The One vs. The Many: A Response to Woznicki and Crisp on the Christological Anthropology of T. F. Torrance

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ABSTRACT: This paper looks at a recent exchange concerning the human nature of Christ and the Christological anthropology of Thomas F. Torrance. In this exchange, Oliver Crisp and Christopher Woznicki offer competing readings of Torrance's Christological anthropology. Crisp argues for a concretist understanding of Christ's human nature while Woznicki offers an abstractist metaphysic. This paper will look at this exchange in conversation with Torrance's work and recent work in group ontology, offering a third way forward between the impasse of Crisp's concretism and Woznicki's abstractism which I call communal participation and argue is more in line with Torrance's own understanding.

1. Introduction

Christ's becoming human in the incarnation stands at the center of Christian witness to God's salvific work. How we understand the humanity of Christ, and how his humanity relates to ours, is essential to understanding Christ's saving work. Few theologians better exemplify the significance of the incarnation than T. F. Torrance. In recent work, Torrance's understanding of Christ's humanity has received extended attention. This article will look at an exchange in which Christopher Woznicki and Oliver Crisp offer competing interpretations of Torrance's theological anthropology.

This paper begins by looking closely at Torrance's work on the humanity of Christ and its implications for humanity more generally. A close assessment of Woznicki's and Crisp's respective interpretations will show that neither metaphysical account adequately captures Torrance's doctrine of atonement. I thus offer my own account, drawing on Torrance's relational ontology and recent analytic work on group ontology. This third way maintains the particularity and the universality of Christ's humanity, but ultimately sides with Crisp's Torrancean concretism in a way that covers some of his view's weaknesses while gaining benefits of Woznicki's Torrancean abstractism. This third option sees human beings as fundamentally relational, sharing our very being with one another in close personal relationship. In union with Christ, human beings share in Christ's reconciled communion with his Father and Spirit, as well as restored communion with one another so that the body of Christ participates in the humanity of Christ together.

2. Torrance's Christological Anthropology

The incarnation is central to Torrance's theology. Everything we can say about atonement, soteriology, or any other doctrine begins and ends with the fact that the Second Person of

the Trinity became human. In the incarnation, "atoning reconciliation has achieved its end in the new creation in which God and man are brought into such communion with one another that the relations of man with God in being and knowing are healed and fully established" (Torrance 2009, 233). Everything that it means to be human is revealed and healed in Christ's assumption of humanity.

Christ's becoming human reconciles humanity to God and reveals God to humanity. Gary Deddo observes that, "the ministry of Christ, as Torrance typically frames it, involves both revelation and reconciliation…persons are whole and spiritual regeneration involves whole persons—mind, soul, and body" (2020, 150). Torrance argues this on account of Christ's mediatorial role in becoming incarnate. He states, "we must think of Jesus Christ as the Mediator of divine revelation and reconciliation in virtue of what he is in his own personal Identity and Reality. He does not mediate a revelation or reconciliation that is other than what he is…he embodies what he mediates in himself" (Torrance 1992, 56). Because Christ embodies both the human and divine in his atoning work, the incarnation reveals and redeems the nature of humanity. Thus Torrance posits, "all men are upheld, whether they know it or not, in their humanity by Jesus Christ the true and proper man, upheld by the fulfilment and establishment of true humanity in him, but also through his work in the cross and resurrection in which he overcame the degenerating forces of evil and raised up our human nature out of death and perdition" (1976, 154) Everything that it means to be human is reconciled and revealed in Christ. In Christ becoming incarnate and atoning for humanity, all humanity is transformed in his image.

The approach which Torrance takes to theological anthropology is often called Christological anthropology. As Cortez defines it, "in its most basic form, the most fundamental intuition of a christological anthropology is that beliefs about the human person (anthropology) must be warranted in some way by beliefs about Jesus (christological)" (2016, 7). This is what Torrance thinks is happening in the atonement. Christ becomes human and lives in a way that sanctifies and offers up his humanity to the Father. In doing so, Christ sanctifies and offers up all humanity to the Father. Jesus "has mediated a new covenant of universal range in which he presents us to his Father as those whom he has redeemed, sanctified, and perfected forever in himself. In other words, Jesus Christ constitutes in his own self-consecrated humanity the fulfillment of the vicarious way of human response to God" (Torrance 1992, 76). In virtue of Christ's vicarious humanity, everything said about human nature ought to be said in virtue of what is said about Christ's particular human nature. Herein lies the particularity of Torrance's Christology: it is in this individual that God reveals and reconciles humanity. Thus, Torrance argues that "we should seek to understand Christ within the actual matrix of interrelations from which he sprang as Son of David and Son of Mary, that is, in terms of his intimate bond with Israel in this covenant relationship with God throughout history" (1992, 3) As Christ atones for humanity, so humanity is reconciled and revealed in Jesus Christ's particular humanity.

This raises two important points of Torrance's Christological anthropology. The first point, captured in Woznicki's explanation of Torrance's *an-enhypostasia* doctrine, is a bi-principled Christological anthropology: Christ's humanity is general or universal, so that what happens to his human nature changes all human natures; and his humanity is particular, so that Christ can be said to act as a person with an individual human nature. This bi-principled understanding of Christ's assumption of humanity unites in the one person of Jesus Christ the general unity of God and humanity with the particular union of Christ's divine and human natures (Woznicki 2018, 112). For Torrance these are not two distinct realities, but the single reality of incarnation. He says, "the *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* taken

together tell us that the incarnation was the union of the Word of God with mankind in solidarity with all men and women; yet it was the union with one man or rather such a union with all humanity that was achieved and wrought out in and through this one man, Jesus of Bethlehem and Nazareth for all men and women" (Torrance 2015, 230).

It is important as we move to assess both Woznicki's and Crisp's work that we note this unity of the *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia*. These are not two distinct realities, but the hypostatic union of Christ's divine and human natures in his particular person *is* the ontological basis for all human being in Christ. The universality and particularity of Christ's humanity are criteria for the question we are asking: what sort of metaphysic could help us make sense of Torrance's Christological anthropology?

Second, Torrance's conception of the incarnation is motivated by theological anthropology. He is concerned to maintain that Christ's becoming human is for the sake of transforming all humanity (Torrance 1977, 13-22). His approach to Christ's humanity cannot be divorced from his concern for theological anthropology to be Christological anthropology. Rather than beginning with a metaphysic of human natures by which he interprets Christ's humanity, Torrance moves from what Christ reveals humanity to be in its reconciled state towards an understanding of our participation *in that humanity*. Thus, Torrance always has in the back of his mind the implications of Christ's humanity for our own.

3. Two Views on Christ's Humanity

Woznicki's article on Torrance's Christological anthropology and Crisp's response to it are part and parcel to a long-standing conflict between concretists and abstractists about human nature. These approaches are representative of two major philosophical influences on Western theology. There is a fresco by the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael titled 'The School of Athens.' Among the figures shown, an elderly Plato and a youthful Aristotle are seen talking together. Plato gestures upward, referencing his theory of abstract forms. Aristotle, in contrast, gestures horizontally below his waist to indicate his theory of concrete particulars. Their conflict has colored debates about human nature for centuries. While Woznicki appeals to something like Platonic abstract universals to explain Torrance's Christological anthropology (2018, 124), Crisp makes use of Aristotelian concrete particulars (2021, 15-16). These two philosophical influences are in the background of the apparent conflict between the particular and universal in Christological anthropology. What Woznicki and Crisp do uniquely is ask age-old questions about human nature on the Christological basis of Torrance's theology.

Both Woznicki and Crisp take on Torrance's bi-principled understanding of Christ's humanity, aiming to account for its universality and particularity. What happens in the atonement must be such a union between the divine and human that it is a particular union, namely the incarnation of the divine Word, efficacious for all humanity. In the hypostatic union of Christ's divinity and humanity, all human beings are brought into union with the Triune God. In applying Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics, Woznicki and Crisp take interpretive liberties to explain Torrance's Christological anthropology. A closer look at these perspectives as a question of *Christology* show that neither approach captures the oneness *and* many-ness of Torrance's bi-principled approach. We require a third way.

3.1 Woznicki's Torrancean Abstractism[1]

Woznicki's account of Christ's humanity, and therefore of humanity generally, appeals to the idea of human nature as an abstract universal. Plato's concept of abstract universals, which he calls forms, functions thusly: concrete particulars participate in abstract universals, thus causing these particulars to be *what* they are (Plato 1996, 78c10-79a5).[2] For example, a blue shirt, the sky, and the ocean are all blue. There must, therefore, be some abstract universal, "blue," which defines and determines the blueness of these objects. It is in virtue of participating in the universal, "blue," that these objects are rightfully described as blue. With respect to human nature, this means that there is some abstract thing called human nature in which human persons participate. Abstract nature is typically described as a property or set of properties. A being is necessarily human if they have these properties and every being that has these properties is human (Arcadi 2016, 233). Abstract objects, traditionally conceived, cannot be acted upon as particulars can. Universals simply are what they are; everything else is what it is in virtue of universals. Christ, on Woznicki's account, is an exception. What is instantiated in Christ transforms universal human nature. Woznicki writes, "Christ instantiates an abstract universal human nature and the rest of humanity participates in an abstract universal human nature" (2018, 105). What Woznicki means by instantiation is not what is typically meant by instantiation, but rather "a specific relation in which an abstract universal is related to a particular object in such a way that the abstract universal nature itself can be affected by other causes when the particular object it is instantiated in is subject to causes acting upon it" (2018, 123). Christ has a special relation to universal human nature which changes it through changes enacted on himself.

The function of an abstract human nature is to be the ontological basis for all concrete particulars called human. It is this human nature that makes all human persons decisively human and determines what that means. Any changes which occur to this universal nature would entail a change in the humanity of all human persons. One philosopher puts it like this, "Forms appear to perform the central *function* that is typically adduced as the reason for introducing a universal, the performance of which has some claim to be constitutive of being a universal" (Harte 2008, 208-209).[3] Woznicki's account functionally captures the universality of Christ's humanity. What happens in Christ's atoning work to transform and sanctify his particular humanity has the effect of transforming and sanctifying the humanity of other persons. Thus, the *function* of an abstract human nature is carried out according to Christ's particular human nature.

The account he offers, however, is metaphysically odd. Christ is a particular that influences the universal through Woznickian instantiation and other human persons are influenced by universal human nature. Changes to Christ's humanity only indirectly influence the humanity of others. There are two problems with this. For one, Crisp argues that Woznickian instantiation "means that Christ's human nature is significantly unlike every other human nature" (2021, 16). While we participate in abstract human nature, Christ instantiates it. This entails a significant gap between the kind of humanity Christ has and our own, thus calling into question the very universality which Woznicki's account provides a

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[1] Many thanks to Christopher Woznicki for his clarifying and encouraging comments on this section.

[2] There is some debate about the relationship between particulars and universals, but for the purposes of assessing Woznicki's work as a philosophical descendant of Plato, this definition will suffice. See Harte (2008, 207-208).

[3] Emphasis added.

metaphysical basis for. Because the difference is in Christ's relationship to the ontological basis of human nature, this constitutes an ontological difference between Christ's humanity and our own. Crisp therefore argues, "the very notion of vicarious humanity…ends up creating a significant ontological gulf between Christ's humanity and ours" (2021, 16). This pits the one-ness of humanity in Christ against the many-ness of humanity in Christ, undermining Torrance's bi-principled approach. Collin Gunton argues that on such abstract notions of human nature, "the person is pared down to abstract qualities supposedly held in common. Our personal distinctiveness, our human particularity and individuality, so manifest both from what appears and from our bodily constitution, become irrelevant to who and what we truly are" (1993, 49). Woznicki's conception sacrifices the particularity of Christ's humanity (or at least its significance) in order maintain its universality.

The second problem is that participation in Christ's humanity is, on Woznicki's account, indirect (Woznicki 2018, 105). This misses a crucial aspect of atonement. The relationship in atonement between priestly individuals and the communities which they represent is such that community identity before God is changed by and contingent on the particular actions and identity of its priestly representative.[4] The community does not participate in some third thing, but in the actions and identity of its particular priestly representatives. This is the case in Torrance's Christological anthropology: we do not participate in an abstract human nature which is determined by Christ, but in Christ himself (Everhart 2022a, 9-12). There is not some image of God external to Christ in virtue of which he is human. Christ *is* the image. Torrance argues that atonement "takes place…in an intensely personal and intimate way within the incarnate Lord and his coexistence with us in our fallen suffering condition as sinners" (Torrance 1992a, 155). Thus, a concrete particular serves in the *function* of the abstract nature, rather than an abstract object serving in that function.[5] The abstractist view must further sacrifice Christ's particularity as priest of humanity in order to maintain his universality.

In Woznicki's own words, "Torrance wants to affirm the fact that the sanctification of humanity occurs *in* Christ's human nature, not just that Christ's sanctification of human nature affects other parts of humanity" (2018, 118-119). Yet what Torrance denies here is precisely what Woznicki affirms. Christ's particular humanity affects some general human nature outside of himself. While we have the generality of Christ's humanity on this account, this transformation of human nature only occurs *in virtue* of Christ's sanctifying his own human nature and not *in* his own human nature.

3.2 Crisp's Torrancean Concretism

Crisp, in contrast, depicts Christ's humanity as a concrete particular, a view of natures attributed to Aristotle. Aristotle rejected his teacher's notion of abstract forms, arguing that particular subjects are the basis for reality, with each particular being identical with its essence (Aristotle 1924, 1032b1-2 Z6). Returning to our example of the shirt, ocean, and sky, rather than describing these as participating in the universal, "blue," Aristotle would say that "blueness" is derived from these particulars. It is a quality shared by these particulars rather than being that which makes these particulars to have that quality.

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[4] See Cranz (2017, 17; 87); Boda (2015, 155; 2016, 32); Kaminsky (1995, 184-186).
[5] Woznicki rejects the option of abstract particular natures for interpreting Torrance, as it qualitatively divides Christ's nature from ours (2018, 117-119). As such, it will not be addressed further in this article.

Regarding human nature, Arcadi writes, "a nature is a concrete particular instance of a certain kind that endows its possessor with properties and capacities." Whatever properties we might think inherent to human nature, a concretist believes that Christ obtains these properties in virtue of assuming a particular human nature, in this case the human nature called Jesus of Nazareth. Plantinga argues that what Christ "assumed was a human nature, a specific human being" (1999, 183-184). In the incarnation, "a concrete-nature view is one that states that Christ's human nature is a concrete particular, perhaps a human body, but, traditionally, a human body and human soul distinct from the Word" (Crisp 2007, 41).

Crisp states, "Christ's vicarious act on our behalf is all about Christ taking on a particular human nature that is qualitatively similar to our own, sharing the same limitations" (2021, 16). In his response to Woznicki, Crisp observes that the concrete particularist view of Christ's humanity forces one to deny the universality of Christ's humanity as Woznicki applies it (2021, 16). Crisp elsewhere argues at length against this understanding of Christ's human nature and its implications for the *an-enhypostasia* (1999, 88).[6] That Christ must be particular in the same way that we are particular, implies that at least some ontological value is placed on particularity in atonement.

This squares with one of Torrance's principles, namely that Christ must be an individual person who acts and wills in particular ways. For Torrance, this coinheres with atonement rituals in the Old Testament fulfilled in Christ (2009, 79-80). The particularity of priests, such as their Levitical lineage, serves as the basis for their representative role. Similarly, Christ's particularity as a Jew, the son of David, the Lion of Judah, and so on, serve in as his qualifications to represent humanity to God (Torrance 1992, 16-17; 22). Not only does Christ's humanity need to be particular, but his particularity is significant for the universality of his priestly role.

However, Crisp's Torrancean concretism is not without problems. Most obvious is the lack of a mechanism for the universality of Christ. In terms of how the one comes to stand for the many in atonement, Crisp says that Torrance is "a mysterian" about "the specific kind of action by means of which Christ brings about human reconciliation with God" (2021, 22) While this paper ultimately rejects this reading of Torrance, demonstrating how a mechanism is in fact built into Torrance's conception of human nature, Crisp's lack of mechanism indicates a deeper problem for his account. His account affirms a *kind* of universality to Christ's humanity, but one stripped of significance. The universality of Christ's humanity speaks only to Christ being qualitatively like us (Crisp 2021, 16-17). It does not cover what happens to Christ's human nature happening to every human nature.

What Crisp thinks is happening with respect to universality regards Christ's person. Because Crisp sees the need for the divine to heal the brokenness of humanity, his account emphasizes *theosis*. He writes, "Christ's vicarious work in the incarnation and atonement are penultimate actions that are directed toward the ultimate goal of participation in the divine life… the hypostatic union is the means by which we are placed in a position to be able to participate in the divine life" (2021, 23). For Crisp's Torrencean concretism, our participation seems to be in Christ's divinity only, not his humanity. Rather, his humanity commits some vicarious actions in virtue of which we may participate in the divine life.

This is demonstrated in his laptop analogy: a group of laptops are broken and require an update from the internet in order to be fixed. These laptops are automatically fixed once an engineer re-establishes the link between the hub and internet. "This is akin," he avers, "to Torrance's understanding of the way in which the vicarious humanity of Christ is both

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[6] Crisp's reading has been contested, but not entirely refuted in the opinion of this author, in Woznicki's paper.

particular, that is, having to do with the assumption of a particular human nature (like the hub), and yet also general, having to do with the transformation of all human natures as a consequence of what happens to the particular human nature of Christ (via the hardwired link to the internet)" (Crisp 2021, 20). This clarifies Crisp's reading: the universality is only in that which each human nature is connected to, Christ's divinity, not his humanity. This is illustrated in Crisp's recent Saint Andrean account of the Eucharist, in which Christ's presence in the elements is another hypostatic union between his divinity and the bread and wine (Crisp 2021a, 178). On this account of the Eucharist, we are not united to the humanity of Christ, but to Christ's divinity *via* the bread and wine body. To whatever degree we might participate in Christ's humanity on Crisp's account, it is instrumentalized, serving only the end of our participation in the divine life which alone heals our humanity. Christ's humanity is not universal in the way which Torrance demands.

While Torrance agrees that we participate in the divine life, he requires our participation in Christ to be a participation in his whole person; a union with his divinity *and* his humanity (1992, 53). In contrast to Crisp's mere *theosis*, "in Jesus Christ God himself has come into our human being and *united our human nature to his own*" (Torrance 1992, 63).[7] Crisp's reading of Torrance requires Christ's humanity only as a means for our participation in the divine life, and not as that particular humanity in which ours is transformed. For Torrance, humanity participates in and is healed by Christ's sanctification of his own humanity in union with his divinity. It is his whole person, including his humanity, that is particular and universal. This highlights a potential pitfall for Crisp's concretism. Christ's humanity is so particular that his sanctification and transformation of his own humanity do nothing for us directly, but only allow his divinity to do something for us. Similar to Woznicki's re-interpretation, it is not the particular humanity of Christ in which we participate to be human in Christ, but his divinity. While this reading has the advantage of our participation being in the person of Christ, it is still not in the humanity of Christ sanctified for us.

4. Communal Participation: A Third Way

Neither Crisp's concretist nor Woznicki's abstractist interpretations adequately account for Torrance's criteria. These accounts pit the oneness and many-ness of humanity in Christ against each other, rendering Torrance's criteria irreconcilable. We require, therefore, a different description of human nature. In brief review, let us remember that Christ's *humanity* must be particular, so that the human Christ acts and wills as an individual, and universal, so that what happens to Christ's human nature happens to every human nature. Modifying Crisp's account, which seems intuitively closest to capturing both criteria, we need only account for the relation between Christ's human nature and our own in a way that does not qualitatively distinguish Christ's human nature from our own and describes humans as participating in Christ's particular humanity to be transformed.

4.1 Torrance's Onto-Relational Christological Anthropology

To make sense of how Christ's particular humanity is the ontological basis of all humanity, so that it is indeed both general and particular, human natures require certain qualities in

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[7] Emphasis added.

order for the *many* to be sanctified in the *one* without the *one* ceasing to be an individual and particular *one*. This is, I take it, the problem on which Crisp's and Woznicki's differences hinge. What is, we should ask, the *metaphysical* relationship between our humanity and Christ's, so that what happens to Christ's humanity can rightly be said to transform our own?

To answer this question, we return to the resources that Torrance himself offers and develop them further. Torrance's account of human ontology is constructed in light of his criteria. He argues that persons, divine and human, are essentially constituted by their relations to other persons: "the proper approach [to ontology] would be one in which we consider things in terms of the actual relations in which they are found, relations which have to do with what they really are. These are being-constituting relations or 'onto-relations', as I call them" (Torrance 1992, 47). He continues, with regards to those beings which are persons, "the relations which persons have with one another as persons are onto-relations, for they are person-constituting relations" (Torrance 1992, 49). Personal beings, therefore, require personal onto-relationships to constitute their being. Person-constituting relations, as that specific kind of onto-relation, holds a primacy in Torrance's thought. Deddo argues that "personal" is the organizing principle in Torrance's understanding of being and natures (2020, 143). The kinds of relationships that occur between persons are fundamental for understanding the nature of personal beings. On Torrance's view, the relationship between two persons is at least partially constitutive of the being of each person. A human being is thus a being constituted by all their interpersonal relationships participated in through a human body, with each relationship contributing something to the being of that person. We might think, then, of persons as discrete but overlapping networks of relationships, so that each branch of the network connecting two persons is a relationship that partially constitutes both persons and each nexus where several relationships come together is a person constituted by those relationships.

This is how Torrance understands the interconnection between who God is, how he relates to his creation, and why God becomes incarnate. God relates to humanity in this personal way because of who God is in Godself. For Torrance, "giving full consideration to the revelation that took place through the personal presence of Jesus and his self-interpretation leads to the discovery of the ultimate source of what is truly personal, namely, the Persons of the Trinity" (Deddo 202, 145). What it means for human beings to be persons is that they are creatures personally related to the personal God. The personhood of human beings is rooted in their creation in the *imago Dei* (Gunton 1991, 16). "Torrance is clear," writes Deddo, "that what is centrally personal about God and about God's dealings with his human creatures is that it is characterized by God's own kind of love. This is a love that creates, sustains, and renews relationships in what is true and good" (2020, 150). The loving and personal relationship of Trinue communion that God has in himself is not only the *imago Dei* in which human beings are created, but it is also for Torrance the ontological basis of human personhood. What heals human nature is its ontological union with the divine nature that is its source. Because God is fundamentally three persons in loving communion, what constitutes human persons is the communion they have with God and one another.

This is why God becomes incarnate: to live out the restored, being-constituting relationships between God and humanity in his person, sharing with us the communion that he has with Father and Spirit. If the person as being-in-relation or being constituted by a network of relations is what Torrance thinks human nature is, then what Christ assumes is a particular network of human interpersonal relationships and the relevant embodied

capacities for those relationships, and sanctifies them. In the incarnate one, we have both sides of the God-human relation lived out in a reconciling way. Torrance states, "reconciliation thus concerns the personal relation between God and man…it is God himself who forms anew the relation between himself and humanity" (2009, 142). In Christ, we have a particular person who restores the relationships in which he participates, most especially the God-human relationship which stands at the centre of human purpose.

This is what it means on Torrance's view for Christ to assume and heal human nature: Christ assumes human ways of interpersonal (thus being-constituting) relating. Because this includes Christ's assumption of a body as the means through which humans relate to other persons and the world, we might make the case that embodiment is what distinguishes Christ's interpersonal relating in divine ways from his relating in human ways; humans relate in essentially embodied ways while God has no physical body. Yet, for Torrance, Christ's assumption of a body is an essential part of his assuming and healing human interpersonal relationality, not an end in and of itself.[8] Christ heals these relationships through his participation in them and through his participation in the ontological source of perfect loving communion: the Triune Godhead. Where the assumption of a body (or a body and a soul) has been the traditional organizing principle for describing all of what Christ assumes in the incarnation, Torrance centers human relationality as that which Christ assumes.[9] Whereas a more traditional view might include relationality as a function or feature of human embodiment (or ensoulment), Torrance's view understands embodiment as given for the purpose of relating to other persons in redeemed and reconciled ways. Embodiment remains essential on Torrance's view, but is grounded in the *telos* of humanity for communion.

4.2 Towards an Onto-Relational Account of Human Nature

This is where further metaphysical footwork helps to develop Torrance's view. Torrance's onto-relational account of Christ's human nature assumes that Christ can share with us that which he has in relationship with the Father and Spirit. We need to account for what happens metaphysically in interpersonal relationships so that being-constituting content of one relationship can contribute to or be shared in another being-constituting relationship. If each relationship partially constitutes an individual person, and each relationship is shared between at least two persons, then we require some account of how Christ, or any human person for that matter, can share part of their relational constitution with other persons.

Recent work in group ontology will help to account for this metaphysical gap. In his seminal work on group ontology, Pettit argues for individualism, which rejects appeals to mysterious social forces to explain group phenomena, and holism, which maintains that persons depend on relationships to one another in groups for individual agential capacities (Pettit 1996, 117-119; 175-193). We are individual thinking and acting agents, but we are not *merely* individual agents. We are socially situated, acting in shared identity and agency with others around us. Many studies have shown that the cognitive and psychological capacities in virtue of which we act as individual agents are formed in relating to others (Sipova and Carpenter 2019, 260-274). Much of what we think contributes to our agency is derived from

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[8] There is not enough space to defend this view at length. I take this as a just-so story of Torrance's account and provide a metaphysic to make sense of his claims.

[9] Thanks to Oliver Crisp, whose comments helped me clarify exactly what I want to propose of Torrance's understanding of human nature.

our thinking, acting, and attending to things together in groups, thus forming a basis of shared knowledge, agency, and attention from which individual agency arises.

The ways in which individual agents contribute to the agency of others is through the influence that individual agents have on the shared agency of groups. While a group might be as small as two, and thus the influence of one agent on another is more direct, it is nevertheless the case that the influence of one agent on another is qualified by the nature of that group. The group, in this sense, acts as a conceptual hinge between persons, both allowing for the sharing of things between them and maintaining distinctions between them as individuals. The ways that one person contributes to the other in a group is by sharing knowledge, attention, and so on with them as is appropriate to the relationship. Whatever is being shared by the first person can come from their other relationships in other social groups, so that shared knowledge from group A in which that person is a participant can be internalized as individual knowledge. That knowledge is then shared with members of another group B, so that those members are indirectly influenced by another relationship which constitutes this person's being. Thomas McCall has argued that, on such a view, one can come to share in Christ's affections, intentions, and personal knowledge of the Father through participation in Christ (2020, 21). This is how we think of Christ sharing his relational being with us by sharing with us his side of the Father-Son relationship. This in turn changes other relationships that constitute us as our relations to the Father through Christ become a part of us and thus change how we behave in relationships with other humans.

Appealing to this ontology of groups offers us a way of describing how parts of relational being can be shared between distinct persons without appealing to the "mysterian" of the atonement or abstract human nature. Rather, as James Cone avers, Christ's atonement for sin "is only meaningful in the context of the Israelite community…not an abstract idea that defines ethical behavior for all and sundry. Rather it is a religious concept that defines the human condition as [contextualized by] the essence of the community" (2010, 110). In union with Christ, Christ shares the content of his particular network of interpersonal onto-relations with the group, humanity. His particular network and ours remain distinct, yet it would be true to say that we are participating in his humanity by participating in his relationships, specifically his relationship with his Father lived out in human embodied ways of relating. In participation, we can have a reconciled human relation to the divine, so that our humanity is healed in restored relation to God and one another.

Taking this developed view of onto-relational Christological anthropology, we can modify Crisp's Torrancean concretism slightly to avoid pitfalls of his view while gaining benefits of Woznicki's Torrancean abstractism. The divine Word's assumption of a concrete human nature is the assumption of a particular set of human interpersonal relationships, including a particular body through which to participate in those relations. In this description of assumption, we can easily identify the ways in which Christ's humanity is a concrete particular. He participates in his particular set of relationships and acts in the world out of that particular relational nexus and its bodily capacities. He is an individual network of relationships and acts as an individual agent within those relationships. This is sufficient for the particularity criteria.

Moreover, this is particular in a way that does not make Christ's human nature qualitatively different from our own. Christ's human nature, like every human nature, consists of relationships to other persons participated in bodily, and his human nature does not have some unique ontology in virtue of which it can cause change in other human natures. Rather, all human natures share relational content of one relationship with another

in groups. This onto-relational account of human nature avoids the main pitfall of Woznicki's account by upholding Christ's particularity and its significance in a way that does not set an ontological gulf between his human nature and our own. His human nature functions in qualitatively similar ways to ours, sharing his relational being in relationships with other human persons.

This account also improves on Crisp's, in which the universality of Christ's humanity is lacking in two respects. First, Crisp's account only seems to hold to the universality of Christ's divinity. On an onto-relational account of Christ's humanity, our union with the divine is *through* Christ's union with us in the embodied ways that humans relate. Secondly, Crisp's interpretation is unnecessarily mysterious about the mechanism of our participation in the divine life through the incarnation. On an onto-relational account of Christ's humanity, his relational human nature *is* the mechanism of our participation in the divine. It is not as if Christ does something which allows us to directly participate in his divinity external to his humanity, but rather we participate in his humanity via onto-relations. This means that, in relationship with Christ, he transforms our natures by transforming our relationships with God and one another through his own human relationships. The mechanism for Christ to share his humanity and its relation to the divine with us is built into the relational nature of humanity.

To fully illustrate this modification, let us revise Crisp's laptop analogy. On Crisp's analogy, Christ is a wireless hub which, when reconnected to the internet by an engineer, allows computers to update and automatically self-repair. Instead, my account understands Christ's humanity as another computer (we might argue that this is a better analogy, for hubs and computers are qualitatively different). Now Christ has a certain relationship to his Father in virtue of his divinity. Let us say that the Christ laptop is properly connected to the internet because it is in the network group, 'Trinity.' When Wi-Fi is run through a network group, a computer must be in that group to have network access. A little-known function of most laptops is that they can be used as a Wi-Fi hotspot, creating a network through which other computers can share their network access. The Christ laptop is not unique in this way, but it is unique in its access to the Trinity network group. Thus, the Christ laptop could run the particular function which creates a network for the other laptops to join. When a hotspot is created and the hotspot computer chooses to share access to the network group's internet connection with connected computers, all connected computers gain the network access necessary to update and repair faults. It is in being connected to the network that the laptops are repaired, though they require the ongoing connection to the Christ laptop through the hotspot function in order to continue to have internet access and repair future faults.

This analogy is noticeably different than Crisp's. Whereas Crisp's analogy has each laptop connect to the internet (Christ's divinity) directly, in this analogy the network runs through a network group, and so a member of that group needs to continuously share the network connection with non-members. Thus, we require union with Christ's laptop (humanity) in order to have access to his internet connection (divinity). Moreover, the laptops in Crisp's analogy would no longer require a Christ laptop after the engineer has used said laptop to fix the hub's internet connection. Instead, the group of laptops requires on-going connection to the Christ laptop in order to have internet access. Finally, because this happens in a group on a shared network, there is some sense in which the laptops connected to the Christ laptop are also connected to one another. Because the onto-relational account of Christological anthropology I have argued for relies on group ontology for the sharing of Christ's relational being with humanity, our participation in him is a group

activity. Our participation in Christ's humanity leads to restored communion with God *and* one another in the body of Christ.

4.3 Communal Participation

To conclude, I will highlight some implications of this account. The most notable feature is that the mode of universality of Christ's particular humanity is not unique to Christ. Because we are concerned with Christological anthropology, the nature of Christ's humanity reveals the nature of all humanity. All human beings are able to share aspects or features of our relational personhood with other persons. Just as Christ can share with me his relationship to the Father and Spirit in virtue of my union with him, I am able to share relational aspects of my ontology with others with whom I am in relationship. What is unique about Christ is not how his humanity functions, but the particular relationship he has to the Father and Spirit in which we participate.

   This is a different way to talk about participation in the particular humanity of Christ. The author of Hebrews describes this participation in terms of Christ's priestly role. Christ is the High Priest of humanity, offering up the humanity of all human persons in his offering up of his own sanctified humanity. He is qualified not on the basis of some uniquely universal humanity, but on the basis of his particularity as the Son of God and Melchizedekian priest who perfected his particular network of human onto-relations and ascended to the heavenly holy of holies (Moffitt 2011, 213). Christ is particular and unique in this role, not because of a unique way in which he relates to all human beings, but because he has a unique relationship to the divine which heals his humanity and, vicariously, ours. It is through union with Christ that Christ shares his participation in the divine life, so that we may approach God as his children and have union with him. (Heb 4:14-16) This sharing of onto-relational content, the relationship Christ's humanity has to his divinity, through relationship is also how we share things like identity and action in our participation in groups. For me to be a part of a certain group, I share things like attention, intention, and agency with other group members which are formative for the individual action and agency of other members (Reicher et al. 2010, 50-54).

   If Christ's humanity is not uniquely universal, but rather all human persons can share their being with others in relationship, we should ask how it is that Christ is related to *all* human persons so as to be the ontological basis of humanity. Union with Christ, according to Paul, is brought about by the indwelling of the Spirit (Campbell 2012, 287, 409). Paul is quick to note how this same indwelling is what unites us to one another in the body of Christ (Eph 2:20-22). The close and intimate relationship that Christ has with his Spirit is the basis for the Spirit to share Christ with us, making him relationally present to us. While one might think this pushes us back to the "mysterian" of Crisp's account, as we are appealing to the mystery of the Holy Spirit, such a reading of indwelling and the Spirit's work in making Christ present to us is misguided. The Spirit, is not just some mysterious force, acting impersonally or as an impersonal medium; the Spirit is a person, making indwelling an interpersonal and being-constituting relationship. Just as surely as we might affirm Christ's interpersonal mediation of his relationship to his Father and Spirit, so too can we affirm the interpersonal activity of the Spirit's indwelling to make Christ relationally present to us via the Spirit's person. Appeal to the work of the Spirit is not an appeal to "mysterian" as such, but a further appeal to the relational nature of the Triune God reflected in our own human nature.

That our union with God in Christ and our union with one another in Christ are both a result of the indwelling of the Spirit points to the reality of relational sharing that occurs in individuals' participation in groups. Thus, there is some sense in which Christ is related to all human persons by the relational presence of the Spirit of Life. This is a move that Torrance himself makes: "the eternal Spirit of the living God has composed himself, as it were, to dwell with [all] human nature, and human nature has been adapted and become accustomed to receive and bear the same Holy Spirit" (Torrance 1965, 246). This is how, for Torrance, the universality of Christ's human nature comes about; all human nature finds its being in Christ's particular nature because all human nature bears some relationship to the Spirit of Life who unites Christ's humanity with our own. Torrance is here appealing to Calvin's doctrine of the so-called *extra Calvinisticum*, arguing from located presence of Christ's human body in the heavenly holy of holies that the Spirit is needed to unite our humanity to Christ's over that distance (Torrance 1977, 171). [10] However, there appears to be a distinction between this general presence by which the Spirit grounds the being of every human person in the particular humanity of Christ and the intimacy of the Spirit indwelling believers. Torrance, for his part, differentiates between the general union of Christ and humanity and the particular intimacy he has with the Church, claiming that while Christ's humanity is universally efficacious for all human persons, universalism is still false.[11] The differentiation in the kinds of presence the Spirit can have with humanity is the basis for the difference in the kind of union Christ has with the general group humanity and the particular group the body of Christ. We therefore may still claim the universality of Christ's impact on human natures through the onto-relational sharing of Christ's person by the Spirit.

The universality of Christ's humanity, moreover, applies also to the relationships between human persons. What Christ restores in the incarnation is not only our relationship to God, but our relationships to other human beings. As Torrance puts it:

> Through union and communion with Christ human society may be transmuted into a Christian community in which inter-personal relations are healed and restored in the Person of the Mediator, and in which interrelations between human beings are constantly renewed and sustained through the humanizing activity of Christ Jesus, the one Man in whom and through whom as Mediator between God and man they may be reconciled to one another within the ontological and social structures of their existence. (Torrance 1992, 72)

Our participation in the humanity of Christ is bound up in the restoration of our communion with God and one another in the body of Christ. The same relational sharing that occurs in the Spirit uniting us to Christ also unites us to one another. This occurs in both the general and particular ways of speaking about the union of humanity with Christ. In other words, Christ's humanity establishing the communion that is the body of Christ reveals too something about the nature of humanity outside of the intimate communion in

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[10] This is a significant point of Torrance's Christology and Pneumatology. While it is terribly relevant to the discussion at hand, and a treatment of this point would highlight significant elements of Torrance's anthropology beyond this article's focus on onto-relations, a full treatment is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. I do, however, treat these points more thoroughly elsewhere. See Everhart (2022a and (*Under Review*.

[11] Crisp's article cited throughout pursues this topic to greater depth then I have the space for. Torrance, for his part, thinks he need not commit to universalism for this reason.

this body. In the general sense that all human being is grounded in the particular humanity of Christ, all human persons can share something of themselves with others in groups. While this relational sharing of being in groups is not a unique feature of Christ's humanity, there is perhaps a unique extent to which Christ shares something of himself with others and a further sense in which Christ's sharing his own humanity becomes the basis for all other human persons sharing something of themselves with others. This sort of sharing is a reflection of the essence of humanity to be in the particular kind of communion that Christ establishes via the indwelling of his Spirit.[12] Because our relating to God in Christ and one another in Christ are so inextricably bound together, our sharing in Christ's relationship with Father and Spirit includes our sharing in that content with one another as fellow believers. Our participation in the particular humanity of Christ is not reduced to several individual, dyadic relationships, but is the joint action of the communion of saints participating in our High Priest as he sanctifies and offers up his own humanity in union with God. Our participation in Christ is a communion with the whole body of Christ in which we also participate in one another, being members of one another.

Conclusion

In this article I have assessed Woznicki's Torrancean abstractism and Crisp's Torrancean concretism and found them wanting with respect to Torrance's criteria. These views pit against one another the oneness and many-ness of humanity in Christ. Instead, I have opted for an onto-relational account that, while still concretist, better holds together these two important aspects of Christ's humanity. On this view, human beings are constituted by their relations to other persons in such a way that we share our relational being with one another. Thus, participation in Christ's particular humanity is a sharing in his relational human nature, so that we participate in the relationship of his humanity to his divinity in the incarnation and the unitive relationship he has with his Father and other human persons as a human being. Our humanity is healed in our participation in the divine life, but this is done through our participation in Christ's healed humanity. Because of the relational nature of human beings, our participation in Christ's humanity is not merely several individuals participating in Christ's particular humanity. It is a communal participation in the humanity of Christ, partaken of not as mere individuals, but as a group of individuals united in communion with God and one another by the power of the Spirit.

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[12] While these points are interesting and relevant to the argument of this article, there is not space to address them sufficiently. I do, however, expand on these considerations in Everhart (2022b, 4; 15-16).

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