Examining the significance of the Incarnation for our Sanctification

By Stephen Oliver

Abstract

Drawing strongly on a lecture series first presented by Dr Thomas Noble of the Nazarene Theological College in 1988, and subsequently revised in 1999, this paper examines the relationship between the Incarnation of Christ and the Sanctification of fallen humanity. In so doing the paper explores Christian holiness from Christological and Soteriological perspectives. Starting with a brief analysis of the condition of sin and sinfulness, and some of the key contributions to atonement theology the paper explores how Christ graciously unites Himself to fallen humanity and sanctifies our humanity by "assuming it, living in it and crucifying it". The paper concludes with an exploration of what it means to participate in Christ – fallen humanity's response to Christ's Incarnation and all that follows.

Acknowledgement

Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between the Incarnation and Sanctification, drawing on Dr Thomas Noble's "Collins Lecture" series first given in 1988 and subsequently revised in 1999. In seeking to understand more about the nature of the Incarnate Son, through considering various aspects of

Christology, we explore how the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ underpins the Wesleyan understanding of Christian holiness. For the purposes of this discussion, sanctification is "the idea that a person may in this life become wholly devoted to God." (Noble 1999: 17)

> This it is to be a perfect man, to be 'sanctified throughout;' even 'to have a heart so all-flaming with the love of God, . . . as continually to offer up every thought, word, and work, as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.' (Olsen 2006: 83)

Our original question may then be rephrased slightly: how does the Incarnation of Christ make such wholehearted devotion to God possible? On its own, the question makes little sense without the underlying context of the Atonement and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Noble (1999: 29) comes to the question following a thorough examination of the various ideas of the Atonement and is then prompted to ask how the cross deals "with sin as a reality internal to man", which in turn leads to a consideration of the nature of sin and the nature of Christ. Whilst a detailed consideration of the key ideas of the Atonement is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief consideration of aspects of Anselm's and Aulén's treatments helpfully set the scene for our understanding of why the Incarnation is necessary.

The condition of fallen humanity

The understanding of sin and sinfulness is key to our understanding of how the Incarnation makes sanctification possible, and it is important to note that the difference in emphasis between Reformed and Roman Catholic theologies on this point. Gustafson observes how "the basic morphology of Catholic theology and ethics made immoral actions a deterrent to salvation, and moral actions an asset to salvation" (Gustafson, 1978: 6). The reformers, wanting to avoid "works righteousness" (Gustafson, 1978: 8) understood sin "to be more basic than immoral acts" (Gustafson, 1978: 8). The Catholic view, shaped in large part by Thomas Aquinas who integrated Aristotelian ethics into Christian doctrine (Kerr, 2001: 203), perceives sinfulness – "a basic disorientation toward the ultimate good" (Gustafson, 1978: 7) as distinct from sins – "specific infractions of the

proper moral order of nature" (Gustafson, 1978: 7). The reformers understood this as having an effect on understanding the relation of humans to God: "It was not so much persons inclined toward God as their end, as persons trusting or not trusting in him" (Gustafson, 1978: 8). Rooted in the former view, the Thomists' claim that "if mankind had not sinned the Son of God would not have become incarnate" (Kerr, 2001: 217) is deserving of consideration. However, the Reformed view that "the common experience of humanity is that sin is at the centre of one's being, and that it affects the total person" (The Salvation Army, 2010: 123) leaves us with the question of how fallen humanity obscures the *imago Dei*. Picking up the theme, Moltmann asks:

> If the likeness to God is 'lost' through sin, then humanity as such is lost at the same time, for it is in order to be the image of God that humans are created. So is a sinner no longer a human being? But then what happens to his responsibility, which is the reason why he is culpable, and is called to account for his sins? On the other hand, if sin merely clouds and obscures a person's likeness to God, how can a human being 'be' a sinner and acknowledge himself as such? (Moltmann, 1985: 229)

Moltmann addresses his own question by defining the *imago Dei* as "God's relationship to human beings" (Moltmann, 1985: 232) – a relationship in which God demonstrates His commitment to humanity in the Incarnation of Christ.

At the beginning of *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm's dialogue partner, Boso, puts the following question: "By what necessity and for what reason hath God, being omnipotent, assumed, in order to its restoration, the humiliations and weakness of human nature?" (Anselm 1909: 2) In other words, why was the Incarnation necessary? Anselm (1909: 27) concludes: "If no one but God can make that satisfaction and no one but man is obliged to make it, then it is necessary that a God-Man make it." The satisfaction that Anselm speaks about is of compensating God for the honour that, in our fallen state, we have not given Him. Further, no amount of holy living now will satisfy the past debts – we are incapable of saving ourselves. (Noble 1999: 30)

Stott (1986: 119) summarises Anselm's contribution as follows:

> He perceived clearly the extreme gravity of sin (as a wilful rebellion against God in which the creature affronts the majesty of his Creator), the unchanging holiness of God (as unable to condone any violation of his honour), and the unique perfections of Christ (as the God-man who voluntarily gave himself up to death for us).

However, as with the other key ideas of the Atonement, there are problems in Anselm's treatment, not least that his definition of sin solely "as an act or failure to act . . . [fails to recognise that] sin is attitude and disposition, sin is a condition of sinfulness" (Noble 1999: 31). Whilst Anselm shows how Christ's sacrifice means that God forgives and accepts us, he does not address the question of how the condition of sinfulness is dealt with.

The *Christus Victor* theory, associated with Gustaf Aulén has more to say about how Christ defeats the forces of evil on the cross, dealing not only with sin as an external, objective power, but sin as an internal reality (Noble 1999: 29). In tracing the idea back to the Greek and Western Fathers Aulén observes that for the early theologians Incarnation and Atonement were organically connected (Aulén 1931: 42). Thus, we find that a consideration of what Christ did on the cross is incomplete without a consideration of who Christ is on the cross, particularly in His humanity: "Christ sanctified our humanity by assuming it; Christ sanctified our humanity by living in it; Christ sanctified our humanity by crucifying it." (Noble 1999: 32)

The Word made flesh

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only sin, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14 NRSV).

In assuming our humanity, Christ the eternal Son, the *logos*, the Word of God fully identifies Himself with what it means to be human. Thomas F. Torrance, following Calvin (2008: 298) notes:

It is only in Jesus Christ, however, that the Word or Son really becomes flesh, but in becoming flesh of our flesh he entered into our adamic existence as a man made of a woman, made under the law. Within that continuity of adamic existence, fallen existence, he is nevertheless true man, and true Son of God in true union with the Father. (Torrance 2008: 94)

Torrance (2008: 94) emphasises the importance of the virgin birth, which "must not be understood as a theory explaining how the Son of God became man . . . [but] rather an indication of what happened within humanity when the Son of God became man".

Torrance perceives that the unity of Christ with fallen humanity, in consequence of the virgin birth (2008: 94) has much to do with how he sees God acting as Creator in human history, bringing about the new creation through intervention in fallen creation, renewing it into what He had always intended it would be:

In the virgin birth the incarnation has taken a meaningful form which tells us that here in the midst of our nature and humanity God is recreating our humanity, that here God is at work in an act of pure grace. It is an act within our humanity and its creaturely continuity, for he who is no creature became creature. (Torrance 2008: 95)

Gunton (1992: 43) concurs, although his comment that, "Jesus was as we are, a creature in relations . . . with other people and the world" perhaps rather stretches the point. However, his purpose is to explore Christ's relationship with His Creation: "As bound up with the world as any other human being, he is yet its lord and redeemer, recalling it from its bondage and decay so that it may participate in its true directedness." (1992: 47)

The Incarnation accomplishes the union of God the Creator with His creation:

Our union with Christ is grounded on his union with us. We can be one with him because he made himself one with us. As always, the divine

initiative comes first. Christ's union with us took place in his incarnation. (Letham 1993: 77)

Similarly, Torrance (2008: 106) observes: "What happens in the incarnation is the union of God and man. . . . God and man meet in Jesus Christ and a new covenant is eternally established and fulfilled." Thus, the union of Christ and humanity, and not solely Atonement, seals the new covenant and paves the way for reconciliation between God and humanity:

> Jesus Christ is not only mediator between God and man, but as such opens up a new way from the old humanity into the new. . . . [The virgin birth] reveals God as the creator and redeemer actually with us in our estranged human existence, and as God bringing out of our fallen and sinful existence a new humanity that is holy and perfect. (Torrance 2008: 94)

Torrance's understanding of the God who is with us finds an echo in Calvin (2008: 298):

> Thus the Son of God behooved to become our Immanuel, i.e. God with us; and in such a way, that by mutual union his divinity and our nature might be combined; otherwise, neither was the proximity near enough, nor the affinity strong enough, to give us hope that God would dwell with us.

Calvin's view is that a mediator between God and man can only be effective by entering into our humanity: "the most appropriate remedy, setting the Son of God familiarly before us as one of ourselves." (2008: 298) Torrance takes that perspective further, recognising that only through union with Christ can humanity participate in the renewal of humanity that is God's initiative. Faithful to the Noahic covenant (Genesis 9) God graciously chooses not to dispose of, or replace, humanity but to bring about a renewal of humanity by the act of His entering into it. Thus, God, in Christ, participates in humanity in order that humanity "may become participants in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4, NRSV). Torrance calls this, "A recreation within our human existence." (2008: 99)

Following the approach of the Church Fathers, Torrance also connects the doctrines of Incarnation and Resurrection, stating that they "are the twin signs testifying to the miraculous life of the Son of God within our humanity." (2008: 96). It is this miraculous life of Christ that brings new life to our fallen humanity.

Because Christ, the second Adam, was the first to be raised incorruptible this is now available to the whole of humanity, all of which is united to Christ because of His gracious Incarnation. Hence, the connection between Incarnation and Resurrection is made.

The concept of corruption is important to the Fathers, who see it as the consequence of sin, the sense in which "human nature itself was in bondage to decay and death." (Noble 1999: 34) In His Incarnation, Christ makes what was corrupted incorruptible:

> If, therefore, there had been only sin and not its consequences of corruption, repentance would have been very well. But if, since transgression had overtaken them, men were now prisoners to natural corruption, what else should have happened? Or who was needed for such grace and recalling except the Word of God, who also in the beginning had created the universe from nothing? For it was his task . . . to bring what was corruptible back again to incorruption. (Athanasius, cited in Noble 1999: 34)

In the face of this, McIntyre's claim that Athanasius "never faces the question of why it was necessary that the Word, being man, pays for man the sacrifice which man could never pay" (1992: 17) fails to stand up to scrutiny. Conversely, Hutton (1993: 17) shows that Athanasius' concern with the question of sin, its consequences, and God's solution to it led him to pose the Christological questions with which he is most associated. Further, Athanasius (2001: 331) puts forward an explanation of how Christ brought incorruption back to the corrupted:

> Therefore, assuming a body like ours, because all people were liable to the corruption of death, [the Word] surrendered it to death for all

humanity, and offered it to the Father. He presented it to the Father as an act of pure love for humanity, so that by all dying in him the law concerning the corruption of humanity might be abolished.

By His Incarnation Christ assumed our mortality, "and by taking our [mortality] to the grave, Christ transformed it." (Noble 1999: 34) Because Christ is united to the whole of humanity, the whole of humanity can experience Resurrection. This can lead to an idea of universal Atonement, but it need not do so. We can hold the idea that the whole of humanity participates in the work of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14) in tension with the idea of justification by faith (Romans 3:28). Letham (1993: 79) observes:

> If [Christ] became one with the race by his incarnation it seems to follow that the entire race is united with him and so will be saved. The Bible . . . stresses the utter necessity of repentance and faith for salvation. . . . The Word became flesh. He was, and is for ever, one of us.

If our corporate union with Christ has its source and roots in the Incarnation, then our personal union with Christ begins with, and depends on, our repentance and faith in Him. Williams (1960: 41), commenting on Wesley's understanding of prevenient grace, notes:

> Because of original sin, the natural man is 'dead to God' and unable to move toward God or respond to him. It is through the work of prevenient grace that he is given the power to respond or resist.

The key is that Christ makes the transformation of humanity possible – the humanity identified with the first Adam, a fallen humanity, is now transformed into the humanity identified with Christ, the second Adam, the one who came to demonstrate what humanity was always intended to be. Letham (1993: 78) takes up the theme:

> Because of the revealed nature of God, what was required was for God himself to accomplish our salvation from within our own life and

experience. . . . Only another Adam could undo the damage the first Adam had done.

The identification and union, with sinful, mortal humanity and the sinless, immortal Christ can be a cause of difficulty. Cyril of Alexandria (2001: 263) emphasises that, in the Incarnation, Christ is united to humanity without any change to His divinity:

> In declaring that the Word was made 'to be incarnate' and 'made human,' we do not assert that there was any change in the nature of the Word when it became flesh . . . but we say that the Word, in an indescribable and inconceivable manner, united personally to himself flesh endowed with a rational soul, and thus . . . was called the Son of man.

In response, Noble (1999: 35) asks, "Did the Greek Fathers think that [Christ] took our sinful nature, and, if so, does that not compromise the sinlessness of Christ?" His response to his own question (1999: 35) is very powerful:

> The fallen humanity, our humanity, which God the Son took from us through his mother Mary, was indeed sinful humanity . . . But in the very act of taking it, He sanctified it by His Holy Spirit so that in His own body . . . it was the old humanity, weak, mortal flesh, in bondage to decay and death – but sinless. The conception and birth of Jesus is thus for them a crucial moment in the history of salvation.

Calvin (2008: 308), taking a position against those who taught that it was the absence of a human father that made Christ sinless, draws the same conclusion:

> We do not hold Christ to be free from all taint, merely because he was born of a woman unconnected with a man, but because he was sanctified by the Spirit, so that the generation was pure and spotless, such as it would have been before Adam's fall.

For Calvin, then, the humanity of Jesus is that which it was always intended to be. Christ not only shows us what sanctified humanity is like, but also enables our own sanctification. Gunton, wary of attempts "to isolate Jesus' humanity from ours" (2002: 99) argues that the Roman Catholic doctrine of Immaculate Conception "prevents the doctrine of the humanity of Jesus from performing its saving function." (2002: 99) If we follow a doctrine whereby Mary is sinless in order that Christ may also be we have several problems, firstly that absolute purity is an attribute of the Creator rather than post-fall humanity, but also that unless Jesus receives sinful human nature from Mary He doesn't receive it on behalf of the rest of humanity either. Following a Trinitarian pathway, Gunton (2002: 101) sees that the sinlessness of Christ has nothing to do with Mary and everything to do with His own nature, as well as the nature of Father and Spirit:

> Because the Father's action is mediated by the Son and the Spirit, the Son and the Spirit are correspondingly intrinsic to the Father's eternal being . . . It is by the power of his Spirit that God the Father shapes a body for his Son in the womb of Mary, enabling this sample of human flesh to that which it was created to be . . . The Spirit's action is a renewing action, and therefore makes perfect that which enters the process marked by the accumulated corruption of the ages.

The paradox of the sinless Christ assuming a sinful humanity has been a controversial view, and is a relatively recent development, initially associated with Edward Irving in the nineteenth century, who was eventually expelled from ministry in the Church of Scotland for his teaching (Macleod 1998: 222). Irving may have used provocative language, but he still held to the sinlessness of Christ and it wasn't until Barth "enthusiastically espoused that Christ took a fallen humanity" (Macleod 1998: 223) that the idea began to find more acceptance.

Noble finds support for the apparent paradox in the Greek Fathers. In the thought of the Fathers, fallenness and sin were quite different. Sin "had ontological consequences for mankind" (1999: 34), one of which is mortality. We resolve the paradox when we recognise the frailty and mortality of the still

sinless Christ. Gregory of Nyssa (cited in Noble 1999: 34) expresses it in very evocative language:

> [God] with a view to the destruction of sin, was blended with human nature, like a sun as it were making his dwelling in a murky cave and by His presence dissipating the darkness by means of His light. For though He took our filth upon Himself, yet He is not Himself defiled by the pollution, but in His own self He purifies the filth.

Baillie expresses a similar idea in his "paradox of grace" (1948: 114) – the idea that any good in humanity "is somehow not wrought by himself but by God" (1948: 114). In the Incarnation of Christ the paradox of grace is "complete and absolute . . . [the] life of Jesus which, being the perfection of humanity, is also, and even in a deeper and prior sense, the very life of God Himself" (Baillie, 1948: 117). Whilst pointing to the Incarnation as the supreme example of the paradox of grace Baillie's treatment perhaps rather emphasises fallen humanity as a starting point, from which arise questions of personal and moral responsibility which then return us to Moltmann and the obscuring of the *imago Dei* (Moltmann, 1985: 229). Contrary to the Thomist view referred to earlier, Baillie emphasises that "Christianity transcends morality altogether and there is no such thing as a Christian ethic" (1948: 115). A detailed consideration of that is beyond our scope here.

Of course, it is our humanity, not Christ's that is in need of sanctification. With that perspective we can join Noble in his confident assertion "that the sanctification of our humanity in Jesus takes place right from the moment of His conception." (1999: 36) However, whilst the assumption of our humanity by Christ is necessary for our sanctification we may also consider that it isn't sufficient – we need to consider the way in which Jesus lives His humanity. Here, we may be assured by the ongoing presence of the Spirit in the life of Jesus, and the obedience of the Son to the will of the Father. Christ has the capacity to disobey God, and the free will so to do, but chooses to follow His Father's will, remaining sinless.

The obedience of Christ

In His humanity, Christ remains sinless, although, as the temptation narratives suggest, He had the capacity to sin. The witness of the New Testament testifies to this aspect of Christ: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15 NRSV). Gunton (1992: 53) states that, "If Jesus did not share our human trials, he is as irrelevant to our needs as if he had not borne the same flesh." Torrance (2008: 116) concurs:

> Jesus lived out among humanity a life of utter obedience and faithfulness to the creator and Father. As such he was the perfect image of God on earth, for in him the will of God was done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Gunton, however, goes further in observing that it is too simplistic to equate Christ's temptations with our own, "because they are those consequent upon the calling that follows from the divine acknowledgment and the sending of the Spirit. . . . [His] temptations are messianic." (1992: 55) However, in His obedience to the Father, Christ sanctifies our humanity:

> And, because in the original formation of Adam all of us were tied and bound up with death through his disobedience, it was right that through the obedience of Him who was made man for us we should be released from death. (Irenaeus, cited in Noble 1999: 37)

Jesus is portrayed by the gospel writers as having all the traits of other human beings: hunger, thirst, fatigue, anger – but at every stage of life He is obedient. Gunton's claim that the temptations of Jesus are connected to His call and purpose, and therefore, of little relevance to the rest of us, have some resonance but the fact remains that Jesus chose to exercise free will in accordance with the Father's wishes – in the wilderness, at Gethsemane and at all the other "opportune times" (Luke 4:13) in between:

> The Jesus we meet in the Gospels is someone who prays, who speaks of putting his will and his decisions at the service of his Father. He is

someone who is in a relationship of dependence on the one he prays to as Father . . . Jesus isn't God just when he is being strong and in control; he's God when he speaks lovingly to God the Father, when he submerges what his human nature fears or longs for in love with the Father. (Williams, 2007: 65)

Jesus sanctifies human nature by living in obedience to the will of His Father. Gunton states, "In Jesus we meet God redemptively present to the world in person." (1992: 48)

To understand Christian holiness and "the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified" we look at the example of Jesus and His life of obedience. Quoting C. H. Dodd, Coutts helpfully observes:

We may fairly say that it is never safe to emphasis the call to holiness as part of Christian teaching, unless the idea of the Holy is understood by constant reference to the Jesus of the Gospels, his example and his teaching. (Coutts, 1976: ??)[1]

Ultimately, the crucifixion stands as the culmination of Christ's obedient life.

The cross is the outcome of the two marks of Jesus' humanity as we have described them: of the involvement of the incarnate Son in the network of the fallen creation and of his obedience to the Father's will worked out in the temptations and ministry. (Gunton 1992: 58)

The crucifixion is not only the greatest demonstration of Christ's love (Hutton 1993: 49), it is also the point at which the One who identified with sinful humanity, whilst remaining sinless, "became sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV). Commenting on the crucified Christ's prayer of dereliction, Macleod (1998: 176) observes:

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[1] I am indebted to Lt-Col Ian Barr for the quotation and gladly incorporate his suggestion, but am unable to locate a precise reference as my copy of No Continuing City is 200 miles away!

> In his self-image, he is no longer Son, but Sin; no longer . . . the Beloved with whom God is well-pleased, but . . . the cursed one. . . . The great *for* of substitution enmeshes Christ in the guilt of his people and justifies God in treating him as sin deserves.

Commenting along similar lines, James B. Torrance (1981: 143) notes:

> In Jesus Christ . . . we have both God giving himself to men in unconditional forgiveness, and at the same time we see Jesus, as the Representative Head of the race, . . . Saying Amen in our humanity to the just judgment of God . . . submitting for us (not for himself) to the verdict of guilty, in offering his life in death on the Cross.

Thus, we are left contemplating one of the mysteries of the Incarnation, how Christ who had no sin became sin, but at the same time we may need to be reminded that, "We must not confuse redemption as an experience with theories of its possibility" (Mackintosh 1912: 28). Mackintosh's advice is well taken but we do need recognise, with Moltmann, that Calvary is a fully Trinitarian event in which God in every aspect of His being is fully involved:

> The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The grief of the Father here is just as important as the death of the Son. The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father, and if God has constituted himself as the Father of Jesus Christ, then he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of the Son. (Moltmann, 1974: 251)

Bauckham helpfully comments on how Moltmann recasts Christ's cry of dereliction "as an event of divine suffering in which Jesus suffers dying in abandonment by his Father, and the Father suffers in grief the death of his Son. As such, it is the act of divine solidarity with the godforsaken world." (Bauckham, 2005: 153)

When we view the crucifixion through the lenses of Christ's dereliction we find ourselves drawn back to the themes of *Christus Victor*. The cross heralds the

destruction of sin and all its consequences, the destruction of all that would enslave us and the end to Satan's claim over us:

> Sovereign Divine Love has taken the initiative, broken through the order of justice and merit, triumphed over the powers of evil, and created a new relation between the world and God. (Aulén 1931: 79)

Torrance (1981: 135) comments on the bond of love, demonstrated by Christ, which is the work of the Spirit:

> There is this established for us a twofold relationship, between God and man in Christ and at the same time a relationship between Christ and the Church, both of which are understood in terms of the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of love between Christ and his people.

The key to our sanctification is that the cross is a finished work. Because Christ graciously unites Himself with the whole of humanity and deals with sin and sinfulness as ontological realities, the condition of sin is dealt with. Christ is raised to life and we are raised to new life in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17) and with Him (Colossians 2:12) through faith.

Again, using the language of corruption for death in every aspect of its meaning, Athanasius (2001: 331) explains how the cross is effective for all humanity, because Christ has united all of humanity to Himself.

> The Word thus takes on a body capable of death, in order that, by partaking in the Word that is above all, this body might be worthy to die instead for all humanity, and remain incorruptible through the indwelling Word, and thus put an end to corruption through the grace of his resurrection. . . . Hence he did away with death for all who are like him by the offering of the body which he had taken on himself. . . . Thus, the incorruptible Son of God, being united with all humanity by likeness to them, naturally clothed all humanity with incorruption, according to the promise of the resurrection.

Conclusion – Participation in Christ

Gary W. Deddo (2007: 138) observes, "that essential to the very meaning of being a follower of Christ is that one is united to Christ." He further observes that our contemporary evangelical language of personal response "can leave us on a precarious perch" as we can too easily focus on what we have done in coming to Christ than in what He has done in coming for us. Noble (1999: 29) concurs:

> Christ's death on the cross was the objective event, the real victory, the actual moment of salvation. And my subjective Christian experience is only real and valid if it is . . . A participation in, that actual, real, objective victory through death on the cross.

One of the great mysteries of sanctification is that we are graciously allowed to participate in Christ's redemptive work. We share in life with Him the life that He has made possible for us. James B. Torrance (1981: 128), commenting on Christian worship, observes that worship is "the gift of participating through the Spirit in the (incarnate) Son's communion with the Father – of participating, in union with Christ, in what he has done for us once and for all in his life and death on the Cross . . ." Whilst we are crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20) we also participate on an ongoing basis in life with Him.

The language of union and participation helps us in an understanding of how the Incarnation influences our own sanctification, in that "we are so united to Christ that the core of our very being is changed because it has become spiritually joined to the perfected humanity of Jesus." (Deddo 2007: 139)

Whereas Torrance talks about union and participation with Christ interchangeably, Deddo seems to separate them, seeing union with Christ as being about our personal discipleship (2007: 139) and participation with Christ as being about ministry and mission (2007: 145). However, the separation of personal discipleship and ministry and mission is a false dichotomy: personal holiness is expressed in mission. There must be a missional dimension to our personal discipleship, in our personal response to the mystery of Christ and His

gracious Incarnation: "Participation . . . holds together what we do, and that in which we are given to participate – the Son's communion with the Father, and the Son's Mission from the Father to the world." (Torrance 1981: 145)

In conclusion we return to Noble (1999: 32) and a reminder of the three dimensions in which the Incarnation of Christ sanctifies our fallen humanity: by assuming it, by living it, by crucifying it. The threefold response of our fallen humanity, then, is perhaps best expressed in article 7 of The Salvation Army's doctrines: repentance towards God (assuming it), faith in Christ (living it) and regeneration by the Holy Spirit (in consequence of crucifying it).

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