that creatures may come face to face with the Creator. Jesus Christ is the central pivot of the universe both as Creator and as the one who entered creation in order to redeem it (Torrance, 2001a:204; Samms, 2008:60). As a result of the incarnation, God has entered space and time in Christ and therefore the *homoousion* binds creation and redemption together in the love of God in his internal relations (Torrance, 1993a:136). Torrance (2001a:223) holds that creation is grounded in the one covenant of grace which is fulfilled in the incarnation so that God restores creature and creation to unbroken communion with him by means of the substitutionary nature of the incarnation and atonement. Torrance (1993a:108-109; 1996b:217) makes it clear that God can only be known in creation if he is known through his Son, so that the universe in real terms is ontologically bound to Jesus Christ. However, it is only as redemption is permitted to enter into and heal the damaged order of creation, that humanity can fulfil its true role in the created order (Torrance, 1985:47). Although well ahead of his time in terms of mission as care of creation (Wright, 2006:397-420), Torrance's warning that scientific cosmology and mission eschatology must be considered together for the sake of the future of humanity may have been somewhat prophetic of the recent focus of the Lausanne Movement (of evangelical mission) to develop a missiology of creation care in the face of the ecological challenges of the twenty-first century (Lausanne, 2012).

4.2.4 Natural Theology

Throughout the discussion on the unity of knowledge and the onto-relational nature of Torrance's holistic theology, natural theology has been on the horizon. This is firstly because of the methodological relationship between natural science and theology in Torrance's thought structure, but also because of his unified understanding of the centrality of the Trinity for all theological reflection. This led him, together with Karl Barth, to reject the commonly-held dualist perception in missiology of natural theology as the basis for the doctrine of the one God and revealed theology as the basis for the doctrine of the Trinity (Torrance, 1980b:147). For Torrance (2001a:162), it is impossible for natural theology to be antecedent to revealed theology. The issue

is that God must be known as he is, in his inner relations within his triune self and this is only possible through the Son, Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1980b:148).

Torrance's stand on natural theology derives from the unitary and onto-relational nature of his theological science. Natural theology is often considered the precursor of faith but to Torrance (1982:33; 1969b:103), this can only distort true knowledge of God, as it does not allow God to be known as he is in himself. Natural theology cannot form a logical bridge from creation to God because they do not operate on the same terms (Torrance, 2002b:38). There is a form of natural knowledge of God in the world but this cannot be considered a natural theology (Torrance, 1969b:103). Because nature is contingent on God, an examination of nature will only lead to nature, not to God (Torrance, 1969b:101; 1959b:lxiv). Ultimately, the only way to know God is by Jesus Christ through the Spirit and not "behind God's back" in any other "natural" way. This is because justification by grace lays aside natural theology and sets man on a wholly new basis with God (Torrance, 1969b:103). Natural theology can only function as it is completed beyond itself in special revelation. It will only become "natural" in terms of its relationship with its proper or "natural" object which is God in his self-revelation in space and time through the incarnation (Torrance, 2002b:39). Natural theology will therefore never be "complete" because it will always remain open to God (Torrance, 2002b:40).

Another way of thinking about natural theology for Torrance is in terms of the relations between space, time and the incarnation. Torrance maintains that as Jesus Christ was incarnate within space and time in the natural world, there must be connection between the concepts of theology and natural science. The Christian doctrine of creation asserts that God in his freedom, made the universe out of nothing and gave it a reality distinct from himself but dependent on him and endowed the universe with a rationality that made it knowable (Torrance, 1969a:59). God, however, remains free in his self-existence and cannot be known in the same way that the universe can be known. When considered theologically from a centre in God, the world subsists in God's creative word. When considered naturally from a centre in nature, the world can be known in as far as humanity can penetrate its intelligibility. However, nature only speaks ambiguously about God and cannot give a final account of itself because it can only be understood through the incarnation (Torrance, 1969a:59-60).

Consequently, it is in the relations between incarnation and creation that the reality of God comes into space and time as the sphere in which humanity has its relations with him (Torrance, 1969a:67). This rids theology of dualisms and means that theology has to operate with a

separation of natural theology and revealed theology (Torrance, 1969a:69). As a result, natural theology undergoes a change in which it is made “natural” to the proper nature of God in the reality of the incarnation. This does not merge God with space and time but sets up Jesus Christ as a vertical and horizontal axis organised around himself through which the world is made open to God (Torrance, 1969a:72, 74). However, as Habets (2013:par. 1568) points out, this distinction between natural theology and revealed theology does not adequately distinguish Torrance’s scientific theology of nature and so here, some ambiguity exists as a blurring of natural theology and natural science.

In terms of general revelation, Torrance acknowledges that God created humanity for knowledge of himself but without God’s self-revelation in Christ, it has become twisted and alienated from God (Rom 1). As a result, in all proclamation of the gospel among people of non-Christian faiths, Torrance (2001a:25) maintains that concepts of God will always be distorted. Torrance does not deny outright the possibility of general revelation in the same way as Barth, but he qualifies its usefulness, not as a precursor to the gospel, but rather as a damaged reflection of the truth that can only be healed as it meets Christ. For Torrance (2001a:25), as was seen in terms of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the *homoousion*, there is in practical terms no “bridge” to Christ through other religions but general revelation discloses the need of other religions for the self-revelation of God in Christ. This reflects the terms of YHWH’s covenant with Israel in Exod 19:4-5 that placed Israel in a unique position among the nations through obedience to the *torah*. There was no “bridge” to YHWH through the religion of Egypt or the surrounding nations. Instead as a priestly kingdom, Israel’s role was to model *torah* as the way of life in the midst of other religions (Block, 2011:3-15).

The heated debate over natural theology and general revelation in Torrance’s theology has been evaluated in the review of the literature in 2.5.6. It was noted that diametrically opposed analyses of Torrance’s position led to the views that his natural theology either hinders evangelism or provides an interpretative framework for leading people to Christ. Evaluation of Torrance’s mission practice in 5.2.4 will show that the latter position is more typical of Torrance’s approach. Torrance did use the relation between science and theology as an interpretative framework for evangelism but this does not imply in any way that the natural world acts a precursor to faith in Christ. Rather, it serves through the integration of form in science and theology to point to Christ. Molnar’s (1995:79-80) complaint, echoed by Fennell (1981:98), that Torrance fails to take into account the sinful nature that tries to control revelation ignores Torrance’s exegesis of Rom 1. Ultimately, for Torrance, the centrality of the incarnation for revelation and reconciliation will

not allow him to abandon the exclusivity of Christ for salvation. Therefore there is little, if any, inconsistency between his scientific theology that wants to know God in his own terms and his “new natural theology” that wants to know God in a way that is “natural” to his self-revelation that is in Jesus Christ.

4.2.5 The Stratification of Knowledge

A further foundational concept arising out of the Trinity is the stratification of knowledge (cf. sections 2.2.3; 3.1.3). By Torrance’s admission, humanity can only understand God in so far as the conceptual capacity to grasp God in his inner relations is in place and even then knowledge of God is always shrouded in mystery (Torrance, 2001a:73-74). Nonetheless, Torrance proposes a stratification of knowledge of the interrelations of the Trinity that follows the threefold stratification of scientific knowledge proposed by Michael Polanyi. The foundation of Polanyi’s thought lay in the conviction that independence of thought and obligation to transcendent reality are inseparable (Torrance, 1984a:176). He rejected the deterministic basis of Newtonian mechanics and proposed a stratified structure to the universe in which the different levels are organised in such a way that the higher levels arise spontaneously out of the lower levels and rest upon them (Torrance, 1984a:180). Nonetheless, the higher levels are not determined by the lower levels but remain in a relationship of freedom with them, giving the natural world both freedom and order (Torrance, 1984a:180). Polanyi further proposed that this is the kind of order that operates in basic human acts of perception as the mind spontaneously integrates clues within a framework of traditional beliefs in order to build new modes of cognition. This leads to the constant emergence of new layers of organization, each one richer and less restricted than the lower level on which it rests (Torrance, 1984a:181).

Using Polanyi’s basic structure, Torrance proposed that knowledge of the Trinity is built up in the mind of the church on three distinct levels of cognition. This theory was expounded in skeleton form in *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (1980b) and developed more fully in *The Christian Doctrine of God* (2001a). It consists firstly of the evangelical and doxological level of worship and Bible study within the church. The “ground level” of experience operates in the local church in the context of God’s saving activity in the gospel and faith in Jesus Christ. Although it is a communal experience within the worship life of the church, its primary focus is on personal relationship with Jesus Christ in response to the proclamation of the gospel and the preaching of the Word of God within the local community (Torrance, 2001a:88). It is fundamental for all further knowledge because it rests on the primary necessity of experience of divine revelation and

reconciliation as the basis of sharing in the fellowship of communion with God (Torrance, 2001a:91).

On the second “theological level”, the economic Trinity is understood as the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Act of God in Jesus Christ. The reality that is perceived in the church becomes a theory of Trinitarian relations as God reveals himself through Word and Spirit (Torrance, 2001a:88). Primarily, this level presupposes that the person of Jesus Christ and his saving acts are one. Within the context of the church, theologians consider the nature and impact of the economic Trinity through the *homoousion*, giving theological expression to the oneness in Being and Act of Jesus Christ as it is presented in the gospel (Torrance, 2001a:91; Myers, 2008:6-8). It is at this level that the latent Trinitarian structure of God’s revelation as presented in the Scriptures becomes evident.

Finally, the third “higher” theological or “scientific” level is reached, in which the self-communication of God is understood on the level of the ontological Trinity as an understanding of God in his inner relations (Torrance, 1980b:156-158). This builds on knowledge of the economic Trinity and is not divorced from it (Torrance, 2001a:99). It involves an understanding of the onto-relational nature of the Trinity through the concept of *perichoresis* as a coinherence that leads to the understanding of the Trinity as Person (Torrance, 1980b:173-174). It also considers the mystery of the love of God in the free outpouring of his grace in his determination to be one with his church through the incarnation in order to raise the church up into his eternal life and love (Torrance, 2001a:99).

The exegetical and biblical theological work in Chapter 3 assumed that any method for the evaluation of the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance’s theology should follow this threefold stratification of knowledge from exegetical study at the ground level, to biblical theology at the second level, to dogmatics on the third level. In terms of the missional nature of divine-human communion, it should be observed that the ground level flows out of the missional act of preaching of the gospel on the first level (1 John 1:3) which leads to divine-human communion as fellowship (*koinónia*, 1 John 1:3, 6) understood on the second level. This becomes the basis for deeper biblical understanding of the ontological Trinity and biblical referenced philosophizing at the higher theological level.

4.2.6 Conclusion

This section has focused on the Trinitarian foundation of Torrance's theological system as the first area of dogmatics for consideration in evaluating the missional nature of divine-human communion. It is predicated on his rejection of Western cultural dualism in favour of a unitary system premised on the axiom that God can only be known from a centre within himself through his self-revelation in Jesus Christ. This is best expressed in the Nicene understanding of the *homoousion*. Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity is the "basic grammar" of Torrance's theology and the centre from which all other doctrines, including his Christology, are derived. Torrance's theology is not reductionist or dualist but is fundamentally Trinitarian.

However, knowledge of God as he is in himself (*kata physin*) cannot be achieved without the grace of divine initiative. There is an epistemological inversion in operation in Torrance's theology because the God who reveals himself is also the subject of his revelation, making God both the subject and object of faith. This is entirely because of the integration of form and being. Through the *homoousion*, God's Being and Act are the same. The economic Trinity is thus identical with the ontological Trinity, giving all Torrance's theology a soteriological basis, which is predicated on faith. The essence of soteriology is situated in the eternal *perichoresis* as a communion of love out of which the love of God extends to humanity in and through the incarnation and draws humanity into relationship with him as *theosis* or divine-human communion.

The doctrine of the Trinity therefore gives to Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion an ontological foundation at the highest level of cognition, which has several outcomes for practice. Firstly, the conjunction of the ontological and economic Trinity in the incarnation leads Torrance to an integrated and holistic theology in which faith and practice, theology and mission are one. Consequently, the theology of the Trinity has a practical outcome in the life and mission of the church. Secondly, Torrance's stratification of knowledge roots theology in the faith and life of the church, making faith a prerequisite for all theological understanding and the basis of the mission of the church. Thirdly, the centrality of Christ in the incarnation renders Torrance's soteriology exclusivist so that there is no possibility of natural theology leading to knowledge of the triune God outside the special revelation of the Christ-event. Fourthly, the relationship between Creator and creation is integral to the gospel because all things were created in and through Christ. This again renders Torrance's soteriology exclusive but also suggests that a theology of mission as care of creation could be developed.

A further missional implication is Torrance's rather optimistic evaluation of the new paradigm in science, as a "cultural revolution" that he projected would bring about an integration of form and being in both science and theology. The rise of postmodernism at the end of the twentieth century has seen a move away from integration of form to a more piecemeal and fragmented philosophy of science and therefore to a disruption between science and theology. This leaves the question of the ability of Torrance's theology to evangelise the roots of Western culture hanging in the balance.

4.3 The Mystery of Christ

4.3.1 Introduction

The first section evaluated the ontological foundation of Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion and noted the centrality of the incarnation for all theological reflection. In this section, the focus is on the coordination of the ontological and economic implications of the person and work of Christ through the hypostatic union, expressed by Torrance as the "mystery of Christ". For Torrance (2009:328-329) the sense of mystery in the doctrine of Christ is concerned with an attitude of humility before the triune God as a type of apophatic thinking. He does not use the word in the traditional sense of mystical theology or Eastern mysticism but rather in the sense of worship and awe associated with the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity (Torrance, 2001a:74). For Torrance (1960a:82-92; 1992:64; 2008:164), *mysterion* equates *theosis* as the union of God and man eternally purposed in God and revealed in Jesus Christ, which gathers all into his body by adoption and creates room in estranged humanity for communion with God. Mystery therefore is the coordination of the ontological with the economic Trinity in the sphere of space and time through the incarnation (Torrance, 1982:23). As such, it is not cut off from the world but has practical soteriological implications.

Kettler (2011:484) commented that the categories of mystery in Torrance's Christology make a unique contribution to dogmatics, which has not been fully evaluated. Recently Habets (2013:par. 2949-3069) has attempted to undertake a more rigorous evaluation of mystery in Torrance's theology. He claims that Torrance emphasises noetic union to the neglect of mystical and spiritual union and maintains that this leads Torrance to a "partial and inaccurate" definition of mysticism and an *a priori* exclusion of "helpful mystical elements" in his theology. Unfortunately, Habets (2013:par. 3070; 3096) appears to have channelled Torrance's categories of mystery through his own understanding of the word, rendering his claim that Torrance is a mystical theologian *sui*

generis less than perspicuous. Torrance does not use the word “mystery” to imply traditional mysticism in any way and so he could not have included “helpful mystical elements”. Indeed, Torrance (1969b:81-82) views medieval mysticism and Protestant subjectivism as part of the inherited dualistic culture in which knowledge of God is separated from his objective Being. For Torrance (1969b:98), therefore, there needs to be a critical reconstruction of subjectivity in accordance with the nature of the object rather than a descent into “mystical elements”. It is the eternal nature of God as object in his self-giving in Christ that is the source of mystery.

This highlights the fact that divine-human communion is ultimately unfathomable to the human mind and belongs to the realm of Trinitarian glory to which the human response can only be one of praise and adoration (Torrance, 1982:141). This is not a “remaining Kierkegaardian-Barthian transcendentalism” that has forced a schism between the divine and the human, as was suggested by Morrison (1995:66). For Torrance (1960a:83), the mystery of the union of God and man in Jesus Christ is centred in the incarnation which functions like an axis thrust into the midst of humanity, making everything else derive significance from it. It stretches into eternity in the election of God but also manifests itself in history in the incarnation and the communion of the church with God in Christ through the Spirit. It is by the atonement and the work of the Spirit in bringing about divine-human communion as *koinónia* that humanity is restored to relation with God and the church becomes the sphere of relationship with God (Torrance, 2008:165; 1992:114; 1 John 1:7). Therefore, ultimately, the mystery of Christ is the revelation of the Spirit that enabled the apostles and disciples, after the resurrection, to see Jesus in the “third dimension” of his Trinitarian glory (Torrance, 2008:162). This Trinitarian centre of the mystery of Christ renders it impossible to divide Christology from soteriology or incarnation from atonement in Torrance’s thought (Pratz, 1998; McGrath, 1999:157; Eugenio, 2011:4).

The mechanics of the incarnation have no analogy in human experience or cognition and therefore, for Torrance, the question of “how” the Son of God became human is not appropriate. The only way to understand the mystery of Christ is to explore it in the way in which it is revealed in the history of revelation (Torrance, 2002a:108). Consequently, Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion is primarily rooted in exegesis and biblical theology, followed by dogmatic reflection on the themes presented by his biblical framework. This combination of biblical scholarship and dogmatic reflection is presented most fully in Torrance’s lectures in Christology and soteriology at New College, Edinburgh (1952-1987), edited by Walker and published as *Incarnation: the person and life of Christ* (2008) and *Atonement: the person and work of Christ* (2009). Molnar (2010:228) commends Torrance’s “scriptural exegesis” in

Incarnation as that which takes seriously both the Jesus of history and the theology of the New Testament. These exegesis-based works are the main source for analysis of the missional nature of divine human communion in this section. Reference is also made to briefer and consequently less exegetically based work on the mystery of Christ in Torrance's Auburn lectures (1938-1939) published as *The doctrine of Jesus Christ* (2002) as well as *Conflict and agreement in the church*, 2 (1960a), and *The mediation of Christ* (1992).

Torrance divides his theology of the mystery of Christ into three categories that encompass the role of the persons of the Trinity as firstly, Jesus Christ, the key to the mystery (*mysterion*), secondly, the election of Christ as *prothesis* (God the Father), and thirdly, the communion of Christ as *koinónia* in the Spirit. In this section, the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's Christology is evaluated under these headings. The concepts of the mystery of Christ are in turn organised in accordance with the pattern suggested by 2 Cor 8:9, "For you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that by his poverty you might become rich" (Torrance, 2002a:108; 2008:74). The categories are evaluated as the mystery of faith, the mystery of grace, the mystery of hypostatic union, the mystery of condescension, the mystery of substitution and the mystery of union with Christ. Within these areas of analysis, the biblical theological themes and dogmatic concepts raised in Chapter 3 form an integral part of the evaluative process.

4.3.2 *Mysterion* -Jesus Christ

In the gospels, Jesus holds the mystery of the kingdom as the "messianic secret" which is gradually, but not fully, revealed through the parables (Torrance, 1960a:61). Because the incarnate Word of the kingdom can only be revealed to humanity by means of analogical speech, the parables have meaning both on the level of analogy and of revelation. Torrance (1960a:62) maintains that parables are therefore always sacramental because they are designed to confront hearers with the revelation of Jesus Christ. However, in the gospels, the mystery cannot be fully understood as long as Jesus' mission from the Father is incomplete (Torrance, 2008:161). Only after Jesus' death and resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit can the disciples understand the mystery in Trinitarian dimension (Torrance, 2008:162). The revelation of the messianic secret as the mystery of Christ is therefore integrally bound up with the mission of Jesus from the Father to bring reconciliation to the world.

In 2 Cor 8:9, Paul reminds his readers that they “know” the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word *ginōskō* (know) implies not just intellectual knowledge, but a personal connection between the knower and the known in terms of the establishment of relationship (Vine, 1940). To know the grace of God means that the Corinthians have a living and personal faith. This mystery of faith as the gift of God is in all Torrance’s work the basis for theological understanding of God in Christ (Torrance, 2008:88; cf. Molnar’s (2003) comparison of the historical reality of faith in all Torrance’s work with Haight’s human experience based faith). In the Auburn Lectures, Torrance (2002a:14) shows that a purely “historical” apprehension of Christ can only render Christ human. Instead, Christ has to be comprehended by faith through his self-revelation as recorded in the New Testament witness. In Torrance’s (2002a:9) work, the premise for all study of the nature of Christ is faith through a real encounter with the risen Christ. However, the initiative for faith does not lie on the side of a human “decision” for Christ, although a decision has to be made. Rather, faith is the gift of God because God can only be known by divine initiative, rather than in the action of humanity in reaching out to God (Torrance, 2002a:15, 20; 2008:26).

For Torrance, faith is an essential element of the covenant relationship. The post Fall world is one in which humanity has broken God’s covenant and destroyed the communion with God (Torrance, 2008:35). Christ descended into the world as God the Son and lived a life of full obedience, thus fulfilling the covenant will of God from the side of humanity (Torrance, 2008:114, 340). In his covenant faithfulness, Christ clothed himself with humanity and lifted it up to communion with the Father. It is, therefore, the faithfulness of Christ that forms the basis for the “mystery of faith” on which Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion is built. Torrance’s preferred translation of Gal 2:20 shows this emphasis, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live *by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me*” (own italics; Torrance, 2008:340). In the New Testament, Jesus Christ as the Word of God incarnate is both the object and subject of faith and is only known by faith in and through his saving action. This concept of the faith basis of all knowledge of Christ was observed in the New Testament exegetical passages of 1 Pet 2:4-12 and 1 John 1:1-7 as the foundation for relationship with God in Christ.

Personal and corporate knowledge of Christ as the object and subject of faith is the mystery of the “grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 8:9). The mystery of grace is summed up for Torrance (1959b:lxv; 2009:7) in one covenant of grace that operates throughout human history. Torrance therefore holds to the unity of the historico-redemptive movement in the Old and New

Testaments through the incarnation. Consequently, the covenant of grace is one movement of God's grace to renew the relationship broken by the Fall and to restore humanity into communion with himself (Torrance, 2008:44-45). The history of Israel is the precursor of the incarnation through its threefold office of prophet, priest and king, established through the covenant at Sinai (Torrance, 2008:45; cf. Exod 19-24). This was fulfilled in Christ in the establishment of a new covenant in his blood (Torrance, 2009:10). Within the covenant, God reveals himself by entering into a subject-object relationship with his people, which then becomes the sphere of promise and fulfilment of that covenant. This leads to its full realisation in Christ who is both the embodiment of God's Word to humanity and the embodiment of humanity's word to God.

Torrance (2008:44) argues that the covenant is seminal to understanding the mystery of Christ because it grounds the mystery of divine-human communion in space and time through the history of Israel. In section 4.2.3, it was observed that for Torrance there is no gospel unless there is a bond between the ontological and economic Trinity. It is the covenant of grace realised in the incarnation that forms the "bond" that brings about the conjunction between the ontological and economic Trinity in its mission to redeem the world through the mystery of Christ. As a result, there is an integration of theology (the ontological Trinity) and mission (the economic Trinity) through the *homoousion*. The covenant is therefore of vital import to Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion and can be seen as a hermeneutical "metanarrative" in his thought.

There is an integral link between covenant and grace throughout Torrance's work. This is especially seen in the connection between covenant and atonement as justification (Torrance, 2009:117). In a discussion on justification and the law, Torrance contrasts the old covenant with the new, noting that the coming of Christ as holy God to deal with sin changed God's covenantal relationship with humanity. The difference between the two covenants is the difference between the administration *through* law in the old covenant (and not *of* law) and the administration by grace in the new covenant (Torrance, 2009:117). In reality, both covenants are administrations of grace but it is the cross as the revelation of a righteousness that breaks through into human history with a "miraculous" forgiveness that sets the life of the church on a completely new ethical basis (Torrance, 2009:118). Torrance maintains that such forgiveness cannot be demonstrated in moral terms but can only be believed as the reality that the grace of God has overtaken humanity. As Thimell (2008:30) observed, for Torrance, faith is not a condition of grace but a response to grace. This brings Torrance's Christology back to the arena of mystery as an act of God that

cannot be fully understood but which can be accepted as an objective act of God making peace with mankind through the reality of his gracious self-giving on the cross (Torrance, 2009:119).

The mystery of the hypostatic union in 2 Cor 8:9 is the designation of the “Lord Jesus Christ” as *kurios*, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew YHWH. As has been noted in section 4.2.3, the key to understanding of the person of Christ in Torrance’s theology is the unitary nature of the Father/Son relationship that falls within the Being of God. The doctrine of Christ is therefore the mystery of true divine nature and true human nature in one person (Torrance, 2008:83). This is best explained in terms of the Greek concepts of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*, which reveal the “inner logic of grace” embodied in the incarnation (Torrance, 1998:55). By *anhypostasia*, Torrance (1959a:242; 2009:84) shows that Christ’s assumption of human nature had no separate or independent existence outside union with God, meaning that Christ is truly God. By *enhypostasia*, he shows that human nature of Christ was given real substance in the hypostatic union, meaning that Christ was truly human. These two terms are inseparable and find their fullest meaning in the application of the atonement.

Considering the term *hilasmos* as propitiation (1 John 2:2), Torrance observes that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself and yet at the same time, Jesus is in himself the *hilasmos*. Because *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* are inseparable, there is only one act of the God-man at the cross (Torrance, 1959a:243). Through both the incarnate life and work of Christ, the atonement is therefore both the realization of the covenant will and the faithfulness of God in the covenant in the fulfilment of judgement and the restoration of humanity to communion with God (Torrance, 2009:9). Both the promises and the commands of the covenant are fulfilled in the self-giving of God to humanity to establish covenant communion with God through his Son, the mediator. It is precisely for this reason that Watts (2012:44-45) maintains that Torrance is able to resolve the tension between the universality of the cross and the particularity of human response. This also answers McGowan’s (2004:13) questions about the relationship between universal incarnational union and spiritual union. The key is the human response of faith engendered through the Holy Spirit as a response of obedience to the divine act of obedience already made on the cross.

As a result, the hypostatic union can be seen from two sides: as the covenant faithfulness of the Son to God and as the covenant faithfulness of the Son to humanity (Torrance, 2008:114, 129). As God, Christ lived a life of redeeming obedience that was a reflection of the divine glory and restored the lost image of God in humanity. His baptism to fulfil all righteousness was on behalf

of his people and his faith together with his obedient life as the Son of God opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers (Torrance, 2008:125). From the side of man, he acts as the high priest who uncovers and bears sin and intercedes for sinners with the Father (Torrance, 2008:146). At the same time, he is the royal king who brings the active presence of God into the midst of humanity in his person and work (Torrance, 2008:138).

For Torrance, knowledge of the Father and the Son arises together but it is mediated through the Son as the controlling centre of revelation and reconciliation because Jesus in his hypostatic union is the content of both revelation and reconciliation. The mystery of hypostatic union is therefore the point of coordination between the ontological and economic aspects of the Trinity. The person and work of Christ are one, and so incarnation and atonement must be understood both soteriologically and dynamically (Torrance, 1992:56; 2008:85). The hypostatic union acts as the means of reconciling and sanctifying union with God. In *The mediation of Christ* (1992:64), Torrance narrates the story of a dying soldier who asked him, “Is God really like Jesus?” Torrance (1992:64) assured him that the face of Jesus is identical with God so that the people of God share in the inner life of God through communion with him. Thus Torrance (1992:66) argues that union with God in Christ is in fact the goal of reconciliation, making divine-human communion the goal of the proclamation of the gospel, as was observed in 1 John 1:3.

The mystery of condescension flows out of the mystery of hypostatic union. Christ laid aside his riches to become poor in a movement of descent to the world in order to lift up humanity into his riches. This is the mystery of the covenant love of God in his self-emptying and humility so that he is not an impassible deity remote from human pain but one who chooses freely to interact with the world (Torrance, 2001a:4). Torrance (2008:74-45) comments that in Phil 2:5-11, the servant of God emptied himself out of the glory of his heavenly form (*morphē*) into an inglorious earthly *morphē*, humbling himself into human form. For Torrance (2008:76), this is not *kenosis*, an act of Christ emptying himself of his divine nature, but rather the veiling of his glory in an act of condescension. This is a mystery, achieved in the power of the Holy Spirit, which flows from the will of God in his love. The incarnational descent of the servant was a descent into the depths of sinful humanity and death so that humanity might ascend in Christ into his glory and communion with the Father (Torrance, 2008:77). The humanity of Christ is thus a movement of revelation and reconciliation achieved through his self-humbling life and death so that humanity is raised up to share in his exaltation and glory (Torrance, 2008:81-82). As Kirkpatrick (2009:77) has observed, the mystery of the love of God in his self-humbling is for Torrance is an expression of the self-

giving “agape” love of Trinitarian interrelationships that extend outwards in acts of reconciliation.

Flowing out of the humility of Christ is the mystery of substitution because Christ’s humiliation was “for your sakes” (2 Cor 8:9). The mystery of substitution in Torrance’s work is most characteristically expressed using Calvin’s concepts of the “one for the many” and the “wondrous exchange”. Here incorporation and substitution are closely intertwined with mystery and therefore substitution is the basis for entry into divine-human communion (Torrance, 1959a:245; McGrath, 1999:157). Substitution combines the vicarious life of Christ on behalf of humanity and the vicarious death of Christ for humanity, thus bringing together both incarnational substitution and penal substitution in the hypostatic union of God and man. Redemption is the act of God in vicariously taking the place of the humanity in its entirety from birth to death in order to give to the believer God’s place (Torrance, 2008:52). The atoning exchange is the process whereby Christ assumes sinful flesh, without becoming sinful himself, in order to transform that flesh after his own likeness by a process of substitution (Torrance, 2008:63). Torrance does not imply by this that Christ’s human nature was flawed, as implied by Macleod (2000:57), but rather that Christ took on humanity completely, in all its frailty, in a “wondrous exchange” that effected reconciliation with God and restored access into his presence as his children (Torrance, 2009:151).

McGowan’s (2004:17) claim that Torrance presents union with Christ in such a way as to obviate the need for a forensic explanation of the atonement is misleading. Equally so, is Letham’s (1993:358) claim that in Torrance’s work, the “cross is quietly pushed into the background”. In his lectures on the *Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, Torrance (2002a:166) argues that the cross of Christ has both forensic and incarnational implications because of the dual nature of sin. When sin is conceived of from God’s vantage point, God himself provides the means of propitiation in the vicarious life and death of Jesus Christ. However, when sin is considered as the action of humanity against God, then the cross must be seen as satisfaction with penal application (Torrance, 2002a:171). In *Incarnation* (2008:155) Torrance maintains that Christ deliberately provoked evil to its final reaction by invading the realm of the “strong man” in order to bind him by the suffering and love that culminated in the cross and the atonement. In *Atonement* (2009:68), he maintains the dual forensic and incarnational nature of the atonement through the Old Testament concepts of *kopher* (the forensic act of expiation) and *kipper* (the priestly act of restoration of fellowship with God). For Torrance (1965:156; 2009:69) this dual position on the atonement is present both in the book of Hebrews and the Johannine writings (cf. 3.2.4). Thus, for

Torrance (2009:72), the atonement may not be thought of in purely forensic terms. It is for this reason that his theology is often seen to emphasise incarnational atonement at the expense of forensic atonement (Molnar, 2009:337).

The incarnational nature of the atonement can be seen in Torrance's (2009:126-127) understanding of the mystery of substitution in Rom 5 as the doctrine of "the one for the many". Torrance notes that Paul argues that as Adam was created by the word of God and in the image of God, true humanity resides in the word of God. In the incarnation of the word, Christ became "proper man", the new Adam representing all humanity from the inner depths of human being. In his substitutionary death on the cross, Christ remained fully God and thus conquered sin and death by his resurrection from the dead. This was evidence of both the passive obedience of Christ in submission to the will of the Father and the active obedience of Christ in the offering of himself (Torrance, 2009:213, 215). The act of justification was entirely a corporate act. As Creator and head of the human race as the new Adam, Christ died for all humanity, the one for the many (Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:2), meaning that humanity in its totality is involved in the act of justification of the one man because all came under his substitutionary atonement (Torrance, 2009:128).

As a result, Torrance (1996a) maintains that there is no possibility of accepting a theory of limited atonement, thus setting his theology at variance with the tradition of Scottish Westminster theology (cf. Macleod, 2000:57). Torrance (1996a:249-250) contends that all moves towards limited atonement are in fact in opposition to the universal free offer of the gospel and as such, are "anti-missionary". Unless Christ died for all, substitutionary atonement breaks up the wholeness of justification and destroys it. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that Torrance's defence of corporate justification in *Atonement* (2009:129) is poorly worded, occasioning an editorial cross-reference to a clarifying article on the mission of the church (Torrance, 2009:129 n.82). It can, nevertheless, be deduced that Torrance (2009:129) holds that corporate justification is universalised among humanity by incorporation into Christ (and thereby into the church) by the Spirit through faith. This is the conclusion reached by Habets (2008b:340) who links the Holy Spirit with election in order to differentiate Torrance's commitment to universal atonement and not universal election.

It is from Torrance's rejection of limited atonement that critics have accused him of universalism (cf. 2.5.5). McGowan (1998), in particular, criticises the distinction Torrance (1996a:223-251) makes in his history of Scottish theology, between the evangelistic "older Scottish tradition" of

Calvin and Knox and the rationalist “hyper-Calvinist tradition” with its stress on “absolute particular predestination behind the back of Jesus Christ”. Torrance (1996a:250) argues that Scottish theology had to break with the doctrine of limited atonement, as it was interpreted by the Federal theologians, in order to be ready to engage in the missionary movement of the nineteenth century. McGowan (1998:78, 80) claims that Torrance’s interpretation of limited atonement in Scottish theology, is “biased”, inaccurate and unduly influenced by the theology of Karl Barth. McGowan, however, has not recognised that Torrance’s concern with limited atonement in Scottish theology is not abstractly propositional, but characteristically missional (Torrance, 1996a:229 cf. Newlands, 1998:460).

Letham (2013:454) accuses Torrance of incoherence at this point. He claims that Torrance cannot deny limited atonement and defend universal salvation from a “centre in Christ” because, if it is possible for people to reject Christ, then the atonement cannot have been complete for them. As a result, he claims that Torrance breaks down rational discourse on the basis of a “privileged and precious gnosis”. However, Letham himself falls into the “rationalising trap” that Torrance (2009:187) claims subjects the mystery of the atonement to the rationalism of human thought. Walker (*in* Torrance, 2009:188 n.70) notes that for Torrance, understanding the cross requires the subjection of human reason to the “mystery of Christ” and seeking to understand it without any attempt at rationalising schema. Instead, natural reason needs to be “crucified with Christ” so that the inner logic of the Scriptures can guide understanding. For Torrance (1959b:lxix), all systematic presentation of knowledge must leave room for the nature of Christ as mystery, so it is in this respect that Torrance is able to hold to universal atonement.

The final phrase, “so that you might become rich”, (2 Cor 8:9) speaks of the mystery of union with Christ through which the believer, by grace and by means of Christ’s condescension, is raised up in Christ into the richness of the life of the triune God. This ascent into the presence of God through the Holy Spirit is effected by the power of the resurrection and realised by faith. Torrance (2008:97) understands the resurrection in the same light as the virgin birth in that they both reveal the mystery of Christ. The union of God and man begun in the birth of Christ as “God with us” is finally achieved on God’s side and on man’s side in the crucifixion and resurrection, bringing to fulfilment the covenant love of God in full justification and reconciliation (Torrance, 2009:227).

The importance of the resurrection for Torrance’s theology of mystery as union with Christ cannot be overstated (cf. Molnar, 2003:158, 162). It is the fulfilment of the redeeming purposes

of God in Christ and as such can only be considered in terms of the hypostatic union of his divine and human natures (Torrance, 2009:209). It is in the resurrection that Christ is revealed as God in his power and capacity to enact victory over the forces of sin and darkness in humanity through union with him in his vicarious suffering and death. It is in the physical resurrection of Christ that justification finds its fulfilment (2009:225). The mystery of union with Christ shows that justification is not simply a forensic event centred the crucifixion but also an incarnational event based on the whole atoning life and death of Christ through the mystery of substitution (Torrance, 1959b:cxi; 2009:224-225). Through the resurrection, the believer comes to share in the benefits and blessings of Christ. This is the exaltation of humanity to be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4) through sharing in the life and love of God embodied in Christ (Torrance, 2009:231).

The significance of the resurrection as the historical basis of faith was seen in the exegesis of 1 Pet 2:4-12 where the “new birth” is predicated on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as the basis for salvation and the benefits of communion with God in Christ. Correspondingly, in 1 John 1:1-7, the eyewitness proclamation of the apostles concerning the resurrection was seen to be the basis for faith and entry into *koinónia*. In both passages, union with Christ as a result of the resurrection was replete with new exodus imagery of victory over the kingdom of darkness and entry into the kingdom of light, which echoed the poetic words of the Sinai covenant summary (Exod 19:4). For Torrance (2008:239f), the image of darkness points to the “dark side” of the human predicament in its evil and brokenness, while the light points to the breaking in of the kingdom of God into human darkness through the cross and resurrection. Torrance (1988:12) understands Jesus Christ as the word of God in terms of God’s uncreated light being made visible to the world through audition and perceived only by faith (1 John 1:2-3). Torrance’s (1981b:161) treatment of light does not make the connection with the second exodus but considers light as the breaking in of eternal life in the Son, as was seen in 1 John 1:1-7. For Habets (2013:par. 2939) light is another category of the mystery of union with Christ in Torrance’s theology.

The ascension is a further aspect of the mystery of union with Christ. The ascended Christ in his hypostatic union is both the word from God and the word to God on behalf of humanity (Torrance, 2009:278). As the ascended Lord, he is head of the church that exists in a relationship of *koinónia* with him in the Spirit. Through the Spirit, the Word is sent back to earth to be proclaimed to all nations (Torrance, 2009:278-279). Thus the ascension initiates an eschatological gap in time during which the grace of God enables the church to participate in mission to the world (Torrance, 2009:435; Fergusson, 2012:101). The purpose of the ascension is therefore the same as the purpose of Christ’s life on earth, namely the revelation of God and the redemption of

humanity. Through union with Christ, the church takes on his passion for the salvation of all people because his propitiation is for the sins of the whole world (Torrance, 2002a:196; 1 John. 2:2). In addition, Torrance (2002a:194) shows that the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest and king runs together in and through the ascension. The prophetic role of Christ is found in his teaching ministry recorded in the gospels, the priestly ministry of Christ was effected on the cross and his kingship is realised through the resurrection and ascension. Thus, the ascension speaks of the coming kingdom of God and necessitates the mission of the church as it waits for the Second Coming.

Ultimately, the claim by Morrison (1995) that Torrance's theology of the mystery of Christ leads to an incipient dualism where knowledge of God and the Christ-event are separated is refuted through the mystery of union with Christ. The insertion of the *homoousion* into space-time in the incarnation by substitutionary atonement, which is appropriated by faith, brings about a conjunction of the ontological and economic Trinity so there is unity between the Christ-event and knowledge of God. This allows Torrance's theology to move out in mission and evangelism, calling people to saving knowledge of God in Christ. Torrance's treatment of the categories of the mystery of Christ does not lead his theology away from evangelism, but rather establishes the missional base for his theology of divine-human communion.

4.3.3 *Prothesis* -God the Father

Prothesis is the mystery of Christ in its eternal dimensions. Torrance (1960a:86-88; 2008:168-171) examines the mystery of the eternal election of Christ as *prothesis* meaning both God's eternal purpose in Christ (2 Tim 1:9-10) and God's eternal "setting forth" of Christ (Rom 3:24). Torrance (1960a:86) understands the eternal purpose of God to be the election of Christ in eternity for the outworking of the divine will to restore all things in heaven and on earth to himself. The incarnation of Christ is therefore the eternal *prothesis* of the love of God in his interpersonal relations, reaching out into space and time to restore humanity to communion with himself (Torrance, 2008:169). For Torrance (2008:177), the life of Christ on earth was the result of an eternal decision (*prothesis*) which God had purposed from all eternity. However, it is important to note that Torrance (1959b:lxix; 2008:179) does not imply by this an eternal covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son prior to the covenant of grace as put forward by Federal Theology. Torrance's concern with Federal Theology is that it relegates God's role in salvation to a place outside space and time that is abstracted from the incarnation. In accordance with his unified theology, Torrance (2008:178) maintains that salvation cannot be

dependent on any background decision that is not identical with the foreground, which is the actual person of Christ, God's eternal purpose to bring all humanity into communion with himself in his Son, Jesus Christ.

The second meaning of *prothesis* is the "setting forth" of Christ as propitiation for the sins of the world (Torrance, 1960a:87; cf. 1 Pet 2:6). Torrance (1960a:87; 2008:169) infers from exegesis of Rom 3:24 that the idea of the "setting forth" of Christ derives from the "mercy seat" in the Old Testament where the blood of the covenant is "set forth" to make atonement and where God communes with his people in covenant relationship. Consequently, Torrance links atonement and divine-human communion through covenant. In his incarnation, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ became the propitiation by means of which humanity is restored to communion with God. Atonement therefore has a dual function, both as forensic propitiation (*hilasmos*) and as reconciliation which brings about union with Christ (*katallaso*). In terms of the covenant, propitiation through the blood of Christ is the love of God expressed in his covenant will and reconciliation is the covenant mercy of God expressed in his assumption of the sinner into fellowship (Torrance, 2009:148-149).

Therefore, *prothesis* refers to the eternal election of Christ and the fact that his purpose in atonement is "set forth" in the incarnation, resulting in communion with God that is experienced in the *koinónia* of the church (Torrance, 2008:171). The *prothesis* or election of grace is actualised in the church through fellowship and so the church is the doctrine of corporate election moving into history as the body of Christ (Torrance, 2008:179-180). There is no differentiation in Torrance's theology between the people of the church and the people of faith (Van Genderen & Velema, 2008: 567). The atonement as both propitiation and reconciliation always evokes the response of faith as both the faithfulness of God in Christ and as answering human faithfulness (Torrance, 2009:103). Through the mystery of *prothesis* as the election of Christ, by means of the faith response, divine-human communion takes on a corporate nature in the church.

Kettler (2011:484) believes that Torrance was influenced by Barth's doctrine of election, although he declares that Torrance is not a "Barthian". However, Kettler does not provide evidence for this. Barth (1957:101-103) maintains that before the creation of the world, God determined in his freedom and love that Jesus Christ would act graciously towards the uncreated world in order to bring it into communion with himself by means of a covenant actualised by his own self-offering. Jesus Christ was the election of God in his grace towards humanity and because he is God, he is also the electing God. Thus, Christ is both the elected one and the elected

God (Barth, 1957:101-346). In Jesus Christ, all humanity is elected because the object of the divine covenant is the salvation of all (Barth, 1957:116). The obverse of this is that none is reprobate but all remain elected by God in Jesus Christ because even their rejection is borne and cancelled by Jesus Christ (Barth, 1957:306). The difference between the elect and the rejected is in calling. By the work of the Holy Spirit, those who are called are assured of their election by their faith in Jesus Christ (Barth, 1957:345).

Torrance's (2008:113) theology is in essence similar to Barth's in that he holds to Jesus Christ as both electing God and elected one. The difference is the way in which Torrance deals with reprobation. For Torrance (2008:251) the reprobate are those who remain under curse outside the covenant relationship and are banished to the denial of their being in God and to an eternal darkness outside the saving grace of God in Christ. For Torrance, God's election through his covenant with humanity intensifies sin and the enmity between God and people because God's love wills that people should not escape his election of grace. Those who resist the grace to bring them into covenant relationship in the election of Jesus Christ remain under judgement and in a state of reprobation (Torrance, 2008:110). In this way, the election of Christ becomes a sign that is spoken against (Lk 2:34), reminiscent of the stumbling block of 1 Pet 2:7. In the light of the coming judgement, it is inconceivable that anyone should reject the love that brings humanity into the mystery of union with God in Christ (Torrance, 2008:114). This gives Torrance a stronger mission imperative than Barth, although Flett (2011:213) maintains that Barth's doctrine of the missionary election of Christ has a correspondence in human mission.

4.3.4 *Koinónia* –The Holy Spirit

The third aspect of the mystery of Christ is *koinónia*, meaning participation through the Spirit in Jesus Christ. This is expressed as participation in the union between God and humanity in Christ and participation in the fellowship of the church as the communion that exists between members of the body of Christ (Torrance, 1960a:88). Participation in the Spirit therefore implies both vertical and horizontal dimensions of relationship. Vertically, it is about union with Christ and communion with the triune God in his interTrinitarian relations of love and horizontally it is about communion with the body of Christ as the earthly and heavenly church throughout the ages (Torrance, 2008:172). This cannot be understood in any dualistic way as separate movements of the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit, but as one movement of grace from *perichoresis* as the dynamic movement of love of the Godhead (Torrance, 2001a:171,192).

The importance of the Holy Spirit in Torrance's theology of divine-human communion is well-established (Kruger, 1990:369; Colyer, 2001a:211; Walker, 2012:51). It brings the mystery of Christ into Trinitarian perspective and relieves Torrance's theology of the accusation of "Christomonism". Nonetheless, MacLean's (2012:199) contention that Torrance's "relative neglect" of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit leads him to an "over-determined Christology" and neglect of the doctrine of final judgement needs to be considered. In order to do this, this section considers firstly Torrance's doctrine of the Holy Spirit in his *homoousial* relations with the Father and the Son, secondly the function of the Holy Spirit within the economic Trinity and thirdly the role of the Holy Spirit in lifting the church up into communion with the Father.

Torrance (2001a:192) situates *koinónia* in the inner relations of the Trinity as the eternal *koinónia* that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Torrance's (2001a:193) concern is that the relations between the persons of the Godhead should not be subordinated in any way that reduces the *homoousion* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit because the *homoousion* is essential for the gospel. Taking his cue from Athanasius, Torrance (1993a:231) shows that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son and so the *homoousion* means that the Holy Spirit is God (Torrance, 1993a:233). The implication is that there is one activity of God that is manifest in three distinct functions of the three persons that form a unitary movement from the Father through the Son and in the Spirit (Torrance, 1993a:236).

Torrance (2001a:190) further maintains that the *filioque* clause inserted into the Nicene Creed is important because it declares the lordship of the Spirit. The *homoousial* relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son cuts behind the *filioque* controversy regarding the procession of the Spirit because the Spirit proceeds from the Son in a relation of unity with the Father. Thus there cannot be any dualist thinking in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit but only a holistic thinking whereby the Spirit proceeds from the coinherent relations of the three divine persons or from the one Monarchy of the triune God (Torrance, 2001a:190). The *homoousion* therefore protects Torrance's theology of divine-human communion from the criticism of an over-determined Christology because the Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son. This is important for Torrance's (1998:61; 2001a:162) understanding of the mission of God proceeding from the inner relations of love of the triune God towards the church and effecting a corresponding movement of love from the church to God in the Spirit.

In terms of the economic role of the Spirit, there is no separation between the lordship of the Spirit and his Sonship in Christ (Torrance, 1959b:xcvi). The sovereign rule of the Spirit inheres in

the Word made incarnate in the Son, meaning that Word and Spirit cannot be separated. Therefore, the Spirit cannot be conceived of as a separate entity because he is of essence the Spirit of Christ (Torrance, 1959b:xcviii). This means that the mystery of the union of God and humanity in Christ is inserted into the midst of the world by the *homoousial* relation of the Spirit to the Godhead, both in terms of revelation and reconciliation (Torrance, 2008:172-173). It is through the Spirit that the atonement is made effective and in the atonement, that God is known as Trinity (Torrance, 1992:123). Thus Torrance maintains that the Trinity belongs to the inner heart of the Christian message of salvation so that without the saving work of the Holy Spirit, there would be no gospel message (Torrance, 1992:123). The insertion of the oneness of God into the depths of humanity through the activity of the Spirit results in *koinónia* which is made possible by the atonement and realised in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as the church continues in the fellowship of Word and sacrament (Torrance, 1960a:91; 2008:172; 1 John 1:1-7).

The economy of the Spirit has both objective and subjective dimensions (Torrance, 1959b:ciii). Firstly, it is objective in its application of the finished work of Christ to the church. The threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest and king is a correlate of the work of the Spirit in redemption. As prophet, he is the “quickening Spirit” of the Word, as priest, he applies the blood of the covenant through the atonement to cover sin and as king, he applies Christ’s victory over the powers of darkness to deliver his people from the bondage of sin and bring them into the kingdom of light (Torrance, 2009:39; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John. 1:5-6). Secondly, the economy of the Spirit enables the church to receive the fruit of the work of Christ subjectively as the Spirit creates the response of faith that enables the church to worship, give thanks and pray (Torrance, 1959b:ciii-cv). This is not a subjectivity that involves a human-centred response. The response of the church in the Spirit is in actuality not its own, but a participation in the vicarious response of Christ in his own reception of the Spirit at baptism (Torrance, 2001a:148). The Spirit is the operative force of the presence of God in the life of the church and the operative force in the raising up of the church into the communion of the internal relations of the Trinity. It is a subjectivity that is grounded in the objectivity of the incarnation.

Torrance’s work has been criticised for elimination of the personal subjective appropriation of the benefits of Christ and situating the whole *ordo salutis* objectively in Christ’s vicarious life applied through the Spirit (Cassidy, 2008:192; McGowan, 2004:17). If Torrance has indeed eliminated all subjective response, there would be little imperative to call for individual response in the preaching of the gospel. Certainly, Torrance does seem at times to react against a theology of individual subjective appropriation of the benefits of Christ:

In theology we have to do with a divine Object that demands and creates reciprocity so that our knowledge of God involves right from the start a union and not a disjunction between subject and object, and yet a union in which God is not entangled in our subjectivity (Torrance, 1969b:307).

Torrance's concern, however, is that the difference between God and the human subject should be maintained so that the self does not hide the reality that is God (Torrance, 1969b:309). This is not to eliminate subjective appropriation but only to root it in the grace of God in Jesus Christ, as Torrance's own preaching shows. His method of presenting the gospel is focused on the unconditional grace of God in Jesus Christ that demands an individual response of belief in what Christ has already accomplished and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable that response (Torrance, 2010:30). Torrance is aware that failure to respond to the person and work of Christ on behalf of the world is to face damnation and the unconditional judgement of God on sin and evil through the cross. As a result, Torrance answers both MacLean's criticism regarding his "neglect of divine judgement" and Cassidy's criticism of his neglect of subjective appropriation. There is no dualist differentiation between his theology and practice because the judgement of God requires an individual subjective faith-response.

The third role of the Holy Spirit is to raise the church up into communion with God. For Torrance (1959b:cvi) the union of the church with Christ in the Spirit and the raising up of the church into the communion of the Trinity is the essence of mystery of Christ and as such is correlative to the incarnation and atonement. This is both through "carnal union with Christ" in his human life in the Spirit that sanctifies the church and also through "spiritual union with Christ" as the blessings extended to the church through the work of Christ in atonement. Once again, this has covenantal overtones for Torrance. Salvation is not dependent on the act of believing but on the faithful covenant fulfilling life and death of Christ on behalf of the church (Torrance, 1959b:cix). It is particularly in terms of the covenant relationship that Torrance conceives of the mission of the Spirit.

For Torrance (1959a:25), the mission of the Holy Spirit inaugurated at Pentecost and the sending of the apostles are two parts of the same movement that is grounded in the new covenant which Christ established in his body and blood. The apostles had a special place in the inauguration of the new covenant at the Last Supper and through their relation to God incarnate, they are therefore the foundation of the new Israel as the church. It is the covenanted faithfulness of Christ that holds the new covenant secure (Torrance, 1959a:25). As part of the covenant, God sent his Holy Spirit to the church, founded on the apostles, so that it could have communion with Christ

and share historically in his obedience (1 John.1:3). Communion with God in the Spirit is the inner form of this participation in Christ, while the outward form is to be found in the sacraments (Torrance, 1959a:26). This is considered further in an examination of the mission of the church in section 4.4.4.

The Holy Spirit is mediated to the church in God's *oikonomia* by Christ in both his divine and human natures (Torrance, 1965:243). As God, Christ gives the Spirit but as man, Christ received the Spirit into his human nature so that he might mediate it to the church (Torrance, 1965:248). However, the Spirit could only be mediated through the glorification of Christ because it was only through the atonement worked out through the human and divine natures of Christ that the Holy Spirit could live with sinful humanity. The implication for the worship of the church is that the Holy Spirit comes from God, unites the church in the worship and prayer of Jesus and returns to God, thus raising the church up in Jesus to participate in the worship of heaven and in the eternal communion of the Trinity, as was noted by Colyer (2001a:225). At the same time, the Spirit renews the church in holiness by drawing it into the self-consecration of Christ (Torrance, 1965:250). Holiness is therefore one of the marks of the church in the Spirit (1 Pet 1:16).

The primary activity of the Spirit in the life of the church is to bear witness to Christ as the Word from the Father (Torrance, 1993a:247). Consequently, there is little in Torrance's work that develops a pneumatology that is distinct from either his Christology or missional ecclesiology. When the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, he bore witness to Christ and also enabled the disciples to bear witness to Christ by creating in them a sphere of *koinónia* where Christ was heard and continues to be heard (Torrance, 1965:253; Molnar, 2009:194; 1 John 1:3; 7). At the same time, it is the work of the Spirit to call the church out of the world as the place of God's presence among humanity in which God bears witness to himself (Torrance, 1965:254). Thus Torrance sees a dual nature to the work of the Spirit in mission, both to enable the church to bear witness through proclamation in the world but also to allow God to bear witness to himself in the separation of holiness of the people of God in the world (1 Pet 2:9-12). Ultimately, these two concepts are one as it is only the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit that enables the incarnate Word to be proclaimed by the church and therefore confront the world directly through witness (Torrance, 1965:257). He is both the one sent by Christ and the response to that sending in the form of worship and witness, so that the church is enabled to fulfil its mission to the glory of God (Torrance, 1965:242).

The mystery of the Holy Spirit as he proceeds from the Father and lifts up the church into to the Father is the act of *theosis* (Torrance, 1965:243). Hart (2008:83) noted the necessity of revelation and reconciliation as the foundation of *theosis* that is mediated by the incarnate Son, showing that Torrance's doctrine of *theosis* is fundamentally Trinitarian and essentially soteriological, although he did not follow Torrance's line through into the mission of the church. However, there is another side to *koinónia*. The Spirit, who by *theosis* brings believers into relationship with God in Christ, also creates a horizontal fellowship within the communion of believers who participate jointly in the mystery of union with Christ. The full extent of Torrance's doctrine of the church as the body of Christ through union with him and joint communion with the one another is fundamental to the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's work and as such is dealt with under a separate heading in 4.4.3. However, suffice to note here that the horizontal dimension of *koinónia* is realised through joint participation in the vicarious life, death and resurrection of the Son of God, accomplished after the ascension in the pouring out of the Spirit on the church as a community of those who are at one with God through the reconciliation of Christ (Torrance, 1960a:91).

4.3.5 Conclusion

The missional nature of divine-human communion is realised in *koinónia* as vertical union with God and horizontal union with the church by the revelation of the mystery of Jesus Christ incarnate through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the "axis" in the midst of the world around which everything revolves. This links the divine *prothesis* with the *mysterion* that is Christ in a *koinónia* of those who are reconciled to God through Christ. As a result, the hypostatic union, enacted in atonement and resurrection, issues in the community of the resurrection that is the church (Torrance, 1960a:91). The threefold mystery of Christ is therefore the locus of the coordination of the ontological and economic aspects of the Trinity in full soteriological realisation in the church. It is the place in space and time of the meeting between God and the world and so has practical implications for mission.

In terms of the considerations for dogmatics laid out in Chapter 3, this evaluation of the mystery of Christ in Torrance's theology highlighted the centrality of the covenant as a type of hermeneutical "metanarrative" in all aspects of incarnation and atonement. The mystery of the hypostatic union was seen in covenant terms as Christ's fulfilment of the covenant of grace both from the side of God in his faithfulness and obedience to the will of God but also from the side of humanity through the mystery of substitution. Throughout Torrance's theology of the covenant,

the soteriological implications of the conjunction of the *anhypostasis* and the *enhypostasis* in the person of Christ were made evident.

In terms of biblical theology, examined more closely in 4.4.2, Torrance understands the covenant as one covenant of grace from creation to recreation in a divine initiative of covenant love to restore the broken relationship of the Fall into restored communion with him. Thus, Torrance sees that there is an integral relationship between covenant and grace, as was observed in Chapter 3. Indeed, for Torrance, the establishment of the covenant at Sinai (Exod 19f) is fundamental for understanding not only the old covenant that was administered through law but also the new covenant of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. The new covenant is sealed with the body and blood of Christ in substitution, atonement and justification. The work of Christ in making atonement in his blood is thus understood as both reconciliation and restoration of relationship through the vicarious life of Christ (incarnation) and propitiation and justification in the crucifixion (atonement) with both incarnational and forensic functions. The power of the incarnation and atonement is realised in the resurrection.

The mystery of election as *prothesis* is also understood in terms of the covenant of grace. Torrance sees election as the “setting forth” of the blood of Christ in atonement for the purpose of bringing humanity into divine-human communion as a covenant relationship. For Torrance, there was no covenant of redemption prior to the incarnation, as this would imply a duality in the Trinity. Rather, Jesus Christ is both the elected God and the electing one who achieves reconciliation in one movement of the love of God that begins and ends in eternity. However, Torrance’s rejection of limited atonement lays him open to claims of universalism. This was seen to be resolved through Torrance’s the universalization of corporate justification among humanity by incorporation into Christ by the Spirit through faith and so he maintains that there is universal atonement but not universal election. The reverse of election and grace is reprobation and curse. Torrance understands curse in covenantal terms as the choice to remain subject to judgement outside the covenant in spite of God’s election of humanity in Christ Jesus. This position is borne out by the exegesis of Gen 12:3 of curse as the opposite of the Abrahamic blessing and also in 1 Pet 2:7 as the destiny of those who reject Christ. Torrance’s rejection of limited atonement does not allow for complacency but drives the church out into mission.

The covenant of grace in Christ put into effect through the Holy Spirit is the arena of promise and fulfilment, although this concept is not well developed in Torrance’s theology of the mystery of Christ as divine-human communion. Nonetheless, the blessings of Christ are in fact, participation

in the eternal intertrinitarian relations through the Holy Spirit as *koinónia*, which in 1 John 1:4 was seen to be the “fullness of joy”. Divine-human communion as fellowship is therefore seen as the fruit of the love of God and as the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ. All aspects of promise and fulfilment are realised covenantally as participation in the kingdom through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Although Torrance’s missiology is evaluated through his doctrine of the church in section 4.4, two foundational aspects of the missional nature of divine-human communion came to light through the evaluation of the mystery of Christ. Firstly, it is the incarnate Christ who is in his own person the good news of the covenant faithfulness of God in his will to restore humanity to relationship with himself. The proclamation of the gospel as Jesus Christ incarnate, crucified, raised and ascended is therefore the foundation of faith and the point of entry into union with God in Christ by the Spirit, giving a foundation of faith to divine-human communion. Secondly, the vicarious life of Christ through the mystery of substitution brings the believer into a new relationship with God through the covering of sin by the blood of the atonement. Incarnation and atonement are therefore key concepts for Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion. Further, through the substitutionary holiness and righteousness of Christ, there are ethical implications (couched as obedience) to being in relationship with God in Christ through the Spirit. Again, this was seen in the exegesis of all four passages. As this work now turns to Torrance’s theology of the mission of the church, there are indicators that entry into a relationship of covenant with God in Christ has outcomes for mission as witness both by proclamation and ethical living.

4.4 The Mission of the Church

4.4.1 Introduction

In this section, Torrance’s ecclesiology is considered together with his missiology as a function of the doctrine of the Trinity. In *The mediation of Christ* (1992:4-5), Torrance observes that when the apostles and Early Church Fathers reflected on the events of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, they came to understand them through the oneness of Jesus of Nazareth with the eternal God, as the breaking into history of the *logos* of God. In addition, they were able to interpret these events in the light of the covenant history of Israel as a prehistory of the incarnation, fulfilled in Christ, which revealed that Israel had a missional purpose for the salvation of the world. Thus, the economic activity of the Triune God in concrete historical

actualisation in Israel through the incarnation was interpreted in ontological dimensions as the mission of the triune God towards the world. This gives Torrance's ecclesiology two essential elements, firstly the fulfilment of God's covenant promises to Israel through Christ in the church and secondly, the hypostatic union realised through the incarnation as the basis for the union of the church with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Torrance's doctrine of the church is intrinsically Trinitarian through the hypostatic union actualised by the power of the Holy Spirit and essentially missional through participation of the church in the mission of Israel and Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this section, Torrance's understanding of the role of Israel in God's missional purposes to the world precedes consideration of Torrance's missional ecclesiology. This leads into a discussion of the function of the sacraments and eschatology and ends with his conclusions for evangelism, preaching and theological education.

4.4.2 Israel and the Mission of the Church

Colyer (2001a:56) observed that the rooting of the gospel in the history of Israel enables Torrance to reject dualism and maintain a realist interpretation of God, which gives a holism to his theology. This is a holism that gathers the whole redemptive history of Israel from its election in eternity to its eschatological fulfilment into the election of Jesus (Torrance, 2008:41). The promise of the coming Messiah through Israel was fulfilled in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and so the New Testament church lives its life in the world as a result of the finished work of Christ. It lives in union with Christ and in communion with God in the power of the Holy Spirit. It does not exist for itself, but as the body of Christ, it carries the mission of Christ to the world. The "eschatological pause" between the ascension and the *parousia* in which the church operates is the time for the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles but always with the salvation of Israel in view (Torrance, 2008:298-344). As a result, the life and mission of the church is holistically integrated with the life and mission of Israel.

This position requires Torrance to build a whole Bible theology of God's covenant relations with humanity beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation. The biblical-realist position places Torrance among those who belong to the "Biblical theology movement" of the twentieth century (cf. 3.1.2). However, it is doubtful whether Torrance's work could be considered the precursor of whole Bible theologies of mission as such. Walker's (2009:45-46) criticism that Torrance's theology tends to jump to conclusions based on his own Christological perspective (section 2.6.0) could also have application for Torrance's biblical theology of the missional nature of Israel and the church. The question is whether Torrance does sufficient biblical theological work to justify

his position or whether he uses his unitary Trinitarian theology as an overarching hermeneutical framework that guides his thought. It is in the light of this possible weakness, that the role of Israel in the mission of the church is evaluated.

Torrance roots his biblical theology of the covenant in Genesis with the creation of humanity to live in perfect fellowship with God, with each other and with nature. The perfection of the original relationship was broken by sin, leading to irreversible damage in all other areas of relationship (Torrance, 2008:39). In line with Vos (1948:76) and other biblical theologians, Torrance sees the prehistory of Israel before Gen 12 as one of failed attempts to heal broken relations and rebuild relations between God and humanity and within humanity itself. It has already been noted in 4.3.2 that Torrance holds to one covenant of grace, therefore he rejects as “abstraction” the idea of a covenant of works established in the Garden of Eden between God and Adam and Eve (Torrance, 1959b:lxiii). In addition, Torrance is not concerned with the similarities between the biblical and ANE treaties. Torrance’s biblical theology betrays a bias towards the one covenant of grace, which can be seen in the way he understands the promise of Gen 3 to be a hope for the recreation of the bond between God and man through the grace of God. Torrance maintains that right from the early history of Israel it became clear that this could only happen through the principle of incarnation and sacrifice as illustrated by God’s provision of a sacrifice for Abraham in the place of his son Isaac. As a result, God’s plan for the salvation of the world was from the start by means of his grace (Torrance, 2008:40).

From the narrative of the provision of a sacrificial animal for Abraham, Torrance (1992:74) builds a theology of the “covenanted way of response” as divinely appointed sacrifice that replaces humanity’s “offering” in terms of its covenant response to God. He sees this as a “middle term” between the two sides of the covenant (Gen 12:1-3; 15; 17:1-14; 22:9-19) which was developed further in the covenant agreement between God and Israel at Sinai (Exod 19:4-6). Torrance (1992:74-75) maintains that God knew the Israelites would not be able to keep his covenant, so out of his grace, he provided a vicarious way in which the covenant could be fulfilled on their behalf through the liturgical cult laid out in the *torah*. Thus, the covenant is not made between two equal parties, but is the gracious gift of the sovereign Lord to his people, Israel.

From this Torrance infers that Israel became a separate nation, different from other peoples, which he interprets as the vicarious, priestly mission of Israel among the nations. The covenanted way of response to God promulgated in the *torah* and enacted through Passover and circumcision,

was thus imprinted into the heart of Israel's existence, into its "flesh and blood" (Torrance, 2009:15). The "priestly mission" of Israel in covenant relationship with God was to be the bearer of revelation and reconciliation to the world (Torrance, 1992:7; Exod 19:5). As the covenant bond was progressively tightened through the history of Israel, so Israel was broken and remoulded in preparation for the coming of the Son of God. The function and role of Israel was therefore to act as a prehistory of the crucifixion and resurrection in the eyes of the world (Torrance, 1992:11). Ho's (2008) criticism that Old Testament revelation through Israel is disregarded in Torrance's theology of the incarnation is refuted here because Israel acts as the precursor to Christ.

There is interplay between universality and particularity in Torrance's biblical theology of the covenant. He understands the covenant relationship with Abraham as particular but with a universal view. In the same way, the Sinai covenant was particular to Israel but had the whole world in view. Thus, he sees the gracious Old Testament covenant of union and communion with Israel as "essentially universalistic" from its inception (Torrance, 1959a:293). This is a position commonly held by biblical theologians of mission (cf. Kaiser, 2000; Köstenberger & O'Brien, 2001; Wright, 2006, 2010) and has been explored in sections 3:2.2 and 3.2.3. However, Torrance does not detail what he understands as the missional nature of the covenant in the Old Testament other than in Christological terms as the "womb" of the coming Son of God. His biblical theology of the mission of Israel is premised on the contrast between God's election of Israel to covenant relationship for the sake of the world, Israel's rebellion against the terms of the covenant and God's covenant faithfulness, even in judgement. The covenant was kept throughout Israel's history by the covenant love and faithfulness on the side of God as a continuous act of grace (Torrance, 2008:46).

Torrance (1959a:293) maintains that throughout covenant history, there is a battle between God's missional intentions for Israel as his special people (*laos*) distinct from the world, and Israel's desire to be an indistinct people (*ethnos*). The ensuing internal conflict plunges Israel into suffering because of its failure to fulfil its election purpose by displaying God's redeeming purpose in the world (Torrance, 1965:196). As a result, Israel increasingly becomes a *diaspora* scattered among the nations as God's covenant faithfulness means judgement on Israel. Indeed, Israel's disobedience and the agony of her judgement throw into sharp contrast the depths of human sin and the love of God that led to his self-giving in Christ in order to achieve real union and communion (Torrance, 1959a:290; 2008:47). God was faithful to the covenant, even in judgement. Because the covenant was grounded in mercy and truth, God would not let Israel go (cf. Hosea, 1-11) and so God drew the covenant into himself through the role of Israel as

suffering servant until he assumed Israel into himself by the incarnation and crucifixion. This meant the particularisation of the covenant relation between God and Israel into Jesus Christ (Torrance, 2008:47). However, just at this narrowest point, the covenantal bond in Jesus became universal for the whole world through the identification of the Word of God with the person of Jesus Christ (Torrance, 1959a:294). While the old covenant had been enacted in the flesh of a particular people through circumcision, the new covenant was enacted in the heart by the identification of Christ, the Word of God, with the whole of humanity in what Torrance (1959a:290, 293) sees as the “ultimate act of union”.

Torrance’s (2008:45) biblical theology of the covenant focuses on the roles of the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants but there is little detailed evaluation of the Davidic kings, or the prophets other than the role of Israel as prophet, priest and king and the role of the suffering servant in Isaiah. There is no specific consideration of the exile or the development of the remnant theology of the latter prophets. Torrance’s (2008:46) biblical theology of the covenant is centred on the “once and for all events of Mt Sinai” (Exod 19f) that occupy the central place in the history of Israel. This provides the framework for the covenantal relation of YHWH with Israel that develops overtones of the messianic kingdom once the monarchy is established in Israel (Torrance, 2008:46). Torrance gives little attention to the call of Abraham and the promise of blessing through his seed, although he does acknowledge “an inner organic continuity” of the promised Messiah in the Old Testament (Torrance, 2009:74, 203). This is because his primary focus is on the theological significance of the insertion of the incarnation into the history of Israel to create a place of meeting between God and the world that spans all history (Torrance, 1969a:24). Torrance’s biblical theology therefore serves a Christological purpose.

The relationship between the Old and New Testament church is also explained in Christological terms. Torrance (1959a:212, 298) maintains that the Christian church has no existence apart from Israel but that this is held in tension because there is both continuity and discontinuity in the relationship between the Old and New Testament people of God. The continuity is to be found in the word of God, which was the basis for the establishment of the Old Testament church in Exod 19-24 and continues to be the basis of the establishment of the New Testament church in Christ. However, the continuity was radically disrupted by the miracle of the virgin birth that brought about a discontinuity and established the New Testament church on an entirely different basis (Torrance, 1959a:212, 298). The New Testament church is only the Israel of God in so far as it is gathered up into Christ through engrafting into Israel and the covenant (Rom 11:16-24). The church is therefore not an offshoot of Israel as such, but it is Israel gathered up into Jesus Christ

and sharing in his missional purpose for the world (Torrance, 1959a:287). Once again, Torrance's biblical theology serves a Christological and missional purpose.

However, for Torrance (1959a:300; 2012:180) the historical particularity of God's covenant with Israel persists into the present and will only be fully universalised when Israel and the Christian church are united. God elected Israel so that the Son of God could come both as judge and as the one judged and thereby, through Israel, bear the sins of the world. This means that the present rejection of Israel is not its abandonment but the reaffirmation in Israel of the covenant and its promises through the substitutionary nature of the cross (Torrance, 1959a:295-8). The present implications of the historical mission of Israel are fundamental to Torrance's concept of the mission of Israel and the church. The practical outworking of this forms part of the evaluation of his mission practice in section 5.6.3. Here, the task is to explore Torrance's theological justification for the continuation of the vicarious role of Israel in the evangelization of the world. In an unpublished paper entitled *The divine vocation and destiny of Israel in the world* (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 87), he states that the people of Israel have a permanent missionary role to declare God's love and salvation to all nations. Using Rom 9-11 and Eph 2, he concludes that God has not revoked his call and so Israel still has a role to play in the evangelization of the world. He sees this primarily because the Jews hold the "secret" to the unity of humanity and the church in God's eschatological redemptive purposes.

In *The Mediation of Christ* Torrance (1992:5-46) develops his theology of the missionary role of Israel by projecting Israel's Old Testament role as vicarious suffering servant into the era of the Christian church through Israel's "blinding" for the sake of the salvation of the Gentiles. However, as he had previously maintained that there was a narrowing of the concept of the suffering servant into the person of Jesus Christ, the continuation of Israel's role as suffering servant could be seen as inconsistent. To deal with this, he holds that there were two different outcomes to the atonement. The Christian church received the atonement triumphantly but the Israelites became the scapegoat, cast out and continuing to bear disgrace by means of a prolonging of the atonement into history until such time as they accept the Messiah (Torrance, 1992:37). Torrance (1992:42) understands the Holocaust in the light of this ongoing role of suffering for the sake of the reconciliation of the nations and proposes that it could be the means of the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles. Thus, Torrance maintains that Israel retains an essential role in the mediation of reconciliation to the Christian church as the church can only fulfil its own mission in so far as it is incorporated into Israel in one mission of God's love for the entire world (Torrance, 1992:46). He sees the failure of the Jews and the church to work together

in the service of divine reconciliation as a frustration of their dual mission from God (Torrance, 1992:103). As there is no Christian understanding of God apart from his revelation to Israel and no Jewish understanding of God apart from the reconciliation in the cross, Torrance concludes that Jews and Christians need to be both reconciled to God and to each other for the sake of mission (Torrance, 1992:105).

The idea that Israel is a scapegoat bearing rejection for the sake of the church is a controversial position to hold. Colyer (2001a:68 n.50) calls it “astonishing” but at the same time, he finds it “insightful”, although he gives no explanation for its insightfulness. Essentially, this is a difficult position for Torrance to justify. The writer to the Hebrews shows that the atoning work of Christ is complete (Heb 7:27; 9:12; 26). Israel cannot bear the sin of the world in an extension of the atonement without making the work of Christ insufficient and dependent on Israel’s coming back to faith. Rather, and this is perhaps something that Torrance in the light of the Holocaust was unwilling to consider, the suffering of Israel could be considered as a continuation of the covenant faithfulness of God in judgement. Paul’s argument in Rom 9–11 is that there is a remnant of Israel that is saved by grace and in the eschatological perspective, the mercy of God will triumph over judgement so that all Israel will be saved (Rom 11:32). In this way, Israel still bears testimony to both the sternness of God and the kindness of God (Rom 11:28-30). Israel still has a missional role, negatively as warning for those who disbelieve (Rom 11:12) and positively as the remnant that believes and bears witness (Rom 11:1-2). This aspect of the covenantal theology of mission has recently been explored by Ferreira (2015:158-160). There is a weakness in Torrance’s theology of the extension of the atonement through Israel because he does not have a theology of the remnant. Israel’s rejection does not extend the atonement but stresses the need for the whole nation to join the remnant in a response of repentance and faith in Christ.

Nonetheless, Torrance’s treatment of the significance of Israel for the mission of the church should not be underestimated. It is “insightful” for the mission of the church to be rooted in the history of Israel so that the church is not abstracted from Israel but grounded in one holistic movement of covenant relationship spanning the whole of history. In addition, there is a correlation between what Torrance sees as the missional role of Israel in the Old Testament and the missional role of the church in Christ. Firstly, just as YHWH called Israel to live a life of holiness and obedience to the word of God as *torah* in communion with him as his chosen people among the nations (Torrance, 1965:196), so Christians in the church, living in communion with him, are to live “godly lives” among the Gentiles (1 Pet 2:11). Secondly, in the same way that Israel prefigured the passion of Christ in its own history, so the Christian church reflects the

sufferings of Christ in its own life in the world (Torrance, 1959a:206; 1965:197). Thirdly, as Israel's whole life and purpose was gathered up into Christ in the incarnation, so the church is gathered up as the body of Christ. Thus for Torrance, the role of church is to reflect through the lens of the incarnation the missional role of the people of Israel among the nations.

In general, however, Torrance gives little consideration to the details of the history of Israel other than to trace in broad terms the pattern of the unfaithfulness of Israel in order to build a theology of the particularity and universality of the covenant through the incarnation. Although Torrance uses the history of Israel as a biblical theological base for his doctrine of the mission of the church, his work cannot be considered as a biblical theology of mission as such because of its tendency to use Christological fulfilment in a way that is apt to ignore detailed exegesis of Israel's later history, especially of the latter prophets. This would indicate that Walker's (2009:45-46) concern that Torrance tends to jump too hastily to his own Christological conclusions when considering the historical theology of other writers, may also be a valid concern for his treatment of the biblical theology of the mission of Israel and the church. Nevertheless, as Torrance did not consider himself a "Biblical theologian" in the current sense of the word, but rather a dogmatic theologian developing an exegetical and biblical theological basis for his work, his biblical theology of the mission of Israel and the church should be seen as an attempt to root his Christology in the history of Israel in order to avoid the dualistic abstraction of the "historical Jesus" from the concrete context of Israel.

4.4.3 A Missional Ecclesiology

In line with the grounding of the Old Testament church in the history of Israel, Torrance (2009:350) roots the establishment of the New Testament church in the person and ministry of the historical Jesus. He does this firstly through the relationship between the mission of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God, secondly through the historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus and thirdly through the "re-birth" of the church with the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost (Torrance, 2009:349-372). As the events are not in any way abstracted from the mission of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit they also form the basis of his missiology. The holism of Torrance's theology defies all attempts to create a theology of mission that is in any way abstracted from the historical reality of the incarnation and the formation of the New Testament church in the *koinónia* of the Holy Spirit. For Torrance (1982:139) this reality creates a living theology in which the church is both ontologically and practically committed to God in terms of its life and

mission. This section seeks to show that Torrance's ecclesiology is entirely missional and conversely, his missiology is entirely corporate, centred in the church.

Eugenio (2011:134-135) and Chung (2011:150) noted the close association between Spirit and the life and mission of the church in Torrance's ecclesiology and Ziegler (2008) ascertained the missional outcome of union and communion. However, none of them established an integral link between pneumatology, ecclesiology and the mission of Christ through his church. Torrance (1993a:252; 2009:358) comments that in the Nicene Creed ecclesiology is a function of pneumatology. There is no separate "I believe in the church" because the clause declaring the church to be "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" is subordinate to belief in the Holy Spirit. The marks of the church are therefore entirely the fruit of the Holy Spirit in his work of drawing the church into the sphere of *koinónia*. In the community of the new covenant that is the church, the Holy Spirit is the empirical community of people called into being by the gospel, indwelt by the Spirit and who, in union with Christ, are joined to God (Torrance, 1993a:253). Because the church is in Christ, by the Spirit it participates in the communion of love that is the essence of the Trinity and therefore in the outflowing of the love of God to the world in the mission of Christ. This is the realisation of the new covenant as the relationship between Christ and his church in practical terms (Torrance, 1960a:13-20). The mission of the church is therefore the correlate of the mission of Christ and a function of its new covenantal relationship with God in Christ by the power of the Spirit. This is the ground basis for Torrance's missional ecclesiology.

The establishment of the church is rooted in the eternal *prothesis* as the setting forth of Christ to reveal God and reconcile the world to him through the cross. Therefore for Torrance (2009:183) election is essentially corporate because the church is elected in Christ and cannot be separated from Christ's life and work. As such, the church is both the earthly and the heavenly sphere of participation in Christ through the Spirit by means of *theosis* (1981a; 2009:350). In the state of *theosis*, the church has ontological union through the Spirit in Christ by means of the incarnation and atonement. Incarnation and atonement are therefore the foundation of Torrance's ecclesiology and give it a fully Christological structure (Torrance, 1959a:238; 1981a). The church does not exist for itself but as God in his sovereign freedom willed it into existence in Christ, it exists for His praise and glory. In its vertical dimension of fellowship with the Trinity, the church is held in its relation of communion through the faithful love of Christ in spite of its sinfulness and constant need of forgiveness (Torrance:1959a:110; 2008:361). This unites the incarnation and atonement as the covenant love of God in Christ realised in the church.

In the exegesis of 1 John 1:1-7, the essence of the gospel was the establishment of relationship with the eternal Word of life through hearing and accepting the witness of the apostles. The purpose of mission as the proclamation of the Word was declared to be entry into *koinónia* with the Father and the means of remaining in *koinónia* with the Father and one another was the atonement (“the blood of Jesus that cleanses from all sin”, 1 John 1:7). A useful image for understanding this application of the *koinónia* in the Spirit is that of the church as the temple of God, which was noted in the exegesis of 1 Pet 2:4-5. Following Basil, Torrance (1993a:269) holds that through the indwelling of the Spirit, the church becomes the temple, or the place where the people respond in worship and adoration and become the “doxological correlate” of the Triunity of God (Torrance, 1993a:269). The application of the temple analogy has practical implications for the life of the church as it lives out the holiness of God in the midst of its life in the world and as such is distinguished from the world by its own inner life in the Spirit (Torrance, 2009:385-386).

For Torrance (1959a:105), the most useful analogy for thinking about *koinónia*, however, is the Pauline image of the church as the body of Christ. This is because the image refers directly to the person of Christ in his soteriological relation to the church through the new covenant in his body and blood by which the church has union and communion with him (1 Cor 11:23-26). The emphasis of the analogy is not on the church *per se*, but on Christ in his wholeness, who includes the church in his fullness and also on Christ as the head of the body that is the church (Torrance, 2009:362). Thus, the whole life and essence as well as the whole mission of the church is founded in and derived from Christ alone (Torrance, 2009:363). By the work of adoption, Christ builds the church as his body through incarnation, atonement and the sending of the Spirit and presents the church to the Father as children of God (Torrance, 1993a:265; 2009:364).

Torrance (1993b:31) is careful not to collapse his missional ecclesiology into his Christology. Although Christ and his body the church are bound together in ontological unity through the incarnation and atonement actualised through the Spirit in individual and corporate life, the church should not be seen as the continuation of the incarnation on earth but rather the continuation of the mission of Christ through the church on earth. In the New Testament, there is a difference between the mission and ministry of Jesus and that of the church. This is because Christ raised up a community of the kingdom rooted in himself, whereas the church is a community that is rooted in the sending of the Son by the Father and therefore takes its form from the shape of Jesus’ incarnate ministry on earth (Torrance, 1965:199). The goal of Christ’s mission was that he would be the Saviour of the world, whereas the goal of the church’s mission arises

from union with him as a result of his redemption of the world (Torrance, 1965:201). As a result, the mission of the church is a function of the Trinitarian sending.

This raises questions of Torrance's relationship with the concept of *missio Dei* through his involvement with the WCC. The concept of the locus of mission in Trinitarian theology was first posited at the 1952 Willingen Conference on World Mission and Evangelization. Although Torrance did not take part in this meeting, he had previously produced theological discussion papers on the preparatory reports for the first WCC meeting in Amsterdam in 1948, published in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* in 1949 and reprinted in *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, 1 & 2 (1959a; 1960a). These reports and Torrance's response formed a theological platform for the discussions on mission in 1952 in the light of the crisis caused by the expulsion of missionaries from China (discussed in section 5.2.4). In his evaluation of the second Amsterdam report on the mission of the church, Torrance (1959a:214) notes that the compilers of the report were unable to consider the nature and mission of the church separately. He suggests that this is because there is theologically no separation between the church and mission. The church is commissioned by Christ to participate in the sending of the Son from the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-23), thus locating the mission of the church directly in the theology of the Trinity (Torrance, 1959a:214). This shows that at an early stage in WCC thinking on mission, Torrance's contribution was to direct the mission of the church into a Trinitarian framework.

Torrance was not the only theologian at that time to be reconsidering the mission of the church in Trinitarian terms. Sarisky (2014:258) observes that the missionary bishop from India, Lesslie Newbigin was beginning to use the doctrine of the Trinity as the context in which to reflect on the mission of the church. Torrance quotes extensively from Newbigin's contributions to the 1948 Amsterdam Report, most especially in respect of his "missionary ecclesiology" (Torrance, 1959a:208, 215, 218, 222; Goheen, 2000:1). Newbigin's background in mission equated to a certain extent Torrance's mission background in China and both theologians were concerned with the ongoing mission of the church in the light of changing political circumstances. In his work on Karl Barth and the *missio Dei*, Flett (2011:5-7) claims that the locating of mission in the *missio Dei* by these, and other WCC theologians, created a dualism between ontological mission and practical mission. Because mission had its locus in Trinitarian relations, there was no longer any specific act of mission for the church to be engaged in and so mission came to encompass the whole of creation. However, both Torrance and Newbigin correct this potential dualism through their Christological-Trinitarian focus (Goheen, 2000:434). An extensive comparison between Newbigin and Torrance is not the subject of this thesis, but suffice to say that for Torrance, as for

Newbigin, it is the incarnation that eliminates dualism between *missio Dei* and the mission of the church. Torrance (1959a:223) states that the church does not need new evangelistic methods or natural theology to create links with the world but rather it needs to take hold again of the “supreme relevance of the gospel to every situation” in the historical events of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

Nevertheless, because Torrance’s (1965:204) ecclesiology is Christological, mission has its ontological source in the perfect union between God and the risen Christ. If there is any practical direction to the church on how it might participate in the mission of Christ in Torrance’s theology, it is primarily in the proclamation of the *kerygma* as the gospel of reconciliation through the cross (Torrance, 1959a:12; 2009:221). The *kerygmatic* obligation of the church includes mission as proclamation, witness to the love of Christ, growth in holiness and transformation of the mind after Christ (Torrance, 2009:373, 376, 378, 387). These four areas constitute the content of mission practice in the church for Torrance, thus creating a practical bridge between the *missio Dei* and the mission of the church, against Flett’s (2011) general accusation of a dualist chasm. Chung (2011:150, 157) criticised Torrance for what he saw as the lack of practical application but Chung’s work lacked the advantage of research into the personal mission documentation of the Torrance archival material. However, even without such evidence, Torrance’s work is replete with references to the mission and ministry of the church as a result of its participation in divine-human communion.

Although Torrance has a corporate understanding of election and *koinónia*, the relation of the church to the Father also has an individual element to it. The work of the Spirit brings about an encounter between individuals and Christ who, as they enter into *koinónia*, become corporate members of the body in union with Christ (Torrance, 1966:134-135). The gift of the church to the world is therefore both particular to the individual and universal as entry into the community of faith and love (Torrance, 2009:365). The work of the Spirit is to bring about union with Christ on both an individual and corporate basis so that there is full subjective appropriation of the objective reality (Torrance, 1966:134-135). This again answers accusations of lack of subjective appropriation in Torrance’s theology examined in 4.3.4. In terms of the mission of the church, it is by the preaching of the gospel as the power of the cross that the individual is brought face to face with the work of Christ and by faith is incorporated into the body of Christ, which is the church (Torrance, 1994:30).

A further consideration for the mission of the church is the royal priesthood of Christ and by implication, that of the church. This is a role that finds precedents in the Old Testament in the priesthood of Israel as mediator of God's word and priestly witness to God's will as *torah* (cf. Exod 19:4-6). In *Royal Priesthood* (1993b:1-22), Torrance draws a comparison between the royal priesthood of Christ as suffering servant and the royal priesthood of the church. He maintains that the way in which the church draws near to God is the same way in which the Son of Man drew near to God in his obedience as suffering servant (Torrance, 1993b:21). The priestly witness of word and liturgy (cult) in the Old Testament was realised in Christ as Word and Act (cult) of God in his role as suffering servant. In the same way, the church enacts the role of the suffering servant in its flesh through Word and liturgy as proclamation of the gospel to the nations and praise as it offers itself as a living sacrifice (Torrance, 1993b:22). In its mission to the world, the church follows the path of Christ in his suffering, showing that in its tribulation, it is the place where Jesus Christ reigns as king (Torrance, 1960a:27). This concept was seen in the exegesis of 1 Pet 2:4-12 in the encouragement of the suffering people of God. As "royal priesthood" and "holy nation", their "spiritual sacrifices" were "acceptable to God". As those who believe in Christ the cornerstone, they would ultimately receive "honour", but those who continued to reject him would "stumble". The suffering servant and the royal priesthood therefore act as metaphors for the mission of the church in Torrance's thought.

In an article on Torrance's theology of ministry, Iain Torrance (2013) explains that his father systematically reconnected order in the church with the servant ministry of Christ. Torrance (1960a:13-20) maintains that the church is ordered in Jesus Christ by means of the covenant relationship and not by any imposed outside structures. In terms of biblical theology, communion with God is the fruit of God's creative will that brought to order the formless void. In the world after the Fall, in which God's order is disturbed, chaos is held in check by the covenant and the new order is realised in Jesus Christ through the new covenant. This happens by means of the creative will of God who purposes to restore creation to true form and harmony in the Word of God (Torrance, 1960a:14). The *oikonomia* of God thus enters into the world through the incarnation and transforms it from within as the entry of light into the darkness (Torrance, 2013:523). The consequence is that all order in the Christian church, including mission, is a participation in Christ's obedient humanity through the fellowship of the Spirit (Torrance, 1960a:16-17; 2009:65). This is the church, which is sent out to share its order in Jesus Christ with the world in an ambiguous relationship that is both temporal and eschatological because it points ultimately to the new order in the risen Christ (Torrance, 1960a:18). The order of the church in its

ministry is therefore a participation in the obedience of Christ to his mission (Torrance, 2013:524).

The attributes of the church are a function of the life of the church in union with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. As such, they have a missional function. The oneness of the church derives from the triune life of God as one fellowship of love that reaches out to and encompasses the visible and invisible church throughout history (Torrance, 2009:381, 384). The holiness of the church is realised through its union with Christ in the Spirit as God “sanctifying” himself in its midst by his holy presence, which has a missional function in terms of witness to the world (Torrance, 1993a:281; 2009:385). The catholicity of the church is a participation in the universality of the triune God in time and space through the universal and limitless mission of Christ and the apostolicity of the church is the foundation of the church laid by Christ on the witness of the apostles as recorded in the New Testament (Torrance, 1993a:285; 2009:392). The apostles form the “hinges” that open out the vertical mission of the triune God into the horizontal mission of the church through Pentecost (Torrance, 1993b:27).

Colyer (2001a:260) finds it necessary to defend Torrance’s marks of the church, especially the oneness of the church, against accusations of universalism. This is probably because he was working without the benefit of Walker’s addition of “duplicated hand outs” on the church published subsequently in *Atonement* (2009:341-400). Torrance (2009:391) makes it clear in these notes that his understanding of the universal nature of the church is “essentially missionary” and not universalist. Walker’s (2009:393 n. 211) editorial note from *The Mission of the church* (1966:138) serves to emphasise that the core issue for Torrance, in so far as the catholicity of the church is concerned, is the “mystery of union between Christ and his church which presses out towards universal fullness”. Thus there is catholicity in the extension of the mission of the church, which derives from the grounding of the life of the church in the Trinity (Torrance, 2009:391).

The apostolicity of the church is linked to its catholicity because apostolicity gives the church the rule of faith and standard by which it may be judged as universal (Torrance, 2009:393). Indeed, Torrance contends that without a foundation laid on the teaching of the apostles, there can be no catholicity because the church participates in one movement of mission from Christ through the apostles to the church and into the world (Torrance, 1993a:285). The written witness of the apostles in the New Testament has to be considered in the light of the uniqueness of Christ as God’s authorised representative (*shaliach*). As supreme *shaliach* Christ is both the Word of God

and the deed of God (Torrance, 2009:318). The apostles are sent out on his mission as his *sheluchim* so that Christ's mission continues through them by the Spirit. Torrance (2009:319) summarises this concept as Jesus Christ giving himself to the apostles through his Spirit, bringing them into his own work, and then sending them out as witnesses and fellow workers on his authority to reflect his own witness in the world but also to bear his pain in witness. This is in effect no different from the previously noted concept of the church as suffering servant participating in the sacrificial mission of Christ in the world.

Following on from the oneness and catholicity of the church, much of Torrance's thinking on the mission of the church is ecumenical in nature. The reason for this lies in his participation in the early Ecumenical Movement of the WCC, which has already been noted in terms of his connection with *missio Dei*. Torrance's (1959a:202-214) argument is that because Christ is one with the Father in revelation and reconciliation and the church is one with Christ through the Spirit, there must be a unity in the church as the body of Christ under the headship of Christ. The primary task of the church in the world is to bring a message of reconciliation through the cross and this cannot be preached where the church is seen to be divided (Torrance, 1959a:118-119). This call to the church for unity can be traced back to a plea for unity in mission from the Chinese church at the 1910 Mission Conference in Edinburgh at which Torrance's father had been a delegate (cf. section 5.3.2). Finding a theological basis for unity was a personal legacy for Torrance in the light of the lifelong family involvement in mission in China. Ecumenical unity was seen to be the primary missional task in the mid twentieth century and is perhaps the reason that Torrance's (1959a:119) discussions on unity are replete with references to the mission of the church in its role as suffering servant.

Ecumenical unity therefore is firstly Christological by means of participation in Christ and by implication, Trinitarian through the *koinónia* of the Spirit. For Torrance (1959a:197) the core nature of the mission of the church as the body of Christ lies in the *kerygma* as bearing witness to the historical death and resurrection of Christ for the reconciliation of the world. However, this does not imply an immediate ecumenical parity. The unity of the church, rooted in the hypostatic union, is primarily eschatological and the visible signs of that unity in the world are to be found in the Eucharist as a receiving together of the body of Christ (Torrance, 1959a:109). Unity is not achievable in space-time because it is "hidden with Christ in God" but it can be participated in by means of the sacraments. Therefore, Torrance (1959a:198-201, 262) proposed a sharing in the sacraments (intercommunion) as a means of participating in the eschatological or "hidden" unity in Christ.

At the time of the publication of *Conflict and agreement in the church* 1 & 2 (1959a, 1960a) there was a mixed reaction to Torrance's call for intercommunion on the basis of common agreement on Christology and soteriology (Torrance, 1959a:13). Writing from the Indian subcontinent, Sully (1960:350-351) expressed doubt whether Torrance's analogical reasoning from the hypostatic union to the nature of ministry and sacraments in the church could sustain the "dogmatic nature of his conclusions" regarding intercommunion. Instead, he proposed an "organic union" of "comprehension and tolerance" as the basis for immediate visible unity in the church in India. On the other hand, the Methodist theologian, A. Raymond George (1960:304) writing from Europe, supported Torrance's proposal for intercommunion as the basis for working out the practicalities in the ministry of the church. This suggests a possible clash between Torrance's theological work on unity through sacrament and its practical implementation in the context of world mission.

4.4.4 Doctrine of the Sacraments

In evaluating Torrance's doctrine of the sacraments two aspects are considered. The first is the extent to which the sacraments are integrated into his doctrine of divine-human communion and the second is the missional outcome that he affords to his doctrine of the sacraments as the basis for church unity. The two aspects are linked through the message proclaimed in the *kerygma* that believers are gathered into the church through the Word and the church is built into a community through the continued witness of the Word which is realised especially in participation in the sacraments (Torrance, 1959a:218-219).

Following Calvin (1970:680), Torrance (1975:82) understands the sacraments as the *mysterion* of Christ who was prophesied in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament as the Son of God incarnate. For Torrance (1975:82), this means that the sacraments have to be understood in terms of the historical person of Jesus Christ in his incarnation and vicarious obedience. This is no surprise in terms of Torrance's realist theology with its Christological and Trinitarian structure. The primary mystery (sacrament) is Jesus Christ in his incorporation into humanity and his consequent assimilation of the people of God into his own body in a relationship of *koinónia* through the Spirit. This means that baptism and Eucharist are fundamentally expressions of the mystery of union and communion in Christ. This was observed by both Colyer (2001a:264-265) and Molnar (2009:299).

As a result, there is a unity of sacrament in Torrance's theology. Torrance (1960a:156) maintains that there is in real terms only one sacrament of "the Word made flesh" or the "Christ-event" and

this renders baptism and Eucharist parallel events. Nonetheless, he makes a distinction between baptism as the sacrament of initiation into union with the entire life of Christ as the “all inclusive” event and Eucharist as ongoing incorporation in time. While he maintains that both sacraments are essentially about the same event, he suggests that baptism receives the greatest emphasis in the New Testament. He holds that the priority of baptism is essentially the position of the Orthodox Church, with which he was engaged in ecumenical discussion (Torrance, 1960a:156 n.2). It is possible, however, that Torrance’s (1960a:156) suggestion that there is a priority of baptism is an over emphasis of the Orthodox position. In Orthodox tradition, while there is a unity of sacrament (baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist), it is the Eucharist and not baptism that is the primary sacramental event (Zizioulas, 1995:1; Dragas, 2011:143; Noble, 2013:16). Torrance’s doctrine of the sacraments would therefore seem to have a different priority of focus in comparison with the Orthodox position.

The reason for Torrance’s stress on the priority of baptism can be found in his theology of divine-human communion. He maintains that baptism should not be understood as a simply a ritual, but it must be interpreted in a “dimension of depth” that grounds it objectively in the whole work of Jesus Christ from his birth to his ascension (Torrance, 1975:83). He does this by relating *kerygma* and *baptisma*. He shows that the New Testament writers did not use *baptismos* (the rite) to refer to the sacrament of baptism, but *baptisma* that they interpreted in the same way as *kerygma*. This is because both words relate to the proclamation of the mighty acts of God as Word and Act (Torrance 1960a:127). In baptism, it is Christ who is the reality behind the *baptisma*, just as in proclamation, it is Christ who is the reality behind the *kerygma* (Torrance, 1960a:110). Both *kerygma* and *baptisma* are fundamentally about incorporation into the whole vicarious life and work of Jesus Christ. This gives objectivity to Torrance’s theology as believers are baptised into the finished work of Christ (Torrance, 1975:88).

Consequently *kerygma* and *baptisma* can be interpreted on two levels, the first being the mystery of Christ and the second being the acts of the church in proclamation and baptising (Torrance, 1975:84). This brings together baptism at the ontological level and the mission of the church at the practical level of application. However, there is a fundamental difference between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of the church. In the ministry of Christ, *baptisma* came first as his act of self-consecration and *kerygma* followed as his act of self-proclamation. The reverse was the case in the ministry of the apostles for whom *kerygma* came first, as proclamation of the message of Christ and was followed by *baptisma* as the “seal” of the gospel message in the receiving of Christ by faith. In the church that is built on the apostolic foundation, the *kerygma*-

baptisma formula equates the mission of the church as it goes out to fulfil the command of Christ in Matt 28:18-20 to “teach all nations” (*kerygma*) and to baptise them into the Trinity (*baptisma*). The resultant promise, “And, behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” is the promise of his presence through union with Christ (Torrance, 1960a:165). Thus, Torrance’s theology of baptism is thoroughly missional because the act of proclamation of the gospel as *kerygma* precedes incorporation into Christ by baptism (cf. 1 John 1:1-3) which in turn leads to presence through union with Christ. This in turn leads to a renewed missional obligation to proclaim the message and to baptise.

There is a depth to the work of Christ into which the believer is united that Torrance (1975:89). maintains has to be viewed “stereoscopically” as it includes Jesus’ baptism in water and the Spirit with Jesus’ baptism in blood at the cross and the baptism of the church at Pentecost. They the same event but they involve both incorporation into the church and the mission of the church as two different but related outcomes. Both Colyer (2001a:264-265) and Molnar (2009:299) observed the relation between incorporation into the vicarious life of Christ through baptism and the outflow into the mission of the church but did not see this as a theology of mission in Torrance’s work. However, the missional emphasis gives Torrance’s doctrine of baptism a Trinitarian basis in the mission of the Son from the Father in the Spirit. Baptism is more than baptism into Christ, it is baptism into the whole Trinity in which baptism into the Father is the seal of the covenant promise and baptism into the Spirit is the actualisation and sealing of that promise.

In keeping with his use of covenant as a “metanarrative”, Torrance (1960a:165-167) explains baptism in terms of covenant theology within the salvation history of Israel. Christ provided both the covenant faithfulness of God and the covenant obedience of his people in his own person and so mediated a new covenant of communion with God that is made available to all in the message of the gospel (Torrance, 1960a:122). Baptism is the sign of the new covenant made by God in Christ through the Spirit and takes the place that circumcision played in the old covenant (Torrance, 1960a:99-101). Baptism therefore represents the breaking in of the saving power of the once for all historical Christ-event into the sphere of the church, which gathers people into its communion as part of the universal history of salvation (Torrance, 1960a:167). For Torrance this is about the breaking in of the kingdom of God, a change of lordship and a move from darkness into light (cf. 1 Pet 2:9; 1 John 1:5-7). However, regeneration does not happen through the act of baptism. Torrance (1960a:123) stresses that baptism is the sacrament of what has already been fulfilled in Christ. As with the covenant, it is an act of gracious divine initiative.

Torrance's doctrine of baptism therefore moves his theology beyond the superficial level of "sign" to union with Christ and participation in the triune God. Baptism is not about a "decision" for Christ that requires a life of obedience, but it is about being baptised passively into the Trinitarian work in which the Father is the cause of cleansing and renewal, the Son is its substance and the Spirit is the accomplishment (Torrance, 1975:105). This "dimension of depth" stands in contrast to superficial formulaic baptism in the name of the Trinity that characterises much baptism in evangelical ministry. However, such a passive understanding of baptism might lead to difficulty for the convert understanding the ethical implications of the new life in Christ as a result of his/her cleansing and incorporation. Just as the old covenant required obedience (Exod 19:4-5), in the same way incorporation into communion with God through baptism draws believers into the sphere of obedience to the Father. It is a sacrament that requires faith and obedience because it is a sharing in Christ's faith and obedience (Torrance, 1960a:124). This is always the tension of a grace-based approach, but there is a counterbalance in biblical theology in terms of covenant and demand which is played out as obedience to the cult in the Old Testament and the ethics of Christian living in the New Testament, as was seen in 1 Pet 2:11-12 and 1 John 1:6-2:2.

For Torrance (1975:86) the key to the Trinitarian nature of baptism is in the function and work of the Holy Spirit. In the same way that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism was a seal by God of Jesus' mission and ministry, so the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a seal by God of the mission and ministry of the church as the body of Christ. In other words, the baptism of Christ by John and the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost are the same in terms of the missional nature of the church as the body of Christ (Torrance, 1975:86). When Jesus commissioned the apostles to go out into the world, to preach the gospel and to baptise (Matt 28:18-20), he did so in the anticipation that the Spirit who had come upon him, would also come upon the church to enable it to go out in mission. This again links Torrance's pneumatology with his missional ecclesiology through the new covenant in Christ that reaches out to draw humanity into communion with God through the Spirit (Torrance, 1960a:123).

Torrance's doctrine of the Eucharist rests on the same Christological foundation as baptism. The Eucharist is both the celebration of an eschatological Messianic meal with the risen Lord and the remembrance of the "Last" Supper with the historical Jesus. As such, it has both eschatological and historical implications (Torrance, 1960a:136-138). Hunsinger (2008:105) noted the relation between the ascension of Christ and the sending of the Spirit by whom the benefits of union with Christ are realised. It is the presence of the Spirit in the Eucharist that brings the reality of union

with Christ to the fore. The “real presence” of Christ in the Lord’s Supper has both present and future application because it is the sacrament of the Christ who is now and who is yet to come in dynamic tension (Torrance, 1960a:162, 171). This is fundamentally because in the Eucharist there is a sacramental relation between the believer and the hypostatic union in Christ (Torrance, 1960a:139).

For Torrance (1960a:168-169), the Eucharist became for the disciples the enactment of their baptismal incorporation into Christ in flesh and blood as the new covenant. Thus, it belongs to the church, rooting it in the historical reality of the incarnation and pointing it to its fulfilment at the *eschaton*. Following the German theologian, Karl Heim, Torrance (1960a:171) argues that the Eucharist inserts the union with Christ obtained at baptism into an abiding union with the heart of humanity’s estrangement from God and from there into all the conflicts of history. This would seem at first glance to be a universalist position, but Torrance (1960a:172) qualifies it by showing that this enactment of union with the world’s estrangement through the Eucharist is in fact the mission of the church in the world as it goes out as the suffering servant to bring the message of reconciliation. However, the church only receives its own union and wholeness sacramentally until the *parousia*. As the church goes out into a broken world, it is the Eucharist that mediates wholeness into the divisions of the church while waiting for the fullness of unity in eschatological realisation (Torrance, 1960a:173). Reconciliation in the church through intercommunion thus becomes the essence of Torrance’s call for ecumenical unity in mission.

There is a further missional relation between Eucharist and eschatology through “sacramental fulfilment” and “eschatological suspension”. This is because the Eucharist holds Word and Act apart in order to allow for space for faith and repentance as well as growth in communion and love. Thus through the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist enables the church to taste the powers of the age to come through sacramental incorporation while it engages in the proclamation of the gospel (Torrance, 1960a:160). Until Christ returns, the Eucharist represents the breaking in of the incarnation into the reality of the church’s existence on earth. Through the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist, Torrance (1960a:187) shows that the church has a “relation in being” to Christ by faith. The church is therefore seen in the Eucharist to be the place of Christ’s presence on earth that binds it to Christ’s presence in heaven (Torrance, 1960a:19).

Torrance also considers the place of memory and proclamation in the Eucharist. He notes that memory is both the action of the church and also the action of the Spirit through whom the church is enabled to remember the historical event of the crucifixion (Torrance, 1960a:176). The

Eucharist is the earthly echo of the eternal heavenly oblation and thanksgiving, as a kind of earthly *anamnesis* of the atoning death of Christ. The church, by *anamnesis*, proclaims the death of Christ and at the same time, through union with him, participates in Christ's intercessory prayer for humanity (Torrance, 1960a:177). Thus, the remembrance is in itself an act of mission as the church participates, by means of the mystery of its union with Christ, in his prayer for the world (Torrance, 1960a:178).

In addition, the church's proclamation of the death of Christ is sacramentally and analogically derivative of its relationship of *koinónia* in the Spirit because it combines both Christ's self-offering to the Father and the prayer of the saints in one Eucharist so that the church participates in the self-offering of Christ. There is a missional role deep within Torrance's theology of the Eucharist as a bringing to remembrance and proclaiming the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The objective proclamation of the church therefore corresponds to the sacramental proclamation in the Eucharist as a living act, so that at an undefined moment in the Eucharist liturgy, the "real presence" of the coming Lord points by faith beyond the liturgy (Torrance, 1960a:179). The church is enabled to "step over the eschatological border" in order to participate in the divine nature. As love is the eternal reality, this relation is based in love, from which flows out faith and hope (Torrance, 1960a:188). Through the Eucharist, there is enacted a "true and substantial union" between Christ and the church that is reminiscent of the union of the Trinity (Torrance, 1960a:189).

For Torrance, there is a further relation between the sacraments and the work of evangelism. The problem in evangelism is how to preach the gospel in a Christ-centred way so that the human response is not based on the "decision" one makes for Christ rather than the work of Christ in his life, death and resurrection. For Torrance (1992:96-97), the sacraments correct this perception because they give historical substance to the proclamation so that the gospel is proclaimed as much in sacrament as it is by Word. The sacraments therefore belong to the work of evangelism and should be seen as "converting ordinances" following the tradition of eighteenth century Scottish evangelicals (Torrance, 1992:97; 1996a:234). This might suggest that Torrance has an "open table" approach to the Eucharist, using it as a means of evangelism rather than stressing the warning of 1 Cor 11:27 against those who partake of the Eucharist in an "unworthy manner". However, Torrance (1960a:153) stresses the responsibility of the church to live its practical life in a way that is in agreement with the communion of the body of Christ so that it does not quench the Holy Spirit in its midst. From this Torrance (1960a:152, 193) infers that the table must be

“fenced” by the discipline of the church so that all who participate acknowledge the spiritual and corporate nature of the sacrament.

The practical nature of divine-human communion as *theosis* is seen as participation through the Eucharist in Christ’s obedient life and also in his high-priestly work of intercession for the world (Torrance, 1960a:147). Prayer at the Eucharist involves intercession for others, service in the body of Christ and praise as the work of the “royal priesthood” (Torrance, 1960a:149-150; 1 Pet 2:9; Heb 13:15). The work of prayer, praise, proclamation and witness by a life of “living sacrifice” is entirely practical in the life of the church. Through participation in the Eucharist, the church lives as a fellowship of reconciliation that brings healing to the world (Torrance, 1960a:153). This requires the church to live its ethic out in the world as witness to the nations. Torrance’s Eucharistic theology should therefore be seen as thoroughly practical and missional.

4.4.5 Eschatology

The interrelatedness between sacrament and eschatology has been evaluated in section 4.4.4. The eschatological import of the sacraments makes them signs, which hold the faith of the present church in the hope of the future through divine-human communion in Christ (Torrance, 2009:413-414). This gives the sacraments a missional role in the proclamation of hope to the world as the good news of Jesus Christ. It also gives the church a prophetic role as it proclaims the coming kingdom in the time between the ascension and *parousia* when Christ is veiled by his ascension to the Father. Nonetheless, Torrance (1960b:186) holds that there is also a realised aspect to eschatological hope through the “unveiling” of Christ to the eye of faith as the coming kingdom breaks into space and time through the proclamation of the gospel. It is the grace of God that holds back the dissolution of the current age so that the church can offer the possibility of repentance and faith in its mission to the world (Torrance, 2009:435). Consequently the church exists in the eschatological gap by faith and in fellowship with Christ in the Spirit, in the proclamation of the gospel by Word and sacrament and in prophetic living.

In regards to time, the church has both a horizontal connection with the historical Jesus and a vertical connection with the age to come (Torrance, 1960a:25). Thus, there is communion with God in the present age and elevation of that communion to an abiding communion in the world to come (Torrance, 1960a:21). Ultimately, the church exists in space-time to carry out its task of mission to the world, not in a spirit of self-reliance but relying on the new covenant in the body and blood of Christ as its security (Torrance, 1960a:27). Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of his

church by the Spirit and so the church participates in the life of Christ. Because of this, the church participates in the sending of the Son by the Father and so the church is sent out into the world to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation and to live as the people of reconciliation as a provisional form of the new creation yet to come. Thus, the work of the church is to witness both by word and by life (Torrance, 1965:193).

The practical and ethical consequences of eschatological participation through the Spirit in the resurrection and the age to come must be the transformation of the church by the mind of Christ so that it does not live in accordance with the norms of the present age (Torrance, 2009:435). This concept has already been seen in Torrance's own rejection of cultural dualism in order to bring not only the church, but Western culture under the aegis of the self-revelation of God in Christ. In Johannine language, the difference between walking in the darkness or in the light represents the clash between the norms of the present age and the norms of the kingdom of God (John 1:5; 1 John 1:5-6). Again, the only way in which the church can truly walk under the tutelage of the King of kings in the light of the kingdom of God is by living as suffering servant under the cross (Torrance, 2009:436). The church is sent out into the world as ambassadors of the king to proclaim the coming eschatological kingdom. As the church is already the new humanity in the world, it must bear witness in a revolutionary way that will throw it into conflict with the world (Torrance, 1959a:224).

The message of the second coming that the church proclaims is that Christ will return in glory in fulfilment of his saving work of redemption, bringing history to its final consummation (Torrance, 2002a:196-199). This means the final coming of the kingdom of God and judgement against those who have refused the cross. Those who have rejected the crucified Christ will be dealt with differently from those who have trusted him, but for both, it will be the final consummation of their relationship with God (Torrance, 2002a:197). This silences MacLean's (2012:193) criticism that Torrance's eschatology pushes the issue of judgement (as well as resurrection, heaven and hell) to the periphery in his eschatology. Torrance does not present his eschatology in a systematic way because he ties it to the missional role of the church through union with Christ in its proclamation of the "already" and "not yet" aspects of the kingdom of God. It is the kingdom of God that continues to come through the rebirth of the church in the Spirit at Pentecost to share in his mission and will come in its full realisation at the *parousia* (Torrance, 2009:349-358). It is not the kingdom of this world, but the rule of Christ that is ever expanding through the life and witness of his church, holding out the Word of life until the "eschatological pause" is over and the time for judgement comes. For Torrance (2002a:199), the

reality of the eschatological events is a call to the church to engage wholeheartedly in the mission of Christ and preach the gospel as the coming of the kingdom of God while the opportunity is still present. Eschatological expectation is therefore the core content of the gospel and the basis for mission, evangelism and preaching.

4.4.6 Preaching, Evangelism and Mission

John Stott (1985:25) noted the tendency for Evangelicals to use the words “mission” and “evangelism” synonymously. As Torrance does not define his use of these words, a cursory reading of his missional ecclesiology might lead to the assumption that he uses them interchangeably (Habets, 2013:par. 381-409). However, analysis of Torrance’s usage of the words shows a differentiation in thought similar to that of the missiologist David Bosch (1980:17; 1991:10) for whom evangelism is the proclamation of Christ and mission is the total task that the church is sent into the world to do, evangelism included. In Torrance’s (1959a:208-209) thought, the core content of evangelism is the “evangelical gospel” as the “Word made flesh”, that is, preaching the actualising of the vicarious life and death of Christ in the life of the believer through the power of the Spirit. However, Torrance (1966:139-140) also maintains that the total task of the church in mission to the world has a wider function, premised on proclamation, that includes witness by living in tension with the world, suffering to bring reconciliation, healing and peace, expending itself in intercessory prayer and living in unity. This section firstly evaluates the way in which Torrance understood the task of preaching and evangelism before secondly comparing it to his understanding of the wider mission of the church.

The fundamental responsibility of the church in mission is to evangelise by proclamation of the *kerygma* of Christ. In Torrance’s unitary system, the oneness between Jesus Christ and the Father, the *homoousion*, is the key concept in evangelism because the person of Jesus Christ and his mission flow from his relation with God and it is this that gives evangelical significance to the gospel (Torrance, 2010:10). As was seen in 4.2.3, unless Christ is fully divine, there is no power in the gospel and therefore no salvation (Torrance, 2010:11). In the life and passion of Christ, there is no disjunction between the Being and nature of Jesus and the Being and nature of God so that in the face of Jesus, the open heart of God is made visible (Torrance, 2010:17). In the same way, there is a oneness, a *homoousial* relation, between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit so that by the power of the Spirit in convicting the world of sin and judgement, the church is brought into communion with God in Christ. At the same time, the church of the Lord Jesus is filled with power of God to engage in the preaching ministry of the gospel (Torrance, 2010:19).

This is the simple theological basis of the gospel that Torrance preached. The question was how to preach it in a dualist world in which the historical Jesus had been removed from the Trinity leaving a “hidden God” behind the back of Jesus. The common approach to evangelism and preaching maintained this dualism and so blurred the gospel of Christ, meaning that a different method was needed (Torrance, 1992:93; 1994:39). Torrance responded to this challenge in two ways. Firstly, in terms of parish ministry, he focused on the cross and preached the vicarious faith of Christ through incarnational and atoning reconciliation (Torrance, 2010:23-32). Secondly, in the university and among scholars, he preached a unitary message in the face of a dualistic worldview, challenging the scientific culture to a holistic understanding of Christ (Torrance, 1994:1-40). However, in both contexts, his approach was basically similar. He preached Christ crucified as the power and wisdom of God and not of humanity (Torrance, 1994:39). His preaching was therefore Christ-centred.

The content of Torrance’s (1994:30; 2010:23, 30) evangelistic preaching focused on the love of God and the cross of Christ as the heart of faith. The purpose was to communicate that in the cross, Christ has penetrated into the depths of human judgement and death in order to substitute his life and to make atoning restitution (Torrance, 2010:24). The fate of those who do not respond to Christ through the preaching of the gospel and the reality of the final judgement was a strong motivation. Torrance (2012:31) warned that preachers and evangelists should not forget the “darker side of the cross” as God’s judgement on the rejection of Christ. His concentration was therefore on the vicarious life and death of Christ to stress that Christ’s substitution was complete, so that in the words of Gal 2:20, we are saved by the “faith of Christ” who loved us and gave himself for us. This, however, is not to downplay the faith of the believer, as suggested by Cassidy (2008:165-166) but to encourage the believer to submit to Christ who takes hold of human faith and makes it his own (Torrance, 2010:25). It is the “wondrous exchange” of Christ, his substitution for humanity in terms of 2 Cor 2:8, that reveals the significance of the passion of Christ.

Torrance (2010:28) complained of a neo-Pelagianism in the church that led preachers to leave the responsibility for salvation to the faith of their hearers. For Torrance, this was entirely incorrect. The truth of the gospel is that salvation is by the unconditional grace of God, through the vicarious humanity of Jesus and by his substitutionary faith, best proclaimed at the Eucharist where the substitutionary body and blood of Christ are portrayed as evidence of the new covenant so that there can be no question of self-reliance (Torrance, 2010:27). Thus, Torrance’s (1994:39) emphasis was on the cross as the wisdom and power of God and not on human decision. It was

noted in section 2.4.5 that McSwain (2010), who uses Torrance's theology to preach the gospel, has modified it to add the need for an "evangelical repentance" in order to avoid what he sees as the danger of universalism in Torrance's method. His concern is unjustified. Torrance (2009:3) does not avoid repentance in his theology, but maintains that the cross can only be understood by *metanoia*, as repentance and change of mind to bring it in conformity with the mind of Christ. In *Preaching Christ Today* (1994 36), he speaks of the unconditional grace of Christ as a call to repent and believe (Torrance, 2008 11).

The role of the church in mission, however, has a broader objective in view. Torrance (1966:129) writes, "It is through union and communion with Him [Christ] actualised in the Spirit that the church is quickened into life as his living body on earth and is empowered in its apostolic mission to be His representatives among men". As Christ's representatives, the church continues the mission of Christ by bringing the kingdom of God on earth (Torrance, 1966:137-138). As can be expected with Torrance's unitary framework, the coming of the kingdom of God has practical outcomes in terms of the way the church lives out the lordship of Christ in the world by being the "instrument by which the dynamic Word of [the] gospel intervenes in every form of human existence and action, social, nation and international (sic)...turning the world upside down" (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 55). At times, Torrance's passion for mission burns through his theology with the zeal of Emil Brunner's axiom that the church exists by mission as the fire by burning (Torrance, 2012:84). Although Torrance (1960b:163) holds an amillennialist position, his at times highly realised eschatology has echoes of the postmillennialism of the early Protestant missionary movement with its expectation of the worldwide coming of the kingdom of God on earth, an anomaly that can probably be explained by his heritage in evangelical mission (Torrance, 1960b:172; 1966:138-139; Fielder, 1994:272; cf. 5.2.3). There is no dividing line in Torrance's theology between theological cognition of divine-human communion and practical engagement in the mission of the church in the world.

One important area of mission engagement for Torrance was mission to the Jews, especially in the light of what he saw as Israel's continuing vicarious role in God's mission to mankind (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 40; Torrance, 2012:173f). In an address to the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society in 1977, he urges the church to reconsider the way it undertakes mission to Jews and Muslims (*in* Torrance, 2012:173-181). Torrance claims that as Jews and Arabs (Muslims) have a common sense of destiny regarding the will of God, Christian mission can only succeed by taking hold of this and harnessing it to Christian eschatology through the passion and resurrection of Christ (Torrance, 2012:180). However, among Jews he

argues for the development of a theology of suffering so that they understand their own suffering in the light of the passion of Christ. He also urges Christians to engage Jews and Muslims in mission as dialogue so that the gospel can be brought into the heart of their worldviews. Nonetheless, he advises that dialogue in itself is insufficient because the church also needs to bear witness through acts of compassion (Torrance, 2012:180).

Therefore, for Torrance (2012:75), the church has a role to play in the world, whether in Israel or at home and abroad, as something entirely distinct because the church has a unique message to proclaim. The *koinónia* of the Spirit creates in the church a community of persons in reciprocity with God and each other and as such the church becomes the social coefficient of knowledge about God (Torrance, 1982:46; 2002b:147). As a result, the church cannot be identified with society or with civilization or even with Christendom. The church needs to be able to stand over and against the world in order to proclaim the truth of the gospel. In its preaching and interaction with the world, Torrance (2012:79) holds that the role of the church is to be active, aggressive, disruptive and revolutionary. The work of the church is to evangelise the world, which can only be done if the church recovers the New Testament vision of the task of the church as the redemption of the world. In this light Torrance (1976) called for the Scottish Kirk to renew its passion for evangelism and mission.

4.4.7 Theological Education

A significant part of Torrance's life was engaged in the mission of the church as theological education. Torrance's (1965:13) focus in teaching was on the need for theologians to understand the world in which they live and to think through its implications in order to fulfil the Christian mission. This means understanding and challenging the scientific worldview, understanding the relations between language and theological meaning, finding a theological approach to church history and responding to human need (Torrance, 1965:18-24). The key to responding to human need is to proclaim the humanity of Christ who has already responded to human need in the incarnation. As a result, Torrance (1965:26) maintains that the closer theological education is to the humanity of Christ, the closer it will be to human need. The truth of God finds its relation in humanity in the person of Christ and a response to him. Therefore, theology is always practical because one cannot substitute an intellectual relation for the relation God has already established in Christ. Consequently, Torrance (1965:27) maintains that full place must be given in theology to the practical nature of the gospel as "evangelical proclamation". He thereby establishes an

integral relationship between theological education and mission through proclamation of the gospel.

Although theological knowledge is a human activity, Torrance (1965:27) argues that a proper balance must be kept between the divine subject and the human subject, the divine object and the human knower. However, in all theological education, the divine element must be dominant. If not, theology is thrown back on the human resources and humanity is left to its own devices. This, he claims, is the essence of teaching pastoral counselling. It must be practical but it must direct the counselee primarily to Christ and not to his/her own resources (Torrance, 1965:27). In the same way, theological language should not be simply descriptive but practical and challenging to conversion. In other words, it must consist of existence statements that direct the theologian beyond the self. At the same time, theological language needs to take human nature seriously instead of remaining in a mechanistic way in the realm of the intellectual (Torrance, 1965:28). Nonetheless, in spite of this best intention, Torrance's own theological language and style tended towards the abstract and drew criticism for its lack of practical application (George, 1960:30). However, the tendency of Torrance's discourse towards what appears to be the abstract could be the result of the influence of holistic and "topic-prominent" Chinese thought patterns on his early childhood language development (cf. Nisbett, 2004:45; Huang & Wang, 2011:390-394 for discussion on the characteristics of Chinese discourse). This is explored further in section 5.4.2.

There are seven basic principles to Torrance's (1959b:xxi –xli; xxxii-xli) philosophy of theological education. Firstly, Jesus Christ is the truth so there is no communication of truth except in personal relation to him. Secondly, the incarnation is a historical fact that is communicated through the Word of God in the context of the fellowship and mission of the church. Theological education is therefore not isolated from the mission of the church. Thirdly, the true response to Christian teaching is self-denial and self-criticism that leads to the fourth and fifth principles, which are reconciliation with the truth and renewal on the part of the learner. Sixthly, Christian teaching is done the power of the Spirit. Finally, the learner has to understand that he/she belongs to the communion of the saints who live over and against the world and therefore the only way to have communion with the world is to be sent back on a mission of reconciliation. Torrance links Christian/theological education so strongly with mission that he states that unless a person engages in mission, it is doubtful whether he/she has really entered into communion with the truth as reception of truth only reaches fulfilment when it is passed on to others. This is in accord with the conclusion of Christian educationalists (Shults, 1991; Martin,

1995; Prasad, 2005) that the elimination of dualism in Torrance's theology enables him to link theology and practice, which here is seen as the practice of mission. However, Martin's observation that Torrance's model of praxis is Christopraxis also rings true. In Torrance's unitary system, all practice is centred on Christ and this includes theological education.

In *The Christian Frame of Mind* (1985), Torrance considers the role of the university within a Christian culture. As with all his work on culture, Torrance considers the scientific paradigm to be in the process of shifting from the dualist cosmologies and epistemologies of the past towards a more interrelatedness, thus leading to a break up in the rigid positivist ways of thought of the past. This might seem to have been a rather optimistic prediction in the light of recent postmodern tendencies towards fragmentation in the philosophy of science (Magnus, 2013:48). However, Torrance maintains that the role of the university as the pursuit of truth should not be compromised. A university should be a *universitas*, a community of disciplined research pursuing an open universal aim through a multiplicity of interests, theology included (Torrance, 1985:52). Further, Torrance maintains that a university should be dedicated to the pursuit of truth that is correlated with the ultimate authority of truth and in an atmosphere that enables qualitative and rigorous enquiry that is free from extraneous control and able to function within an atmosphere of stability and serenity. Above all, the university must pursue research in all areas of human knowledge in such a way that they open the way for interconnections. This can only be achieved through a unitary understanding of the universe (Torrance, 1985:59).

Torrance sees the failure to integrate culture owing to the detachment of knowledge from its foundations as the deepest failure of the university system. He notes that traditionally, theology is considered to have provided the bond of cultural unity through its transcendence but also through the inherited rationality of the created universe. He rather optimistically claims that the "master ideas" with which the modern culture works have their origin in Judaeo-Christian doctrines, making science and Christian theology increasingly more compatible. This bridge between science and theology means that science can be incorporated within a unified culture of liberal education. Theology would then play its proper role in making contributions to the interrelatedness of creation, enabling the idea of a *universitas* to be realised in a spiritual cultural unity that is open to the intelligibility and integrity of the universe (Torrance, 1985:62). This desire to transform the dominant worldview at the intellectual level was really the focus of Torrance's long career as a university professor of theology. In all his work in higher education, his evangelistic passion was for the elimination of dualism and the *metanoia* of the culture to a Christian frame of mind (Torrance, 1985:38).

4.4.8 Conclusion

The mission of the church is the basis for Torrance's ecclesiology and missiology. The one is a function of the other, so that they cannot be separated. This is because in the holism that is Torrance's theology of divine-human communion, the doctrine of the church is a correlate of the internal relations of the Trinity flowing out in love as the mission of Christ to restore the broken relations of the world to communion with God in Christ by the power of the Spirit. The church as the body of Christ then participates in the mission of Christ to the world. Thus, there is an integral link between divine-human communion as *koinónia* and mission as *missio Dei*.

The biblical theological base for Torrance's missional ecclesiology commences with the eternal election of Christ, the creation of the world through him and God's gracious eternal purpose to restore humanity to unbroken covenant relationship with himself through the election of Israel, as the one for the many, to be fulfilled in the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Christ. As was seen in evaluation of the mystery of Christ, this is all about God in covenant relationship with humanity through one covenant of grace and one "covenanted way of response". In the Old Testament, God's covenanted way of response was seen as word (Moses) and cult (Aaron) enshrined in the *torah*. In the New Testament, both aspects are fulfilled in the vicarious obedience of Christ, although Torrance does not explore the theological implications of Christ as *torah*. The role of Israel in obedience to the demand of the covenant was to live by the *torah* as a holy people and so, in demonstration of the blessings of obedience, to fulfil its priestly role as bearer of revelation and reconciliation to the world. Thus for Torrance, the Sinai covenant (Exod 19-24) is the basis for the missional nature of the election of Israel.

However, in Israel's inability to fulfil its priestly role as bearer of the blessings of obedience, God remained faithful to the covenant, keeping it through judgement. Israel, as bearer of the promise of God through Abraham, demonstrated vicarious redemption through suffering for its rebellion until the coming of Christ as suffering servant. In spite of the stated discontinuity between the people of God under the old covenant and the people of God in Christ in the light of the resurrection in the new covenant, Torrance maintains that Israel continues to be the bearer of the sin of the world through vicarious suffering in present time. This was seen to influence his attitude to the evangelism of both Jews and Muslims.

Essentially, the church is the "this worldly" sphere of God's presence as divine-human communion actualised by the Holy Spirit and expressed as the new covenant in the blood of

Christ. In New Testament language, this is *koinónia* and in dogmatic terminology, it is *theosis*. In figurative language, the biblical images of the church as the body of Christ or the church as the temple of the Spirit express the concept as the new covenant as the coming of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ. The church is the sphere of the missional nature of the economic activity of the Triune God as a reflection of the communion of love that is the ontological Being.

In Torrance's missional ecclesiology, the sacraments are fundamental to incorporation into *koinónia* as covenant through baptism as initiation and Eucharist as continued dwelling in Christ as the Word of God. This is because *kerygma* and *baptisma* are integrally linked through the incarnation in the person and work of Christ. In the church, *kerygma* is the basis for *baptisma* into the name of the Trinity as the mission of Christ on earth (Matt 28:19-20). Thus, the present time should be seen, in the light of the ascension and sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, as a period of "eschatological pause" before the *parousia* and judgement, during which the gospel is to be taken into the world. This missional imperative is entirely practical. It requires the church to take on the role of suffering servant as it worships, preaches and serves the mission of Christ. Torrance's passion for world evangelization can be seen in his approach to the preaching of the gospel so that it challenges core cultural beliefs with the reality of Christ and in his calling of theological/higher education to *metanoia* as transformation after the mind of Christ.

4.5 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to evaluate the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology through the concepts from dogmatics deduced from the evaluation of the biblical basis for the missional nature of divine-human in Chapter 3. The first area of consideration was the Trinity, evinced by the Johannine concept of *koinónia* as fellowship with the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. This was explored through the centrality of the Trinity in all Torrance's thought, especially his understanding of the incarnation as the insertion of *homoousion* into the midst of humanity in order to lift humanity up into communion with the Father. The relation of communion was made effective through the hypostatic union and realised by the power of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the Son to the world was therefore seen to be the outflow of the eternal communion of love that is the *perichoretic* intertrinitarian relation, drawing humanity into communion with God and at the same time sending the church as the body of Christ back into the world in the same mission of

love and grace towards broken humanity. This was the ontological basis for the missional nature of divine-human communion.

The Trinitarian basis of Torrance's theology means a conviction regarding the uniqueness of Christ for salvation, as was evidenced in exegesis of 1 Pet 2:4-12 and 1 John 1:1-7. The union of Word and Act in the person and work of Christ means that revelation and reconciliation in the history of Israel are fulfilled in the person and work of Christ as incarnation and atonement. This was seen to be the coordination of the ontological and economic aspects of Torrance's soteriology. Mission is therefore about the proclamation of the vicarious life of Christ from birth through death to resurrection as the basis, by the mystery of substitution, of incorporation into the *koinónia* of the Spirit. Consequently, in Torrance's theology of divine-human communion, incarnation and atonement are always conjoined. Entry into *koinónia* is predicated on the atoning life of Christ as his baptism on behalf of humanity and the atoning blood of Christ as his baptism into death for the salvation of the world. The resultant restoration of communion with God is dealt with in Torrance's Christology as three categories of the mystery of Christ corresponding to the role of the Trinity.

The mystery of the "setting forth" of the body and blood of Christ in atonement is the eternal election (*prothesis*) of Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world by the free grace of God and out of his infinite love, thus linking election and grace. Election includes the concept of the "one for the many", which was first evidenced in the election of the people of Israel to be the bearers of divine revelation and reconciliation to the world and fulfilled by Christ in the incarnation and atonement. However, there was criticism that Torrance uses Christology as a pretext in his biblical theology, jumping too quickly to Christological fulfilment and neglecting the later history of Israel. This was seen to be a potential weakness in his biblical theological base for the missional nature of divine-human communion. The election of Jesus Christ as both electing God and elected one was seen to be a Barthian concept that led to accusations of universalism in Torrance's soteriology. This was resolved by Torrance's commitment to universal atonement that drives the church out to preach the gospel to all nations.

For Torrance, the church is the Old Testament covenant people of God seen in the new light of the incarnation as the people of the new covenant. The covenant therefore acts as a "metanarrative" throughout Torrance's work on the missional nature of divine-human communion. For Torrance, the concept of relationship with God in Christ through the Spirit as *koinónia* is the new covenant in the blood of Christ actualised in the church. Thus, atonement

through the blood of Christ is both the means of entry into *koinónia* as covenant (sealed by baptism) and the means of continuation in *koinónia* as covenant (evidenced in Eucharist). This was seen in 1 John 1:7 to be “cleansing” through the blood of Christ. Torrance holds to one covenant of grace, rejecting Federal Theology and its covenant of redemption as a return to dualism in which the will of God is separated from the person and work of Christ. For Torrance, the covenant is the result of the divine initiative of God in the gracious election of Christ, realised in space and time through the historical incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. In Christ the covenant is kept both from the side of God and from the side of humanity. It is predicated on a response of faith and obedience which has been realised firstly by the faith of Christ (Gal 2:20).

Torrance does not examine in any detail the promise-plan of God and the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant in biblical theology. However, he posits that all the blessings of the new covenant in Christ are realised in the sphere of God’s presence in the world that is *koinónia*. This was seen as the “full joy” of *koinónia* in 1 John 1:4. The obverse of blessing is curse, which Torrance sees as failure to respond to the divine invitation to enter into covenant relationship with God in Christ and therefore to remain outside the sphere of *koinónia* and under the judgement of God. This was seen in Gen 12:3 and in 1 Pet 2:7. Within the covenant relationship, the demands of obedience have already been met in Christ, but there remains an obligation to a life of holiness and separation from the “world”, as evidenced in the “royal priesthood” of Israel through the maintenance of the covenant of grace through *torah* as word and liturgy under the old covenant. In the same way, the church as the body of Christ under the new covenant in his blood is a “royal priesthood”, responding to the gracious love of God in Christ by living a life of sacrifice as worship and obedience as witness to the world. The church thus takes on the role of the suffering servant in the world.

The covenant relationship is always communal but is premised on individual participation in Christ by faith, meaning that entry into the new covenant is to participate in the horizontal *koinónia* that is the fellowship of the body of Christ on earth as the church. It is *koinónia* that gives the church its Trinitarian structure, which in turn is the basis for its missional nature. Thus Torrance’s theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion turns full circle. The intertrinitarian relation of love is the basis for the saving mission of Christ who by his life and death makes atonement for the sin of the world and draws humanity by faith into relationship within the Trinity. The church as the body of Christ then participates in his ongoing mission to the world, proclaiming him as the Word of God through preaching and sacrament and by living out the ethics of the kingdom in the power of the Spirit. The church is therefore the sphere of the

activity of the economic Trinity; the incarnation is the sphere of the conjunction of the immanent and economic roles of the Trinity and the intertrinitarian relation is the ontological source of the economic activity bring divine-human communion and mission together holistically through the incarnation.

The unitary nature of Torrance's theology with its rejection of dualism and its focus on knowledge of God in terms of his self-revelation in Christ through the power of his Spirit means that Torrance's theology is dynamic. It cannot remain silent in the world but moves forward in the power of the resurrection to engage in mission as evangelism, worship, witness, ecumenism and sacrificial service as it waits for the coming of the kingdom and the consummation of all things. In the eschatological pause between the ascension and *parousia*, it is concerned to preach the gospel to all, including the people of Israel whose election in Christ has not been revoked. The missional nature of divine-human communion means that there is an integral connection between theology and practice in Torrance's work and life that leads him an understanding of theological education as Christopraxis. However, this does not imply that Torrance engages in reflection on "mission practice" in any sense that is abstracted from the theological nature of the ontological-economic Trinitarian mission. It is particularly in Torrance's personal practice of mission, and especially mission in China, that the "mission practice" outcomes of his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion are evaluated in Chapter 5.

5.0 DIVINE-HUMAN COMMUNION AND THE CHINA MISSION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter established a missional outcome to divine-human communion in the theology of T.F. Torrance. Mission was seen to flow from the divine love of the intertrinitarian *perichoretic* relations, in which is situated the eternal election of Christ as the divine *prothesis* made incarnate in space and time and revealed as the *mysterion* of God. The mission of the person and work of Christ, as the incarnation and atonement, was seen to be the fulfilment of covenant relations, both on the side of God and the side of humanity in Christ, with the purpose of lifting humanity up into *koinónia* with God through the Holy Spirit. The horizontal expression of *koinónia* is the church as the body of Christ. The church, in its fellowship of communion with God and communion with its members in Christ, then participates in the ongoing mission of Christ in the world. The significance of the ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father is to create an “eschatological pause” in which the church is called to carry out the mission of evangelizing the world. The mission of the church is therefore, by implication, the *missio Dei* and the role of the church is to be a “royal priesthood” in the world by proclaiming the gospel and living gospel obedience as a witness to the world.

Chapter 1:1 observed that there are indicators that Torrance’s biography played an important role in the development of his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion but these have not to date been evaluated in any depth. In Chapter 2:1 it was noted that McGrath (1999:237) warned of the danger of concentrating on Torrance’s intellectual achievement to the detriment of the biography that shaped his theology, and Colyer (2001a:35-36) hinted that Torrance’s evangelistic and missionary perspective had influenced his theology. However, neither followed this line of evaluation through in any detail. It has been the aim of this thesis to fill this lacuna in Torrance research in order to establish the unity of Torrance’s theology and practice. In the previous chapter, attention was paid to the missional nature of Torrance’s theological method, especially in terms of his theology of divine-human communion. In this chapter, the task is to evaluate Torrance’s biography and engagement in mission. The purpose is to establish the integral nature of Torrance’s theology and mission practice in order to create a unified approach to Torrance’s life and theology through his mission practice.

5.1.1. Methodological Questions

At the outset, the task of examining the unity of theological thought and practice from evidence of Torrance's involvement in mission may appear to begin at the wrong point. It is usual in contemporary contextual theology for reflection on practice to act as the starting point for theological reflection (Bevans, 2002:3f). This sequence, however, would be inappropriate for study of Torrance's mission practice in China that was undertaken at the end of his theological career after his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion had been developed and refined. If Torrance's missional theology was the result of reflection on practice, it was memory of derived practice as a teenager sharing in his father's evangelistic ministry. Rather, this section argues that Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion was integral to his theology and as such both motivated and informed his mission practice in China in the later years of his life. Torrance is perhaps atypical of mission theologians in that he does not adjust the categories of his missional dogmatic theology to reflect the Chinese context, but rather allows it to inform his mission practice. This does not however negate the influence of the Torrance family background in mission on the development of that theology.

A second issue to consider is the historical nature of the enterprise at hand. Although relatively recent, Torrance's decease (in 2007) means that investigation into the nature of his practice is inevitably a historical task. This necessitates reliance on both intentional and unintentional primary source materials stored in the T.F. Torrance archive collection (at Princeton Theological Seminary) and secondary source materials in the form of comments by friends and family, as well as autobiographical material made available to Alister McGrath (1999) for Torrance's biography. Thomson (2012:101-103) highlights the danger of bias in using intentional autobiographical sources because memory and intention can lead to flawed accounts. In order to minimise the risk of skewed judgement, historical research must always be situated in its background historical context, must be checked for both internal and external consistency and must, as far as possible, be triangulated with other sources to enhance validity (Thomson, 2012:102). Nonetheless, even when these checks are put in place, it must be borne in mind that historical judgements must be considered as interim because there is always the possibility that further evidence will emerge which may cast doubt on the initial conclusions (McDowell, 2013:12).

A third consideration is the peculiar nature of mission history as a category of historical research. Brian Stanley (2012), mission historian from the University of Edinburgh, is disparaging about the role of mission history in contemporary academia, claiming that the missiologist is a "rare

species” in a secular world in which a Christian approach to history is no longer permitted. Stanley maintains that mission history is no longer the realm of the theologian so much as the realm of other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, feminist and postcolonial studies. Stanley’s negative assessment, however, should be tempered by consideration of the role of the *International bulletin of mission research* in keeping mission history in the domain of theology of mission (Noll, 1998:108). Equally, the recent Eerdmans *Studies in the history of Christian missions* series has documented much of the history of the nineteenth and twentieth century Protestant mission movement.

Nonetheless, the difficulties of doing mission history need to be considered. Church historian, Mark Noll (1998) observes the inadequacy of all the three major approaches to mission history. Firstly, the premodern approach presupposes an ideological or theological agenda (often of a confessional nature) through which historical events are compiled and interpreted. Noll (1998:113-115) maintains that this method, often used by mission practitioners, tends towards exaggerated stories of success and progress which fit a preconceived agenda. It can hardly be termed objective. Secondly, the modern approach, which attempts to operate objectively and scientifically, fools itself into thinking that it is without bias because the “facts” speak for themselves without the need for interpretation. This approach ignores the inevitability of subjective bias. Thirdly, the postmodern approach assumes that there is no possibility of finding truth and settles for a multiplicity of opinion. This approach has led to an “epistemological crisis” in the study of history and loss of confidence in the ability of the historian to elicit any truth from the facts presented (Noll, 1998:113). Noll (1998:121) concludes that the only way forward is for the mission historian to use elements of all three approaches in order to avoid the excesses of each one.

As the purpose of this study is to investigate evidence of Torrance’s theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion in his mission practice, it must take into account the difficulties of undertaking what is essentially a theological exercise in the context of mission history. Here the work of missiologist Stephen Bevans (2005) is apposite. In an article on systematic theology and the “missiological imagination”, he makes the point that, although the relationship between mission and systematic theology (especially Trinitarian theology) has traditionally been consigned to the “margins” of theological study, the rise of the concept of *missio Dei* indicates that mission and Trinitarian theology should be given centre place. Thus, he maintains that systematic theology should develop a “missiological imagination” that enables it to consider Trinitarian theology, ecclesiology and mission as one, with implications for practical

theology (Bevans 2005:7-8). This approach to the relationship between systematic theology and mission would suggest that what this research sets out to do methodologically in relating systematic theology and mission history through mission practice, is in fact the outworking of a biblical theology of mission as *missio Dei* and not an attempt to impose a confessional viewpoint onto historical research.

5.1.2 Methodological Procedure

In spite of these assurances, the purpose of this chapter is best served by a methodology that acknowledges and addresses its potential weakness in order to build its research competency. Firstly, it needs to acknowledge that the realm of mission history tends towards the premodern and an agenda of “success” in the growth of the church as a result of the missionary enterprise. The intentional and non-intentional Torrance archive sources are not unaffected by this agenda, especially in the early Torrance family history where the primary source materials are reflective of the prevailing early twentieth century missionary subculture. The material is therefore best approached critically, bearing in mind the potential for ideological bias.

Secondly, the danger of loss of a modernist sense of objectivity by reading mission history through the interpretative eyes of one family is real and so the research needs to be approached with concern for an attempt at objective contextual and historical situating of events. In McGrath’s (1999:3-18) intellectual biography, the Torrance family story is intertwined with macro socio-political events. The result is, at times, somewhat confusing as the combination of macro political history and micro family history means that the reader is left without a complete sense of either. In this research, therefore, the macro historical context is evaluated separately from the micro family history that both converges and diverges from the macro history through different historical periods. Further to this point is the need to validate the internal and external consistency of the archival sources. In order to do this, all documents consulted have been checked, as far as possible, for authorship and dating. The unintentional sources (primarily personal correspondence) have been validated by placing them alongside the unpublished autobiographical articles that formed the basis of McGrath’s biography. Where there is inconsistency in dating and confusion of detail, this has been noted. In terms of scientific objectivity, this research has also attempted to triangulate the sources in order to provide accuracy (Thomson, 2012:102). Three points of reference have been used viz. primary materials from the Torrance family archive, secondary materials relating to the historical context; and for the key area of research, primary and secondary source materials from the Church Missionary Society as

a disinterested party working in the same geographical and missional areas as the China Inland Mission (CIM) and United Bible Societies in Sichuan, Western China.

Thirdly, by taking into account postmodern concerns with subjectivity, this research acknowledges the potential for the personal history of the researcher to affect interpretation. Pierson (2009:15) admits the need to acknowledge personal bias in doing history from a missional perspective. Indeed, the involvement of the researcher in mission in the twenty-first century and personal acquaintance with China Inland Mission (CIM) personnel (and their families) who worked in China before 1950 means that total objectivity cannot be obtained. However, in order to reduce the influence of personal bias, attention has been paid to the triangulation of sources using the CMS archives. Thus, every effort has been made to reduce interpretative bias.

The structure of this chapter therefore reflects its methodological principles. The first section evaluates the socio-political background to the Protestant mission movement in China as a means of objective verification of context. It deliberately avoids detailed evaluation of Roman Catholic and Orthodox mission in order to limit the background to that which concerned the Torrance family directly. It then evaluates the roles played by Thomas Torrance Snr and Annie Torrance in mission in China, before considering their influence on T.F. Torrance's theological development in the early years. It then considers T.F. Torrance's limited involvement in mission during his career when he exercised a pastoral and academic teaching ministry in Scotland and beyond. Finally, it evaluates Torrance's participation in mission in China in his retirement years.

A thread running through the research, linking the family history of engagement in mission in China with T.F. Torrance's participation in mission in his retirement years, is Torrance's lifelong sense of "call" to engage in mission and evangelism in the upper Min River valley in Western China (see map in Annexure) where his father had been among the first missionaries. In a letter to Dr Thompson Brown, who had also grown up in China, Torrance writes "I always wanted to be a missionary on the Tibetan border of Sichuan, in the upper Min valley, where my father worked for so long but the Lord had other ideas" (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159). This chapter shows that T.F. Torrance did indeed have a vocation to mission precisely because he had a vocation to engage in theology. His sense of "call" to engage in mission on the Tibetan border of Sichuan was fulfilled to some extent at the end of his life when he was instrumental in the resurrection of the church among the Qiang. At the same time, Torrance's post retirement involvement in the theological education and the printing of the Bible in China has been

instrumental in the flourishing of Christianity throughout China over the past forty years. Torrance's early mission experiences and sense of "call" had an influence on the development his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion during his professional years, and ultimately, his theological conviction led him to personal mission engagement in China in his retirement years.

5.2 Background to Protestant Mission in China

5.2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to place the involvement of the Torrance family in mission in China in its historical and socio-political context. While this provides empirical evidence of background events against which to evaluate the involvement of the Torrance family in mission, it also serves to illuminate, to a certain extent, the reasons for the events in the lives of the Torrance. People exist within a historical-cultural matrix, which forms the framework against which they live and act, theologise and live out their faith. The purpose of this section is to give a background political and mission history context for the work of Thomas and Annie Torrance Snr in China between 1895 and 1934, as well as to establish a timeframe of events within China and the history of the church as the backdrop for the return of T.F. Torrance to China at the end of the twentieth century. At the same time, it traces the history of the work of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Western China to serve as a third point of triangulation in the evaluation of the history.

Selection of detail is always a crucial question in the writing of history (Pyne, 2009:20-21). The criterion for inclusion of detail in the period between 1850 and 1934 has therefore been relevance to the events in the local geographical context as they impacted the lives of the Torrance family. The criterion for the inclusion of detail from the period between 1934 and 1994 (when T.F. Torrance had his last engagement with mission in China) has been relevance to the mission work in which he was involved. Thus through this section on the historical background to mission in China, attention has been paid to events that affected the lives of missionaries in Sichuan Province of south west China where the Torrance family lived and worked and where T.F. Torrance continued that work after his retirement.

One of the problems with the writing of the history of the interaction of Christianity with China, as has been noted earlier, is the bias of the author. The first scholar to attempt to write a history of the church in China was Kenneth Scott Latourette (1929) who wrote it from the viewpoint of the expansion of Western mission. Apart from that, Stanley (2012) observes that until the 1980s, the

study of the history of the church among the Chinese was marginal. Chinese historian, Zhang Kaiyuan (2001:30-31; 34) bemoans the bias and lack of objectivity among the few Chinese historians who attempted to write a history of Christianity in China before 1949 and notes the complete lack of objective Chinese historical research in China until the 1980s. In the international sphere, Paul Cohen (USA, 1963) had started to address issues of China and international political order in the 1960s. However, it was not until John K Fairbank (1968) addressed the paucity of study of Chinese history in his inaugural address as president of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1968 that Western and Chinese professional historians began to consider collaboration on empirical study of Chinese history.

In the 1980s, as China became more open to the world after the death of Mao Zedong, the need to write the history of mission in China became more urgent. A former Presbyterian missionary to China, Archie R. Crouch, first undertook the task of collecting data and documents relating to the missionary endeavour in China. He devoted his retirement years to the compiling a *Scholars' guide to China mission resources in the libraries and archives of the United States* (1983) under the sponsorship of Princeton Theological Seminary, publishing Vol. 1 in 1983. The collection of resources enabled the Henry Luce Foundation to initiate the *History of Christianity in China Project* in 1985 with a grant of \$500 000. Under the direction of Dr Daniel Bays at the University of Kansas it produced several publications including *Christianity in China* (1996) and *A new history of Christianity in China* (2012). This would suggest an objective secondary source for the history of mission in Sichuan Province, but for this research, T.F. Torrance's personal involvement in the project means that there is still potential for bias (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 120). This again, points to the need for triangulation with CMS sources as independent witness.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that this section of historical research of necessity falls into the category of "mission history" rather than "church history" (Leung, 2002:59). This is because, as a study of Western mission enterprise, it examines the historical data from the perspective of the Torrance family as missionaries, rather than from the side of the Chinese church as recipients. As a historian of the Chinese church, Philip Leung (2002:72) maintains that it is inappropriate to focus exclusively on either missionaries or the Chinese church because history is best written at the point of intersection between Western and Chinese perspectives. This would seem to be a reasonable proviso for any historical study of the expansion of the church. Unfortunately, in so far as the Torrance family involvement in mission is concerned, the Chinese perspective has yet to be written, although there are indicators in the documents of reactions from Chinese recipients.

Bays (2012:2) also acknowledges the “basic tension” in the heart of his historical writing between “(foreign) missions” and “Chinese church”.

5.2.2 Early Mission in China

Protestant mission in China was not the first encounter of the Chinese people with Christianity. Recent archaeological discoveries have suggested that the history of the interaction of Christianity with China might date back to the presence of the Apostle Thomas in the years following the ascension and the early spread of the Christian faith (Bays, 2012:5). Although this has not been proved conclusively, it shows that Christianity in China has deeper roots than the arrival of Protestant missions in the nineteenth century would suggest. Nestorian Christians were present in China as foreigners from CE 635 (Aikman, 2006:21-23) and Mongol Nestorians, together with Roman Catholics, traded with China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Bays, 2012:14). However, the Christian church was not established in China until the arrival of the Jesuit priests in the seventeenth century under the leadership of the Italian intellectual, Matteo Ricci (Aikman, 2006:31). Bays (2012:24-28) and Aikman (2006:32) both maintain that the Roman Catholic Church at this time operated mostly among the educated elite in urban centres so that such rural Christianity, such as there was, tended to be syncretic. The toleration by the Jesuit priests of syncretism in the rural areas eventually led to conflict with Rome and culminated in the “rites controversy” which led to the papal rejection of Jesuit policies in China in 1704 and the deportation of many priests. Not all Jesuit priests were deported, however, and some returned clandestinely to the country against papal orders. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church in China continued to operate with relative freedom of access in urban and rural areas, even during the time of papal interdict.

However, this state of affairs was not to last long. When the Yongzheng emperor ascended to the throne in 1723, he tightened control and sought to eliminate all aberrations from Confucian ideology, outlawing Christianity and deporting all missionaries outside Beijing. This ban was to remain in place until the 1840s, thus prompting Latourette (1975:1323) to state that by 1800, Christianity had a bleak outlook in China. Bays (2012:31) notes, however, that in spite of this, several Roman Catholic missionaries managed to remain in the country and by the early eighteenth century, different Catholic orders had smuggled 40-50 priests into China. Thus in spite of the ban on Christian mission, the Roman Catholic Church maintained a presence in inland China through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and was present when the Protestant missionary movement began.

5.2.3 Protestant Mission in China in the Nineteenth Century

The Protestant church mission movement has its beginning in the Reformation and subsequent revivals in the eighteenth century led by the Wesleys and George Whitefield. Although there had been some early eighteenth century missionary societies such as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), it was really only at the end of the eighteenth century that the great awakening of Protestant missions resulted in the establishment of foreign mission societies. These included the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS, 1792), the London Missionary Society (LMS, 1795) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS, 1799). In 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed with the aim of printing and distributing the Bible at home and abroad. These developments in Britain also had their counterpart in the United States in the early years of the nineteenth century where “mass conversion” through revival meetings led to a rise in the number of mission societies in the USA (Latourette, 1975:1231). In 1816 the American Bible Society (ABS) was formed as an interdenominational group with the initial aim of putting a Bible in every home in America. They were mostly lay-organised and unconnected with any particular denomination (Latourette, 1975:1339). Then, in 1826, lagging somewhat behind its British counterparts, the American Home Mission Society was formed along with several other mission societies.

The first Protestant missionary entered China in 1807 with LMS during the period of the ban on Christianity in the interior. Robert Morrison (1782-1834) was not welcomed by the Chinese nor was he welcomed by the British East India Company (BEIC) who did not want missionaries to be involved in affairs of state and trade. As he was only permitted to reside in Guangzhou during the trading season, he had to retreat to Macao for part of every year. Nonetheless, Morrison used the opportunity to learn the language and translate the Bible, thus reflecting the priority of the Protestant mission movement for the translation and distribution of the Scriptures (Bays, 2012:44). Gradually other Protestant missionaries arrived, most notably the Prussian missionary, Karl Gützlaff (1803-1857), of the Netherlands Mission Society, who defied government orders in order to engage in mission work. He was the exception, however, and many of the missionaries were frustrated by the ban on entry into the Chinese interior and left. This left Protestant mission in a weakened state in China. Nonetheless, during this period, CMS began discussing the possibility of beginning mission work in China with Morrison and Gützlaff. However, like many other mission societies, they waited until the Western powers forced the doors into the interior open as a result of the Opium War (1839-1842, Moule, 1902:42-43).

The treaties following the Opium War were concessions won by Western powers in order to assert their right to free trade with China. Opium had been banned in China but Western nations engaged in smuggling it into China clandestinely. With the conclusion of the Opium War, agreements were made with Britain, America and France to allow for five free trade ports (“treaty ports”) and other privileges for trade and mission in the interior of China. Bays (2012:47) notes that there seemed to have been little ethical discomfort among missionaries that the treaties were opening China up to the destructive nature of opium. Rather, they saw the treaties as an act of providence in opening China up for mission. Gützlaff is notorious for his participation in the opium trade by acting as a translator for smugglers and using the opportunity to distribute his translation of the Bible to the Chinese (Lutz, 2008:294-295). Gützlaff’s use of “questionable means” in spreading the gospel led to unfavourable attitudes towards foreign missionaries, which eventually resulted in the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1900; Moffett, 2005:297, 484).

From 1842, the work of evangelism expanded to the five treaty ports but there was still insufficient concession to allow them to work fully in the interior. CMS sent its first missionaries to China in 1844, working in the urban centres of Shanghai and Nampo. From 1850-1864, a syncretic Chinese church, known as the Taipings, under the leadership of Hong Xiuquan (who had become a Christian in Hong Kong), reacted to persecution from the Qing dynasty and organised a rebellion aimed at the overthrow of the government. Although they did not succeed, the rebellion dragged on thus putting the Qing dynasty under pressure. Aikman (2006:39) comments that this rebellion, which decimated the population in central and southern China, may have alerted the ruling class to the potentially seditious nature of Christianity. However, following the Second Opium War that broke out in 1857, further treaties were agreed between the Qing government and Western powers, which, by 1860, had given missionaries right of access into the interior and the right to buy land and build on it.

From 1860 onwards, the Protestant mission movement began to expand in China, encouraged by the permission to work in the interior and fortified by the bureaucratization of mission organisations at home. Latourette (1929:361) comments that the period between 1856 and 1897 saw the rapid expansion of mission in China, to the extent that by 1898 all eighteen provinces and Manchuria had been evangelised. This was a time of pioneer exploration, evangelism, distribution of Bibles and tracts and the building of school by the various mission societies. At the beginning of this period, James Hudson Taylor entered China as a young missionary with the Chinese Evangelization Society (CES). Not content with the “armchair directors” of the CES, he set up his own mission society that was based *inter alia* on the principles of provision by faith and direction

from the mission field (Austin, 2007:80). In 1865, he established the China Inland Mission (CIM), which was to grow rapidly until, by the end of the nineteenth century, it was the largest mission society in China. Among CIM's unique contributions to mission in China, was its unprecedented use of unmarried women as missionaries in the interior regions of China. Thus by the end of the nineteenth century, Protestant mission had become well established in China.

This period became known as the "Christian occupation of China", a term that Fairbank and Goldman (1998:223) see as "unwise" and which from the Chinese perspective, is seen as "unfortunate" (Kaiyuan, 2001:39). However, it was a time of energetic Christian expansion in China. According to Bays (2012:69-70), the greatest achievement of the missionary endeavour at this time was the building of institutions to form an entire education system of schools and colleges for the development of the Chinese people (Moffett, 2005:479-481). In addition, energy was expended on the translation of the Bible and production of evangelistic literature. Other missions concentrated on setting up medical institutions. The role of CMS during this period, of example, was to establish a large number of hospitals and dispensaries, which records show, were more numerous than in any other country in which the society worked (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 13). However, at this time, CIM was a notable exception to the policy of setting up institutions, preferring to concentrate on evangelism and primary, non-institutional medical work.

5.2.4 Protestant Mission in China in the early twentieth century

The turn of the century brought changes to Protestant mission in China, most notably as a result of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. The political failure on the part of the ruling Qing dynasty to implement reform in the way that Japan had been seen to implement it, led to dissatisfaction among the populace. Capitalising on this, three missionaries who had influence at court, sought to pressurise the government to implement what Bays (2012:83) describes as "westernizing reform", with the implication that westernisation would lead to Christianisation of society. This led to some measure of reform in elite circles, which resulted in a backlash reaction in the general population against Christianity, beginning with the murder of eleven Anglican missionaries in 1895 (some from CMS) and an upsurge of the use of animist religious practices in order to oust the "foreign devil" (Moffett, 2005:484; Austin, 2007:395-420). Young activists put on red turbans and ingratiated themselves among the local populace. They set up altars at local boxing grounds and gave performances of ecstatic trances and dances, inviting others to join them. Once there were sufficient followers, they participated in ritual purging by killing Christians in the area,

both foreign and local. Bays (2012:85) estimates that in northern China alone 250 foreign missionaries and 30,000 Chinese Christians were killed. Moffett (2005:486) however, using Latourette's figures, maintains that only 1,912 Protestant Chinese lost their lives, in comparison with an estimated 30,000 Chinese Roman Catholics. In reality, the exact number of Chinese Christians who lost their lives may never be fully known.

At the same time as the rebellion was happening in the interior, political moves by Western powers to carve up China caused further dismay among the Boxers. In addition, the situation was further exacerbated by what was seen as indecisiveness in the Chinese imperial court. Consequently, the Boxers invaded Beijing and laid siege to the Legation Quarter holding foreign troops. The result was that the Dowager Empress decided to declare war on the Western powers and sent forces to join the siege, which was only lifted when an eight nation expeditionary force entered Beijing in August 1900 and brought the Boxer crisis to an end. The effect that the Boxer Rebellion had on Protestant mission was to spur it on in the light of the martyrdom of so many, revitalising the whole enterprise and ushering in what Bays (2012:93) sees as the "Golden Age of missions" (1902-1927). CIM author, Austin (2007:421), maintains that the Boxer Rebellion changed the whole face of the CIM to the extent that "nothing was ever the same again". For CIM, the encounter with the animist spirits of the Boxers served to stress the need for contextualisation within the church.

This change of focus can be seen clearly in the 1910 Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh at the instigation of the LMS. Cheng Jingyi, a young Chinese assistant pastor who had spent several years in Britain assisting the British and Foreign Bible Society in revising the Union version of the Mandarin New Testament, was the only Chinese delegate invited to speak. In his address to the conference, he challenged the Protestant church to understand the Chinese church from within the Chinese worldview (Stanley, 2009:108). The speech was received well by the entire conference and Temple Gardiner, missionary to Arabia, called it a "vivid insight into the Oriental point of view" (Stanley, 2009:109). It marked the beginning of change in perception as delegates were challenged to think of the mission enterprise through the eyes of the receiving church. As a result, Cheng was coopted onto the Continuation Committee to continue the debate after the conference. This eventually became the International Missionary Committee (IMC). Cheng became the head of the China Continuation Committee until the National Christian Council of China was formed in 1922. Thus the issue of ecumenism, together with the need for the inculturation of the gospel, was initiated by the Chinese church and continued to be part of the agenda as mission progressed during the early twentieth century.

However, until the establishment of the first Republic in 1912, Chinese Christians were held back from self-determination by the treaties of the nineteenth century which left them without the right to build churches or own land. The uprising of 1911-1912 was to aid the movement towards the independence of the Chinese church. The revolution began as a dispute over the laying of railway track in Sichuan Province and from there spread to the troops at Wuchang (see map in Annexure) until all the cities of China were in rebellion against the Qing government, resulting in its capitulation in 1912 and the declaration of the Peoples' Republic of China. In the following year, democratic elections were held and the National People's Party (KMT) won, with Yuan Shi-kai taking the presidency. The new government granted Chinese Christians the right to be full citizens and to own land. The constitution also granted freedom of religion and separation of church and state, thus enabling the Chinese church to take steps towards independence. However, at this time, the independence of the Chinese church was limited to Chinese initiated churches and did not indicate the granting of independence of the churches of mainline denominations.

The First World War of 1914-1918 reduced the powers of the West in China. When China declared war on Germany in 1917, there was a backlash of revolt within the country leading to a revolutionary movement that engulfed at first only six provinces including Sichuan. This led to a war between north and south, with Sichuan again in the frontline. The revolution was only settled by a peace conference in 1919. However, it did not lead to centralised government but to rule by warlords in the various provinces. This was a turbulent period for missionaries in China. In addition to loss of income as a result of the First World War, they suffered deprivations and many of them went home on the recommendation of their governments (Tiedemann & Standeart, 2009:698). This is illustrated by a letter from the China Secretary of CMS in July 1917 to Miss Wied, a missionary from Sichuan, informing her that a government ban on women travelling to China meant that she would have to remain in Britain (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1).

In addition, during this period tensions between mission organisations began to intensify. Firstly, there was a proliferation of Pentecostal revivalist movements with their tendency towards holiness and the gifts of the Spirit. They were often independent of the established missions and so were attractive to independent Chinese churches, some of which styled themselves after the American Pentecostal movement (Lutz, 2001:189; Bays, 2012:106). Secondly, this was a time during which conflict between conservative and liberal approaches to the Bible in Europe and America began to surface between mission organisations, causing tensions in the mission field and as a result, affecting the young Chinese church (Lutz, 2001:188; Bays, 2012:107). These

tensions would eventually affect the CMS, leading to a split between liberals and conservatives in 1923 and the formation of the more conservative Bible Churchman's Missionary Society, which took over some of the CMS work in Western China (Gray, 1996:26).

To add to the problems in China at this time, intellectuals who had begun to react to the increasing influence of Japan from 1917 rose up against the terms of the 1919 Versailles Treaty to end the First World War that threatened to increase the power of Japan in China. On May 4th 1919, students in Beijing started a protest movement that led to the eventual refusal of the government to sign the peace accord with Germany. The May 4th Movement, as it was known, was at first opposed to foreign privilege, rule by warlord and to what they saw as the 'dead' values of Confucianism. Aikman (2006:43) suggests that the movement arose as a result of the failure of the post 1912 failure implement democratic principles. Bays (2012:107) notes that at first, Christians shared the values of the movement but by 1921, the tide began to turn against them. Intellectuals began to reject the capitalist notions of imperialism together with what they saw as the superstition of religion as opposed to the dominance of science. This was the time when Mao Zedong founded the Communist Party of China (CCP) in Beijing. The CCP was then at odds with the nationalist (KMT), leading to sporadic fighting in an unofficial civil war between the KMT and the CCP which only ended when the CCP was "purged" by the KMT in the Second Revolution of 1927. Towery (1990:22) notes that this was a difficult time for missionaries who were often caught between the opposing forces. CMS records are replete with mentions of the "troubles" in Western China during this period (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1).

However, in spite of these problems, the early 1920s saw a growth in mission-based institutions and in the number of missionaries in the country. Nonetheless, Wang (1996:294) and Gray (1996:36) both observe that at this time rising nationalist sentiment led to charges that missionaries were agents of imperialism, especially in their education institutions. In 1923 two CMS missionaries were kidnapped and murdered in Fukien (in the southeast; see map in Annexure). In 1924, several different mission stations in Sichuan were looted (McGrath, 1999:17) and after British troops fired on unarmed students in Shanghai in 1925, anti-Western sentiment increased, which served as a point of tension between Chinese Christians and missionaries. In 1925 Bishop Mowll (CMS) and six clergy were captured on the road outside Chengdu (see map in Annexure) and held for three weeks before being released unharmed (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1). Here it should be noted that Gray's (1996:36)

report that eight missionaries and a child were involved is inconsistent with correspondence evidence in the CMS archive.

From 1925 to 1927, the situation became increasingly dangerous for Christians, especially for foreigners who were attacked as the nationalist troops marched across the country. In Sichuan Province, a Canadian missionary was murdered at Chengdu. After the murder of the Vice President of Nanjing University in 1927, all but about 500 missionaries fled to the coast and many returned to their home countries. A telegram received by CMS head office in London shows that the Consul General had ordered all British missionaries out of inland stations, including Sichuan, at this time (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1). This led to what Bays (2012:112) sees as a “hiatus” in the Christian movement between 1927 and 1928 with an upsurge in nationalization of the Chinese church as local Christians stepped in to lead churches and run institutions. CMS historian, Jocelyn Murray (1985:221) notes that at the 1928 International Mission Conference in Jerusalem it was mooted that the time for foreign mission in China was over.

Between 1927 and 1937, China was under the control of the Nationalists during the period known as the Nanjing Decade. A measure of normalcy was retrieved which enabled missionaries to move back into the country from 1928, although in a letter to CMS headquarters, Bishop Mowll noted that they had generally come back into subordinate positions, working under newly established Chinese church leaders (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1). At the same time, Chinese independent churches were able to gain more of a foothold and grow in numbers. In Chengdu, much hope was placed in the nationalist Chinese government under the leadership of a baptised Christian, Chiang Kai-shek (Maxwell, 1935:280). However, Kai-shek was unable to deal with the socio-economic problems facing China during the 1930s, leading to the increasing influence of the CCP and conflict between them and the nationalist government. After the defeat of the CCP forces in the south, Mao Zedong initiated the Long March of 6000 miles in 1934 in order to relocate the party to the north. Taking a long and difficult route which included the mountainous regions of Sichuan in the upper Min valley, they made their way slowly northwards towards the relative safety of the Russian border, fighting the Nationalist forces along the way. During this period, they executed many Chinese Christians and either killed or kidnapped missionaries (Tiedemann & Standeart, 2009:660).

Bays (2012:127) passes over the effects of the Long March without consideration of the effect it had on the Christian church planted in the areas that suffered from its presence. However, the

CMS records from 1933 and 1934 detail the destruction of property in Chengdu and the killing of many hundreds of Chinese troops and civilians especially in the minority regions, many of whom were Christians (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1). Bays' neglect of this aspect of the troubles is probably because the major part of the country remained unscathed and his concern is with the Chinese people rather than the minorities that make up much of Sichuan (Bays, 2012:2). Historians Jonathan Spence (1982:290) and Paul Ropp (2010:128) also ignore the plight of the inhabitants of the Sichuan valleys, preferring to note the "bitter and dangerous journey" made by Mao Zedong and his troops and the "impressive feats of endurance" of the Communist army. However, the effect of the Long March in 1934-1935 on the mission work of the Torrance family in China necessitates its consideration here, as it was to act as a catalyst for the engagement of T.F. Torrance in China in his retirement years.

5.2.5 Church and Mission in China between 1934 and 1995

The previous two sections established the historical and political background for the context in which the Torrance family was engaged in mission in China from 1895-1934. However, the history of the interim period between T.F. Torrance's immediate family involvement in China and his returns to China between 1984 and 1994 need to be documented in order to set the scene for his mission activity half a century after his father retired from his work with the ABS in Chengdu. In the period between 1937 and 1945, the Sino-Japanese war changed the dynamics for Christians within the country. Missionaries and Chinese Christians who were living in areas under Japanese domination had their activities circumscribed by the Japanese, leading to departure of many missionaries and the increasing independence of the Chinese church, although it still had to rely on the mission boards for financial support (Bays, 2012:142; Tiedemann & Standeart, 2009:774). During this time, CMS continued its work in Sichuan province, increasingly under the leadership of Chinese bishops and clergy. The mission board continued to support the emancipation of women in the church as well as ongoing education through the Western China Union University and the United Theological College in Chengdu (Gray, 1996:68). However, there is no evidence that CMS continued to work in the upper Min valley, which had been so seriously affected by the Long March. The Sino-Japanese war eventually ended with the surrender of Japan after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Between 1945 and 1949, the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists erupted again. By this time, mission activity had resumed under the auspices of the National Christian Council and the Church of Christ in China, but the interim period had allowed Chinese churches to gain

more independence. During this time, indigenisation of the local church and institutions increased. Lutz (2001:190) comments that the indigenisation process was “too little too late” for many Chinese leaders, and so tensions between the returning missionaries and the local Chinese church increased. As the civil war intensified and the CCP gained ground, missionaries began to flee, leaving the Chinese Christians in charge. In 1949, Mao Zedong pronounced the People’s Republic of China in Beijing, loosening China from foreign influence and imperialism. Its religious policy was to move China towards a period of atheistic materialism and Socialist Reconstructionism (Charbonnier, 2004:423). In 1951, the Communists decided to expel foreign missionaries, which Bays (2008) sees as the end of foreign missionary involvement in China but not the end of the Christian movement. Indeed, in the early fifties, the existing Chinese church reorganised itself, not without controversy, into the Three Self Patriotic Movement based on the principles of Henry Venn, General Secretary of CMS (1841-1873), which were expressed as self-governance, self-support and self-propagation (Towery, 1990:35-39). The purpose of the movement was to establish the Christian church as an accepted political entity within Communist China. It had a distinct liberal bent and the evangelical churches who did not comply and leaders who spoke out against it were sanctioned by the state.

Moves to shut down dissent continued in the late fifties. Most independent churches were closed and Protestant denominations were unified into a uniform group with restricted worship patterns. Bays (2012:177) believes that it was at this time that “house churches” began underground as “unregistered churches”, although very little information is available to prove this. In 1966, Mao initiated the “Cultural Revolution” which resulted, *inter alia*, in the abolition of all religion and the closing of all places of worship. This initiated a period in which Christianity was deemed to have “come to an end” in China (Lambert, 1994:9). The fate of the Christian church over the next decade is not well documented but it is clear that it was not in fact, the end of the church. Lambert (1994:12) observes that the sufferings of Christians during the Cultural Revolution served to strengthen the church as it continued to meet “underground” in house churches. During this period, Bibles were not available for purchase, creating a scarcity throughout China.

In 1979, three years after the death of Mao Zedong and the arrest of the Gang of Four, the powerful political elite who implemented the policies of the Cultural Revolution, churches began to reopen. These were opened under the auspices of the Three Self Patriotic Movement, which Lambert (1994:40) observes was set up in the same way that it had been organised in the fifties. Through the eighties, many churches began to reopen but there were still independent groups who were opposed to the idea of a church building and so continued to meet in homes. Towery

(1990:46) believes that this caused problems for the national church leadership and led to the impression generated from the church in Hong Kong that “house churches” were the true church while those who met in church buildings were suspect. In the nineties, he maintains that house churches were cooperating well with the churches of the Three Self Movement. However, Lambert (1994:78-114) holds an opposing position, maintaining that churches that resisted integration into the Three Self Movement suffered persecution in various provinces. He maintains that a spirit of revival burned in the house churches in the eighties and nineties, leading to an unprecedented explosion of faith throughout China. This, he sees as the product of a “theology of the cross” lived out in the lives of the people so that the atonement became real to them in spite of the shortage of Bibles with which to teach the people. This problem was gradually addressed with the opening of the Amity Printing Press in Nanjing in 1987 to print Bibles within China and for China. Thus, the late twentieth century saw a resurgence of the Christian church in China, but not without continued difficulties in the provinces, especially for house churches.

5.2.6. Conclusion

The history of the Christian church in China is still being written. With the establishment in 1968 of the China Records Project at Yale University, the availability of resources has meant the facilitation of research for both Western and Chinese scholars. Universities in Shanghai, Macau and Hong Kong encourage academic study in Asia. Outside Asia, the University of Edinburgh, Kings College, London, the School of Asian and Oriental Studies (SOAS), London, Yale University and the Melbourne School of Theology (Chinese) offer specific opportunities for historical research. In addition, projects in the USA such as the Global China Centre and the Biographical Dictionary of Chinese (Overseas Ministry Study Center) offer ongoing opportunities for research and scholarly debate. Research into Roman Catholic mission continues at the Ricci Institutes in San Francisco and Macau and work on Anglican mission involvement is being undertaken through the *Sheng Kung Hui: studies of Anglican Christianity in China* series edited by Philip Wickeri. In 2015, the Norwegian Mission Society has commissioned specific research into the history of the Norwegian Mission Society in China. This is in addition to research being undertaken by individual researchers around the world under the auspices of different universities and in varying disciplines. As a result, new information is constantly coming to light and new evaluations are being made.

The history of Christianity in China is a history of hardship and difficulty but also one of encouragement and growth. It is not static but continues to be dynamic as the Chinese church

expands and grows both inside China and outside among the worldwide Chinese diaspora. Its present status is both a legacy of the work of pioneering missionaries of the past and a tribute to the ownership of the message by the Chinese peoples. The role that the Torrance family played in mission in China has its own place in the annals history. However, it is a history that needs to be told if the impact of the family life and work in China on the theology of T.F. Torrance is to be fully understood. The aim of the rest of this chapter, therefore, is to evaluate the influence of the Torrance family involvement in mission in China on the missional nature of T.F. Torrance's theology of divine-human communion.

5.3 The Torrance Family in Mission

5.3.1 Introduction

Thomas Torrance Snr (1871-1959) was involved in mission and evangelism in China from 1895 until his retirement in 1934. As a result, his children were all born and raised in China during the turbulent political intrigues and civil wars of the early twentieth century. The impact that China and their mission-minded parents had on their spiritual and moral development in their early years, and by inference on their early theological development, can only be understood by establishing a picture of the background and personalities of both Thomas and Annie Torrance. McGrath (1999:5) comments that any attempt to understand T.F. Torrance's passion for mission and his love for China must begin with what he calls the "story" of how the Thomas Torrance Snr came to be in China. McGrath uses the family biographical details to set the background for T.F. Torrance's theological development. However he does not explore in any depth the theological impact of the influence of T.F. Torrance's parents and their life in China but rather uses the biographical details to interweave a background of historical events into their life story. This research has determined to probe deeper into the spiritual life of Thomas Torrance Snr by examining his correspondence with mission supporters and family across his working life in China in order to establish the spiritual and theological climate in which T.F. Torrance received his early instruction and from which he derived his passion for mission and its focus on China.

5.3.2 Thomas Torrance: Influences and Convictions

Thomas Torrance Snr was born into a dairy farming family in Scotland, in Shotts, Lanarkshire in Scotland in March 1871. This was a time when the influence of the Protestant missionary movement that had begun at the end of the eighteenth century was at his height. The church in

Scotland had previously been reluctant to engage in mission because of its position on limited atonement (Torrance, 1994:250). However, once the Baptist missionary, William Carey, had dismissed Dutch hyper-Calvinism and undertaken mission to India in 1793, the Scottish Kirk began to reconsider its position and its involvement in mission abroad. In 1825, the General Assembly took the decision to send the first missionary to India. This had an impact on the church in Scotland, increasing the number of evangelicals in the parishes and influencing people for mission engagement, no doubt contributing to the atmosphere of mission engagement into which Thomas Torrance Snr. was born.

Although the Church of Scotland had become engaged with world mission, the hugely energetic missionary movement in England and America did not fail to make its influence felt in Scotland. Firstly, the pioneer exploration and medical mission work in Africa of Scottish born David Livingstone (1813-1873) with his policy of “commerce, Christianity and civilization” had an impact on the enthusiasm of the Scottish people for mission (Nkomazana, 1998:44). Although he would have been too young to have known Livingstone personally, the proximity of Livingstone’s birthplace in Bothwell to the home of young Thomas Torrance Snr meant that Livingstone was to have a profound influence on his ambition to become a medical missionary (McGrath, 1999:6). Secondly, the China Inland Mission (CIM), established by James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) in 1865, had by the late nineteenth century become the largest Protestant mission in China, drawing missionaries from many different countries. In 1889, an office was opened in Glasgow to deal with the large numbers of Scottish missionaries coming forward for service in China. By 1875, there were over six hundred foreign missionaries in China through the China Inland Mission. As a vibrant new “faith mission” movement, Thomas Torrance Snr would have been free to proceed to China without the bureaucratic and financial restraints of the established missions, under the proviso that “God will provide” (Cox, 2008:184).

The faith mission concept would have been important for Thomas Torrance Snr, as his parents had refused to support him in training for mission, preferring to pay for him to train for pastoral ministry in the Church of Scotland. As a result, the young Torrance Snr wrote a letter to his parents explaining that he had been called to mission in China and would therefore find other means of financial support. This seems to have been a momentous decision for Torrance Snr and the level of commitment shown by his father in stepping out in “faith” seems to have had an impact on the young T.F. Torrance. In a letter to his father in 1929, T.F. Torrance reminisces, “I often think of the letter you let me read; that letter that you sent to your mother and father informing them of your call to the mission field...” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection,

Box 11). Thomas Torrance Snr's decision to undergo training against the wishes of his family was at high personal cost. Instead of continuing into higher education, he went to work at a cousin's drapery store in order to pay his own way through mission training at Hulme Cliff Training College in Derbyshire, England, between 1892 and 1894. He then self-financed a medical course at Livingstone College in London in 1895.

After training, Rev Thomas Torrance Snr joined CIM and was sent to China at the end of 1895, arriving in Shanghai on 1 January 1896. The rules of CIM were strict. Missionaries were first to learn the language and culture of the Chinese and until well into the twentieth century, they were required to wear Chinese dress. Thomas Torrance Snr therefore remained in Shanghai until the language and acculturation requirements were complete, after which he was sent to Chengdu in Sichuan. Latourette (1929:362) observes that Protestant mission societies at the end of the nineteenth century emphasised evangelism by preaching, personal friendship and literature distribution as well as medical work and elementary schools. CIM was no different, except that where other mission organisations started schools and training institutions, CIM's goal was to reach the whole of China systematically with the gospel and was not concerned with building up or educating disciples. Thomas Torrance Snr's task was to preach, heal and evangelise as far and wide as possible.

Torrance Snr had not had long to settle into the CIM mission station in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, before the Boxer rebellion started. Records show that raids were made on Roman Catholic missions in the Chengdu region while local authorities looked on, powerless to help (Wason, 1918:71). After the deaths of numerous missionaries further north, all foreigners in Sichuan were evacuated to Shanghai by order of the British consul. On arrival in Shanghai, the missionaries were faced with the difficulties of siege conditions until the Western alliance intervened. However, in spite of the obvious dangers of the breaking of the siege, Torrance Snr escaped unharmed and was duly sent back to his work in Chengdu.

Annual letters to supporters in Scotland in the years following the Boxer rebellion show the nature of the mission engagement of Thomas Torrance Snr during his first tour of service (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). A general letter written from K'iongcheo near Chengdu in February 1906 gives a colourful picture of life for CIM missionaries as they sought to preach and distribute tracts throughout the region. On one occasion, the missionaries attempted to preach at a religious fair, which Torrance Snr admits was a "dangerous thing to do", but it afforded them the opportunity to contact people whom they would not normally meet. At

one point, Torrance was struck by a hard piece of soil but he bravely reports, “It did not hurt”. At another point, one of the missionaries had his umbrella stolen, something that Torrance Snr put down to the “strangeness” of Chinese culture which did not see stealing as a sin unless the person was caught in the act. However, a later engagement with a crowd outside an opium den was more successful. Torrance rather triumphantly comments that a “wonderful change” had come over the Chinese in the district and that the “antiforeigner” attitude had dissipated. Nonetheless, his cultural conditioning led him to comment that the Chinese were “a race of grown up children that have not become men” and so he felt he needed to watch over them “as a mother watching over a child”. He complains that the missionary’s life is always a matter of what “might have been” and what “ought to be” in so far as proclaiming the gospel to the whole district is concerned. This tension between the desire to preach the gospel to all and the realities and frustrations on the ground serves to show the zeal with which Torrance Snr approached the work of evangelism.

Torrance Snr describes the “three prong” approach to the work as “evangelistic, pastoral and medical” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection Box 6). As has been seen, evangelism and medical work were core to CIM’s terms of engagement, but one wonders at this stage whether Thomas Torrance was not already on a collision path with the leadership of CIM in that he seemed to be engaging in a pastoral ministry of building up and educating converts, which was not part of the CIM vision (Latourette, 1929:382). In the 1906 letter, Torrance Snr explains that he has chosen five men for training at Chengdu Bible School and motivates his decision by writing, “the whole future success of our work depends on the quality of the men (sic) that are put into it....The more native (sic) workers we can train ... the sooner China will have the gospel” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). CIM believed that it was an evangelistic band with a primary call to proclaim the gospel and the building up of converts should be left to others (Latourette, 1929:386).

The attitude of Thomas Torrance Snr towards the Chinese in his early letters shows a holistic sense of the Christian faith that would not permit him to separate the preaching of the gospel from discipleship. In his annual letter to supporters in 1906, he shows that his concern was for the moral development of the converts, teaching them “precept upon precept” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). He describes the need for the missionary to have an attitude of love but also of firmness against sin in the face of moral challenges posed by entrenched corruption in daily life and in the Chinese medical profession. The missionaries tried to follow Jesus in his mission by preaching, healing and training the converts through the Chengdu Bible School to become evangelists. His passionate conviction was that the Chinese converts needed to

be trained in order for the gospel to reach the whole of China (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). Thus from the outset, Torrance Snr equated theological education and mission practice. He soon became frustrated with CIM policies and, as McGrath (1999:10) observes, he felt that the education and development of the Chinese was being ignored. As a result, he resigned from CIM in 1909 and returned to Scotland in 1910 in time to attend the Edinburgh Mission Conference.

The American Bible Society (ABS) had begun to work among the Chinese in dissemination of the Scriptures in 1833 (Charbonnier, 2004:253). At the 1910 Conference, they approached Torrance Snr, asking him to work with them. Torrance Snr had already had experience of working with missionaries from the ABS and so had sympathies with their methods (McGrath, 1999:10). However, he made it a condition of his tenure with them that he should only be sent to Sichuan, so that he could “send the living Word of God into every nook and corner of this region where heretofore it has not gone” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 7). As there were already many missionaries in the Chendgu area, Torrance Snr was clear at this point that his goal was to move into the unevangelised areas of Sichuan in which the minority tribes lived. CMS and the Canadian Mission had already attempted some work in these areas but many of the villages had not been thoroughly evangelised. Torrance Snr then returned to Sichuan to take charge of the ABS agency in Chengdu. He would later also be made an agent for the British Bible Society.

Early in 1911, Thomas Torrance married Annie Elizabeth Sharpe (1883-1980), an Anglican CIM missionary who had been posted to Sichuan Province in 1907. As a single woman working under CIM, she was theologically trained and held a position of responsibility in terms of the evangelization of the area in which she was posted. She was thus a capable addition to Torrance’s work capacity. Indeed, McGrath (1999:10) comments that she threw herself fully into the work of the ABS. They set up home in an area of the old city called *San Dow Guia* and moved to a larger house close to the East Gate in 1917. That Annie Elizabeth was a strong and courageous woman of great faith is not in doubt. Throughout the T.F. Torrance memoirs and correspondence, he bears witness to his mother’s wisdom and theological conviction. This is a recurring theme through the evaluation of the T.F. Torrance documents in the next section.

Not long after this, in 1912, Sichuan Province witnessed events that led to the rebellion that saw the establishment of the first Chinese Republic. Torrance’s reaction to the events shows the attitude of the missionaries to the revolution. He writes to his supporters, “China, as you all know

is in the throes of a *mighty* and *most marvellous* revolution. In the upheaval, Szechuan, the province I am in, took the *honour* of leading the van..." (own italics; Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). The reason for this attitude was that the missionaries saw the rebel leader Sun Yat-sen as a Christian and understood the rebellion to be pro-foreign and therefore hoped for the establishment of a Christian government in China. In spite of this optimism, however, Chengdu was in uproar and the missionaries had to flee. Annie left for Shanghai in December 1911, where she gave birth to their first child, Mary, on 10 May 1912. Three months later, the situation had stabilised and Torrance Snr was able to travel to Shanghai to bring his wife and daughter home. In due time, Thomas Forsyth (1913), Grace Brownlee (1915) and Margaret Ramsay (1917) were born in Chengdu. James Bruce was born in 1923 at considerable risk to Annie's health and David Wishart, the last child, was born in 1924. While attending to the house and children, Annie also worked among women, teaching them the Bible in her home.

A vignette of the life of Thomas Torrance Snr in Chengdu between 1912 and 1926 shows him as a passionate evangelist, fully committed to his work and ministry. On his return to Chengdu in 1912, he went around the churches holding all day meetings and using magic lantern shows in order to "wake the churches into new life" (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). He also evidences his medical concern for opium addicts, showing that he is opposed to the devastating effect it has on lives. In his letters to supporters in Scotland he reminds them of the need to keep foreign missions at the centre of their lives and challenges them to live for the gospel. In his zeal for evangelism, he tells them that they can test their faith by the quality of their evangelism, showing how passionate he was about sharing the gospel (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). A letter from John Sykes, the General Secretary of ABS in 1920 expresses his "unqualified satisfaction" with the way Torrance Snr has conducted his work, managing to distribute over a million books and Bibles in nine years. He concludes, "I thank God that you have never missed an opportunity of preaching to the low and to the high and that you have always been a good evangelist" (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). His primary vision for the evangelism of China had not in any way been diminished.

In the latter half of the nineteen twenties, life became difficult for missionaries in Sichuan. The unofficial civil war between the KMT and CCP frequently caused flare-ups of violence in the region, confining them to the comparative safety of their compounds. By 1927, the troubles had escalated to the extent that the family was forced to flee for to Shanghai, miraculously escaping death on several occasions. CMS records show that the British consul had ordered all the

missionaries out of Sichuan at this stage (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1). This is taken up later in the accounts by T.F. Torrance of his childhood memories. In 1927, Torrance Snr took the family back to Scotland where it was decided that they would remain while he returned to Sichuan in 1928. The extent of the sacrifice that this would mean for Annie and the family can be seen in the correspondence between T.F. Torrance and his father during these years (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11). Nonetheless, it is clear that Annie fully supported him, working to raise support in the churches in Scotland for his endeavours.

On his return, Torrance Snr was discouraged by the effect that the political situation in China was having on the establishment of the Chinese church. As a result of the exodus of missionaries in 1927, Chinese churches had been forced to function independently. In a letter to ABS in November 1928, he describes the “Laodicean” attitude of the Chinese churches, which he found, shrunk in numbers and failing to engage in evangelism. He complains that it was too early for the Chinese churches to have independence and that missionaries needed to be put back in charge (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 7). This shows the extent of the tension between missionaries and the Chinese church at this time. Nonetheless, he continued to engage passionately in the work of evangelism in the region (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6) although by 1930, political violence frequently interrupted the work (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). In an interview, David Torrance (2015) recalls that his father was targeted for execution at one stage but the troops failed to find him. In 1933, Sichuan came under the control of a Buddhist warlord, which made the work of the ABS difficult. At the same time, the CCP Long March had reached the north of Sichuan, increasing the difficulties experienced by the missionaries in the distribution of Bibles and tracts (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). CMS records show that their own missionaries were forced to flee from the Red Army in some of the outlying stations of Sichuan during this time, while within Chengdu the diocesan hostel and bishop’s home were destroyed in fighting between different battalions of the Chinese army (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1). Nonetheless, Torrance Snr continued resolutely until he retired in November 1934 and returned to Scotland.

Torrance and Annie Torrance were, in a sense, typical of Protestant missionaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hastings, 1996:207-305). They were passionate about evangelism and committed to the preaching of the Word of God and building up of the church in the area in which they served. That they passed their zeal and commitment on as a legacy for their children was not surprising, given the determination and dedication with which they approached both their work and the raising of their family, in spite of adverse and hostile circumstances. In a

sense, given the historical time period, there is nothing surprising about this. One aspect of the work in China, however, sets the Torrance family apart from the “average missionary” family of the period. It is so important in terms of its influence on T.F. Torrance in particular that it is dealt with separately in the next subheading. This is Thomas Torrance Snr’s work among the Ch’iang (Qiang) people of the upper Min valley of Sichuan Province.

5.3.3 The Qiang of the Upper Min Valley

During the hot summers in Chengdu, the risk of disease increased greatly and so missionary families travelled into the surrounding hills of the upper Min valley, bordering on Tibet (see map, in Annexure), for rest and refreshment. Unwilling to allow time away from the work of evangelism, Torrance used the opportunity to travel through the mountainous region, preaching the gospel to the tribes living there. In a letter to John Sykes in 1919, he writes to inform the ABS of his discovery of the unusual Qiang tribe (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). He had first come across the Qiang in 1917 when he visited with a Canadian missionary, Rev James Neave (T.F. Torrance incorrectly recorded the date as 1916; Torrance, T., 1988:1). They found the Qiang living in small rectangular stone houses perched in inaccessible places above the Min valley and surrounded by high towers that they built to act as lookout posts in time of war. However, at that time they had to leave quickly as they received news of political unrest in Chengdu at the start of the 4th May Movement. He returned to the area in the summer of 1919, this time with Canadian missionary, T.E. Plewman, accompanying him as photographer. Torrance was fascinated by the Qiang and wrote a detailed report on his expedition to the ABS. The Qiang people were subsequently to become the focus of his evangelistic activity outside the Chengdu area.

In his correspondence with the ABS (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6), Torrance Snr reports the discovery of an inscription stating that King Yu of the Hsia dynasty was born in the area in BCE 2205, which he felt proved the ancient nature of the Qiang presence in China. On the second day of their visit, they climbed up to another village and shared the gospel, finding that one of the young men had already heard the message of salvation from a Roman Catholic convert. Moving around the area and visiting the villages, they found Rev and Mrs James Houston Edgar, CMS Australia missionaries to Tibet who were working among the people. In Lifan (see map in Annexure), they discovered that one of Rev Neave’s mission assistants had rented part of a house and opened it as a church with 13 members. In addition, the chief in Tsakalao had already bought a copy of the Bible in Chengdu. Torrance was not the first to reach

the Qiang with the gospel but he was the first to evangelise systematically through the region and document their religion and culture in any detail. When he left China in 1934, the Faculty of the West China Union University issued an official appreciation of the role Torrance had played in the establishment of a museum that he had personally supplied with artefacts from his research (Torrance, 1937:6).

Torrance Snr was notably impressed with the Qiang religion as he observed it, comparing it favourably to the “vile religion” of the Chinese and the Tibetans. However, he acknowledged the difficulty of understanding the Qiang belief system without living with the people or having knowledge of their language. For this reason, he returned every year, seeking to understand the people and the roots of their religion. In 1919, he was only able to outline to the ABS the basis of the Qiang religious practice, but by the time he left in 1934, he had acquired a detailed knowledge and understanding. Most significantly, by this time he had become convinced that the Qiang religion derived from ancient Israelite practice, especially in the light of their claim to be descendants of Abraham and to have an ancestor with twelve sons, presumed to be the sons of Jacob (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 4).

Torrance’s 1919 report was published in the *Shanghai Mercury* in 1920 as, *The history, customs and religions of the Ch’iang: an aboriginal people of West China*. In this publication, he explained that the focus of their religion was a white stone (*lopee*) standing in a bare sacrificial house as an emblem of a deity called the Spirit, or the Spirit of Heaven. The deity was one, pure and holy but was also a Trinity, which was represented by three white stones. The temple stood in a sacred grove and included an altar that was made from uncut stone. The priest was the main protagonist in the cult and was also an exorcist. There were two festivals, one in the New Year and one in spring. In the spring festival, a 3-year-old bullock, without blemish, was sacrificed and blood was sprinkled on the *lopee* and altar before the priest prayed to the Spirit with the aid of incense and ritual drumming. At this time the *Shechinah* of the Spirit appeared. Only the male heads of family took part in the ritual so the meat and blood were taken home for the family. In the event of sickness, a bullock or goat was made a scapegoat. These elements of the religion led Torrance Snr to conclude in 1920 that it was of Semitic origin but not necessarily Israelite. However, even at this early stage Torrance Snr saw links between Qiang religion and with the messianic expectations of the Jews. He ended his report with the prayer, “May He whom the white stone speaks of soon shed the glory of his presence on them through the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6).

In an article on the Qiang region, CMS Secretary for Western China, Donnithorne, (1922:111-114) explains that the Qiang fell within the area allocated to CMS for evangelism. His report shows that he had interacted with Thomas Torrance Snr and made use of his observations of the Qiang villages and religious customs in order to spur CMS on to mission in the area (Donnithorne, 1922:112-114). He urged CMS supporters to fund a “small group” of people to evangelise the region, but unfortunately apart from the Australians, no suitable persons were ever found so the evangelization of the area fell to Thomas Torrance Snr (CMS Archive. Section 1, East Asia Missions. Part 1). Torrance Snr visited the Qiang regions most years after 1919, working systematically through the villages to which he could gain access and going back to encourage and build up the believers. Gradually, he came to believe that they were descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel, although in correspondence in 1988, T.F. Torrance admitted that his father had been mistaken in assuming this after Israeli research showed them to be descendants of Joktan from an earlier period (Gen.10:26; Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box, 163).

Two aspects of the work among the Qiang in particular had led Torrance Snr to his conviction regarding the Israelite ancestry of the Qiang. The first was the conversion and ministry of a young convert baptised Isaac Whiteheart, whom Torrance Snr had met in 1920 and the second was the conversion of the chief priest of Oir in 1927. In 1935, Torrance Snr wrote a biography of Isaac Whiteheart in his unpublished *Conversion stories of Chinese Christians* (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 4) and the story was later written up in *The Churchman* by Lt. Col. F.A. Moloney (1939:228-229) who seems to have been based for a while in the region.

Torrance Snr met Isaac on one of his trips to the upper Min valley and invited him to attend Bible studies in Chengdu. During a Bible study on the book of Genesis, Isaac interpreted the Qiang custom of hanging twelve white banners in their houses as a memory of the twelve sons of their ancestor as a memory of the twelve tribes of Israel, thereby making the assumption that the Qiang were descendants of the tribes of Israel. This became the source of Torrance’s association of the Qiang with the sons of Jacob. As they read both Genesis and Exodus together, Isaac came to believe the books explained the origins of the religious practices of the Qiang. Once they had read Leviticus and the Gospels, Isaac declared that the gospel fulfilment of his religion had been made clear. The Qiang were descendants of Jacob and their religion was the ancient Hebrew religion. Therefore he was baptised Isaac on behalf of his Jewish ancestor and Whiteheart because of the value the Qiang attributed to purity and holiness. Isaac became an evangelist to the Qiang, writing tracts and explaining the gospel to his people in terms of their own religion. Wanting his people

to have an education, he also brought five boys to the mission school at Chengdu and paid for their schooling.

Isaac helped Torrance Snr with his summer expeditions, getting him access to priests and explaining the Qiang religion more fully. In 1925, through Isaac, Torrance Snr gained access to a Qiang high priest in a village called Oir and learnt first-hand the significance of the Qiang rite of atonement. Torrance Snr then explained the scriptural rite of atonement from Leviticus to the priest and the priest immediately interpreted the Pentateuch as the “lost scriptures of the Qiang”. After reading about the Lamb of God in the Gospel of John, the priest and his family believed that Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of their religion and were baptised. Young T.F. Torrance, who was 13 years old at the time, was witness to this incident.

Isaac continued to assist Torrance Snr to interpret Qiang religion through the eyes of the Old Testament. The traditional plain scroll used in their rituals was an ancient volume of the law called *Abba Malach* (“my Father sent”) which designated a sin bearer who was to come. The white conical stone was a depiction of Mt Sinai and the incense surrounding it represented the clouds of the presence of YHWH from Exod 19. The Nehustan pole with a serpent wrapped around it represented the bronze serpent that was set up in the exodus. The annual sacrifice represented the Passover. Isaac’s written summary of the Qiang beliefs was reproduced in Torrance’s book published in 1937, *China’s First Missionaries: ancient Israelites*. Both Torrance and Moloney (1939:229) note that Isaac’s focus was on the atonement and vicarious nature of the life and cross of Jesus Christ. Isaac was later killed in the Long March in the Qiang region in 1935.

Through Isaac therefore, Torrance Snr became convinced of the Israelite origin of Qiang people and built a theology of the mission of the Israelites to the world (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 4). In articles and in his book (1937) he explains how he came to believe that God had sent descendants of the Israelites to China to bear witness to the need for blood sacrifice to take away sin:

Since He has made of one blood all races of men, none could be left, not even the wanderers who found their way to the ends of the earth, to remain without a revealed knowledge of his will...” (Torrance, 1937:121).

Thus, Torrance Snr developed, from his interaction with the Qiang, a sense of the missional nature of the people of Israel as witness to the world, although he did admit that the extent of their influence on the Chinese, who regarded them as foreigners, was unclear (Kong, 2000:31). His

conviction that the Qiang were the first missionaries to China also drove him to collect artefacts, many of which he bequeathed to the West China Union University Museum so that there would be a permanent record of their history in China (Kong, 2000:28).

Once Torrance had returned to China after the troubles of 1927-1928, he continued his visits to the Qiang, although by 1932 it had become so difficult to enter the region that he had to obtain a special pass from the Chief General in Chengdu to enter Songpan and the surrounding Qiang regions (see map in Annexure; Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). In his report, he describes his evangelistic methods in the Qiang centre of Tongmenwai in the Lifan region where a small church had been built (see map in Annexure). There he engaged in healing the sick, disseminating Bibles, preaching and baptising believers. However, unrest and an earthquake in 1933 meant that Torrance was not able to return until his final year in China in 1934. A fragment of his report from 1934 shows that he had found the Qiang believers unharmed and so Torrance Snr and his entourage were able to move from village to village, preaching and distributing texts (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 6). On his final trip, he records a spiritual revival so that “village after village caught ‘fire’” as they visited them. As a result, he reports that the Qiang “flooded down” the mountains to the central church in Tongmenwai for Sunday services over a period of four weeks and by the end of that time 84 had been baptised. For Torrance Snr, this was an amazing spiritual experience as the “reality of Christ the living saviour fell on the villages” and the people realised that their long-awaited sin-bearer was Jesus Christ, sent from heaven.

This really represented the culmination of a lifetime of work for Thomas Torrance Snr. The Qiang people had finally responded in number to the preaching of the gospel, although Maloney (1939:229) records a total of only 150 converts out of a population of 30,000-40,000. The question of how the work was to continue after Torrance’s retirement was resolved by the appointment of Isaac and several others as pastors for the seven church centres, which had been set up in the Qiang region with elders to assist them in visiting the villages. In addition, other missionaries working in the area promised to supervise the young churches. As Torrance Snr left in 1934, Isaac asked him to tell the world about the remnant of Israel living in Western China who were missionaries sent by God. This Torrance proceeded to do once he returned by means of the publication of his book in 1937 and his address to the Victoria Institute in 1939.

However, the history of Thomas Torrance Snr’s relations with the Qiang does not stop with his departure in 1934. Early in 1935, the CCP on the Long March passed through the Qiang areas of

the Min valley, destroying everything in their way including the new churches. In 1935, concerned for its own work in the area, CMS sent Rev Plewman and Mr Chao from the Canadian Mission to visit and write a report (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 160). They described a scene of chaos with unburied bodies lying in the open and the people sick with dysentery and typhus. Torrance's church at Wenchuan had been occupied by soldiers and the pastor had been killed. The main church in Tongmenwai had been looted and sixteen of the Christians, including Isaac Whiteheart, had been killed. The CCP had tried to destroy all the Bibles, but the church elders had buried five in a cave and later dug them up. This was no doubt devastating news for Torrance Snr, but he was comforted late in 1935 when Huang Taiqing, a survivor of the massacre, managed to send one of the dug up Bibles to the Torrance family. It became for them a symbol of the "resurrection of the Chinese church". This Bible was held after Torrance Snr's death (1959) by his youngest son David, who kept it until it was returned to the churches in the 1980s by T.F. Torrance (Torrance, D., 2015).

5.3.4 Conclusion

This section has aimed to evaluate the life and work of Thomas Torrance Snr through his own correspondence and writings. It shows him as a zealous and resolute evangelist with a passion to disseminate the Bible and preach the gospel in the "unreached" tribal areas of the Sichuan Province of Western China. His theological persuasion is seen to have been conservative and evangelical and the energy of his evangelistic methods is seen to match the energy typical of the faith missions of the period, such as CIM. However, his conviction regarding the need to teach and train young converts is seen to be more typical of the established missions such as CMS. While he exhibits the general characteristics of late nineteenth and early twentieth century missionaries, it is difficult to categorise him into any specific mission subculture of the period and so he is best seen through his own words as a man of strong conviction and independence of thought and practice. He is nonetheless, ecumenically minded, and willing to work with other missions in order to achieve his goals.

The personal backdrop against which he raised his six children was one of total commitment to his "call", a love for the Bible as the Word of God and a determination to nurture and teach young converts into maturity. The influence that he and Annie exerted on T.F. Torrance has not been considered in this section, leaving it for the words of T.F. Torrance himself. Torrance Snr's anthropological work on the Qiang people and his assertion that they are descendants of Israel is perhaps his most lasting legacy in the annals of mission history in China. However, his work did

not go unchallenged. Even towards the end of Torrance Snr's time in China, anthropologist David Graham (1958) began to object to the theory of the Israelite origins of Qiang religion (Kwong, 2000). It is still a question for debate today, especially among the Chinese who generally see the Qiang as either aboriginal or of Chinese descent (Ming-ke, 2015). Current relations between the Chinese government and minority tribes are politically sensitive and so no definitive scientific conclusion has as yet been reached. Nonetheless, the impact of Torrance Snr's theology of the mission of Israel as a result of his interaction with the Qiang is a factor to be considered in the development of T.F. Torrance's own missional theology.

5.4 T.F. Torrance: Foundational Experiences

5.4.1 Introduction

The scene has been set for the entrance of T.F. Torrance's own impressions of the impact that his upbringing in China. These can be derived from his correspondence with his father, from his own writings and writings and interviews given by his brother David Torrance. The purpose is not to write a biographical account of T.F. Torrance as such but to highlight areas of his background and upbringing that shaped the missional nature of his later theology. Thus, this section first isolates the significant events in his life from his childhood until the end of his student days in Scotland before secondly, evaluating the impact of his upbringing on the shaping and early formation of his theological direction.

5.4.2 Childhood in China

T.F. Torrance was born in Chengdu, in Sichuan province, China, on 30 August 1913. His unpublished memoirs of his childhood days in China give a sense of his lively and what David Torrance (2015) calls his brother's somewhat "mischievous spirit" but also of his childlike faith and understanding of the gospel from an early age. In his autobiographical reflection entitled *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, T.F. Torrance recalls that he inherited from his parents a vivid belief in God that was with him from his earliest memory so that he never doubted God's existence (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). This strong belief in God sets the context for all his autobiographical memoirs.

In his memoir from his childhood in China from 1913-1927, Torrance recalls a child's view of the old city of Chengdu and the wall which surrounded it, before the family moved to a newer area of the city close to the East Gate in 1917. He remembers living in a Chinese house and

speaking the Sichuan dialect. Although the Torrance children attended a mission school at the Western China Union University, their lives were unlike those of the children from other mission organisations who lived in Western-style houses within contained compounds, apart from the local people. The exposure to the Chinese culture and language at such a young age was important for the young Torrance as it embedded China into the essence of his being. It is possible, although not proved, that his early acquisition of Chinese language with its inherent worldview had an effect on the development of his thought processes, giving him more of an East Asian tendency towards holistic, dialectical thought than Western linear logic (cf. Nisbett, 2004:212). In addition, because his earliest experiences and training were in evangelistic mission, his passion for the evangelism of the Chinese was deeply intertwined with his love for China.

Torrance was brought up during dangerous times. When he was only four years old, in 1917, fighting broke out in Sichuan, which became the frontline of the fighting that led to the protests of the 4th May Movement in 1919. At times such as these, the family would have to move out of the city into the protection of the compound of the Canadian mission. It was this event that cut short Torrance Snr's first trip to the Qiang in 1917, forcing him to return to Chengdu for safety. T.F. Torrance recalls that during one such retreat to the Canadian mission when he was very young, he disobeyed orders to remain in the house, climbed over the wall just in time to witness the beheading of two soldiers. It made an indelible, if negative impression on him, and would return to haunt his dreams for the rest of his life (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). Another impression that haunted him, although not related to war, was the harrowing sight of disfigured lepers as he walked past the local leper colony every day on his way to school (Torrance, 2009:440).

The Torrance children were originally taught by their mother, after which they attended the Canadian School on the campus of the Western China Union University as the British boarding school set up by CIM at Chefoo was considered too far away. McGrath (1999:14) observes that the university reflected the tensions between liberal and conservative approaches to the Bible that were causing controversy at the time. He notes that the Torrance family was firmly conservative in their approach, although this did not seem to cause too many tensions with the other missionaries in the city. David Torrance (2001:6) comments that the school was not at the same level as the British system and it appears that his elder brother was too interested in life to be serious about education at that time. His ability in academics only began to develop in his teenage years.

In 1920, the family returned to Scotland on furlough, which was the first time T.F. Torrance had seen the “home country” or met his relatives. The family returned to China in 1921 and life continued as normal in spite of an increasing level of violence occasioned by the activities of warlords in the region. At the same time, in the early 1920s the Nationalist government was becoming increasingly hostile to the missionaries and Westerners in general, meaning that life in and around Chengdu became somewhat turbulent. David Torrance (2015) believes that it was his parents’ prayers that kept the family safe during those difficult years.

In the summers, the family continued to escape to the cool of the mountainous areas giving Torrance Snr opportunity to evangelise among the Qiang. In 1925 and 1926, he took his eldest son with him. The trips were an “exciting and wonderful experience” for T.F. Torrance and made a lasting impression on him (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). In his memoirs, Torrance gives a detailed description of the trips as he remembers them, most notably the visit to the village of Oir high up in the mountains during which his father met with the priest called *Be-bo* and brought him to Christ. He gives a vivid description of the discussion between the priest and his father regarding the religious traditions of the Qiang and remembers the priest showing them the most sacred object which was a thick roll of paper with hundreds of sheets wrapped around a bamboo stick with a death head on the top to indicate that it belonged to the Word of God or the Redeemer (the Lamb of God) who they believed was to come into the world. He remembers that when his father read from Leviticus to the priest, he “jumped off his bench and said that those are the lost Scriptures that had been represented by the white scroll”. His father then read from the Gospel of John and explained that while the Qiang had been far away from the land of Israel, the Lamb of God had come. The priest and his family then believed and were baptised. For T.F. Torrance, this was an unforgettable experience.

Other experiences from this period include visiting the Qiang house at Tongmenwai where church services were held and playing with the pastor’s son, whose name was Huang Taiqing. Taiqing was the only person who escaped the massacre at Tongmenwai in 1935 and sent the “resurrected Bible” to Scotland as a symbol of the resurrection of the Qiang church. T.F. Torrance also accompanied his father into Tibet and remembers visiting a Tibetan monastery where he caused consternation by turning the prayer wheels in the wrong direction (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). Although Torrance admits that he did not remember too much detail about the trips, he recalls in his unpublished memoir of his student life that the experiences among the Qiang were the reason for sensing that God was calling him to be a missionary to the peoples of the Min valley and Tibet. This sense of “call” back to the Qiang and

Tibetan peoples of China would remain his first priority during throughout his schooling and university life (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10).

By 1927, the situation in Chengdu and Sichuan Province had deteriorated to the extent that it was no longer safe for foreigners to remain. T.F. Torrance recalls two CMS missionaries being beheaded near to Chengdu and several others from CIM being beheaded in the streets. He also recalls that women and children were ordered to leave the city, which they did in great danger to their lives due to attacks by hostile forces on the river (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). David Torrance (2015) recalls slightly differently that it was not long after the family had left the city that one of his mother's friends was beheaded in the street and rioting crowds attempted to loot the family house. However, the harrowing journey down river under fire is recalled vividly by both brothers. They eventually reached Shanghai and waited for Torrance Snr, who joined them several weeks later. At this time, most missionaries were leaving China and so the Torrance family joined the exodus and sailed for Scotland. This marked the end of T.F. Torrance's boyhood in China.

5.4.3 Adolescence and Student Years

Once the family reached Scotland, they found it in the grips of an economic recession, making life difficult for the family (McGrath, 1999:19). Torrance's uncle enabled them to obtain a council house in Lanarkshire, but the family struggled to make ends meet. When the political situation settled in China, Torrance Snr believed he should return to Sichuan in order to complete his work with the ABS and with the Qiang. As David Torrance (2015) points out, Torrance Snr was the only person who could continue the pioneer church planting work among the Qiang because he spoke the dialect and knew the area. However, China was no longer a place to raise a family. Torrance's parents felt strongly that they should not leave their children alone because of the negative effect they had seen it have on the children of other missionaries. They therefore took the difficult decision that Annie would raise the family in Scotland for seven years until her husband retired (Hesselink, 1984:49).

Before Torrance Snr returned to China, the family moved into a better house in Bellshill in Lanarkshire and the children were settled into school. During the long years, they wrote letters each week and so Torrance felt that the family kept in close touch (Hesselink, 1984:50). Nonetheless, T.F. Torrance's early letters show evidence of the anguish of separation and the difficulties that his mother was experiencing. Torrance Snr wrote letters describing his work in

detail, asking the children questions about Scriptures. Each child then replied giving their father his/her own news and opinions. One letter from T.F. Torrance in particular shows the pain that the separation caused the family. In May 1929, he expresses his longing to talk to his father again and remembering the mission trips among the Qiang:

“I often think of the quiet hours we used to spend together at Dongmenwai (sic)....
Do you remember the Sunday evenings we used to spend sowing the good seed? ...
I sometimes feel it would be better for me spiritually to be back with you” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11).

Torrance admits that there was a “great cost” to the separation and his longing to go back to China as a missionary (Hesselink, 1984:50). However, finding himself behind the others at school, he settled down to serious study. His letters are full of the detail of study and examinations, good grades and academic interest (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11). He also accompanied his mother on mission deputation in the Scottish churches and preached on various occasions.

On completion of his schooling in 1931, Torrance had to make a decision on whether to go to New College or the Baptist College in order to prepare for mission work (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11). At that time, they attended the Baptist church in Bellshill as Torrance’s mother judged it better for them theologically than the local kirk. Eventually he decided on New College in Edinburgh because it was “sound” and more academic than the Baptist College, although he expressed doubts at the time as to whether he would want to baptise the children of non-believing parents. However, he first needed to study Classics and Philosophy at University of Edinburgh (1931-1934) before he could engage in graduate studies in the School of Divinity New College (1934-1936).

At this time, Annie and family moved to Edinburgh where she was able to support her eldest son in his studies and in the student mission work that he was enthusiastically engaged in. He spent much of his free time after classes speaking at meetings and open-air evangelistic events. In December 1933, he wrote a letter to his father with a description of a mission for international students (Muslim and Hindu) at which he preached the finality of the cross and the uniqueness of Christ (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11). Here he already shows signs of the theological direction that he will take in declaring the objectivity of faith centred in the revelation of Jesus Christ. McGrath (1999:26) makes mention of debates at this time over the scope of the work of Christ and limited atonement in which Torrance held that Christ died for all while others claimed that he died only for the elect. McGrath (1999:26) comments that Torrance got involved

in student mission during this time as an outlet for his evangelistic passion and in preparation for his return to China to continue with his father's work.

During his time at New College between 1934 and 1936, Torrance's conviction of the centrality of Christ and the cross as well as the unlimited scope of the atonement grew. In addition, he began to develop an appreciation of the doctrine of "union and communion" through his reading of John Calvin. He was particularly influenced by Prof Mackintosh's perception of Christ as God and the face of Jesus as the very face of God (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). Hugh Ross Mackintosh (1870-1936) was an adept theologian and philosopher, respected both in his native Scotland as well as in Germany. He was also a pastor and expository preacher of some repute. The seeds of much of Torrance's theological thought can be traced, by his own admission, to the influence of Mackintosh: the Trinitarian ground of theology, the centrality of Christ in revelation and reconciliation, the Nicene concept of the *homoousion*, the significance of the cross for forgiveness, the empirical reality of the resurrection, the concept of *kenosis* as self-emptying, the "blessed exchange", the unitary nature of science and theology, and the concept of personal and spiritual union with Christ. All of this was rooted in a deeply practical sense of the "preachability" of the message on the mission field (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). Thus Mackintosh (2000:71-72) convinced Torrance of the intrinsic missionary and evangelical nature of Christology, a focus that resonated well with his upbringing in evangelistic mission in China.

For Torrance, Mackintosh's teaching had, in some way, anticipated Karl Barth, so that when Mackintosh welcomed the translation by G.T. Thompson of the first volume of *Church Dogmatics* in 1937, Torrance and others eagerly received it. In addition, while at New College, Torrance learnt from William Manson, Professor of New Testament studies, to engage in "depth exegesis" that sought to interpret the Scriptures from within their own theological framework, thereby adding a third and yet neglected "dimension of depth" to his exegetical method. Thus, during the time of his theological formation in Edinburgh, the theological base that Torrance had inherited from his parents began to expand and grow.

Nonetheless, as McGrath (1999:28) observes, through this time, the question of the future of the churches that his father had established together with a concern for the wellbeing and future of Christianity in China continued to trouble Torrance and impact on his thoughts about his future. In *Itinerarium* (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10), Torrance acknowledges that he went to New College with the intention of preparing to be a missionary in the regions in which

his father had worked and further towards Tibet. It seems that he had made no secret of these intentions, as evidenced by the letter of T.E. Plewman to his father in 1935 in the aftermath of the destruction of the Qiang churches, asking if there was any likelihood of “T.F. coming out to work among the Qiang” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 160). However, it was as Torrance studied under Mackintosh that he began to consider a career in theology. Paradoxically, Mackintosh deepened his desire for mission, yet at the same time evinced in him a calling to engage in theological ministry in the “service of the gospel”. In the aftermath of a mission which Torrance organised to recruit students for world mission, he recalls that Mackintosh said that although Torrance had passion for mission, he thought he was destined to lecture at New College and one day become the moderator of the Church of Scotland. Torrance says that he felt it reassuring that as he took the decision to pursue theology, he had not disobeyed God’s calling to mission. Thus under Mackintosh, Torrance’s calling to mission in China began to be directed towards the teaching of theology.

5.4.4 The Theological Influence of Thomas and Annie Torrance

This section would not be complete without evaluating the extent of the influence of Torrance’s upbringing on his future direction. Throughout his memoirs, comments and interviews, it is clear that he attributes his missional theology to them, noting that his father was the evangelist of the family while his mother was the theologian (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). His impressions of his father were of an “indefatigable evangelist” who would never miss an opportunity to share the gospel, even visiting patients in the Canadian mission hospital before breakfast every day in order to distribute Bibles and tracts and share Christ with them. He involved the children fully in the work, sharing prayer concerns with them and assuming that they shared the evangelistic vision of their parents (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). In an interview with John Hesselink (1984:49), Torrance says that his father came from a strong evangelical Church of Scotland pietistic background. Nonetheless, because of his evangelistic zeal, he had problems with “hyper-Calvinism” and limited atonement, which his son inherited.

Torrance Snr’s work with the Bible Society ensured that all his work was “Word-centred”. He had memorised portions of Scripture, for example the Psalms and the book of Romans, and taught his children to do the same. He would read from the Bible every day and then the whole family would kneel down while their parents prayed. When they were old enough, the children were encouraged to read at least three chapters of the Bible each day for themselves. Torrance

(2001b:304) commented in his later years that the combination of daily Bible reading, study of the Scriptures and active mission service meant that they became a biblical family endued with zeal for the gospel. Thus it was particularly from his father that Torrance derived his sense of call to mission.

In spite of the influence of his father, Torrance attributes the roots of his theological understanding to his mother. David Torrance (2015) recalls that she taught the children how to read the Bible from an early age, showing them how to pray for insight and read the Bible in such a way that they could hear God speaking. She taught them to pray and believe that they would hear God. Torrance notes that his mother taught them verbal inspiration and an objective understanding of Word of God. Following her near fatal illness after the birth of James in 1923, Torrance recalls that his mother became more objective in her faith and her love for the Bible increased. This created in her son a deep sense of the authority of the Word and taught him a Christ centred approach. As Christ is the Word of God made flesh, his word and person are one, so it is the living personal Word of God incarnate in Christ that speaks in the Bible. As a result of this approach, Torrance objected to crude fundamentalism, which attempted to codify the mind of God. He sought a deeper, more dynamic, personal and yet objective way of reading the Scriptures.

Annie, however, was not just an influence in the home. In her husband's absence during the seven years the family were alone in Scotland, Torrance writes to his father of his mother's work as she visited and spoke at churches, sometimes taking her eldest children to assist her (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11). In his memoirs, he recalls that his mother became a "theological oracle" for her children and other students at New College (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11). Torrance comments that the whole family came under the imprint of their mother, who was a woman of the greatest spiritual depth and prayer life (Hesselink, 1984:50). Although she never went to university, she had theological and biblical insight and an observable holiness, which left an impact on all the family. As an Anglican, Annie Torrance brought a different perspective into the theological equation of the family home (Hesselink, 1984:50). He claims that his mother gave him an ecumenical approach to theology, which would become significant in his theological years. The influence of Annie on Torrance was undoubtedly important for his theological development. He writes in *Itinerarium* "Her imprint on my spiritual and theological development was incisive, profound and indelible..." (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). As a young professional at Auburn Theological

Seminary in 1939, he would later write to ask his mother to put her theological teaching into writing (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11).

As a result of his upbringing, Torrance states that his religious outlook was biblical, evangelical and evangelistic (*Itinerarium*, Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). He was “deeply conscious” of his parents task to preach the gospel to unbelievers and to “win them for Christ” and notes that, “This orientation to mission was built into the fabric of my mind and has never faded – by its essential nature Christian theology has always had for me an evangelistic thrust” (*Itinerarium*, Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). In interview with John Hesselink (1984:49), he says that his upbringing in China had two outcomes in his life. Firstly, it gave him a missionary and evangelical outlook so that even though he did not realise his ambition to become a missionary to Tibet, he saw his theological work as engagement in mission. Secondly, it made him open to other cultures. He says that both his parents were his first and best teachers of theology and in 1944 he wrote to his parents from the frontline in Italy to thank them for his upbringing and faith (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10).

5.3.5 Conclusion

Torrance’s outlook on life and his subsequent theological development was influenced by his family upbringing and his foundational experiences in China. From the deeply embedded cross-cultural life the family led with all its inherent dangers for foreigners in the early part of the twentieth century, Torrance learnt to be open to other cultures and to different ways of conceiving the theological task. From his parents’ approach to mission, he learnt from his father a zeal for evangelism (with a focus on the Qiang) and from his mother a rootedness in the objectivity of faith focused in the living Word of God. However, it was not until he came under the influence of Hugh Ross Mackintosh at New College between 1934 and 1936 that he began to understand the integral nature of theology and mission. His call to mission in the Tibetan areas of China never left him, but through his professional years, it was expressed as the mission of theology. It is to this that the next section turns.

5.5 China Mission through the Professional Years

5.5.1 Introduction

In 1937, after a year of travelling and studying in the Middle East on a John Stuart Blackie scholarship, Torrance went to the University of Basel in Switzerland to undertake theological

studies under Karl Barth. From this point onwards, throughout his professional career, his “call” to mission in China was superseded by his work as theologian and pastor. As such, therefore, this section does not deal with mission in China but rather with the inherited legacy of his upbringing in China and his call to mission as an influence on his theology. The essence of Torrance’s theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion has already been covered in Chapter 4. This section, therefore, aims to evaluate the influence of the background of mission in China in his professional life.

5.5.2 Mission in the Professional Years

When Torrance was in Basel between 1937 and 1938 he was greatly inspired by Barth’s theology and as a result of excellent performance in a New Testament Greek examination, he was invited into Barth’s “inner circle”. This gave him the opportunity to interact with Barth and to understand his theological position intimately. However, even during this time, Torrance’s autobiography of his student years shows that his passion for mission had not in any way diminished. He remembers that at some point during that year, he was becoming critical of Barth’s teaching because it seemed to lack missionary note and did not have the evangelistic thrust that he had come to expect from Mackintosh (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). McGrath (1999:45) observes that Torrance would revise this impression as a result of Barth’s later writings and Barth’s support of his own son on the mission field. Nonetheless, it serves to show that mission was still at the centre of Torrance’s theological conviction at this stage.

During his time in Basel, the Inter Varsity Fellowship (IVF) organised an evangelistic meeting with Dr Howard Guinness, an itinerant IVP evangelist. Torrance felt that Guinness did not do a good job of explaining the reasons for the resurrection, a sentiment shared by a young Jewish doctor who confronted the evangelist afterwards. To the dismay of the IVP, Torrance supported the doctor’s position. After the mission was over, the doctor came to talk to Torrance and as a result, he was converted. Torrance comments, “He was the only fruit of that mission” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). Mission among the Jews, however, was to become an increasingly important theme for Torrance during his professional years. Not only did his father’s conviction of the missional role of the Jews from his interactions with the Qiang remain with him, but he was also influenced by the medical mission work of relations in Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, first established by his father’s cousin, David Watt Torrance (1862-1923).

On his return to Edinburgh in 1938, Torrance was invited to spend a year at Auburn Theological Seminary in the USA. He was asked to take the place of John Bennett, president of the seminary, who had left as a result of a move towards a more liberal position. McGrath (1999:46) observes that this was the point at which Torrance finally made the decision to turn his “call” to mission towards guiding the church in its evangelistic and missionary work through theological education. Thus there was never an abandonment of his missionary vision and calling, only a redirecting of its energy. In his autobiographical reflection on the year at Auburn, Torrance (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10) comments that his lectures were more evangelical and more theological than the students were used to, which caused some tension, but also resulted in the conversion of a number of students. In addition, the experience at Auburn taught him to write his theology in a way that was understandable to students who did not have a theological background. The published version of his Christology lectures (Torrance, 2002a) shows that his written theology was passionately evangelistic.

As a result of brewing war with Germany, Torrance returned to the UK in 1939 and went to the University of Oxford to complete the dissertation on the doctrine of grace in patristic theology, begun under Barth. Just as he had done in Basel, he got involved in student mission, but in his recollections on the years 1940-1943 show that he found that his association with Karl Barth and his “theological evangelism” were not acceptable at that time to the IVF (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). At the same time, his calling to enter the ministry of the Church of Scotland began to dominate his thoughts, so in 1940 he went forward for ordination and took a position at Alyth in central Perthshire, Scotland. His experiences there from 1940-1943 taught him that preaching and practice could not be separated and so he engaged in a programme of parish visitation, with the support of his mother in the women’s work. This holistic approach to the oneness of proclamation and practice would, by his own admission, come to dominate his later approach to lecturing. This integral link between theology and pastoral work as its practical outcome in Torrance’s ministry has been noted by Anderson (2009) and Gunton (2001).

During this “pastoral” period of his life, Torrance remained passionate about what was called “foreign mission” and was invited to speak to the Meigle Presbytery in a town called Blairgowrie on the place and function of the church in the world. The essence of his lecture was a call to the church to rediscover the primary commitment to evangelism and the proclamation of the gospel. He spoke about the need for the church to participate in the “master-passion” and “world outlook” of Christ for the evangelization of the world, using Brunner’s often quoted maxim that the church exists by mission as a fire by burning (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection,

Box 10). Thus, his practical, pastoral theology continued to bear the marks of the missional nature of his ecclesiology, as examined in Chapter 4.

During his time at Alyth parish, Torrance also began to develop his theology of the missional nature of Holy Communion. He felt that the “real presence” of Christ in the elements of bread and wine enabled him to preach in a real way the vicarious nature of faith and so it was through the Holy Communion that he felt that he best proclaimed God’s unconditional grace. He took this perception of the preaching of the vicarious nature of Christ’s life and death with him in his work as Army Chaplain in the Italian Campaign between 1943 and 1945. However, he was haunted by the words of a dying soldier. “Is God really like Jesus?” (cf. 4.3.2). On his return to Scotland after the end of the war in 1945, he felt that he needed to work against the liberal dualist theology that broke the unity of the Trinity. He returned to Alyth and continued his practical ministry for two years but after his marriage to Margaret Spear in 1947, he answered a call to Beechgrove Church in Aberdeen where he would have opportunity to interact on an intellectual level at King’s College, Aberdeen.

In his recollections from his time in Aberdeen, Torrance (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10) comments that life at Beechgrove Church was different from Alyth because they were more prayerful and hungry for the gospel. However, the demands of the church made intellectual pursuits difficult to the extent that he could not engage in his calling to mission that had now been redirected to his role as a theological educator contributing to the missionary and evangelistic work of the church (McGrath, 1999:83). Like his father before him, Torrance was convinced of the need to engage in theological education for the growth and maturity of the church. His desire was to research and teach Christology and soteriology in order to show the fundamental link between the incarnation and the Christian gospel. However, as he could not initially secure a chair in dogmatics, he accepted a position as Professor of church history at New College, Edinburgh in 1950, later being appointed to the chair of dogmatics where he remained until his retirement in 1979.

During Torrance’s long academic career at New College, he pursued a calling to evangelise the existing dualistic worldview, calling it to a “scientific theology” with unified centre in God’s revelation through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. His work in Christology and soteriology developed a theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion. These areas have been evaluated in Chapter 4. In addition to these endeavours to bring mission into the heart of Christian theology, he continued to work on the mission agenda bequeathed to him by his family

upbringing in China. It was observed earlier, that calls to ecumenism had been initiated by a Chinese participant at the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference, which led to the eventual establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

During his time at Beechgrove Church in Aberdeen, Torrance had been invited to participate in preparatory discussions for the establishment of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, of which he was a member between 1952 and 1962. He notes that he saw this work as supplementary to his primary interest in Christology and soteriology, but nonetheless admits that the concerns of church unity occupied much of his time during this period of his life (Torrance, 1959a:7). In his work on the nature and mission of the church, he interacted with renowned missiologists such as Bishop Lesslie Newbigin and Dr Hendrick Kraemer (Torrance, 1959a:222), thus contributing directly to the ongoing theological and ecumenical concerns of the mission movement in which he had been brought up. As has already been seen, Newbigin was to influence Torrance in the way he linked union with Christ, baptism and mission through the mission of Christ (Kirkpatrick, 2009:53). In addition, during the seventies, Torrance engaged in pioneering ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox churches, working especially with the theologians George Florovsky and John Zizioulas.

Throughout his life, Torrance worked to bring the Church of Scotland back to an evangelical and evangelizing position. In various addresses to the General Assembly before he became moderator of the Kirk, he called the Kirk to mission and evangelism. When he became moderator of the Kirk in between 1976-1977, he and other concerned clergy issued an open letter entitled *Urgent call to the Kirk* (1976) in which he called the Church of Scotland back to confidence in the gospel and in preaching Christ in order to reevangelise Scotland. Thus in spite of the fact that Torrance did not engage in mission in China during this period, his sense of the priority of mission and evangelism was very much with him. This led him to involvement with the Billy Graham's Mission Scotland in the early nineties, after retirement.

Finally, towards the end of his professional career, Torrance began increasingly to become more involved in mission to the Jews. By this time, five members of the extended Torrance family were missionaries in Tiberias. On 14 March 1977, Torrance wrote to the British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, to protest against a new bill that was being prepared to be presented to the Israeli Knesset (parliament) forbidding the distribution of polemical literature designed to bring about conversion to another religion. The contents of the letter show the development of his theology of mission, "What I am concerned about is that it is meant to throttle that age-old

missionary factor in Israel, God's Chosen and Covenant people, through whom all the nations would be blessed with the knowledge of the one God and his redemptive purposes for the world" (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 88). This conviction of the purposes of God for Israel in the world was integral to his father's view of the role of the Qiang people in China. Now, Torrance was acting to ensure that role would be permitted to continue on the world stage. In the event, he received a reply from the Israeli prime minister stating that the government strenuously opposed the private members' bill and would not let it pass.

In 1979, the year of his retirement from New College, Torrance participated in the Church and Israel Committee under the auspices of the Overseas Council of the Church of Scotland in order to look into the implications of Christian/Muslim dialogue in the Middle East. Torrance recommended the appointment of a full-time scholar situated in Israel but attempts to find a suitable person were to prove futile. Nonetheless, Torrance's interest in mission to the Jews did not abate and was to develop further during his retirement.

5.5.3 Conclusion

The period of Torrance's professional career from the time he left Scotland for Germany in 1937 until his retirement in 1979 was not a time in which he and his family were actively engaged in mission in China. During this period, the situation of the church in China changed greatly, especially after the Japanese invasion during the Second World War, the accession of the Communist Party and expulsion of missionaries in the fifties. Contact with the church in China was minimal, and during the Cultural Revolution from 1966, it was dangerous. Nonetheless, during this time, Torrance continued to engage in mission through theology, teaching, ecumenical debate and pursuance of mission to the Jews. In the early seventies, he participated in a project to gather materials relating to mission in China into one place at Yale University as the China Records Project, but was not able to be involved in mission in China as such.

However, as Torrance retired in 1979, the situation in China was beginning to change and churches were reopening (Lambert, 1994:9). Freedom from the demands of lecturing gave Torrance an opportunity to start trying to make contact again. The Torrance family retained in their possession the Bible that had been sent to Torrance Snr from Tongmenwai as a symbol that the Qiang church would rise again. As he reflected on the opening up of China again, the "call" to mission in China that Torrance had kept from childhood was rekindled and he began to explore opportunities for mission engagement in China once again.

5.6 China Mission in Retirement

5.6.1 Introduction

When Thomas Torrance Snr left China in 1934, he left behind a legacy in the museum of the West China Union University but also returned to Scotland with gifts from the Qiang people, most notably a bronze serpent on a rod that he understood to be a type of “Aaron’s rod” (Thomas F. Torrance, Manuscript Collection, Box 11). With the publication of his book on the Qiang in 1937 and the delivery of a paper to the Victoria Institute in 1939, Torrance Snr’s involvement with the Qiang came to an end and it was not until China started to open up in 1979 that interest in China and her peoples began to resurge. Nonetheless, during this time, Torrance had retained a theological memory of his father’s work among the Qiang in his approach to the mission of Israel and the church.

5.6.2 The Qiang Church

During the early years of his retirement, T.F. Torrance continued dialogue with the Orthodox churches and publication of theology. However, as McGrath (1999:238) notes, T.F. Torrance had never lost interest in the Qiang churches established by his father and so, with his own retirement, began to look for opportunities afforded by the change in the political climate in China to visit Sichuan in order to discover what had happened to the churches. By 1984, the resurgence of interest in China led a Jewish publisher, Daniel Shaw, to approach Archie Crouch, the China Missions Resources Project manager, for the rights to republish Torrance’s father’s book on the Qiang (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 120). At the same time, a Chinese historian in the USA who was writing a book on the history of Christianity in China, made contact with Crouch. He had wanted to write about the Chinese Jews using evidence from the 1937 book on the Qiang but had found it too weak to use and requested Torrance to do further research by visiting the area. He advised against the republication of the book without consultation with the Chinese. Crouch also advised Torrance on the need for further research into the Jewishness of the Qiang.

As a result, Torrance made contact with the authorities in Chengdu and obtained permission to fly to the city via Hong Kong in May 1984. As Torrance was born in China, he was able to obtain a permit to visit Chengdu and the Qiang villages in the Wenchuan area but he did not initially gain permission to go further up the valley. However, once in China, he managed to get a permit to

travel into the upper Min valley area where he was able to get as far as Songpan but at that stage, he was only permitted to gaze up at the Qiang villages that he had visited previously with his father. During the visit, he discovered that there was still a Qiang church that was being kept alive in Weichou (in Wenchuan County, see map in Annexure) by Huang Taiqing, the son of the pastor with who had been his boyhood playmate on the trips with his father. In 1984, the church at Weichou was being used as a library and the few Christians did not have Bibles. Torrance went back to Scotland promising to return with Bibles and hopefully, with the title deeds that would enable the church to take repossession of the church building (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). Torrance's call to mission in China was beginning to be realised.

As soon as he had returned to Scotland, Torrance put together a proposal for the printing of Bibles for China. At the time, a relatively small number of Bibles were being printed by the Three Self Movement but purchase was restricted. Otherwise, Bibles were being smuggled into China but the numbers were inadequate. Torrance proposed funding a printing press in China with the permission of the Chinese government, to be paid for through rents paid by the government on confiscated mission properties (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159). This required considerable energy on Torrance's part, but eventually he got an agreement from the Amity Foundation (a Chinese development organisation) and the United Bible Society to set up a printing press on a single site in Nanjing (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159). In the end, the press was not funded through government rents as Torrance suggested but through the financial input of the Amity Foundation and the Bible societies.

During the time that it took to establish the Bible printing press, Torrance revisited the Qiang church. In October 1986, he flew into Chengdu via Hong Kong and attended the former Anglican Church where his mother used to worship, giving the pastor a copy of his mother's New Testament. However, he had again to apply for a special Alien Traveller's Permit in order to visit the Qiang churches in Weichou and beyond but this time there was no obstacle. In Tongmenwai, he handed over the title deeds to the church to Huang Taiqing in the presence of the Chinese officials with the hope that the government would pay rent for the property they had confiscated. He also gave the "resurrected Bible" of 1935 to Taiqing as a symbol of the resurrection of the Qiang church. He then encouraged Taiqing to look for a young person to train at the Theological Seminary in Chengdu, promising that the church in Chengdu would support the pastor so that he could reestablish the church among the Qiang (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). For Torrance, his trip to the Qiang was symbolic of his call. In a report for supporters he wrote, "I felt that I had been sent back by the Lord to help the Chiang (sic) to rekindle the flame

of their Christian faith and start rebuilding the Church (sic) in their midst” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10).

At the end of the 1986 visit, Torrance was given an opportunity to give a lecture at the Aba Teachers’ Training College in Wenchuan County (see map in Annexure). His approach to the lecture shows the missional nature of his theological method in operation. He explained that the closed structures of Marxism did not compare favourably with the open structures of science and discussed the opening of Chinese culture to the Christian faith, which he believed was already in progress. He did this through the science of light, which he explained came from the Christian understanding of light. He told them that there was a “vast spiritual vacuum” in China, which only the gospel could fill. His hope was that he had left the impression that the gospel makes good citizens out of believers (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). Further correspondence with China shows that Torrance’s hope was at least in part realised. Several of the teachers continued to write to him after he returned to Scotland. In a letter to a bishop in China in 1987, he mentions that two of the teachers of the college who were in contact with him wanted to study the Christian conceptual foundations of science and law in order to advance to an open structured society as a correlate of the new open structured science (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159). In July 1989, he wrote a letter to the American Bible Society asking them to help one of the teachers who had become a Christian to study in the USA and also indicated that he had sent several others to Chinese Christians to be discipled. Thus, the mission of Torrance’s theology was beginning to have a very practical missional outcome in the conversion of Chinese contacts he had made.

Once Torrance returned from China for the second time, he devoted his time to working on behalf of the Qiang church. The republication of his father’s book, with an updated preface written on the basis of his own trips back to the Qiang, was being prepared for publication in 1988. In 1985, American Jewish scholars had begun to take interest in Torrance Snr’s work on the Jewish origins of the Qiang, wanting to establish a Judaica section in the Kaifeng Museum. In 1986, two Israelis had attempted to accompany Torrance to film his contact with the Qiang people but had suffered setbacks in obtaining the required permit to enter the tribal area. However, after Torrance’s return from Chengdu in October, there was a backlash reaction from Jewish scholars in the *Hong Kong Jewish Chronicle* of February 1986 (passed on to Torrance in late 1986) discrediting the 1937 version of Torrance Snr’s book and claiming that the Qiang had been “ruined for any serious anthropological research” by Torrance Snr’s attempts to shape the Qiang history and religion for his own religious purposes (Crouch, cc. to Torrance, Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection,

Box 159). Torrance was forced to defend his father's position, showing that he had not suggested to the Qiang that they might be Jewish, but that they had come to the conclusion themselves on hearing the book of Leviticus.

Thus the republication of *China's First Missionaries* in 1988 was somewhat controversial, as can be seen from T.F. Torrance's correspondence for this period (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 120). However, the Israelis who had travelled to Wenchuan with Torrance had completed their research and concluded that the Qiang are descendants of Joktan, the grandson of Shem. They proposed that the Qiang were not Jews but Semites with liturgical notions and practices that predated the Pentateuch by 800 years. In spite of this, in 1989, the Nahum Goldmann Museum of Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv contacted Torrance to tell him that they would include Torrance Snr's work in their material on the ten lost tribes. Clearly, there was some measure of discrepancy in the placing of the historical and religious origins of the Qiang. Nonetheless, the link between the mission of the Jews and the mission of the Qiang established by his father remained the core issue, stating that it was his prayer that the Christian Qiang would also be missionaries, bearing witness to Christ the Saviour among other tribes and among the Han Chinese (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10).

In 1994, at the age of 81, Torrance felt compelled to make a third trip to China. The conversion of several people whom he had met in 1984 and 1986 had served to confirm to him that the work among the Qiang at the end of his life was at least a part fulfilment of his lifelong call to mission. His concern to see the reestablishment of the church among the Qiang and a pastor trained to lead them remained unabated (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 161). In 1993, he received a letter from the president of the Theological Seminary in Chengdu, explaining that Huang Taiqing and two other Qiang leaders had come to see him about reopening the Qiang churches. The attempts which had been made to get the government to allow the church to operate in its premises on the basis of the title deeds, which were returned, had not been realised because the two officials Torrance had spoken to had left, so there was no hope of government support. Torrance was therefore requested to raise money for the building of a new church (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159).

Torrance's report on his trips to China show that he worked with characteristic energy to make contact with various donor agencies and managed to raise sufficient money to start the building of a church and for the education of Qiang young people as its leaders (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). However, once Torrance had arrived in Tongmenwai in 1994,

Taiqing was unable to accept the money without written permission from the authorities to build the church, so Torrance was forced to take the funds back to Chengdu and hand them over to the Sichuan Christian Council for safekeeping. In order to get permission for the church building, a pastor had to be trained and ready and there was no one available at the time. After Torrance left Sichuan, he went to see the Dr James Taylor of Overseas Missionary Fellowship (formerly CIM) in Kaoloon who promised to assist the Qiang to get permission to build a church in Weichou. By the end of 1994, the Qiang reported that permission to build would be granted but asked to build the church out of town in a beauty spot so that they could establish a guesthouse for foreign visitors and give employment opportunities to the youth (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 163). Torrance then set about raising the rest of the required money and deposited it with the Amity Foundation to be released as soon as the final documentation had come through.

However, over the next few months, permission did not come through. A member of the Amity Foundation paid a visit to the Qiang region and established that because there was no legally organised Christian body in the region, the permission given by the local government could not be ratified by the regional government. The chief reason for this was that the Qiang did not have a trained pastor and therefore the Amity Foundation requested Torrance to identify a person for theological training in order to establish the church first (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 161). Torrance responded that he was willing for money to be set aside for training, but in the absence of a suitable person, the issue of the building of the church reached a stalemate. Taiqing wrote to Torrance to inform him that they were whitewashing a house, as they had done in the past, to act as a house church. Torrance wrote back to give his approval. At the same time, he wrote to the Sichuan Christian Council to give permission for money to be released for the purpose (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 161).

The issue of the training of leaders for the Qiang church was not resolved in the nineties and Torrance's final correspondence with China shows that it was a matter that was still close to his heart at the end of his life in 2007. From 1984, he had been in contact with church leaders in Chengdu, urging them to train young Qiang at the Chengdu Theological Seminary. Torrance set about supporting the seminary by raising funds for assistance with books and Bibles. After his visit in 1986, he sought financial assistance from Henry Luce, an American millionaire whose father had been born in China (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159). In addition, he approached the Amity Foundation in Nanjing to donate Bibles to the seminary.

Torrance retained contact with Dr Daniel Lee, the visionary Chinese principal of the Seminary who believed that China was opening up to the Christian faith in a way that had never happened before (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 160). He worked hard to raise funds for the new buildings, gathering contributions from the Canadian church and other private donors (including Torrance) to build a small structure in 1992. However, on his visit in 1994, Torrance realised that the seminary was still too small and its needs too great for the growth of the church in Sichuan. He continued to work on their behalf, sending books and Bibles and working with the Amity Foundation to raise funds for the expansion of the buildings in 1996. His endorsement of the seminary, then under the leadership of Professor Li Dong, son of Daniel Lee, is striking, “They have a splendid catechism and give central place to the Nicene Creed and are concerned to concentrate on the kind of Christian theology that builds up the church” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 160). Torrance’s own theological position, with its focus in the Trinity and the self-revelation of God through the incarnation, was being maintained in the seminary that was preparing church leaders for the province of Sichuan. The missional nature of divine-human communion as entry into *koinónia* with the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit was the substance of theological education in the Sichuan region of China. This was greatly to Torrance’s satisfaction.

However, in spite of Torrance’s legacy to mission as theological education in Sichuan and his attempts to build the church among the Qiang, his instigation of the Bible project in conjunction with the United Bible Societies and the Amity Foundation was to be his greatest contribution to mission in China. In 1985, an agreement to start a Bible printing press was signed between the Amity Foundation and the United Bible Societies in Hong Kong. In 1987, after diplomatic intervention by the American President, Jimmy Carter, the first Chinese Bible was printed on the Amity Press in Nanjing. Between 1987 and 2007 when Torrance died, 50 million Bibles were printed and distributed in China. By 2012, the 100 million mark had been reached (Hongyu, 2012:1).

In 1985, Ian Thompson of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (formerly CIM) wrote to Torrance to say that he thought that the initiative was “certainly the outcome of your own soundings and overtures” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159). As a result, the ABS asked Torrance to operate under their name in all his involvements with the project, thereby indicating that in their view, he had taken up the work that his father had done for them fifty years previously. This is certainly the way that Torrance himself saw his involvement, “I am sure that my dear father knows that in this way his form of missionary activity continues throughout China

and that one of his sons had a part in it” (Torrance, 2001b:304). In the nineties, Torrance continued to be aware of the contribution the printing press was making to the resurrection of the Chinese church, telling Daniel Lee rather modestly that he felt that he was partially responsible for the printing of Bibles in China, something that made him very happy because he felt that as a result of his father’s previous work with the ABS, he felt that the work was “in his blood” (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 160).

Thus as a result of Torrance’s lifelong sense of call to mission in China, the church among the Qiang was “resurrected”, although it is not known to date if a church building has been erected. Before the devastating Sichuan earthquake of 2008 which killed 80,000 people, there were believed to be around 150 Qiang believers, possibly continuing to meet in the house church which Torrance had assisted them to renovate. In addition, partly as a result of Torrance’s interest and assistance, the Sichuan Theological Seminary was developed and its library built up so that in 2010, there were about 550 students being trained for leadership in the region. Finally, his concern to get Bibles into the hands of the Qiang church led to the founding of the Nanjing Amity Press which has to date printed over 100 million Bibles legally in mainland China and distributed 60 million of them to China. More than anything else, this has been Torrance’s greatest contribution to mission in China.

5.6.3 The Mission of the Jews

A second area of mission involvement that flows indirectly from the Torrance family’s involvement with China and the Qiang was mission among Jews, which, as has already been noted, had been an area of interest for the wider Torrance family since the late nineteenth century. However, as Torrance became more involved in the debate over the origin of the Qiang and the republication of his father’s book which pictured the Qiang as God’s ancient missionaries to China, so he became more involved in the theological aspect of the mission of the Jews, especially in support of the work of his brother David in this area who published *The mission of Christians and Jews* in 1986.

In the early eighties, the concern of the Torrance brothers within the Church of Scotland was with their work in Tiberias that had previously included outreach to both Jews and Arabs. In a report on the *Church of Scotland and the mission to the Jews* (1980), he shows that the purpose of the Church of Scotland mission in Tiberias had been to bear witness to the Jews of the promised Messiah and to “win them to Christ” as part of the New Testament principle of proclaiming the

gospel to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 87). However, by the eighties, there was little work among the Jews but only with the Episcopal Arabs whose theology sought to “dejudaize” Jesus and cut him off from salvation history. His concern was that if the Church of Scotland failed to witness to Christ in the “heart of mission” (mission among the Jews), then it would fail to engage in mission at all.

The heart of Torrance’s concern in this report is his theology of the mission of the Jews. He points out that the Christian gospel derives from the Jews but it is the gospel of Jesus Christ and as such can only be preached among the Jews in a way that shares in the mission of Jesus. He points out that Israel was called to be God’s historic partner in his self-revelation through covenant relationship and had a priestly status among the nations as both God’s representative and messenger. This identity was moulded into their being through suffering until the coming of the suffering servant in the person of Jesus Christ. The new covenant is not an abrogation of the old, but the consummation of a higher level of intimacy and communion with God through the outpouring of the Spirit. Thus, the New Testament church understood the cross to be foreordained by God and part of Israel’s destined calling to act for all nations. As a result of the grafting of the church into Israel (Rom 9-11), it is only through its assimilation into Israel that the church can share in the mission of God and be engaged in mission to the world.

Torrance maintains that the Christian church cannot properly understand Jesus without Israel. As the covenant has not been revoked, Israel continues to play a vicarious role but in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Israel has lost its priestly and redemptive role in the world. It is therefore the task of the Christian church to witness to Christ in Israel and proclaim forgiveness on the basis of one covenant of grace mediated to the church through Israel. For Torrance, the key to this is 1 Pet 2:9-10 where the priestly role of Israel is applied to the church. Therefore, it is the task of the Christian church to assist the Jews to fulfil their priestly role by preaching Christ to them. Again, Torrance interpreted the Holocaust in terms of Israel’s vicarious mission to humanity, which was evaluated in 4.4.2. Nonetheless, the point here is that for Torrance, the mission of Israel is ultimately the same as the mission of the church and therefore the church needs to engage in dialogue with Israel because ultimately, Israel will play a critical role in the consummation of all things.

It is here, in the mission of Israel, that the conjunction of Torrance’s theology and practice really finds its roots. In an address to the New College Missionary Society in 1989, Torrance says that the problem with Christian mission is its detachment from the mediation of the Christian message

in and through Israel because Israel has a vicarious role to play in the function of God's mission to humanity (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 40). This leads the Christian gospel to put a "Gentile mask" on the face of Jesus, which also detaches the gospel from creation and from space and time. As a result, mission simply becomes concern with cultural and social development, leaving behind the saving import of the *homoousion* through the incarnation. Torrance maintains that the message of the gospel needs to be preached through the "school of Israel" in order to show its rootedness in the history of salvation, illustrating his point by citing his father's preaching of the gospel to the Qiang through the history of Israel.

Thus, the involvement of the Torrance family in mission among the Qiang who they believed to be ancient Jewish missionaries to China seems to undergird Torrance's theology of mission and as such his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion. The incarnation as the insertion of the *homoousion* into space and time is mediated through the covenant relationship with Israel evidenced in the history of Israel realised through the life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ. The role of the Qiang in China is proof of God's ancient concern for the nations and the role of the Christian church among the Chinese is proof that God continues to bear witness to his saving love in Jesus Christ. In his paper presented at the Victoria Institute in 1939, Torrance Snr spoke of the symbols of the Qiang religion that pointed to their messianic hope that a sin-bearer would be sent from heaven to bring them into relationship with the Father-Spirit, which he interprets as divine truth preserved in pictorial form to preserve the idea of the necessity of atonement for salvation (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 4). Thus the Qiang were Israelites sent to China as missionaries with a message of the coming Messiah. In the same way, Christian missionaries who have become part of Israel through the new covenant, bear witness to China of the Messiah who has come.

5.6.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this section has been to evaluate the documentary evidence of T.F. Torrance's involvement with mission in China in his retirement years in order to gain an understanding of the way in which his practice flowed out of the missional nature of his theological persuasion. The first theme was his engagement in mission with and on behalf of the Qiang, which presented itself to him as the fulfilment of the call to mission that he experienced as a result of his boyhood involvement in mission in China. This led him to practical involvement with the rebuilding of the Qiang church, support of theological education in Sichuan Province and the instigation of the Amity printing press, which has seen the printing, and distribution of Bibles throughout China.

The second theme was his theological and practical concern for the mission of the Jews, which was seen to have its roots in his father's research into the Jewish roots of the Qiang people and the development of a method of preaching the gospel through the salvation history of Israel. His mission in the retirement years, however, was not dissociated from the rest of his life of theology, but was integral to and built on his theological conviction regarding the missional nature of divine-human communion.

5.7 The Relationship between Theology and Mission Practice

5.7.1 Introduction

The final task of this chapter is to evaluate the relationship between Torrance's theology and his mission practice in China. It is at this point that Torrance's life history and his theology conjoin so that this research into the missional nature of divine-human communion does not deal with a theologian in the abstract, but with a holistic concept of the theologian's life and theology. It therefore firstly considers the influence of his personal biography on his theology, before explicitly linking mission in China with Torrance's theological system. It then considers in brief other aspects of his theology and practice that make the link between theology and practice as well as weaknesses that have the potential to undermine that link. Finally, it looks at the relevance of the relationship between theology and mission practice for Torrance scholarship and the contemporary mission of the church.

5.7.2 Personal Biography

Colyer (2001a:51) proposes that mission involvement in China should be seen as "bookends" to Torrance's life, thereby suggesting a hiatus in mission involvement between Torrance's return from China in 1927 and his reengagement with mission in China from 1984-1994. This study has found it impossible to hold this view because it assumes a duality in Torrance's biography, as if his theological oeuvre is separate from his life experiences and practice of mission. Although Colyer (2001a:51) correctly assesses T.F. Torrance as an "evangelical missionary who became a theologian without ever ceasing to be an evangelist", he incorrectly assumes that "[Torrance's] audience has not been the indigenous peoples of China". Torrance's own comments on his "call" to mission in China must be understood not only in terms of his work to renew the Scottish Kirk or to evangelise Western culture but also in terms of his ever present determination to fulfil the "call" of his adolescent years to bring the gospel to the far regions of Western China. The

historical realities of mission in Sichuan from 1935 made it difficult and later impossible for missionaries to continue to build up the churches in that area. When Torrance made overtures towards the local government in Sichuan in 1984, China had only just started to open up for Western visitors again. In other words, he went back to the Qiang region of Sichuan with the intent of rebuilding the churches his father had established as soon as it was politically possible to do so. There had been no deviation of purpose in his life, only forty years of waiting.

Ultimately, it would have been more accurate for Colyer to say that Torrance became a theologian without ever ceasing to be a missionary. Colyer's contention that Torrance became a theologian who remained an evangelist threatens to divide Torrance's persona into parts that relate to theology and parts that relate to evangelism, thereby introducing a dualism between his thought and practice. For Torrance, such dualism is contrary to the gospel that roots mission in the relationship between Christ and his church and by implication, in the participation of the church in the mission of Christ. Torrance the theologian, therefore, should not be conceived of in any way that is different from Torrance the missionary with a "call" to build the church among the indigenous peoples in the Tibetan border region of Western China. As was seen in section 5.6.2, this is how Torrance understood his life and work. As a result, it is important to see the relationship between theology and mission practice in terms of Torrance's personal biography so that his theological work is more deeply rooted in his persona.

5.7.3 The Assumption and Conversion of Leprous Humanity

Torrance's theology must therefore be understood in terms of both his thought as well as his mission practice. The challenge with Torrance's broad-ranging discourse is to isolate the unifying centre that holds his mission and practice together. So far, this has not been done adequately. Walker comes close to finding that centre by including Torrance's essay on *The reconciliation of the mind: a theological meditation on the teaching of St Paul* as an Epilogue to *Atonement* (2009:437-447). Walker (in Torrance, 2009:437 n.1) comments that the essay encapsulates themes central to Torrance's theology viz. the rationality of faith in Jesus Christ, the transformation of the unbaptised mind and the evangelization of the roots of human thought and culture. However, Walker overlooks the central point of the argument in the essay viz. Torrance's (2009:440) use of the concept of the "assumption and conversion of leprous humanity and diseased mind" which he borrows from a fragment written by Irenaeus (no reference).

Torrance (2009:440) notes especially the suggestion by Irenaeus that the incarnation can be conceived of in the light of Mark 1:40-42 in which Jesus touches a leper and heals him without contracting the leprosy himself. Torrance understands from this that Jesus has taken “leprous human nature” on himself and transformed it into the flesh of a new born child by first assuming it and then converting it to his own likeness. This applies not only to the physical body but also to the human mind, which Christ assumed and transformed when he penetrated the depths of human alienation and estrangement. Union with Christ must therefore be understood as total, transformative and as the centre point of Torrance’s theology. For Torrance (2009:441), the fundamental patristic principle that “The unassumed is the unhealed” (Gregory of Nazianzus) or “What Christ has not assumed has not been saved” (Cyril of Alexander) is the most astounding aspect of union with Christ because it involves the complete transformation of what Torrance (2009:442) calls “foul, wicked, depraved humanity, twisted on itself” into the likeness of Jesus Christ, mind and body inclusive.

It is at this point that the union of theology and personal mission practice becomes evident. Torrance (2009:441) processes Irenaeus’ leper image through his childhood memory of the leper colony in Chengdu, which made such a horrific impression on him in his childhood (cf. 5.2.2). Indeed, it is possible that it was Torrance’s personal experience in China that prompted him to take note of Irenaeus’ image of the cleansing of the leper by Jesus in the first place. The narrative in Mark 1:40-44 makes reference to Lev 14:1-32 in which Moses lays out the rules and regulations for the cleansing of lepers in the Old Testament. The Old Testament cleansing rituals would have resonated in Torrance’s memory with his interactions with the Qiang people who attached much significance to the sacrifices and cleansing rituals of the book of Leviticus. When Torrance Snr explained the gospel to Isaac Whiteheart, it was particularly the connection between Qiang rituals, the book of Leviticus and the explanation of those rituals in the light of Christ through the reading of the gospels that persuaded him to become a Christian (Thomas Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 4). Equally, the conversion of the priest of Oir in 1926, witnessed by the adolescent Torrance, came about when the priest understood the significance of the religious practices of the Qiang through the study of Leviticus and the Gospel of John. The cleansing of the leper was therefore an apt analogy for the “blessed exchange” in Torrance’s theology.

The Qiang rituals were spelled out most clearly by Torrance Snr in his address to the Victoria Institute in 1939 (Thomas Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 4). Similarities can be seen between Torrance Snr’s account of their rituals and the cleansing of lepers in Lev 14:1-32 and Mark 1:40-44. In Qiang religion, there was a need for the removal of the impurity of sin before

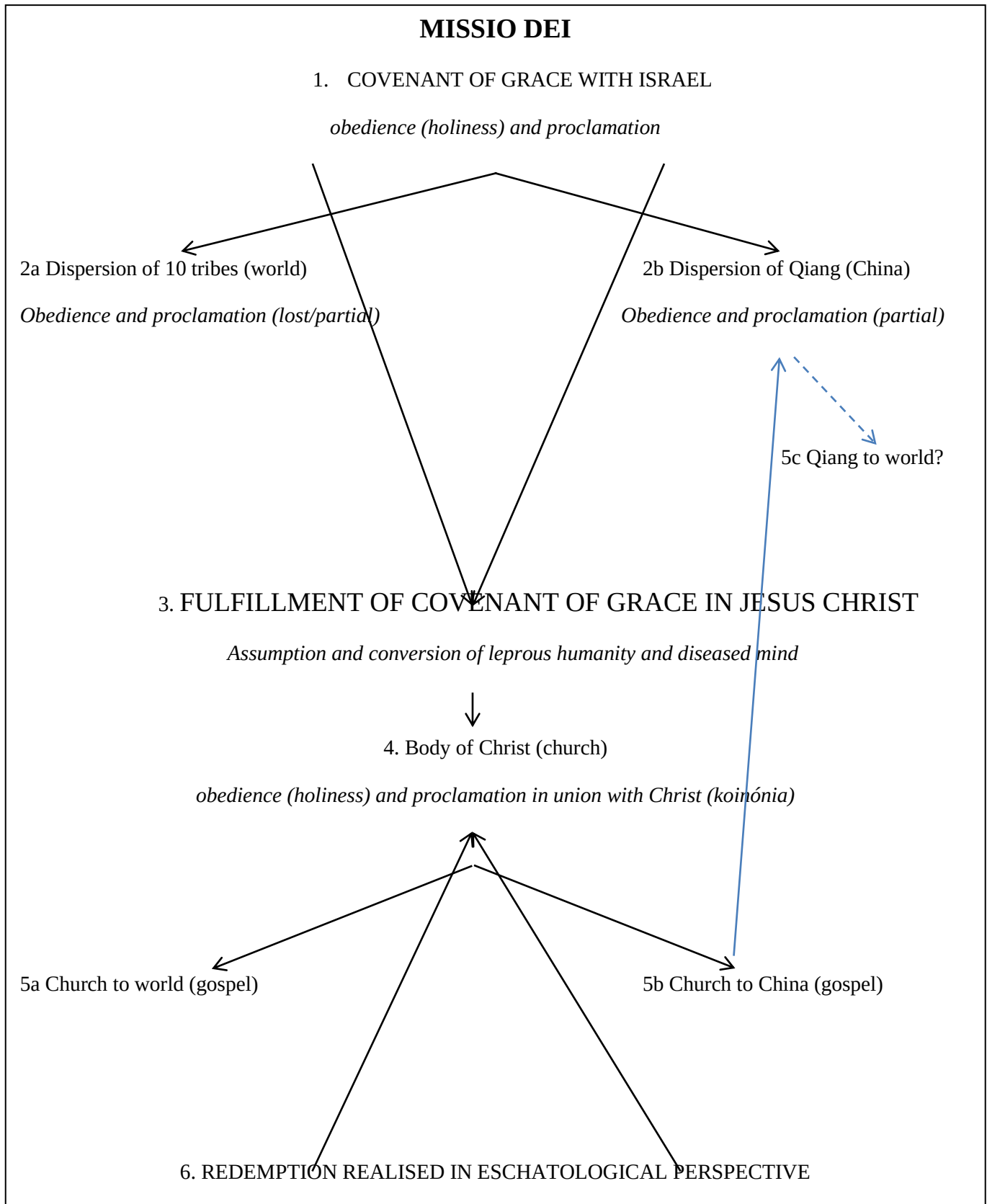
the Father-Spirit could extend forgiveness to the community. Worshippers had to bathe and wash their clothes in order to separate themselves from all defilement before they could come to the altar in the temple on the high place. Then a spotless lamb, without blemish, was sacrificed on an altar that had not been touched by human hands. Sin was transferred onto the head of the lamb and the blood of the lamb was then sprinkled on the *lopee* and on the worshippers to signify cleansing. All utensils used in the sacrifice became holy. At the end of the ritual sacrifice, a sacred roll signifying the Word of life (known as Je-Dsu) was placed in a bowl of wheat seed to indicate that Je-Dsu was present and gave life. After the ritual, Je-Dsu scattered the seed of life on the worshippers as a symbol of life and prosperity.

In the Leviticus instructions for the cleansing of lepers, the purpose of the rituals is the cleansing from the guilt of sin (Lev 14:12, 21). The fine details of Moses' instructions differ depending on the economic status of the person involved. However, the essentials remain the same: separation and washing, a sin offering and a guilt offering to make atonement, a grain offering as a sign of fellowship and thankfulness. The blood of the sacrifice is sprinkled or daubed on the leper as a sign of atonement and the cleansing from sin (Lev 14:1-32). The Qiang rituals show similarities with these basic points, which makes it possible to interpret their rituals in the light of Jesus Christ as the "assumption and conversion of leprous humanity and diseased mind". In Mark 1:40-44, as Irenaeus observed, it was Jesus who cleansed the leper, although the man was required to show himself to the priest and to make the sacrifices required for cleansing. In the same way, in the Qiang religious ritual, Je-Dsu is the sin-bearer who will come to make final atonement for sin. The Qiang sacrifices were understood to be provisional, awaiting the coming of the Abba-Malach (Je-Dsu), the messenger of the covenant, who would extend the permanent mercy of God to them.

Other aspects of the Qiang religion, such as the bronze serpent on a pole and the incense signifying the clouds on Mt Sinai relate better to Exodus, but it was particularly the sacrifices and offerings of Leviticus, with the symbolic cleansing of sinful leprous humanity, that the Qiang understood as fulfilled in the gospels in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not possible to state categorically that interaction with the Qiang in his youth and continued support of his father's theories about the Jewish origins of Qiang rituals led Torrance to an understanding of incarnational atonement. In the article, he attributes his full understanding the meaning of the assumption of "leprous human flesh" in the incarnation to H.R. Mackintosh and Karl Barth (Torrance, 2009:442). However, it can be posited that his early exposure to rituals similar to Old Testament rituals and his participation in the preaching of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment and meaning of those rituals could have predisposed him to an understanding of the historicity of the

Jewish faith and its fulfilment in the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah as the fulfilment of the covenant. This understanding of the *missio Dei* as the mission of Israel (as illustrated by the Qiang) and the church (as illustrated by Torrance family mission in China) is presented schematically in Figure 5.1 below:

Figure 5.1 *Israel and the missio Dei*



In Torrance's theological schema, the *missio Dei* is God's purpose to bring humanity into relationship with himself as Trinity through the atoning life and death of his Son. However, the effect of the Fall (Gen 3) is to cut the bond between God and humanity so that continued union or fellowship is impossible unless sin as the root cause of the problem is first dealt with. God's answer to this is to provide a covenanted way of response to his gracious offer to forgive, heal and restore humanity to relationship with himself. The covenant with Israel through Abraham is a covenant of grace that promises that through Abraham, the whole world will be blessed. Israel is the "seed" of Abraham and the inheritor of covenant promises (1). As recipients of the covenanted grace of God, Israel has a responsibility to obey the demands of the covenant (which requires holiness of life) and to proclaim God's gracious acts among the nations.

The missional obligation of Israel's response to its covenant status is realised through YHWH's faithfulness to his covenant by judging Israel's disobedience and scattering ten of the tribes among the nations (2a). There, in exile, the "lost tribes" maintain, to a partial extent, a memory of God's covenanted way of response through their rituals of blood sacrifice for cleansing from sin. In particular, the Qiang peoples were exiled from Israel in order to bear witness to the Chinese of the need for a covenanted way of response to God in order to be brought back to him (2b). Their message was not accepted by the idolatrous Chinese people and so the Qiang were forced to retreat into inaccessible mountain areas where they continued to practice cleansing through blood sacrifice in obedience to the teachings of their ancestors and as a partial witness to the surrounding peoples. They nonetheless maintained the hope of a coming Messiah.

The Qiang (and other lost tribes) remained in exile until, in the fullness of time, the Saviour entered time and space and became incarnate. As God incarnate, Jesus Christ assumed and converted the sinful (leprous) humanity and diseased minds of the human race and provided in himself through his life, death and resurrection, the covenanted way of response (3). He is therefore the fulfilment of the covenant of grace made with Abraham and he himself is the perfect response of humanity to that grace. By faith in him, humanity is drawn into union with God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This is the sphere of *koinónia* that is the church on earth in fellowship with God and with one another (4). Out of the sphere of *koinónia*, however, the *missio Dei* continues to reach out to a lost world. The church as the Israel of God has the same obligation to live in obedience to the Word of God (a life of holiness) and to proclaim the gospel of the Lord to the Jewish and Gentile nations. The *missio Dei* therefore sends the church out in mission to the world (5a) to complete the mission of Christ as the church waits for the second coming of Christ and the full realisation of redemption in eschatological fulfilment (6)

For the Torrance family, the *missio Dei* meant a “call” to take the gospel to China (5b). The Torrances were part of the mission movement to the Gentile world that started when the Apostles moved from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and then to the rest of the known world. However, as they participated through obedience and proclamation in the work of the gospel in China, Torrance Snr encountered the Qiang who he believed were Jewish and had been sent by God to China 2500 years previously as the first missionaries of the Old Testament era. His mission among them was not mission to the Gentiles, but a mission to a lost Jewish tribe from a previous era. He considered it a joy to explain the gospel to them in terms of the New Testament presentation of Jesus Christ as the expected Messiah, and the fulfilment of all God’s covenant promises.

The family mission to a “lost” Jewish tribe was an experience that was shared by Torrance as an adolescent. In a letter to his father in October 1928, just after Torrance Snr had arrived back in the Qiang region from Scotland, Torrance writes, “My soul fills with joy when I think about and meditate on these things [the work among the Qiang]” (Thomas Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 11). When Torrance was able in his retirement years to engage again with the Qiang, it was with the purpose of rebuilding the churches his father had planted, not only in terms of physical facilities but also in terms of the transformation of the minds of the Qiang by the mind of Christ through the reading of the Bible. To this purpose, Torrance expended his energy on facilitating the printing of the Bible in China and building up the theological college in Chengdu to teach and train leaders from the minority tribes.

That Torrance Snr’s historical analysis of the origins and purpose of the Qiang people has been disputed (cf. section 5.3.4) does not alter the union of theology and mission practice in Torrance’s thought. Torrance fought to defend his father’s theory regarding the Qiang and promoted his book by writing the forward to the second edition published by Daniel Shaw (1988, Thomas Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159). In it he claims, “The Chiang (sic) are now Christian”. It is my prayer that they may also be missionaries, bearing witness to Christ the saviour of the world to other tribesmen, Chinese and Tibetans as well” (Torrance, T., 1988:4). In working to resurrect the church among the Qiang, Torrance expected fulfilment of his “call” to take the gospel to Tibet to be realised through them. The ancient missionaries were to become the new missionaries to China. Due to secrecy surrounding the current state of the minority churches in the tribal areas of Sichuan, it is not known if this has already happened (5c).

The encounter of the Torrance family with the Qiang people should therefore be understood as seminal to the development of Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine human communion. The central idea of the "assumption and cleansing of leprous humanity and diseased mind" takes an image from China, processed through the mind of Irenaeus, and builds on it a theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion as the covenanted way of response for Israel and the church through the incarnation. For Torrance, the *missio Dei* is of essence covenantal, both in its interactions with Israel and with the church as the Israel of God awaiting final eschatological redemption and fulfilment as it goes out in mission to Jew and Gentile (6). The strong sense of mission to the Jews, as well as Gentiles, in Torrance's theology seems to be a result of his interaction with the Qiang both in his youth and retirement years. His realist sense of the role of the history of Israel in redemption is bolstered by what the family believed to be proof of the Old Testament *missio Dei* in the religious practices of the Qiang people. This is the strongest and most unifying aspect of the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology and mission practice in China. There are however, other areas in which theology and practice conjoin.

5.7.4. Elimination of Dualism

The elimination of dualism has been seen as a strong motif in Torrance's life and theology. The question of the extent to which Torrance's involvement in mission in China demonstrates the practical and missional nature of divine-human communion is one that Torrance would not ask because for him, all theology must of essence be practical. In Torrance's unified and holistic thought system, there is no dislocation between thought and practice because God has demonstrated his truth once and for all in his involvement in history in the incarnation in space and time of Jesus Christ. This characteristic was noted by Simpson (2011:146), Spiedell (2013:1), Stamps (2007:xv), Banman (2011), Walker (2011) and Gunton (2001:116-117). As a practical theologian, Anderson (2009:52-62) found a resonance with Torrance's theology in terms of the "living theology" of the reality and presence of Christ that led Torrance to pastoral care and concern for the role of Christ in the mission of the church in the world. Deddo (2007:144-147) further explained Torrance's theology of participation in the ministry of Christ as the sphere of *koinónia* in which, through union with Christ, the church participates in Christ's ministry in the world. Kirkpatrick (2009) linked Torrance's theology of divine-human communion with the renewal of the church through Christian education. However, none observed the integral nature of Torrance's theology and interaction with the church in China through mission among the Qiang

people. In addition, none located the Trinitarian centre of Torrance's missional theology in the *missio Dei*. For Torrance, it is the church that is the earthly locus of the practical and missional nature of divine-human communion, so that in Torrance's theology, it is the church and not the world that should be understood of the locus of the *missio Dei*.

To apply an integrated approach to Torrance's theology and mission practice in China is not without challenges for the Western researcher with a tendency to abstraction and compartmentalisation of thought. The sheer number of theses on aspects of Torrance's thought that are completely abstracted from his life and practice is evidence of this (cf. section 2.2.1). Torrance's life and work, however, tends towards holistic and unitary non-Greek thought modes that are more typical of what Nisbett (2004:212) calls "East Asian thought". As a result, attempting to evaluate Torrance's missional and practical theology using a system that requires categorization and logical sequencing is at times counterintuitive to Torrance's own worldview and therefore destined not to find the central core of his theology in his persona.

It is possible that Torrance was exposed to Chinese cognitive style through the early influence of Chinese language acquisition on the development of his thought patterns, although it would take further linguistic research to prove this. Psychologists Michael Bond (1991:20) and Richard Nisbett (2004:205, 212) have observed the tendency towards holistic perception in Chinese cognitive processes, as opposed to a preference for separation of form and content and the use of logic in Western thought. Chinese theologian Alexander Chow (2013:124) shows that the Chinese preference for holism and unity is based on the principle of *Tian Ren Heyi* or unity between heaven and earth that has its roots in shamanism and a desire for social harmony. However, he proposes that this worldview tendency accords well with the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* and Irenaeus' theology of the recapitulation of all things in Christ, communion with God and eschatological hope (Chow, 2013:169). He maintains that elements of this doctrine are found in all types of indigenous Chinese theology.

It is interesting to observe the similarities with Torrance's extensive use of Irenaeus in his theology, his use of the concept of *theosis* and his essentially holistic theology that does not necessarily follow traditional Western patterns of thought. In 1984, when Torrance first visited Chengdu Theological Seminary, the principal Dr Daniel Lee told him that the Chinese were not interested in Western liberalism but that patristic theology, especially the Nicene Creed, had enabled the church to survive the Cultural Revolution (Thomas Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 10). Although it cannot be stated categorically that Torrance's theology was influenced by

the Chinese worldview, the similarity of direction is striking. This would be an area for further research but is currently outside the scope of this thesis.

5.7.5 Transformative Encounter

For Torrance, the starting point for all theological understanding is a transformative encounter with the risen Lord. All encounter with God must be *kata physin*, or in accordance with God's own nature as revealed in his Son. Thus, all divine-human relationship is the result of grace and not human initiative. In terms of mission, this means that the gospel must continue to be proclaimed throughout the world with a sense of urgency because there will be an end to the time in which God's mercy will be extended to the entire world. Like his father before him, Torrance preached the gospel for transformative encounter. This meant that evangelistic preaching, as the proclamation of the gospel was the centre of Torrance's pulpit life. He preached the love of God in the face of Christ and called people to repentance and faith. Torrance always kept the mission of the gospel at heart, both in his pastoral ministry in Scotland and in all his interactions with the Chinese, whether in person or by letter (Thomas Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 160).

The need for the transformation of the mind in accordance with the "mind of Christ" as part of the assumption and conversion of "leprous humanity" was always central to Torrance's mission practice. The stress on theological education was first found in Torrance Snr, who disagreed with standard CIM practice of evangelising without setting up Christian education institutions for the discipling of the Chinese converts. Thomas Torrance Snr was particularly concerned with teaching converts the Word of God and building up the church by training pastors through formal Bible study and theological education. His decision to leave CIM and pursue work for the Bible societies through which he would be able to contribute not only to the evangelism of the Chinese but also to the building up of the church in Sichuan Province showed that his own theology of mission was church centred. This was a lasting legacy that he passed on to his son.

Torrance spent his life in theological education, aiming to transform the roots of Western culture and later, to a limited extent, Chinese culture. When he was able to return to China, he made the building up of the Chengdu Theological Seminary through acquisition of books and Bibles one of his primary concerns. His interactions with Chinese students at the Aba Teachers' College also demonstrated Torrance's strong conviction of the need to transform the Chinese mind through evangelization of worldview. The transformation of the mind through theological education is therefore a major part of Torrance's mission practice. For Torrance, natural theology does not

bring about knowledge of God in Christ, as only the revelation of God through encounter with Christ the Word will allow this. In addition, his system of the stratification of knowledge of God which is rooted in the doxology of the church but extends upwards through a holistic biblical theology of the economic Trinity to an understanding of God in his immanent relations explains his passion for the building up the local church through the teaching of the Word of God and theological reflection. As a result, his engagement in mission in China, including working with theological seminaries and institutions of higher education, should be seen as integral to his theological system.

5.7.6 Weaknesses

A possible problem for the union of theology and mission in China is the weakness of Torrance Snr's theory regarding the Jewish roots of the Qiang. It has been seen that Torrance Snr's contention that they are descendants of Abraham and one of the ten lost tribes of Israel was challenged during his lifetime by the anthropologist David C. Graham (1958), who claimed that Torrance had allowed his zeal for converting the Qiang to cloud his judgement regarding their origins (Thomas Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 120). The debate over the origins of the Qiang and remains a source of contention today (cf. section 5.3.4). Although Christian mission groups, such as Asia Harvest (2015), still hold Torrance Snr's position, anthropologists and Chinese historians in general reject it. However, it is doubtful whether conclusive refutation of Torrance Snr's theory would in any way change Torrance's theology of the missional role of the Old Testament Israelites and the need for mission to the Jews today because it is primarily grounded in the biblical evidence rather than in Qiang history.

It is regrettable that Torrance did not write explicitly about the union of theology and mission but rather allowed mission to "season" his discourse on the three levels of stratification of knowledge. It is perhaps for this reason that Torrance scholarship has largely missed the integral nature of mission in his biblical theology. Torrance never formally crossed the dividing lines between systematic theology, biblical theology and theology of mission (cf. 3.1.2). His work, nonetheless, has much to add to a biblical theology of mission, especially in terms of his understanding of the relationship between covenant (as divine-human communion) and mission. In addition, Torrance did not concern himself with the practicalities of mission theory in the field, such as intercultural studies, interfaith concerns, issues of gender, social justice and the environment. His work has, as a result, been classified as dogmatic theology and his contribution

to the theology of mission has largely been ignored. It is for this reason that Chung (2011:150, 157) criticised Torrance for being too intellectual and having little concern for mission.

For Torrance, the church is the locus of the ongoing mission of Christ to the world and therefore it was the building up of the church among the Qiang that was the focus of his attention in China. His concept of mission is entirely bound up in the *koinónia* of the Spirit as the church of Christ reaching out to the world in proclamation, worship and ethical witness. Although he gives attention to the content of evangelistic proclamation and worship, he pays little attention to the ethical side of mission other than engagement in theological education in order to evangelise the roots of thought. This weakness could leave him open to accusations of dualism between his theology and practice.

Another weakness of Torrance's theological work is his lack of confidence in his own writing style due to an unawareness of the possible influence of Chinese thought patterns on his own worldview. Nonetheless, he understood that the logical and linear writing style that his readers sought after was counterintuitive to his holistic and unitary approach to theology (Torrance, 2001a:xi). Colyer (2001a:18) talks of the "difficulty and obscurity" of Torrance's prose for Western readers. It would have perhaps been helpful for Torrance to acknowledge that his China upbringing not only exposed him to other cultures but also influenced his way of thinking and writing style. This would perhaps have been less frustrating for Western readers. It is unclear how different Torrance reception would be in the Chinese context, but his acceptance by the students at the teachers' college in Aba in Sichuan and at a theological seminary Hong Kong prior to his three visits to the Qiang suggests that he would be well received.

5.7.7 Relevance for Torrance Scholarship

In spite of the possible weaknesses to his integral and practical theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion, Torrance should be seen not only as a dogmatic theologian, but also as a missiologist who untied dogmatics, biblical theology and mission in a Trinitarian understanding of the *missio Dei*. In his lifetime he was sought after as a mission theologian, firstly by the WCC and later by groups involved in mission in China. In 1988, the United Bible Society wrote to Torrance to ask him to participate in a symposium on Bible translation and mission in Princeton USA along with mission theologians Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh and Samuel Escobar. The motivation for asking Torrance to participate speaks of the esteem in which he was held as a theologian of mission.

Your presence is needed to make it a truly worthwhile session. The input of people such as yourself who are teaching missions or doing research in the field...is crucial to the success of the symposium. Only if the participants are people such as yourself who have knowledge of the past and future directions in the church will there be the kind of in depth review that is needed (Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 159).

That the theology and practice of T.F. Torrance was inherently missional and practical was recognised by missiologists during his lifetime. It is therefore important that as Torrance scholarship proceeds in the twenty-first century, the integral nature of mission and theology in his thought and practice is kept at the forefront of Torrance scholarship. His mission involvement in China shows that a failure to do so is a failure to understand Torrance both as a person and a theologian.

In addition, it would be helpful to Torrance scholarship if Chinese theologians were to write the Torrance family mission history and translate Torrance's work in order to investigate more fully Torrance reception in the Chinese context. If indeed Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion has affinity with contextual Chinese theology, then it is an area of research that can only be undertaken from within the Chinese church.

5.7.8. Relevance for the Contemporary Mission of the Church

The practical and missional nature of Torrance's theology of divine-human communion is rooted in the *missio Dei*, which in turn has its outworking in the covenant relations between God and his people as *koinónia*, or fellowship between God and humanity in Christ, through the Spirit in the communion that is the church of Christ. This means that for Torrance, it is the church as the body of Christ in covenant relation with him that is the centre of the mission of God both in terms of reaching out through proclamation and in witness through ethical living. Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion calls the church to revitalise its understanding of covenant in missiology as it is only when mission is seen as flowing out of the covenant relationship fulfilled in Jesus Christ that a unified understanding of theology and mission practice will be reclaimed.

A second issue for the mission of the church is the question of the locus of mission. Torrance's early involvement in the WCC together with Lesslie Newbigin was to bring a Trinitarian missiology to the heart of the WCC in its early stages that later developed into the concept of the *missio Dei*. The debate over the locus of the *missio Dei* as the world or the church as developed by Hoekendijk (1967) in the late sixties was not one that Torrance entered into as he moved out

of the WCC and concentrated on the relationship between science and theology in his concern to evangelise the roots of Western culture. His theology remained resolutely missional and his mission practice remained church centred. Much of ecumenical mission theology since Hoekendijk has, however, made the world the locus of the *missio Dei* thereby threatening to reduce or even eliminate the role of the church in mission. Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion speaks to this dissonance and relocates the *missio Dei* back in the work of God through the body of Christ, the church.

Further, Torrance's insistence on the need to transform the mind through engagement with the Word of God and his understanding of the mission of theological education calls the church to engage in theological education from an integrated mission perspective. Kirk's (1997:3) contention that the mission of theology and the theology of mission are the same is borne out in Torrance's own theology and practice. It calls the church to rethink the dualistic attitudes that separate mission from theology and theology from mission and calls for the blending of biblical theology of mission with mainstream biblical theology and systematic theology.

Torrance's passion for the proclamation of the gospel, the evangelism of the roots of culture, the worship and witness of the local and global church serves to inspire churches throughout the world to put the gospel at the centre of their agenda and to engage as a worshipping community of *koinónia* in the mission of Christ. Torrance's engagement in mission and evangelism in China alone is enough to clear him of any accusations of universalism in his theology. With its centre in the incarnation, Torrance's vision of the missional nature of divine-human communion crosses denominational boundaries for the sake of the gospel. This is a challenge to the church today, even in China where the church remains divided between registered and unregistered churches.

Torrance inherited from his family a Word centred approach to theology and life. Torrance Snr devoted his life to the dissemination of the Bible in Sichuan Province. His son would later be instrumental in ensuring that the Bible would be available for the whole Chinese population. Torrance "indwelt" the Word of God by allowing it to transform his life and thinking. In the same way, the church in mission needs to be Word centred so that both in its proclamation and witness it participates in the *missio Dei* through union with Christ in the *koinónia* of the Spirit.

5.7.9 Conclusion

The purpose of this section has been to evaluate the relationship between Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion and his mission practice in China. It has noted

the relationship between personal biography and Torrance's missional theology, stressing that Torrance's mission engagement in China cannot be thought of in terms of "bookends" but rather as integral to his life. It also observed the elimination of dualism in Torrance's thought so that theology and mission are one. Torrance's experiences with the leper colony in Chengdu commended to him Irenaeus' image of the assumption and conversion of leprous humanity as a picture of the central atoning exchange that is the basis for divine-human communion as *koinónia*. This image brought together the Old Testament *missio Dei* as the sending of the Qiang to China as ancient missionaries and the New Testament *missio Dei* as the sending of the Torrance family to the Qiang. However, the transformative nature of the gospel continues to send the church to preach the gospel not only to the Jews but to all peoples until the *parousia*. The weakness of the Qiang theory was not seen to detract from the biblical theological basis of the concept of the missional nature of the covenant relationship. The union of theology and mission practice was therefore seen to have implications for the mission of the church and Torrance scholarship in general.

5.8 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to evaluate the links between Torrance's theology of the missional nature of the divine-human communion and his mission practice in China. This was seen to be a historical task, which would involve the conjunction of mission history and systematic theology through the concept of the *missio Dei*. In order to reduce the danger of inaccurate records and autobiographical bias, the research was triangulated through establishing the historical context and using the CMS archive as two points of verification. Nonetheless, the interim nature of historical research was acknowledged, bearing in mind the possibility that further evidence could come to light later. In addition, it was admitted that the sources for the mission history of the Torrance family are mostly Western as the history of the Torrance family work among the Qiang has not yet been written from the Chinese perspective.

Torrance Snr and his wife Annie were in a sense, a product of their age but they both had exceptional qualities that marked them out as different from other missionaries of the time. Thomas Snr was a zealous and devoted evangelist, whose drive and passion led him to bring his children up as evangelists and to include the young T.F. Torrance in the evangelism of the Qiang. This made an indelible impression on his son and formed in him a sense of call to mission in China, which remained with him throughout his life. At the same time, Annie was a deeply spiritual woman with depth of theological insight, which she imparted to her children. T.F.

Torrance's theological outlook, although refined and developed over his theological years, was initially planted by his mother. The combination of Torrance's boyhood experiences in China together with the influence of his family produced in Torrance a unitary Trinitarian theology that was Word centred and mission oriented.

It was particularly Torrance's interaction with Hugh Ross Mackintosh at New College in Edinburgh that enabled him to understand the missional nature of theology that he refined and developed through his theological years. This has been examined in this thesis as the missional nature of divine-human communion, but there are equally missional aspects to his scientific theology, such as his theology of light, which have not come under the scrutiny of this research. Throughout the professional years in which he was not involved in mission in China, Torrance developed a theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion that was of essence missional and practical in that it was rooted in the history of Israel and the incarnation as God's covenant engagement with the world. He saw scientific theology and his involvement with the intersection between theology and science as part of his call to evangelise the roots of Western culture. At the same time, he was involved in the theology of ecumenical relations as part of the engagement of the church in world mission. Throughout his career, he was concerned with the involvement of the Church of Scotland in worldwide mission.

In Torrance's later years, his theology of mission as the mission of the church in practice came together with new opportunities for mission in China. Torrance pioneered the reevangelization of the Qiang people and his efforts to place Bibles in their hands resulted in the dissemination of the Bible throughout China as part of the "resurrection" of the Chinese church. However, the Torrance family engagement with the Qiang also evinced in him an understanding of the mission of the Jews in antiquity as well as a sense of the mission of the Jews as the mission of the church in the present. This led to a strong sense of the need for dialogue with the Jewish faith as part of ongoing mission to the Jews.

This chapter has therefore sought to establish the practical and missional nature of Torrance's theology through the Trinitarian concept of the *missio Dei*. It has been seen as so integral to his person and theology, that any attempt to evaluate Torrance's work without taking into account his engagement in mission would miss the whole purpose and flow of his Trinitarian theology. The Torrance family mission engagement with the Qiang gave to T.F. Torrance a deep sense of the *missio Dei* as the purpose of the covenant history of Israel fulfilled in Christ through the inclusion of the Gentiles in the *koinónia* of the Spirit as the church of Christ. This is achieved through the

“assumption and conversion of leprous humanity and diseased mind” in the incarnation. It is therefore the task of the church to participate in the mission of Christ by making disciples through theological education and expanding the church through proclamation and witness.

To date, secondary sources have only skirted around the missional nature of Torrance’s theology rather than considering the integral nature of mission in all Torrance’s theological thought, including his theology of divine-human communion. The biblical basis for the missional nature of divine-human communion examined in Chapter 3 suggested that there were missional outcomes to union with God in Christ. These have seen to be at play both in Torrance’s written theology and in the practical involvement with the church as the body of Christ both at home in Scotland and abroad in China. Torrance’s holistic theology has implications both for the future of Torrance scholarship and the mission of the church.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 Preliminary Considerations

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between Torrance's theology of divine-human communion and his mission practice in China. It asked firstly whether there is a clear link between divine-human communion and mission in Torrance's theology and secondly, whether Torrance's mission engagement in China demonstrated the practical and missional outcomes of his theology. It had, therefore, a dual purpose that was both theological and practical, relating both to dogmatics and the discipline of the history of mission. However, in spite of the dual research areas, it was found that there was no sense of dualism between Torrance's theology and mission practice. Torrance's engagement in mission in China was seen to emanate from his understanding of the missional nature of divine-human communion as the involvement of the church in God's mission to establish a covenant relationship with his people through the incarnate life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Torrance's theology of divine-human communion and his mission practice in China were therefore seen to form a unified whole.

The first chapter noted that there has been much scholarship over the last twenty years that has concentrated on aspects of Torrance's scientific theology in a way that is abstracted from his life and mission involvement. It observed that Torrance's biographer, Alister McGrath (1999), warned that there was a danger that Torrance scholarship might concentrate on the intellectual aspects of Torrance's work to the detriment of his personal biography. Colyer (2001a), Hesselink (1984), Ziegler (2008) and Habets (2013) also raised the need to root Torrance scholarship in his mission biography but unfortunately, to date, this has not been done in a systematic and rigorous manner. It has been the aim of this research to begin the process by consideration of one aspect of Torrance's theology in the light of his mission biography. The purpose was to situate Torrance's theology of the divine-human relationship more holistically within his persona by considering its possible outcomes in his mission involvement in China which Colyer (2001a:51) had described as "bookends" to Torrance's life.

6.2 Scholarship

In the light of the fact that no extended research has been undertaken into the relationship between Torrance's theology and his practice of mission, the review of the literature in Chapter 2

was undertaken by looking at authors whose work suggested or pointed to missional outcomes in Torrance's theology of divine-human communion. The three most useful contributions were seen to be Molnar's (2009) evaluation of the Trinitarian centre of Torrance's work, Colyer's (2001a; 2001b) understanding of the practical nature of Torrance's theology and Lee's (2003) work on Torrance's treatment of union with Christ. In addition, practical theologians such as Deddo (2007) and Anderson (2009) brought a pastoral approach to Torrance's theology although they did not investigate possible missional outcomes. Researchers using Torrance's theology as a basis for fieldwork saw the link between divine-human communion and Christian education as a link between his theology and practice (Fredrickson, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2009).

The review of the literature highlighted areas of Torrance's theology in which the missional nature of divine-human communion might be investigated. The area of first importance was the Trinitarian nature of Torrance's theology with its onto-relational framework. In Torrance's theological system, it was noted that epistemology and ontology unfold together. Thus, revelation and reconciliation are two sides of the same coin. This, it was suggested, gives a soteriological and evangelistic basis to all Torrance's theology and especially to his Christology. In addition, Torrance's realist understanding of the nature of the history of Israel as the "womb" of the incarnation (Colyer, 2001a) led him to a perception of the covenant as a tool of mission. This indicated that the research might explore Torrance's use of the covenant as the basis for his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion.

In addition, Lee (2003:197-199) showed that Torrance's Trinitarian theology produced a concept of union with Christ under the categories of *prothesis* (election), *mysterion* (mystery) and *koinónia* (fellowship). Hart (2008), Habets (2009) and Molnar (2009) further showed that Torrance explains union with Christ through the concept of *theosis* which, when combined with Torrance's understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in raising humanity up to God in Christ, has a soteriological function in and of itself. The link between resurrection, ascension and faith and the role of the sacraments in maintaining this was further seen to have implications for the missional nature of Torrance's theology of divine-human communion, as was his concept of the "eschatological pause" between the resurrection and *eschaton* as a time for the church to engage in mission. Eschatology therefore pointed to the role of the church in mission as highly significant in Torrance's theology.

The area of second importance was derived from Torrance's rejection of dualism between theology and practice through his understanding of the incarnation as God entering time-space in

the person of his Son. Colyer (2001a, 2001b) noted that Torrance's theology is always undergirded by holism which is centred in the *homoousion* as the unifying principle. Molnar (2003:162) observed that for Torrance, the resolution of dualism in Christology is through his theology of union and communion. There is always a convergence between faith and reality in Torrance's theology that suggested that there should be practical missional outcomes to Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion. Torrance's unitary centre in the *homoousion* was also seen to lead him away from natural theology *per se* as a medium of revelation. Torrance rejected outright the concept of natural theology as a "bridge to God", something which it was suggested would have consequences for the way Torrance engaged in mission to peoples of other faith. The practical outcomes of the elimination of dualism were again seen to have implications for the mission of theology as theological education through the conjunction of theology and praxis (Shults, 1991; Martin, 1995; Prasad, 2005).

The third area of significance was derived from biographical and autobiographical comments about Torrance's personal life and practice. It was remarked that there is a constancy of "missionary zeal" throughout Torrance's life history that has been observed by students, colleagues and family alike. In his life, as well as in his theology, Torrance was convinced that theology is of essence practical, something that had been observed particularly in his pastoral life in Scotland (Gunton, 2001; Anderson, 2009). The essence of mission for Torrance was seen to be the mission of the church as *koinónia* in the Spirit with both vertical and horizontal directions. Colyer (2003:161) stressed that Torrance's theology should never be seen as abstracted from the church. It was particularly in the sacraments that the missional activity of the church was most prominent.

Criticisms of Torrance's theological method included accusations of occasionalism, reductionism and the collapsing of God's Being into his revelation. It was felt that there may be an over emphasis on the cognitive to the neglect of the mystical, leading Torrance's theology into the kind of dualism that he so vehemently rejected. This threatened to separate the Christ-event from knowledge of God, which further laid Torrance open to accusations of universalism and failure to preach for "acceptance" of the gospel by faith. Ultimately, however, the review of the literature suggested that there was sufficient consensus regarding the participative and doxological nature of Torrance's theology and biography to proceed with the evaluation of the missional nature of divine-human communion in Torrance's theology and mission practice in China.

6.3 The Biblical Framework

In order to answer the criticisms levelled against Torrance, the third chapter sought to establish the biblical basis for the missional nature of divine-human communion in order to elicit a framework for the evaluation of Torrance's theology. It was found to be necessary to evaluate recent historical developments in dogmatics, biblical theology and theology of mission in order to show the historical separation between the disciplines. As the basic premise regarding Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion is the unity of dogmatics, biblical theology and theology of mission in both the cognitive and practical spheres, a new methodological approach needed to be found. Torrance's theory of the stratification of knowledge provided such a framework, allowing the biblical basis to proceed from exegesis to themes from biblical theology and then to suggestions for dogmatics.

The exegetical studies of the Old Testament covered the call of Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 and the prelude to the Sinai covenant in Exod 19:3-8. The two texts were chosen because of their pivotal importance in the history of Israel. This was seen firstly in terms of the establishment of the covenant with Abraham and the promised extension of the blessing of Abraham to the world and secondly in terms of the furtherance of the covenant with the nation of Israel at Sinai and Israel's subsequent role in bearing the message of that covenant blessing through its role as a "priestly kingdom". Israel was to provide a model of *torah* ethics to the world as they lived out covenant obedience. *Torah* itself was both proclamation of the will of God and holy living, both of which had a missional role among the nations.

In the New Testament, 1 Pet 2:4-12 was selected for its interpretation of Exod 19:3-8 in the light of Christ, thus creating a link between the testaments. Those who believe the testimony of the Word of God enter into covenant relationship with Christ, the living stone and receive the blessings of living in relationship with him. As they live in fellowship with him, they bear witness to his grace through proclamation of the gospel and living lives of praise and holiness. The missional nature of divine-human communion had both verbal and practical outcomes. Again in 1 John 1:1-7, the missional nature of divine human communion was seen to involve both proclamation and holy living. Proclamation of the gospel is bearing witness to the historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those who receive it as the "Word of life" enter into fellowship (*koinónia*) with God and with one another and receive the blessing of joy that is made possible through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. The missional outcomes to living in *koinónia* as covenant relationship were to proclaim Christ's atoning sacrifice as sufficient for the world and

to walk ethically “in the light” through cleansing by the blood. From the passages, themes for biblical theology were elicited. They included themes relating to: divine-human relationship, divine initiative, word and act, faith and obedience, blessing and curse and mission. From these further areas of investigation for dogmatics were suggested including Trinity, incarnation and atonement, election and grace, covenant, ecclesiology and missiology. The purpose was to evaluate Torrance’s theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion using these categories in order to ascertain the validity of his approach.

6.4 Findings

The research focused on Torrance’s theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion in Chapter 4 and on Torrance’s historical engagement in mission in China in Chapter 5. The purpose was to find links between his biography (which included the biography of his immediate family) as mission practice in China and his theology. The biographical work initially traced the influence of Torrance’s parents and their mission engagement in Sichuan Province in the early twentieth century before taking up the history of Torrance’s own role in mission in China at the end of the twentieth century. The work was seen to be a task in relating dogmatics and mission history. The findings refer to the areas of conjuncture between theology and practice.

6.4.1 Holism of Torrance’s Theology

The review of the literature suggested that there was a case for research into the conjuncture between dogmatics and mission in Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion precisely because his entire theological output is holistic and integrative. Colyer (2001a:25; 28) proposed that there is an “architectonic holism” throughout Torrance’s thought which allows no dualism, in spite of claims by some scholars that Torrance inadvertently allows dualistic thought to cloud his judgement at times (cf. Morrison, 1995). However, this research found, together with Molnar (2009), Cass (2008), Eugenio (2011) and Habets (2013) that the integrative focus of Torrance’s theology is the Trinity, centred in the *homoousial* relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is brought into focus by the incarnation, which acts as an axis intersecting space and time to give a three dimensional depth-perspective to Torrance’s theology of divine-human communion.

The holism of Torrance’s theology means that it is circular in its argument, moving from the Trinity to the world and from the world to the Trinity through its centre in the incarnation. God can only be known as he is in himself (*kata physin*) and so, through the *homoousion*, Christ is

both the revelation of God and the reconciliation between God and his world. He is therefore both the subject and object of revelation and reconciliation. The importance of this conjuncture cannot be understated because it gives soteriological import to Torrance's Christology. The incarnation thus becomes the basis on which theology and practice, faith and mission are integrated. To know God is to be reconciled to him and lifted up into his inner Being in a movement of grace that has divine-human communion as *koinónia* as its goal.

Torrance's holistic vision runs counter to the worldview of the Western world that tends towards fragmentation and abstraction of thought. Chapter 3 evaluated trends in biblical theology and dogmatics, which have separated historical-critical exegesis from biblical theology, biblical theology from dogmatics and dogmatics from biblical theology of mission. In Torrance's system, all theological disciplines are part of the same movement from God and to God, in Christ. Chapter 5 suggested that Torrance's early interaction with Chinese language and culture enabled him to entertain a more unified approach to theology and practice, such as might be more typical of Chinese worldview. It was suggested that Torrance's childhood experience of mission in China might have opened him up to a more holistic approach to theology, thereby tracing the roots of the conjuncture between theology and mission to his biography. This suggests that it is at the level of worldview that Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion finds its source.

This unitary view of the relationship between theology and mission practice was typical of the Early Church Fathers and the Nicene theology of Athanasius. For Torrance, the theologians of the ecumenical councils, particularly Nicaea, had a missional purpose in determining and stating in creedal form the human and divine natures of Christ. If there is a unity of purpose between dogmatics and mission in the Nicene Creed, then for Torrance, there is a unity of purpose between dogmatics and the mission of the church. The integrative nature of Nicene theology also resonates well with the Chinese worldview. It was noted that when Torrance visited the theological seminary in Chengdu in 1984 he was greatly encouraged by their appropriation of Nicene theology and the statement by the principal, Professor Lee, that it was Nicene theology that kept the Chinese church alive during the Cultural Revolution. In other words, there is a full integration of dogmatics and mission practice in the mission history of Torrance's visits to Sichuan Province in his retirement years.

6.4.2 Divine-Human Communion is Governed by the *Missio Dei*

The incarnation links the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity through the *missio Dei*. The ontological Trinity is the sphere of the eternal communion of love through the mutual inherence of the persons of the Trinity in perichoretic relationship with one another. However, in the eternal divine will (*prothesis*), God purposed that his creatures should be in relationship with him, within the Trinitarian sphere of his interpersonal relations. This is made possible in the outpouring of love of the economic Trinity to the fallen world through the sending of the Son as the personification of eternal will of the Father. The economic Trinity is the expression of mystery of Christ (*mysterion*), hidden under the old covenant, but revealed in the incarnation and realised in the atonement as new covenant. All this is put into effect by the Holy Spirit who makes possible the *theosis* of humanity through union with Christ and by virtue of the *homoousion*, into communion with the Trinity. The sphere of relationship between God and humanity, the sphere of divine-human communion, is the sphere of the New Testament concept of *koinónia* as the vertical and horizontal fellowship of the church. Entry into *koinónia* is therefore the goal and purpose of the *missio Dei*, ensuring that the unity of the ontological and economic Trinity has soteriological implications. There is as a result, an exclusivity to Torrance's theology of divine-human communion as *missio Dei*, which leads him to reject all forms of Theism, Unitarianism, polytheism and inclusivity in favour of the uniqueness of Christ for salvation.

Torrance was seen to have been a leader, together with Lesslie Newbigin, in the early formulation of the concept of the *missio Dei* for the first General Assembly of the WCC (Amsterdam, 1948). His contributions to *The nature and mission of the church* set the stage for further developments in the Trinitarian theology of mission, although *missio Dei* was later, under the influence of Hoekendijk, to move its centre from the church to the world. Torrance's theology, however, remained resolutely church centred as a result of his understanding of the role of the covenant in cementing divine-human communion as union with Christ its head, who sends the church out to participate in his mission to the world. It was shown that in his lifetime, Torrance was sought after as a theologian of mission and shared a platform with mission historians and theologians such as Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh and Samuel Escobar. It is regrettable that posthumous research to date has not followed the missional foundation of Torrance's dogmatics.

6.4.3 Divine-Human Communion is Cemented by the Covenant of Grace

Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion is concretised in human history by means of the covenant. Torrance uses the covenant as a "metanarrative" running throughout his theology of divine-human communion. Rejecting the basic tenants of Federal Theology, he eschews the concept of the covenant of redemption in favour of one covenant of grace as the eternal will of the Father realised in the election or the "setting forth" of the Son, which stretches from creation to new creation. The role of Israel in covenant relationship with YHWH is to act as precursor to the coming of Christ, the fulfilment of the covenant. Israel bears in herself the pain of failure to keep the covenant. God, in his faithfulness, keeps covenant with Israel by enacting the blessings of obedience and as time progresses, by enacting the curses of disobedience. This continues until, in the fullness of time, the Christ is made incarnate. The historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, is both the fulfilment of the covenant from the side of God and from the side of humanity. God therefore provides in his Son the covenanted way of response so that in union with Christ and by faith in Him, both Israel and the rest of the world can live in a restored relationship of *koinónia* with him.

The church is the Israel of God in covenant relationship with him through Jesus Christ. Entry into covenant relationship with God and the fellowship of the church (as *koinónia*) is through the proclamation of the *kerygma* as Jesus Christ, the Word of God, made flesh. The proclamation of the Word requires a response of faith on the part of the hearer but for Torrance, even the response of faith is the gracious gift of God through Jesus Christ. The church lives in the world by the faith of the Son of God who loved it and gave himself for it (Gal 2:20). This gives to Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion a centre in the grace of God as the divine initiative in providing in Christ a covenanted response of faith and obedience and requiring of humanity a response of repentance (*metanoia*) as a response to grace.

In Torrance's system, the *anhypostasia* and the *enhypostasia* have soteriological import within the covenant by means of the *hilasmos*. Through his self-offering, Christ as fully divine and fully human, made atonement for the sin of the world and by the power of the resurrection, fulfilled the eternal covenant will of God. This was seen to have both incarnational and forensic implications. All the promises and demands of the covenant are met in the once for all offering of the Son. This brings together both the universality of the gospel in that Christ died for all, and the particularity of the gospel in that participation in the covenant blessings of God requires a human response. Thus for Torrance, the concept of limited atonement is not possible. The atoning exchange in

which Christ condescended to become human and take on himself the depths of rebellious humanity in order to lift humanity up into communion with God, was sufficient for the sins of the whole world. It is this that thrusts Torrance's theology out in mission and evangelism, calling the world to respond to the love of God in his Son.

The sacrament of baptism marks the point of entry into covenant relationship through the washing away of sin as a sign of union with Christ and participation in the communion of the Trinity in the church. However, as the church lives in the world, it waits in expectant hope for the second coming of Christ when all things will be renewed in him. The sacrament of the Eucharist both looks back by faith to the shedding of the blood of the atonement and looks forward in joyful anticipation to the second coming and the fulfilment of the reign of Christ. The period between the first and second comings marks the "eschatological pause" in which the church goes out into the world in mission and calls humanity to enter by faith into the covenant relationship that God has provided through his Son.

6.4.4 *Koinónia* is the Sphere of the Effective Operation of Word and Spirit

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is crucial for Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion because the Spirit is the mode of application of the atonement and therefore the mode of its efficacy. As the Spirit inheres in the Word, he does not operate independently but holds the church in the concrete salvific historical reality of the incarnation of Jesus Christ through the *homoousion*. In Torrance's theology, this is not an experience of sentimentality but an objective means of subjective appropriation with transformative effect. The work of the Holy Spirit is therefore essential for the full Trinitarian realisation of the vertical dimension of *koinónia* as the lifting up of the church in fellowship with the Trinity as *theosis*. The church is thus the community of the resurrection and is maintained in covenant relationship with the Father, in and through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the church exists in horizontal fellowship with one another as the sphere of the love of God in Christ expressed through the Holy Spirit.

In situating the effective operation of Word and Spirit in *koinónia*, Torrance gives the *missio Dei* a locus in the church, thereby uniting pneumatology, ecclesiology and missiology. The *koinónia* put into effect by Spirit sends the church out in the love of God to complete the mission of Jesus Christ to reconcile the whole world to God. It is a mission that is built on the foundation of the apostles as the apostolic ministry acts as "hinges" that open up the vertical *koinónia* to the

horizontal *koinónia*. It is the Word of Christ relayed by the apostles that invites the world into *koinónia* and it is the Spirit of Christ that holds the community of believers in union with God and communion with one another. This means that for Torrance, ecclesiology and missiology must operate together because there is no church without mission as proclamation of the gospel and no proclamation of the gospel without the church. This can be seen very clearly in Torrance's church based mission practice, both in China and in his involvement in the Church of Scotland.

The Spirit gives *koinónia* a corporate nature in the church but at the same time, an individual nature in calling people into a personal communion with God in Christ. The corporate nature of the church leads Torrance into a sense of the catholicity of the universal church in the Spirit and in mission, driving him out in search of ecumenical unity in mission. At the same time, the Spirit infuses into the church the holiness of God in Christ, calling it to mission as witness and holy living. All this is held in eschatological perspective as *koinónia* waits for fulfilment as the horizontal communion in the world stretches out into the coming age through its vertical communion with the risen and ascended Christ.

6.4.5 There are Practical and Missional Outcomes to Divine-Human Communion as Covenant

The missional nature of divine-human communion has practical outcomes in biblical theology. Torrance focuses mainly on the Sinai covenant and the role of Israel as a "royal priesthood" in the world. As God's chosen nation in covenant relationship with him, Israel is to bear witness to the holiness of YHWH in a world that has rejected him. In agreeing to the terms of the covenant, Israel is custodian of the *torah* that it proclaims among the nations through its liturgical practices and lives out in its ethics as witness YHWH's holy requirements. The Levitical feasts and sacrificial system bear witness to the need of blood sacrifice to make atonement for the sins of the world. However, Israel's failure to keep the demands of the covenant as *torah* or to bear witness to YHWH's ethical standards among the nations sends them through the covenant faithfulness of YHWH as judgement, into suffering and exile.

Israel therefore utterly fails in its task of bearing witness to the righteous requirements of YHWH among the nations. In the eternal plan of God, another was needed who in himself would fulfil the covenant and provide a way of response to God's righteous demands. God sent his Son who entered the world as a human and from his life until his death, bore in himself all the failure and rejection of humanity, transformed it in his own flesh and raised it into fellowship with God as the church of Christ, his own body and the temple of the Holy Spirit. As the head of the church,

Christ sends his people out to continue his mission to the world. They go out to proclaim the gospel of Christ incarnate, saviour of the world, and call the world to respond. At the same time, they bear witness to the love of Christ in their lives by growing in holiness and allowing their minds to be transformed in accordance with the mind of Christ as revealed in his Word. As church, they participate in the sacraments to witness to their entry into union with him as covenant relationship and as proclamation of the vicarious life and death of Christ in the symbols of his body and blood.

The practical implementation of this biblical theology of the missional role of Israel and the church is first seen in practice in Torrance Snr's interaction with the Qiang peoples of the upper Min valley in Sichuan Province of Western China, in which T.F. Torrance participated in his early teenage years. Believing the Qiang to be Israelite descendants of Abraham through Jacob, Torrance Snr devoted his life to evangelism and anthropological research among them. In the process, he developed a theology of the missional role of the "lost tribes" of Israel. In the case of the Qiang, their emphasis on holiness and the need of blood sacrifice for cleansing and continued relationship with the deity, as well as their expectation of a "sin bearer" who was to come, convinced him that they were God's first missionaries to the Chinese people. Torrance Snr saw himself in turn as God's missionary to the Qiang.

T.F. Torrance maintained his father's conviction of the Israelite origins of the Qiang and of the role of the "Ancient Israelites" in bearing witness to the world of holiness of YHWH and of the need for a "sin bearer". In the same way that Israel was to be a "royal priesthood" bearing witness to the world, so the people of God as the church of Jesus Christ in covenant relationship with him are to bear witness to the world as a "royal priesthood" through proclamation and ethical living. However, God has not rejected the Jews. Although they rejected his Son, the covenant purposes of God have not been annulled. It is now the role of the Christian church to engage in mission to the Jews. The Torrance family believed that their mission work among the Qiang was exactly that, especially as the Qiang priests saw in Jesus Christ the fulfilment of their Levitical religious practices. As a result, the Torrance family retained a sense of mission to the Jews and T.F. Torrance developed a theology of the continued missional role of the Jews in the world.

Torrance did not only have an interest in mission to Jews, however. His whole life and biography was saturated with his conviction of the mission of the church as participation in the mission of Christ. On a personal level, from his teenage years in China, he felt "called" to mission among the Qiang and the Tibetan people of Sichuan. Although he was not able to engage in mission in China

for political reasons during his academic years, his passion for mission never left him. He undertook the task of evangelizing the roots of Western culture through theological and scientific research and engagement in higher education as theological education. In addition, he maintained his interest in mission in China through assisting with the China Records Project and then, as soon as China had “opened up”, by going back to Chengdu and to the Qiang to rebuild the church and ensure that the Christians were able to be transformed through reading the Bible. His involvement in the establishment of the Amity Bible Press in Nanjing would ensure the availability of Bibles throughout China, thus assisting the “resurrection” of the Chinese church.

In addition, Torrance engaged in mission in whatever he did. As a parish minister, he preached the gospel of the vicarious incarnation of Christ, calling people to a response of faith. This passion for preaching the gospel was undoubtedly the heritage of his family background but he brought to it a fresher and more vivid image of incarnational atonement and assurance of salvation through the whole life and work of Christ. As an academic, he engaged in theological education as mission, seeking to impress on his students the need firstly for a personal response of faith to the gospel and then the need to indwell the Word of God in order to transform their minds after the mind of Christ. At the same time, in his theological research, the missional nature of the covenant relationship in which the church exists in Christ permeated his thought. For Torrance, the missional nature of divine-human communion was a living reality.

6.4.6 There is a Unity of Theology and Mission

Ultimately, the unity of theology and mission was seen to be rooted in the Torrance family mission in China. Irenaeus’ image of Jesus’ assumption and conversion of leprous humanity brought the reality of the incarnation home to Torrance in terms of his childhood memories of a leper colony in Chengdu. It reminded him that the covenant of grace with Israel resulted in the dispersion of the ten northern tribes throughout the world, bearing witness even in their apostasy, to the righteous demands of the covenant keeping God. In the process of this dispersion, the Qiang arrived in China as China’s first missionaries. In time, God sent his Son as the fulfilment of the covenant of grace. By his incarnate life, death and resurrection he assumed and converted leprous human flesh, creating the church as a people in union with him. As his holy people, the church bears witness to the world through proclamation of the gospel and holy living and Christ sends the church into the world to complete his mission. In due course, the Torrance family was sent to the Qiang to give them the good news that the sin- bearer who they were waiting for had come.

Torrance Snr's work among the Qiang was disrupted by his retirement and then the armies of the CCP on their Long March in 1935. Although the Qiang churches were destroyed and some of the Christians were killed, a buried Bible was dug up and sent to the Torrance family as a symbol of the resurrection of the church among the Qiang. The unity of theology and mission practice meant that Torrance returned to China in his retirement in order to realise his call to the Chinese church and to complete the work that his father started. Thus, mission is not seen to be "book ends" to Torrance's life but integral to his theological system.

6.5 Strengths and Weaknesses of Torrance's Theology of the Missional Nature of Divine-Human Communion

It is regrettable that Torrance never wrote explicitly about the union of theology and mission but rather allowed it to season his discourse on the three levels of stratification of knowledge. Nonetheless, his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion is strengthened by its relationship with his theory of the threefold stratification of knowledge because it allows for the conjuncture of theology and mission (as practice) through the *homooousion* with outcomes for the *missio Dei* on all three levels of knowing.

Table 6:1 *The stratification of knowledge and the missio Dei*

Level	Conjuncture	Means	Outcome
Three Ontology 	Ontological & Economic Trinity	<i>Homooousion</i>	<i>missio Dei</i> 
Two Biblical Theology 	Incarnation (revelation) & Atonement (reconciliation)	<i>Homooousion</i>	<i>missio Dei</i> 
One Doxology 	<i>Koinónia</i> (divine- human communion) & mission of Christ	<i>Homooousion</i>	<i>missio Dei</i> 

As with all Torrance's work, this model allows for a circular movement from the first doxological level in the church, through the biblical theological level to knowledge of God on the ontological level and back to the church through the missional outcomes of all three levels of knowing. On the first level, the church lives in union with Christ (as divine-human communion) and communion with one another through the *koinónia* of the Spirit. As the redeemed people of God, the church engages in worship as praise and proclamation of the gospel as it transforms its life by indwelling the Word and being transformed after the mind of Christ. This gives Torrance's

theology roots in the practical mission of the church as the extension of the mission of Christ to the world through proclamation and ethical living.

On the second level of knowing, the church becomes aware of the biblical theological basis for its participation in the mission of Christ in the world. This is knowledge of the nature of divine-human communion as one covenant of grace enacted in the history of Israel and realised in the incarnation, death and resurrection of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, as incarnational atonement. The church understands that its life in union with Christ is participation in one progressive movement of grace from the Fall through the history of Israel to its fulfilment in Jesus Christ to be fully realised in the *eschaton*. It understands that the missional role of Israel as a priestly kingdom under the old covenant has now passed to the church of Jesus Christ.

As the church lives in union with Christ, it understands that because of the *homoousion* it exists in covenantal relationship with the Trinity. On the third ontological level, this is made possible through the conjuncture of the ontological and economic Trinity through the *missio Dei*. The perichoretic, intertrinitarian and *homoousial* relationship of love that is the ontological Trinity, reaches out to the world in one movement of grace through the economic Trinity by means of the incarnation and atonement. In the power of the Spirit, the church is drawn by faith into participation (*koinónia*) in the faithfulness of Christ and responds in praise, proclamation and obedience. These responses have missional functions in terms of the vertical dimension (as invitation to the world into communion with the Trinity) and horizontal dimension (as invitation to the world into the communion of the body of Christ, the church). Thus by means of the *homoousion*, the *missio Dei* is enacted on all three levels.

This gives to Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion a strong biblical basis. The exegetical and biblical theological work done in Chapter 3 suggested that there was a Trinitarian and covenantal basis for the missional nature of divine-human communion. The establishment of relationship was seen to be dependent on the divine initiative of grace and involved a response to the Word of God as belief (faith) and obedience. The blessings of communion with God flowed out of the obedience of faith in Jesus Christ, the faithful One. The converse was unbelief, disobedience and judgement. All these aspects were seen to be present in Torrance's theology, although within the literature he was accused of ignoring judgement. However, this was not found to be true of the entire corpus as Torrance does, at times, deal with judgement as a motivation for mission.

Throughout Torrance's biblical theology, mission is integral to the covenant, both in the mission of Israel and in the mission of the church. Torrance's realist understanding of the missional nature of the covenant with Israel was further borne out in practice by the perception that the Qiang people of Western China, among whom his father worked as a missionary, were ancient Israelite missionaries sent by God to proclaim the need for atonement among the pagan Chinese. This brought to Torrance's concept of mission a sense of the integral relationship between covenant and mission through the history of Israel and a passion for mission to the Jews. At the same time, however, he believed that the role of Israel in mission continued into the New Testament era through the continuation of its Old Testament role as suffering servant by the prolonging of the atonement into their history until they come to accept Christ. This was seen to be a weakness in his biblical theology in that he tends to consider only the Sinaitic covenant and its implications without much evaluation of the Davidic kingdom or the latter prophets and the exile. As a result, he does not build a theology of the faithful remnant, which would lead to the conclusion that the atonement is complete in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the response of faith by the faithful few Jewish believers builds a theology of the remnant of Israel who are saved, until the time of the Gentiles is complete and all Israel is saved (Ferreira, 2015:158).

Torrance's theology of the mission of the Jews is at the same time both the greatest strength and weakness of his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion. His calling to proclaim the gospel and assist in the building up of the church among the Qiang led him to continue his father's mission work in the distribution of the Bible and the preaching of the gospel among the Qiang. It led him to a realist sense of the missional role of Israel in history. However, the practical work among the Qiang was based on a disputed theory of the origins of the Qiang, which opens it to interpretation as a weakness. If Torrance had built a stronger biblical theology of the missional role of the Israelites in exile, he would have been able to counter the possible weakness of the Qiang history through the biblical history.

In terms of dogmatics, the biblical theological themes led to considerations firstly of the doctrine of the Trinity. A question was raised as to whether Torrance does sufficient biblical theological work to justify his position on the missional nature of divine-human communion or whether he uses his unitary Trinitarian theology as an overarching hermeneutical framework that guides his thought. It was concluded that Torrance may, in fact, tend to jump too easily to Christological conclusions in his biblical theology as he is guided by his overarching Trinitarian framework. Once again, this could have been corrected through a stronger biblical theology of the Davidic kingship and exile. In addition, Torrance's enthusiasm for incarnational atonement and

comparative neglect of the forensic aspects has led to accusations of Barthian “Christomonism”, which could have been countered by a more fully developed theology of the forensic nature of the atonement and the cross.

In terms of the doctrine of election and reprobation, Torrance holds a Barthian position on Jesus Christ as the elected and electing one. However, while for Barth all are elect in Christ, for Torrance there are those who are reprobate precisely because they choose to remain outside the covenant relationship and so under curse. They persist in unbelief and reject the offer of Christ to enter into covenant relationship with God through the blood of the atonement. This was seen to match the biblical concept of the rejection of Christ the cornerstone in 1 Pet 2:6-8. This gives to Torrance’s theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion an eschatological motivation for mission as the preaching of the gospel for the avoidance of the coming judgement, which strengthens his position in relationship to Barth because it avoids the appearance of universalism that Barth’s theology of universal election appears to imply.

A possible area of weakness was highlighted in in Torrance’s attempts to use the doctrine of the sacraments as the basis for intercommunion because his work was seen to lack the benefit of practical experience of implementation in mission contexts. Torrance did not engage in practical intercultural mission for the entire period of his academic and pastoral career, so although he was writing missional theology, some of his attempts to build a case for intercommunion on the mission field did not bear the experience of practical mission and so were criticised by missionaries. In addition, those who point out the lack of practical mission advice in Torrance’s theology are correct in that there is very little that one could point to as “practical mission advice” within his work. His years in theological education meant that he was not engaged personally in intercultural mission practice during his academic career. In addition, although Torrance acknowledges the need for the church to engage in witness to the world through personal transformation, it has to be acknowledged that his theology stresses mission as proclamation of the gospel rather than as social conscience or ethical living. This does not negate, however, his attention to aspects of the ministry of the church, including Christian marriage and the ordination of women (Torrance, 1984b; 2012). It simply acknowledges that he does not deal with these issues in a cross-cultural mission context.

From the practical side of scientific theology, the elimination of dualism and the integration of form and being as the unification of science and theology that has been seen as the foundation of Torrance’s holism has in itself an inherent weakness. Torrance acknowledged that the process of

transition from Newton to Einstein was slow, causing dislocation in Western culture. He envisaged that science would move further towards integration, whereas in fact, the world of postmodernism has led to further fragmentation. This questions the ability of Torrance's theology to evangelise the roots of Western culture in the postmodern context. It does not, however, call into question Torrance's understanding of the mission imperative to work for the integration of science and theology. Rather, it shows that Torrance was perhaps over optimistic in his expectations regarding the speed of integration.

6.6 Limitations of the Research

This research has had to be content with limiting its exploration of the conjuncture of mission and theology in Torrance's life and work to his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion. This has necessitated ignoring rich areas of his theology such as the relationship between science and theology, the theology of light, the epistemological basis for Western philosophy, hermeneutics, ecumenical discussions with the Orthodox Church, relationship to the writings of the Early Church Fathers and relationship to Karl Barth's corpus. In addition, the biblical theological work done in order to evaluate his theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion was of necessity limited to key texts for exegesis from which the themes were drawn. The limited findings did little justice to the wealth of evidence that there is a missional nature to divine human communion in the biblical witness. Far more could have been investigated such as the love of God, the second exodus, exile and return, the remnant of Israel, the kingdom of God, the full history of Israel, the prophets and wisdom literature and eschatological expectations. In terms of Torrance's dogmatics, more could have been explored in terms of the Monarchy of God, the passibility of God, the doctrine of grace and the relationship between creation and culture.

In terms of the relationship between mission and practice, this work has assumed that Torrance's practice equates engagement in mission and has at times used the words together as "mission practice". This has made the assumption that Torrance's practice was synonymous with engagement in mission because the focus of this work is his mission engagement in China. This has largely, although not completely, ignored his pastoral practice in Scotland and in the Scottish church as practical engagement in mission. In addition, the China research has focused primarily on the work of his father and his father's work among the Qiang and has not explored his mother's personal work and correspondence, in spite of Torrance's statement that his mother

exerted significant theological influence over him. Once again, this has been due to the limitations of the exercise.

6.7 Implications for the Mission of the Church

The findings of the research suggest that the mission of the church should be understood in terms of the Trinitarian conception of the *missio Dei*. Within Torrance's theological system, the *missio Dei* is rooted in the ontological Trinitarian relationship of love that reaches out to the world in a redemptive movement of incarnation and atonement in order to bring humanity into covenant relationship with himself. This means that the locus of mission is the divine initiative of grace that first reached out to a broken world in love and redemption. It takes the onus of mission away from the church and places it in the mission of God and the sending of the church to complete the mission of Christ to bring the world into relationship with himself. The purpose of the proclamation of the gospel is therefore to call people to repentance and faith so that they enter into covenant relationship with God through Christ in the power of the Spirit. This is the *koinónia* of the Spirit, which is the new covenant in Christ. There are therefore missional implications to being in covenant relationship with God in Christ because the *missio Dei* is universal in its scope, aiming to bring the whole of creation into relationship with itself.

The holism of Torrance's theology and practice calls on the church to live out its theology in the world by engaging in mission as integral to and fully related to its theology. The covenantal basis of mission means that dogmatics, biblical theology and missiology must be united in one common purpose to bring the gospel to the world. The theology of mission and the mission of theology must therefore be understood as two sides of the same coin. There can be no divide between mission and the church as the body of Christ but only one movement from the Father to the Son through the Spirit into the world to raise humanity by faith in Christ into fellowship with the triune God. Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion and his mission engagement in China serve as an example of the way in which mission is informed by theology and theology is informed by mission. This unification also calls on the world of theological education to integrate mission into all aspects of the curriculum. There can be no theology that is abstracted from the practical missional implications in church and mission field. This, again, was borne out in Torrance's lifelong engagement with theological education as mission both in the Western and Chinese contexts.

In addition, Torrance's understanding of the inclusion of creation in the covenant relationship means that through Christ as both Creator and redeemer, creation and redemption are bound together in the love of God in his internal relations. Torrance holds that the creation is grounded in the one covenant of grace that holds all things together, but it can only fully realise its potential if redemption is permitted to enter creation and to bring healing and fulfilment. Torrance warns that Christian eschatology and scientific cosmology need to work together for the sake of the future of humanity. This points towards a theology of the role of church to care for creation, not only by engaging in practical conservation exercises, but also by preaching the gospel to all creation so that creation experiences the 'freedom of the glory of the children of God' (Rom 8:21).

Nonetheless, Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion always calls on the church to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world with full assurance of the uniqueness of Christ among the world religions: Judaism, Islam and animism included. There is no place for natural theology to act as a bridge to faith because theology must be faithful to its "natural" object, which is God revealed in Jesus Christ. The first priority must be proclamation of the Word of God as the cross of Christ, which requires a response of faith and *metanoia*. This must be followed by the growth of the convert through biblical and theological teaching so that the disciple indwells the Word and is transformed by the mind of Christ. For Torrance, Christian education must take the form of theological education in order to take the church from the first level of doxology, through biblical theology, to the third level of ontological understanding that will enable its leaders to begin to know God as he is in himself (*kata physin*) and so be transformed after the mind of Christ.

Torrance's engagement with mission calls on the church to understand the role of Israel in mission to the world and to root its mission theology firmly in the biblical history. As the covenant people of God, Israel bore in its own history the faithfulness of God both to bless and to judge. Where Israel was unfaithful, God was faithful and brought on Israel the terms of its disobedience to the covenant in the form of trial and eventually exile. Nonetheless, in spite of this, wrath was always tempered with mercy and God used the Israelites in exile to continue to spread the light of his *torah* through their (corrupted) religious observances. Israel was therefore a light to the world and is still important in terms of the eschatological fulfilment. The church should not therefore ignore the necessity of engagement in mission to the Jews.

There is a correlation between missional role of Israel in the Old Testament and the missional role of the church in Christ. Firstly, just as YHWH called Israel to live a life of holiness and obedience to the Word of God as *torah* in communion with him as his chosen people among the nations, so Christians in the church, living in communion with him, are to live “godly lives” among the Gentiles. Secondly, in the same way that Israel prefigured the passion of Christ in its own history, so the Christian church must reflect the sufferings of Christ in its own life in the world. Thirdly, as Israel’s whole life and purpose was gathered up into Christ in the incarnation, so the church must understand itself as the gathered up as the body of Christ. The role of church is to reflect through the lens of the incarnation the missional role of the people of Israel among the nations.

6.8 Contribution to Scholarship

The primary contribution of this research to Torrance scholarship is to situate his theology more holistically within his persona. This has enabled Torrance’s work on the missional nature of divine-human communion to be considered in terms of his biography. It therefore ends the cycle of intellectual abstraction in which Torrance’s theology has been considered to date and gives to his work a mission context that explains its missional nature. Torrance’s sense of calling as a missionary to the indigenous peoples of Western China on the borders of Tibet undergirded his whole life and theological output so that it cannot be seen as “bookends” to his life but rather as integral to his being and persona. The fact that he did not engage in mission in China during his academic career should be seen more in terms of political necessity than an abandonment of purpose. To evaluate Torrance the theologian in any way that is abstracted from his calling to mission in China is to insert an incipient dualism into the fabric of his being by separating his persona from his theology.

This research calls on Torrance scholars to consider that the holistic nature of Torrance’s theology means that mission is fully integrated into all his thought. Although this research has only considered the missional nature of divine-human communion, other areas of scholarship such as the relationship between science and theology, hermeneutics and works on Torrance’s theological method would benefit greatly by being rooted in his missional persona. Unless this is done, Torrance scholarship will continue to consider his theology in the abstract and gloss over the permeation of mission throughout the Torrance corpus. In addition, the affinity of Torrance’s holistic theology with the Chinese worldview suggests that Chinese scholars might usefully translate Torrance’s work for reception within the Chinese church.

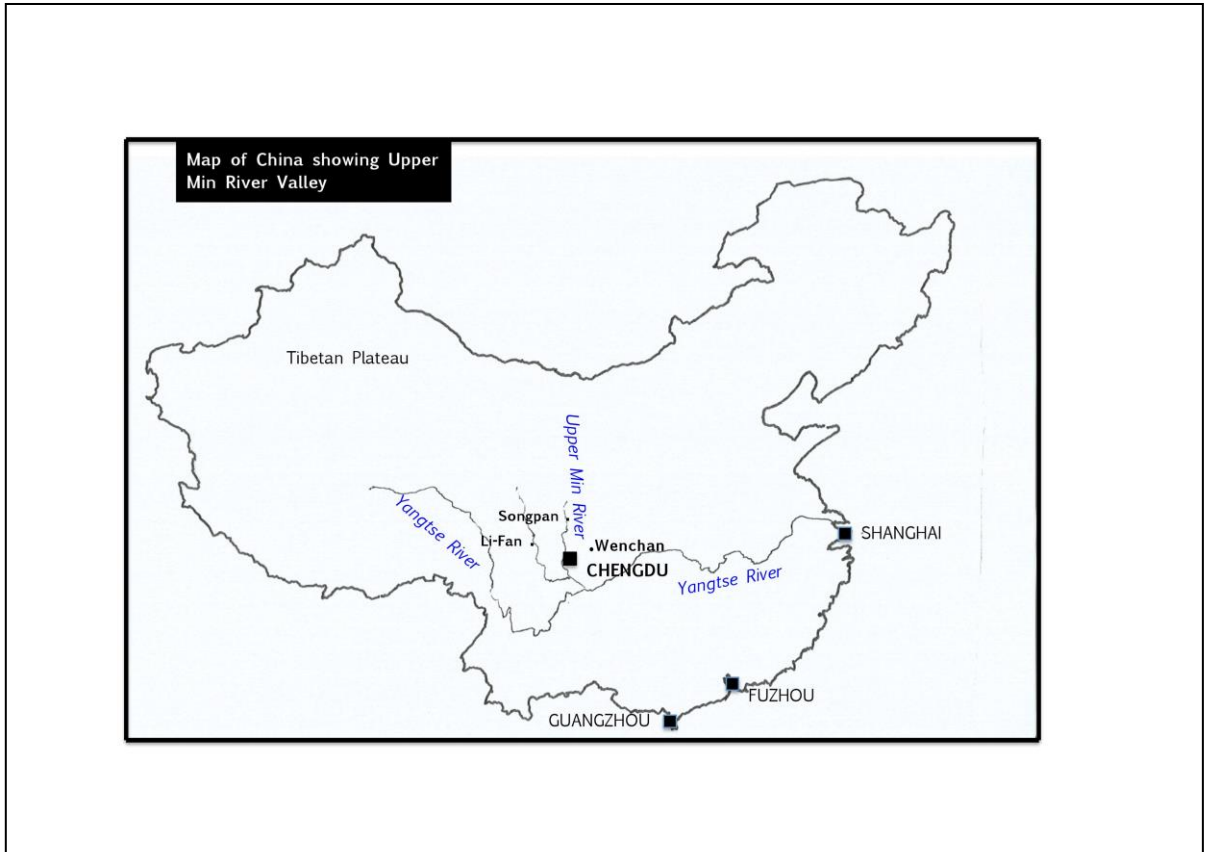
Torrance's strongly covenantal sense of the mission of Israel and the church, calls for research into the implications of covenant and mission. In order to do this, the distinction between dogmatics, biblical theology and biblical theology of mission will need to be laid aside so that a more integrated approach can be built. If Christ is in his person God's covenant relationship with the world, then missiology cannot proceed without taking cognizance of the biblical theological concept of the covenant and the dogmatic nature of covenant theology. In addition, the relationship between covenant and the *missio Dei* could usefully be explored through Torrance's theology of the missional nature of divine-human communion.

In terms of Torrance's engagement with other theologians, further work could be done on the nature of the influence of Hugh Ross Mackintosh on the integration of mission and theology in Torrance's work. As this predates Torrance's engagement with Karl Barth, it could serve to trace the source of areas of divergence between Torrance and Barth in terms of Torrance's stronger mission focus. In addition, evaluation of the theological interaction between Torrance and Lesslie Newbigin in terms of early work on the *missio Dei* in the WCC would serve to place Torrance back in his rightful place as a foundational contributor to the theological development of the Ecumenical movement in world mission.

This research has aimed to bring to the world of Torrance scholarship a picture of a theological giant humbly engaged in the mission of God through the church of Jesus Christ. As an intellectual of almost unparalleled capacity, he did not deign to engage in a thoroughly practical manner in the work of the extension of the kingdom of God. This is seen firstly in his early mission experiences as a child in China and then in his personal engagement in mission in the Church of Scotland, in his participation in theological education as mission in Auburn, Edinburgh and beyond, in the resurrection of the church among the Qiang and in his monumental contribution to the opening up China for the printing and distribution of the Bible. Torrance did not separate the call to take the gospel to all nations from the task of the theologian at his/her desk. Theology and practice, divine-human communion and mission were to him the same. Rooting his understanding of the significance of *homoousion* in the missional considerations of the first Council at Nicaea (AD 325), he understood the covenantal nature of the *missio Dei*, realised in the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross, to be the very heart of the gospel. As a result, he preached, wrote, taught and lived out the gospel with all its implications with characteristic and indefatigable energy. For this reason, scholarship dares no longer ignore Torrance the person, but must allow his lifelong engagement with mission in China to speak his mission practice into future evaluations of his theology.

ANNEXURE

Map of China showing Upper Min River Valley



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