THE PLACE OF ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS
IN HISTORICAL AND DOGMATIC THEOLOGY
ACCORDING TO THOMAS F. TORRANCE

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ABSTRACT: *This essay summarizes Torrance's reading of Irenaeus' place in historical theology, and then examines Torrance's use of Irenaeus in the treatment of three distinct theological areas: (1) Christology, (2) the theology of baptism, and (3) the hermeneutics of doctrine. Assessment is offered with particular reference to Eastern Orthodox theology. Emergent from this study is a contemporary ecumenical appeal to Irenaeus as a model realist theologian, offering a unitary resolution to plaguing dualisms in historic Christian theology.*

For some recent theologians, the figure of Irenaeus has come to stand as the emblem of biblical orthodoxy, the grand measure against which to assess the history of Christian thought.[1] For T.F. Torrance, that accolade belongs chiefly to Athanasius: it is to the "Athanasius-Cyril axis"[2] of early conciliar Christology that Torrance would re-call his contemporaries. Yet among the

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[1] Cf. Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 159; also: Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999); John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006); Douglas Knight, *The Eschatological Economy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2006). A comparable centrality for Irenaeus has been argued regarding the theology of von Balthasar: see Kevin Mongrain, *The Systematic Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: an Irenaean Retrieval* (New York: Crossroads, 2002).

[2] Thomas Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975), 9 (cited hereafter as *Reconciliation*).

noted patristic forerunners to this Nicene-Ephesine standard, the most crucial touchstone for Torrance's own theological exposition is Irenaeus.

The present essay provides a summary of Torrance's reading of Irenaeus' place in historical theology and then examines his use of Irenaeus in three doctrinal themes. Assessment is offered with particular reference to Eastern Orthodox theology. Emergent from this study is a contemporary and ecumenical appeal to Irenaeus as a model "realist"[3] theologian, offering a unitary resolution to plaguing dualisms in Christology, sacramental theology, and hermeneutics.

Irenaeus in Torrance's Reading of the History of Christian Doctrine

Irenaeus and the Apostolic Fathers

Torrance's interest in the second century dates from his earliest period, signaled by his dissertation, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (1948), begun at Karl Barth's suggestion in 1937.[4] Highlighting supposed discontinuities between the NT and Apostolic Fathers, Torrance argues that a misunderstanding of the NT concept of grace took place as early as the second century, resulting "in a doctrine that is largely un-biblical, and that has been only partially corrected by the work of Augustine and the Reformers." The great mistake: "to detach the thought of grace from the *person* of Jesus Christ."[5]

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[3] In Torrance's description, realism entails "an epistemic orientation of the two-way relation between the subject and object poles of thought and speech, in which ontological primacy and control are naturally accorded to reality over all our conceiving and speaking of it": See T.F Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1982), 60. Such realism critically concedes to the idealist an element of active mental composition in acts of knowledge, yet insists (against Kantian idealism) on the possibility of apprehending reality-in-itself, in a kind of mediated immediacy. It is this particular dimension of Torrance's realism which comes to the fore especially in his treatment of Irenaeus. See T.F. Torrance, "Theological Realism," in Hebblethwaite and Sutherland, *The Philosophical Frontiers of Theology: Essays Presented to D.M. MacKinnon* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 169-96.

[4] Thomas Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1996) (hereafter: *Grace*).

[5] *Ibid.,* v.

While Torrance's thesis deals little with Irenaeus, two comments here are noteworthy. Criticizing the Apostolic Fathers for a relapse into Hellenistic naturalism with an "idea of grace as ghostly potency . . . not very different from the deifying *charis* of Greek mythology," Torrance states:

> It was only after the circulation of Paul's epistles gave the Churches an opportunity to study the N.T. Gospel that its real implications began to be grasped, as in Irenaeus. But meantime the whole Church had become thoroughly moralistic. Some of the implications of the Gospel, grace particularly, were never recovered till the Reformation.[6]

> The idea of deification was taken up even by such good theologians as Irenaeus and Athanasius. Nothing could be more characteristically Hellenistic.[7]

Already Torrance discerns in Irenaeus a grasp of the radical character of the NT doctrine of grace which, he argues, is identified with the person and work of Christ, wherein God's love is actualized "in a deed of absolutely decisive significance which cuts across human life and sets it on a wholly new human basis."[8] This emphasis will also characterize Torrance's mature reading of Irenaeus. On the other hand, Torrance's criticism of the doctrine of *theosis* as a species of Hellenistic naturalism – a reading reflecting the influence of Harnack – will be reversed. In 1964, he leveled a plea for "reconsideration by the Reformed Church of what the Greek Fathers called *theosis.*"[9] Countering Harnack in terms reminiscent of Georges Florovsky, the later Torrance asserts: "far from a radical Hellenisation having taken place . . . in making use of Greek thought-forms Christianity radically transformed them . . . not the Hellenising of Christianity but the Christianising of Hellenism."[10]

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[6]   *Ibid.,* 136, f2.

[7]   *Ibid.,* 140, f3.

[8]   *Ibid.,* 34 and 133; cf. 139. Cf. Thomas Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 297, for discussion of Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3:11:2.

[9]   Thomas Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975), 243; cf. 214 (hereafter: *Reconstruction*).

[10]   Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 68.

Nevertheless, some trace of Harnack-like thinking can still be discerned even in Torrance's mature patrological discussions.[11] In Torrance's 1995 collection on patristic hermeneutics, none of the figures criticized in his thesis are brought forward for re-assessment.[12] The grand exception of Irenaeus seems in part related to a belief in some unique link to Jewish tradition: Torrance even claims Irenaeus knew Hebrew.[13] Torrance's recently published dogmatics lectures register an apparently fixed judgment: throughout the second century, "the atonement failed, on the whole, to meet with any deep understanding in the Greek world."[14]

Irenaeus and Melito

Together with Irenaeus, there are two contemporaries whom Torrance excepts from this judgment: the author of *Epistle to Diognetus* and Melito of Sardis.[15] These he credits with overcoming Greek mythologizing tendencies to uncover the "biblical-theological understanding of the Gospel,"[16] central to which is the recognition "that our salvation, and our knowledge of God, are grounded upon *divine action in time.*"[17] Torrance regards Melito especially as standing in the same school with Irenaeus

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[11] As Robert Wilken observes, Torrance "underestimates the ways in which Origen distanced himself from Hellenistic conceptions. In part this is because his understanding of Origen still stands in the shadow of von Harnack, filtered through Hanson, in part because of an uncritical use of heuristic categories such as the distinction between the Hebraic (Athanasius) and the Greek (Origen) ways of thinking," Review of Thomas Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995)*, Theological Studies* 57 (no 4 D 1996), 743-744.

[12] But contrast the judgment of Ignatius in Torrance, *Grace,* 89, with Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 114, f7.

[13] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 77.

[14] Thomas Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2008), 292 [hereafter: *Incarnation*]. Cf. also Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 275.

[15] Torrance, *Incarnation*, 292.

[16] Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 215.

[17] Torrance, *Incarnation,* 292.

for his grasp of the all-transforming significance of Christ's death in history.[18]

Torrance detects in Melito and Irenaeus two approaches to this *Heilsgeschichte*. Both interpreted the Gospel in light of the unity between prophets and apostles, Israel and the Church. Yet where Irenaeus sensed more deeply their substantial oneness, Melito underscored the difference, stressing the supra-historical significance of Christ's Passover.[19] Further, where Irenaeus is didactic, Melito offers a dramatic, cultic proclamation.[20] These two foci correspond to the Jewish *Halakah* and *Haggadah*:[21] while Irenaeus is oriented towards Scriptural exposition of the *regula fidei*, Melito renders "a kind of 'Haggadic' proclamation" of Christ's Pasch drawn from the Exodus account and its memorial in the feast of Passover – "cultic," not in being focused on rites, but on the objective "'structure of the mystery.'"[22] As Torrance insists, these respective foci, of *genomena* and *gegrammena,*[23] "event and message, the Word and words, the Truth and truths, are intrinsically integrated, and cannot be torn apart without serious dismemberment of the Faith."[24] Thus, the approaches of Irenaeus and Melito are "complementary."[25]

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[18] Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 215. Torrance notes that the two were linked as early as Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* 5:28:5: "Who does not know the books of Irenaeus and Melito which proclaim Christ as God and Man?": Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 75. (Although Torrance does not note it, Eusebius' statement is a quotation from an earlier, probably third century, work entitled *The Little Labyrinth,* whose authorship has been attributed – perhaps wrongly – to St. Hippolytus of Rome.) The articles on Irenaeus' *Demonstratio* and Melito's *Peri Pascha* in *Divine Meaning* were originally delivered as a two-part lecture.

[19] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 75-6. Torrance notes that this emphasis was continued later by Epiphanius, a figure whose Jewish background Torrance also makes much of: cf. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 280.

[20] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 76.

[21] *Ibid.,* 57-58.

[22] *Ibid.,* 77-78.

[23] *Ibid.,* 57; cf. Torrance, *Reconstruction,* 39.

[24] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 57.

[25] *Ibid.,* 76.

Irenaeus and Tertullian

If Melito constitutes Irenaeus' most notable second-century complement, it is Tertullian whom Torrance singles out most for negative contrast. Tertullian offers with Irenaeus a powerful early witness to fleshly resurrection – "the redemption of man's *perishable* form of existence" – against docetic heresy.[26] Beyond that, however, a sharply drawn historical typology emerges, emblemizing two divergent ways: "unitary" and "dualistic."

Dualism is a recurrent theme in Torrance, with two chief referents: (1) separation between phenomenal and intelligible, *kosmos aisthētos* and *kosmos noētos* (Ptolemy, Plato, Philo, Clement, Origen, Augustine), observation and thought (Descartes), "contingent truths of history" and "necessary truths of reason" (Lessing), "absolute" and "relative" space and time (Newton), *phenomena* and *noumena* (Kant), *Historie* and *Geschichte* (W. Herrmann, Dilthey, Bultmann), or fact and value (positivism); and (2) separation between being and act in God (Arianism). Underlying all such "cosmological and epistemological dualism," however, is an "ontological *monism,*"[27] in which the incommensurable difference between Creator and creation is obscured and confused with dualities which cut *across* the span of *created* reality. Thus, "dualism" does not preclude the same naturalism at work here as criticized earlier in the Apostolic Fathers: "the remarkable assimilation – e.g. in Tertullian – of the Christian conception of Spirit and substance to those of Stoic philosophy," in which "grace is thus assimilated to the concept of being and there is a graduated infusion of grace corresponding to a grand hierarchy of being."[28]

In spite of his anti-docetism, Tertullian's eschatology does not extend to the non-dualist affirmation of cosmic restoration found in Irenaeus.

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[26] T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976), 72, f11, and 75, f13 [hereafter: *Resurrection*]. On this point, Torrance cites Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* II. 44.1 and V. 9.3, and Tertullian, *De carne Christi* and *De resurrectione Christi.*

[27] Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 217, 225, etc., and *Trinitarian Faith,* 85.

[28] T.F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church,* vol. 1 (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1959), 147 [hereafter: *Conflict and Agreement* 1]; cf. also, T.F Torrance, "Ein vernachlässigter Gesichtspunkt der Tauflehre," *Evangelische Theologie,* vol. 16 (nos 10-11, 1956), 490-1 [cited hereafter as "Tauflehre"].

Tertullian envisages the return of physical creation to nothingness.[29] Extending a taxonomy introduced in his 1956 study of eschatology in Luther and Calvin,[30] Torrance regards "the Irenaean tradition" as belonging to the positive eschatology of the East, whereas he finds in Tertullian seeds of a world-denying, Western, "Augustinian" eschatology.[31] Accompanying this is a psychological turn, particularly regarding baptism:

> Whereas Irenaeus had thought of salvation in terms of the historico-redemptive acts of God in Jesus Christ, in whom we are regenerated into God, Tertullian tended to think of salvation as saving discipline in which the healing processes of divine grace and the penitential merit of men cooperate to effect man's cleansing and renewal. . . . emphasis came to be laid firmly, not on the objective act of God in the Incarnation, but upon the candidate's response . . . what *man* does and upon the awful responsibility that devolves on him in baptism, the *pondus baptismi.*[32]

Torrance believes this "switch from a Christocentric to an anthropocentric starting point, evident in the difference of theological outlook between Irenaeus and Tertullian,"[33] opened the way for Donatism[34] and contributed later to a shift in the Western doctrine of the Eucharist, from an event integrated into the objective ground of Christ's paschal mystery, to a fore-shortened focus on the physical conversion of the elements.[35]

Torrance detects a similar shift in the hermeneutics of doctrine. For Irenaeus, doctrine aims to disclose the order already inherent in the

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29   Cf. Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes,* 34.

30   T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 5 *et passim.*

31   Torrance, *Resurrection,* 155, f19. Note the ecumenical-polemical strategy at work here: just as with regard to Eucharistic doctrine in *Space, Time, and Incarnation*, Torrance here connects Calvin with Eastern Orthodoxy and opposes both to Roman and Lutheran "Augustinianism." Cf. *Reconciliation,* 128. See also *Trinitarian Faith,* 106-7, where Torrance notes the "profound interrelation between the doctrines of incarnation, atonement and creation" in Eastern patristics.

32   Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 96.

33   *Ibid.,* 122.

34   Cf. *Ibid.,* 97 and Torrance, "Tauflehre," 491-2.

35   Torrance, *Reconciliation*, 122.

"organic structure" of the "body" of Christian truth:[36] "the canon of truth is properly the truth itself in its own self-evidencing authority."[37] In contrast, Tertullian imported "dualist modes of thought" into theology, conceiving the *depositum fidei* as a system of doctrinal propositions "themselves identical with the truths they were intended to express," thereby introducing a "nominalistic conception of revealed truth."[38] As evidence of this, Torrance highlights Tertullian's association of the *regula fidei* with a codified *lex*[39] and "unity of discipline," a pattern continued in Cyprian.[40]

Here the constructive, polemical stamp of Torrance's historical taxonomy is clear. Tertullian is the proto-nominalist; Irenaeus, styled in Barthian terms, is a "realist" theologian for whom God himself is both the content and medium of revelation.[41] Calvin, Barth and Vatican II are all more or less "Irenaean";[42] Tertullianic propositionalism operates in Westminster Calvinism and the First Vatican Council.[43] Torrance avers:

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[36] T.F. Torrance, "The Trinitarian Foundation of Truth and Authority in the Church," in T.F. Torrance (ed.), *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches,* Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985)*,* 96.

[37] *Ibid.,* 102, with reference to Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.,* 2.4.1.

[38] *Ibid.*, 103.

[39] *Ibid.,* 103.

[40] Cf. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 271.

[41] Cf. T.F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (T&T Clark, 1996), 77. The description of Irenaeus' theology in terms of some variety of "realism" goes back at least as far as P. Battifol, *Études d'Histoire et de Théologie Positive* (Paris, 1902) and F. Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte* (Halle, 1906); more recently, Hans Urs von Balthasar describes Irenaeus as "decidedly the father of the 'realism' of Christian theology": von Balthasar, *Iräneus: Geduld des Reifens* (Basle, 1943; Leipzig, 1983), 9. See also von Balthasar, *The Scandal of the Incarnation: Irenaeus against the Heresies* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 13, and *The Glory of the Lord,* vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984)*,* 45. J. Behr also expresses agreement with this description by von Balthasar: St Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching,* trans. and intro. by John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 18. Torrance's attribution of realism to Irenaeus, however, is more epistemological and less sacramental in focus than the above commentators.

[42] Cf. T.F. Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation," *op. cit.,* 106, 120; "The Deposit of Faith," *Scottish Journal of Theology* [hereafter: *SJTh*] 36 (1983), 17-19; "Ecumenism and Rome," *SJTh* 37 (1984), 59-64. Apart from St. Augustine, Irenaeus is the Father of the Church referenced most frequently throughout the documents of Vatican II, with a total of fourteen citations.

[43] Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation," 105, 107; "Deposit," 26.

the divergence represented by the views of Irenaeus and Tertullian, and a dualist, legalising movement of thought which tended to impose Tertullian-like ways of thinking upon the basic contributions of Irenaeus, have had very far-reaching effects . . . upon the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Churches, not least in the lasting tension . . . between what came to be called 'the substance of the Faith' and dogmatic formulations of the Faith.[44]

Behind this Tertullianic "dualism" is an intellectual tendency which Torrance calls the "Latin heresy": "a habit of thinking in terms of external, symbolical or merely moral relations, which resulted in a serious loss of direct contact with reality."[45] This is associated with Christological error: Tertullian thinks "of the Word of God, not as eternally generated in him, but as an emanation from his Mind which became Word only when God spoke it in creating the world" – following the Stoic distinction between unexpressed mental word (*logos endiathetos*) and spoken word (*logos prophorikos*) which would later form a background to Arianism.[46] In Torrance's view, it is this distinction which stands behind the later notion, suggested by Augustine and espoused by Aquinas, that God and the angels converse *wordlessly,* by intelligence alone.[47] Following cues from patristic thought as well as Anselm and John Reuchlin, Torrance rejects such thinking as out of keeping with the confession of the Son as *logos enousios* – Word in the being of the Father – and indicative of a damaging dualism between *form* and *being* in the doctrine of God.[48] According to Torrance, the "nominalistic" or legal-propositional

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[44]   Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation," 104.

[45]   T.F. Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," in Thomas Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 218.

[46]   A distinction suggested early on in Plato, *Thaet.* 189E, and *Soph.* 263E. Although Torrance does not note it, Irenaeus also appears to reject this distinction in *Adversus Haereses,* 2:13:8.

[47]   *De Trinitate,* book XV; *Summa Theologiae* 1a, q.107, a.1.

[48]   Cf. T.F. Torrance: "Scientific Hermeneutics According to St. Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1962), 259-89; *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge* (Eerdmans, 1984)*,* 316-17; "The Hermeneutics of John Reuchlin," in Bromiley and Muller (ed.) *Church, Word, and Spirit* (Eerdmans, 1987)*,* 107-121; "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," *op. cit.,* 222; *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1980), 95-100;

approach to revealed truth exemplified in Tertullian's concept of the *regula fidei* is directly tied to this dualism: citing M. Heidegger, Torrance argues that one possible result of this "secession of logos from being" is that the "separated *logos* is turned into a sort of *nomos . . .* a set of formalistic ideas which are then imposed upon being in a prescriptive and legalistic way."[49] At bottom, Torrance's Irenaeus-*contra*-Tertullian typology implies an indictment of the Western theological trajectory as insufficiently Nicene, at points even semi-Arian – from which judgment Torrance exempts few leading Westerners after Irenaeus (notably, Hilary of Poitiers, Anselm, Reuchlin, and Barth).[50]

Irenaeus, Origen and the "Athanasius-Cyril Axis"

Torrance therefore reads Irenaeus in positive relation to Nicaea and the "Athanasius-Cyril axis."[51] Following a scholarly tradition well-established since Harnack,[52] Torrance maintains that Athanasius "stands squarely in the tradition of Irenaeus, and develops the biblical-theological tradition which we see reflected in his works."[53] In Torrance's estimate,

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[cont.] *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press), 103-105. Torrance detects this basic dualism continued in the transcendental Thomism of Bernard Lonergan and Edward Schillebeeckx: see Torrance, "The Function of Inner and Outer Word in Lonergan's Theological Method," in Patrick Corcoran (ed.), *Looking at Lonergan's Method* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1975), 101-26, and "Theological Realism," *op. cit.*

49   Thomas F. Torrance, "'The Historical Jesus': From the Perspective of a Theologian," in W. Weinrich, *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Riecke,* Vol II (Mercer, Georgia, 1984), 520. See also Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Wipf & Stock, 1985)*,* 12, 45-51.

50   See footnote 48 above, as well as Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 392-427.

51   Contrast with Gunton, *op. cit.,* 67-8.

52   Adolf von Harnack, *History and Dogma* IV (New York, 1961), 141-142; E.P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis?* (Leiden, 1968), 12, and *Athanasius: De Incarnatione Verbi: Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Amsterdam, 1989), 20; J. Roldanus, *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie avec sa christologie* (Leiden, 1969), 8, 350, 360; A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition,* Vol. I: *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (AD 451*) (New York, 1975); K. Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London, 1998), 19-24, 205-206, and "The Influence of Irenaeus on Athanasius," in M.F. Wiles and E. Yarnold (eds.), *Studia Patristica* XXXVI (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 463-76.

53   Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 179.

Irenaeus' *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* is "a work that more than any other bridges the relation between the teaching of the Apostles themselves and that of Athanasius."[54]

This assertion has the effect of downplaying the latter's dependence on Origen, which Torrance believes exaggerated by modern scholars.[55] Following the old dichotomy between Antiochene and Alexandrian Christologies, Torrance sees orthodox Christology emerging as a "middle stream of development, running from Irenaeus to Athanasius and Cyril."[56] Pre-Nicene Alexandrian thought "never really expelled the Gnostics,"[57] being beholden to a Platonic dualism which Athanasius, following Irenaeus, rejected. Ironically, however, it is precisely this rejection which enables Athanasius to develop an emphasis *common* to Irenaeus and Origen, albeit "in different forms":[58] namely, "the Irenaean (and even Origenist) understanding of salvation as redemption of the *whole man.*"[59] Only through an overcoming of the dualism between phenomenal and intelligible which Torrance believes is the characteristic flaw of Origen could Origen's concept of baptism and prayer as participation in Christ's baptism and priestly prayer achieve full force in Athanasius.[60] Thus, Torrance sees Athanasius' basically Irenaean theology as both correcting and *complemented by* the contribution of Origen.[61]

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[54]   Torrance, book-jacket blurb for Ian MacKenzie, *Irenaeus' Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary* (London: Ashgate, 2002).

[55]   Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 215; cf. also *Trinitarian Faith,* 175-76.

[56]   Torrance, *Incarnation,* 198.

[57]   Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 179.

[58]   Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 230.

[59]   *Ibid.,* 225: on this point, Torrance cites Athanasius' *Ad Epictetum* 7, Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* 5:9:1, and Origen's *Dialektos.* Cf. also Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 163.

[60]   Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 93, 186.

[61]   Thomas Torrance, "The Open Texture of 'Faith' and 'Godliness' in the Church's Confession," in George Dragas (ed.) *Axsum-Thyateira: A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britain* (London, 1985), 149. Contrast with the general approach of Gunton and Farrow, *opera cit.,* who present Irenaeus and Origen in radical opposition.

This contribution entailed a partial reversal of Aristotelian-Stoic thinking about human reason in its relation to God, for which rationality was tied to notions of finite creaturely form: for such thinking, knowledge of the infinite would have to be irrational, and rational knowledge could only be of "a finite, limited and intra-mundane God."[62] Further, "in line with the conception of scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*) which had long prevailed in Alexandria, that exact knowledge is in accordance with the nature (*kata physin*) of what is known, Origen concentrated on developing a way of knowing God which was strictly in accordance with the nature of God as he has revealed himself to us, that is, in a godly way; and he set himself to cultivate personal godliness in reliance upon the grace of Christ and the power of his Spirit, so that he could bring to knowledge of God an appropriately godly habit of mind."[63] While Irenaeus offered a realist notion of "canon," in Origen, "godliness and the rule of faith became operational equivalents."[64] It is this *epistemic,* and indeed likewise *ascetical,*[65] dimension in Origen that was brought to bear upon the otherwise "Irenaean" substance of Athanasius' thought.

This acknowledgment, however, should not be exaggerated. Torrance's appreciation of the *doctor adamantius* is cautious: as Robert Wilken observes, "he seems not to have De Lubac on Origen."[66] Positive discussions of Origen appear quite late, marking a convergence between

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[62] Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 218.

[63] Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 37-8.

[64] *Ibid.,* 38; cf. also 126. Torrance also credits Origen with breaking with ancient Greek "receptacle" notions of space in order to arrive at the "relational" idea of space crucial to Nicene Christology: see "The Relation of the Incarnation to Space in Nicene Theology," in T.F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* pp. 349-363.

[65] "Ascetical" is not Torrance's term, and indeed appears remarkably little in his *oeuvre.* Nevertheless, it is precisely an ascetic theology which stands at the heart of Torrance's notion of theological science, with its stress upon the epistemic necessity of repentance and godliness in the knowledge of God. For a rare comment on the need for "ascetic theology," see Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 26.

[66] Wilken, *op. cit.*

Torrance's Christologically-focused dogmatics and his ever-growing interest in the history of scientific epistemology, not least in Alexandria.[67]

What is consistent from the beginning is an appeal to Irenaeus and Athanasius as a twofold witness to the Christological faith of the ancient Church. Here a 1957 exchange with a Jesuit interlocutor, in debate over the Immaculate Conception, is representative:

> Irenaeus and Athanasius . . . held to the fundamental fact that the Holy Son of God assumed our mortal, corrupt humanity under the bondage of sin in order to heal and redeem it. The flesh which He the sinless Son took from Mary was in the likeness of 'the flesh of sin.' That principle was tersely enunciated by Gregory Nazianzen: 'The unassumed is unhealed.'[68]

According to Torrance, this teaching was a core insight of Irenaeus' doctrine of *anakephalaiōsis*,[69] taught everywhere by Fathers "[f]rom Irenaeus to Cyril of Alexandria."[70] However, in the 5th century West, it was replaced by "the idea advanced by Latin theologians, probably to be traced back to the rather dualist *Tome* of Leo sent to the Council of Chalcedon, that the Son of God assumed a neutral human nature."[71] Torrance believes that this latter, Christological form of the "Latin heresy" had profound consequences for Western treatment of both redemption and revelation, exemplified in the Immaculate Conception dogma ("Scotist heresy"),[72]

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[67] On the Alexandrian scientific background of "dogmatics," cf. T.F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology,* 49-51, as well as the essays on the thought of John Philoponos in T.F. Torrance, *Theological and Natural Science* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2002).

[68] Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement,* vol. 1, 174.

[69] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 68.

[70] Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," *op. cit.,* 231.

[71] Torrance, "Karl Barth and Patristic Theology," *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian,* 203. Thomas Weinandy agrees with this reading of Leo's *Tome,* but notes a contrasting view in Leo's *Sermon* 7:2, where it is stated that when the Son "lowered himself to our condition, He not only assumed our substance (nature), but also the condition of our sinfulness": see Thomas Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 36. According to Weinandy, a position similar to Torrance's is upheld by both Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas: *ibid.,* 46-52.

[72] Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement,* vol. 1, 175.

penal atonement-theory,[73] and the "fundamentalist conception of 'verbal inspiration' of the Bible."[74]

In contrast, Irenaeus and Athanasius understood the incarnation as involving God's taking-up of an *internal relation* with actual humanity.[75] As Irenaeus made clear, God is known through God alone: in the incarnation, fallen humanity is drawn into the Son's own knowledge of the Father.[76] It was this same way of knowing God through *internal* relations that was at stake in Athanasius' defense of the *homoousion*. Torrance claims it was Irenaeus who first gave prominence to the statement of Mt. 11:27/Lk. 10:22, a passage crucial for that defense: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."[77] Similarly, Irenaeus anticipated Athanasius "in putting forward a doctrine of the indwelling or containing of the Son and the Father in one another."[78]

For both Fathers, this "oneness in being and agency between Christ and God" was asserted of the *incarnate* Son and, thus, in *soteriological* perspective.[79] Crucial here is the overcoming of the dualism between humanity and divinity, history and truth. Irenaeus' use of *oikonomia* implies that God's *eternal* purpose has been realized *temporally* in Christ, an understanding epistemologically deepened by

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[73] See especially, Thomas Torrance, "The Singularity of Christ and the Finality of the Cross: The Atonement and the Moral Order," in Nigel Cameron (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Paternoster Press, 1992), 225-256, and Review of Leanne van Dyk, *The Desire of Divine Love: John MacLeod's Doctrine of the Atonement,* in *SJTh,* 49 (1996), 125-7.

[74] T.F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 40.

[75] Torrance, "Deposit of Faith," *op. cit.* 8-9; *Divine Meaning,* 186.

[76] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 108-09, citing Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4:6:4, 6-7 and 4:20:7. On this basis, Torrance conceives of revelation and Scripture on analogy with the hypostatic union: cf. Torrance, review of B.B. Warfield, *The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible, SJTh* 7 (1954) [104-06]*,* 106.

[77] Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy," 214.

[78] Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 67 (citing *Adv. Haer.* 3.19.2), and *The Christian Doctrine of God,* 168, n1 (citing *Adv. Haer.* 3.6.2.)

[79] Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy*,"* 227, and *Divine Meaning,* 67-8.

Athanasius in a realist joining of economy and truth.[80] As Torrance notes, this resembled the later Chalcedonian definition, but with a stronger emphasis upon the reality of the economy, the unity of divine *ousia* with *ta erga* accomplished in the humanity of Christ.[81] Thus, in Torrance's neo-Athanasian theology, the *homoousion* is interpreted dynamically, within an Irenaean account of the redemptive scope of God's covenanted history with Israel as the actual "field" in which Christ is known,[82] providing the "permanent structures" within which revelation is apprehended.[83]

In further evidence of Irenaeus' anticipation of this unitary, *frühkonziliare* Christology, Torrance cites an unauthenticated fragment attributed to Irenaeus which speaks of "the Word of God become one with the flesh by a hypostatic and physical union" (*houto tou Theou logou henōsei, tē kath' hypostasin physikē, henōthentos tē sarki*).[84] Torrance's reading of this union, however, challenges Harnack's one-sided attribution of a deifying "physical" redemption by incarnation alone: "In the teaching of Irenaeus and Athanasius, there was considerable stress upon the obedience of the incarnate Son, and consequently upon the saving significance of the humanity of Christ,"[85] an aspect "often completely omitted by patristic scholars,"[86] at least as regards Athanasius. Thus, the famous dictum regarding deification from Athanasius' *De Incarnatione* 54:3 – too often quoted without regard for context! – is properly

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[80]   Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 259-72. Torrance is particularly concerned to stress an understanding of economy as being-in-act, God's *self*-revelation, against any dualism between divine economy and truth, in which economy might be understood as "reserve" on the part of God (the latter notion which he detects in J.H. Newman: see *Divine Meaning,* 383).

[81]   *Ibid.*, 262.

[82]   Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 50.

[83]   *Ibid.*, 18.

[84]   Fragment xxvii in W. Harvey's edition of *Adversus Haereses*, II (Cambridge, 1857), 493; cited and discussed in "Kerygmatic Proclamation of the Gospel: Irenaeus' *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*," Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 67.

[85]   Torrance, *Incarnation,* 198.

[86]   *Ibid.*, 229; cf. also, Torrance's preface to the dissertation of G.D. Dragas, *St. Athanasius Contra Apollinarem* (Athens, 1985).

interpreted through the Irenaean doctrine of recapitulation through the *human obedience* of Jesus.[87]

This shared Irenaean and Athanasian stress upon the significance of Christ's humanity[88] has another importance. Grasp of Athanasius' appropriation of the Irenaean "understanding of salvation as the redemption of the whole man . . . makes rather irrelevant the distorting distinction between a *Logos-sarx* and a *Logos-anthrōpos* approach which some scholars have employed as a framework for the interpretation of Patristic Christology."[89] Here Torrance aims to put to rest the question of the soul of Christ in Athanasius first raised by Ferdinand Christian Bauer (1792-1860) and recently repeated with suggestions of Apollinarianism by Joseph Leibaert and Aloys Grillmeier; he is likewise concerned to counter Western scholarship's general insinuation of monophysitism in Cyril of Alexandria.[90] Interpreting Cyril's *mia physis* in the light of Irenaeus' doctrine of recapitulation, Torrance observes how

> the distinctively soteriological understanding of the Incarnation deriving through Irenaeus . . . retained a place of centrality in the thought of Cyril. . . . It is the Irenaean form . . . which seems to be in Cyril's mind: 'In this way the Lord has redeemed us with his own blood, giving his soul for our souls and his flesh for our flesh', for Cyril goes out of his way constantly to stress the fact that this reconciling exchange involves our rational soul as well as our flesh or body.[91]

In tracing here the continuity from Irenaeus through Athanasius to Cyril, Torrance suggests a non-dualist Christology "that really transcends the monophysite/diophysite contrapositions which came upon the scene later

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[87]   Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 156.
[88]   Cf. Torrance, *Incarnation*, 198.
[89]   Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 225, 226 f1. Torrance points particularly to Athanasius, *Ad Epictetum,* and Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5:9:1 for comparison.
[90]   *Ibid.,* 240.
[91]   *Ibid.,* 167-8. The quotation is from Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer* 5:1:2.

on,"[92] thus pointing the way towards theological reconciliation between non-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian Orthodox confessions.

As shown above, Torrance regards Irenaeus as the crucial pre-Nicene patristic source for orthodox Christology. Irenaeus overcomes the Greek dualism between "truth" and "event," securing a theologically *realist* understanding of Christ's life and death. Such realism entails the affirmation that, in the humanity of Christ, God has laid hold of our actual humanity and redeemed it by way of an *internal relation,* thus enabling man to know God himself in his own internal relations. The following discussion examines this realist appeal to Irenaeus in three major areas: (1) incarnation and atonement, (2) baptism, and (3) hermeneutics.

Irenaeus in the Theology of T.F. Torrance: Themes and Assessment

Incarnation and Atonement

Torrance claims that it was Barth who recovered for Western theology the "Irenaean" understanding of the incarnation as an atoning assumption of *fallen* humanity.[93] This is ecumenically significant: Torrance regards the

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[92] *Ibid.,* 226. While not disavowing Chalcedon*,* Torrance distances himself somewhat from its formulations and is sharply critical of the interpretations given this council in Western theology: "There is more than a suspicion of dualism . . . in the christological formulation of Chalcedon, which was thrown into high relief by the critique of the post-Chalcedonian 'Cyrillians' who traced the problem back to the undeniable dualism of Leo's *Tome.* Western interpretation of Chalcedonian Christology is still affected, unfortunately, by this Leonine slant": T.F. Torrance, "Theological Realism," in Hebblethwaite and Sutherland, *op. cit.,* 194, n4. Nevertheless, Torrance's expansive use of the *enhypostasia / anhypostasia* distinction, attributed to Leontius of Byzantium and mediated through Barth, indicates his indebtedness to the post-451 Byzantine Orthodox interpretation of Chalcedon in positive, Cyrillian terms: cf. I, 242-9; *Theological Science* (Oxford University Press, 1969), 217ff, 269; *Space, Time and Resurrection,* 51; *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 125, 198-201; *The Christian Doctrine of God,* 144, 160; *Incarnation,* 64, 84, 105, 197, 212, 228. But see also F. Leron Shults, "A Dubious Christological Formula: From Leontius of Byzantium to Karl Barth," *Theological Studies,* Vol. 57 (1996).

[93] Cf. "Karl Barth and Patristic Theology," *op. cit.,* 202: Torrance cites Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2: *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (T&T Clark, 1956), 147ff. and 172ff.

issue as a stumbling-block between Greeks and Latins,[94] and maintains his own view reflects that of Eastern Orthodoxy.[95] Ironically, however, several leading modern Orthodox theologians hold precisely the teaching Torrance rejects as "Latin."[96] Thus, it may be asked whether Torrance is reading Barth into Irenaeus.

Although Irenaeus never raises the question exactly in Torrance's terms, his framing of *recapitulatio* does lend some support to Torrance's understanding. Irenaeus holds that Christ assumed from the first a humanity which was *mortal*: "By summing up in Himself the whole human race from the beginning to the end, He has also summed up its death."[97] Nor was it only mortal, but, indeed, the very "flesh which sin had mastered and seized and dominated . . . that He might fight for the fathers and vanquish in Adam that which had struck us in Adam."[98] *Adversus Haereses* 5:14:2-3 in particular reveals how Irenaeus regards Christ's assumption of flesh as already an act of "reconciliation" of precisely that "alienated" humanity "which had perished" and which "had formerly been in enmity."[99]

Irenaeus' assertion that "God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, that he might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man"[100] *could* be read to imply the assumption of prelapsarian conditions. In context, however, this statement refers not so much to the condition of the humanity assumed, as to its virginal conception and the identity of its nature with that of the virginally-born Adam, as the locus of both disobedience and obedience.[101] *Epideixis* 1:37-38 speaks of Christ

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[94] Torrance, *Mediation of Christ,* 40.

[95] Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement,* vol. 1, 175.

[96] See below, footnotes 123 and 124.

[97] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5:23:2; English translation: Alexander Roberts and W.H. Rambaut, *The Writings of Irenaeus,* vol. II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869), 118.

[98] Irenaeus, *Epideixis,*1.3.31; English translation: St Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching,* trans. and intro. by John Behr (cited above), 60-1.

[99] Alexander and Rambaut, *The Writings of Irenaeus,* vol. II, 93.

[100] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3:18:7, cf. 3:21:9; English translation: Alexander Roberts and W.H. Rambaut, *The Writings of Irenaeus,* vol. I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1868), 344.

[101] Cf. *Adv. Haer.* 3:18:7.

"recapitulating" the "old disobedience," taking "the same place and situation in which we were when we lost life, breaking the bonds of the prison."[102] Thus, recapitulation is no simple return to a former state, but an entry into the *given* condition for the sake of its active *undoing,* from the Virgin's obedience onward:[103] a *new* creation fashioned precisely out of the *old*. Hence, Torrance argues, Irenaeus' profound linking of *anakephalaiōsis* and virgin birth witnesses to "the fact that, while in becoming man the Son took flesh from our fallen and corrupt humanity, he cleansed, redeemed and renewed it in the very act of his incarnational assumption."[104]

The text of Irenaeus is less than fully decisive, and Torrance relies here upon a much broader witness of Fathers than Irenaeus alone.[105] In all this, however, it is important to note that nowhere does Torrance speak of Christ as simply *possessing* a fallen, sinful humanity. Nor does Torrance affirm the Nestorianizing formula of *posse non peccare,* substantially condemned by the Sixth Ecumenical Council.[106] Torrance denies that Christ's humanity was "in any sense corrupt," that he assumed original sin, was able to sin, or resisted only on account of the Spirit (*e.g.* as in Edward Irving). Christ's humanity is "perfect," "sinless," supremely "holy." Yet as he "entered the sphere of our corrupted humanity," becoming a member of our fallen race under the curse of the law, "we cannot say that his flesh was

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[102] Behr (trans.), *On the Apostolic Preaching,* 64.

[103] Cf. especially *Adv. Haer.* 5:19:1.

[104] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 68-9.

[105] Chiefly Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa: cf. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 153, 161-2. However, Cyril of Alexandria is particularly explicit on this point: "The Father made Him voluntarily descend into the flesh which has become subjected to sin so that by making the flesh His very own he might change it, transferring to it his own natural property of impeccability": *In Ioannis evangelium,* Migne *Patrologia Graeca* LXXXIV, 276A-C.

[106] *Pace* Gerrit Dawson, "As Far as the Curse is Found: The Significance of Christ's Assuming a *Fallen* Human Nature in the Torrance Theology," in Dawson (ed.), *Introduction to Torrance Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2007), 55-74. In fundamental agreement with Constantinople 681, Torrance explicitly states in his earliest lectures that Christ was "without the *will* of fallen humanity." It is most unfortunate that Torrance never related this to Maximus the Confessor's treatment of the "gnomic will," which might have obviated Dawson's nominalistic and Nestorianizing misconstrual.

created out of nothing and absolutely *de novo*": "it was created out of fallen humanity, but without the *will* of fallen humanity."[107] Therefore, we must speak of Christ's humanity as "*vicarious*": the Son of God freely placing himself under the law on the ground of his incarnate union with us, in order to "judge sin in the flesh" and redeem us from the law, creating humanity anew from the old.[108]

Torrance's concern here is with the unity of incarnation and atonement: an *ontological* – as opposed to merely forensic or moral – reconciliation worked out *within* the *person* of the Mediator. Precisely disassociation at this point, argues Torrance, led post-Chalcedonian Latin theology to conceive of salvation in terms of external forensic relations. The result: "an inevitable tendency toward a conception of the natures of Christ in which the two natures are not seen in their full unity in the one mediator," "counter balanced . . . by a tendency in the opposite direction, that is toward monophysitism."[109] Thus, Torrance asserts, "more actual monophysitism may be found in the West than in those who today are usually called 'monophysite.'"[110]

Although nowhere discussed by Torrance, this latent "monophysitism," which Torrance relates surprisingly to the influence of Leo's *Tome,* found its 6th century Eastern counterpart in the Apthartodocetist heresy led by Julian of Halicarnassus.[111] Julian held "that the manhood of Christ was the unfallen

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[107] T.F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 122-3; my italics.

[108] *Ibid.* One factor that makes Torrance's statements on this question difficult to evaluate is the lack of any careful treatment of sin in his mature thought. Apart from his early study, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1949), and the sermons found in *The Apocalypse Today* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1960), Torrance's work contains little in the way of extended consideration of ancestral sin and its relation to human *nature*. A broader consideration of evil in relation to cosmology may be found in Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 85-142.

[109] Torrance, *Incarnation,* 199.

[110] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 212.

[111] "Monophysitism," in that "Whereas Eutyches denied the consubstantiality of Christ's body with the human body, the Aphthartodocetists denied their identity with respect to state," Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God* (Eerdmans, 2008), 288. Byzantine theology, in the person of Leontius of Byzantium, also regarded Julian's position as monophysite: cf. Leontius, *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos,* II, *Patrologia Graeca* 86.

manhood of Adam," that "his suffering and death were voluntarily chosen by him for our sakes, without any natural necessity on the part of his manhood," and thus that "the body of our Lord was incorruptible from the moment of his conception in the Virgin's womb."[112] Julian's teachings were attacked by Severus of Antioch[113] and condemned by a non-Chalcedonian council in 728 employing terms similar to Torrance's: "If any one affirms that it was not our mortal, peccable and corruptible body, but the body which Adam had before his fall and which by grace was immortal, impeccable and incorruptible, let him be anathema."[114] Significantly, while Torrance rarely cites any Eastern theologian after Cyril of Alexandria, in his last works, it is Severus and another non-Chalcedonian, John Philoponos, who are singled out most for appreciation.[115]

Precisely at this point, however, Torrance's appeal to Eastern Orthodoxy in support for his doctrine of Christ's *assumptio* appears most

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[112] V.C. Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon Re-Examined* (England: British Orthodox Press, 2001)*,* 268, 342.

[113] *Ibid.* 361, 470-71. Cf. René Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'incorruptibilité du corps du Christ* (Louvain, 1924). Draguet attempts to clear Julian from charges of heresy.

[114] In V.C. Samuel, "The Manhood of Jesus Christ in the Tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church," Eastern-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue, Bristol Consultation, July 1967, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review,* XIII, issue 2, 162.

[115] Cf. especially Torrance, *Theological and Natural Science* (full citation above). While formally upholding Chalcedon, Torrance's theology is marked by a strong sympathy with non-Chalcedonian "miaphysite" Christology, in contrast to both the Latin and the Byzantine: "in the famous 'Tome of Leo' . . . Chalcedonian thought was given a dualist interpretation, which in the East led to the split between the more dualist Byzantines and the more realist 'non-Chalcedonians' who based their thought on Cyril of Alexandria, *e.g.* Severus of Antioch": Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology,* 159, n. 5. This is yet another point where Torrance's patristic engagement leads him away from Barth: In keeping with a common Western historiographical reading, Barth had spoken of Alexandrian theology as being "purified at Chalcedon" – a purification Barth maintained as normative for Western theology, while mistakenly regarding the Lutheran c*ommunio naturarum a*s "a kind of remote effect of the theology of the Eastern Church": *Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV, Part. 2,* 67-69. See George Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000)*,* p. 131ff, countering the views of Charles T. Waldrop, *Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984).

ambiguous. While Eastern Chalcedonians also anathematized Julian, the modern Orthodox witness is less certain on this point: hints of Julian's *presuppositions* reappear in so representative and careful a theologian as Georges Florovsky, with whom Torrance debated this issue at a WCC meeting in 1955.[116] Florovsky insists that because "the Word assumes the original human nature," Christ's birth

> was not yet the assumption of human suffering or of suffering humanity. It was an assumption of human life, but not yet of human death. Christ's freedom from original sin constitutes also His freedom from death, which is the "wages of sin." Christ is unstained from corruption and mortality right from his birth. And like the First Adam before the Fall, He is able not to die at all, *potens non mori,* though obviously He can still die, *potens autem mori.* He was exempt from the necessity of death, because His humanity was pure and innocent. Therefore Christ's death was and could not but be voluntary, not by the necessity of fallen nature, but by free choice and acceptance . . . Christ is the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." But He does not take the sin of the world in the Incarnation. That is an act of the will, not a necessity of nature.[117]

Florovsky's formulation weakens somewhat the actual unity of incarnation and atonement – contrasting a little with Irenaeus' assertion that "by summing up in Himself the whole human race from the beginning to the end, He has also summed up its death."[118] Torrance's claim that denial of the "Irenaean" view implies redemption by "external relations" – either Anselm's juridicism, or Abelard's moral-exemplarism[119] – seems to be confirmed here also. Equating substitution with the "*satisfactio vicaria* of the

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[116] Cf. Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour* (London: Epworth, 1962), and *Commission on Faith and Order. Minutes of the Working Committee, July 1955, Davos, Switzerland* (WCC).

[117] Georges Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1976), 97-98; cf. also 301, n. 101.

[118] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5:23:2; Roberts and Rambaut, *The Writings of Irenaeus,* vol. II, 118.

[119] Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,*" op. cit.* 232; cf. *Trinitarian Faith,* 158-60. In his earlier writings, however, Torrance held that it is a mistake to

scholastics,"[120] Florovsky speaks of the cross as a symbol of divine love and "speculate[s] against substitution in a fashion reminiscent of Abelard's opposition to Anselm."[121] Florovsky's insistence on the absolute freedom of Christ's pre-resurrectional human nature from necessity also conflicts, if not with Irenaeus explicitly, then certainly with Athanasius, for whom Christ's body "could not but die, inasmuch as it was mortal" (*De incarnatione,* 31.4) and Christ's death clearly substitutionary (*ibid.,* 8:4; 9.1; 10.1-2; 20.2; 37.7), in payment of the debt exacted by the Law (*ibid.,* 6.2-3; 9.5; 20.5, *passim*).[122] Yet while Bulgakov, Meyendorff and Zizioulas[123] uphold positions consonant with that of Torrance, other recent Orthodox theologians incline towards Florovsky's view;[124] although Torrance's formulation enjoys firmer agreement amongst non-Chalcedonians.[125]

[*cont.*] interpret Anselm "in terms of the Medieval *lex et ratio,* that is in the forensic and rational categories of feudal society," insisting that *Cur Deus Homo?* must be read together with Anselm's prayers and meditations: see T.F. Torrance, Review of F.C. Schmitt (ed.), *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia,* in *SJTh* 9 (1956) [88-90], 89.

[120] Florovsky, *op. cit.,* 102.

[121] Bradley Nassif, "The Evangelical Theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church," in Nassif, (ed.), *Three Views on Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004), 47.

[122] Florovsky's formulation also appears to stand in some tension with the language of some Orthodox liturgical texts, such as the following: "Having divinely fashioned me out of the dust at the beginning . . . You extended your arms on the Cross, calling from earth *my corruptible body, which you assumed* from the Virgin" (*Oktoechos,* Sunday matins, tone I, *canon,* ode 1, *troparion* 1).

[123] Sergius Bulgakov, *op. cit.,* 288-91; John Meyendorff, "Christ's Humanity: The Paschal Mystery," *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly,* Vol. 31 (No. 1/1987), 5-40, and *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 117; John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics* (T&T Clark, 2008), 109. Kallistos Ware's formulation appears similar, but strikes an ambiguous, rather Mopsuestian note with its talk of "inward conflict": *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 99-100. The article of Meyendorff must be regarded as the most profound, sustained exposition by a recent Orthodox theologian in favor of the view held by Torrance.

[124] See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 142; John Romanides, comments in response to V.C. Samuel, "One Incarnate Nature of God the Word," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review,* X, issue 2, 1964-65, 52; Panagiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 17; Demetrios Bathrellos, "The Sinlessness of Jesus," in Paul Metzger (ed.), *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology* (London: Continuum, 2005), 113-126.

[125] Cf. V.C. Samuel, *opera cit.*

In making use of the soteriological thought of the Fathers, twentieth century Orthodox theology has sometimes tended to react to Western juridicism by setting aside any positive consideration of law, substitution and atonement. In contrast, Torrance's "Irenaean" approach succeeds in accounting for forensic and cultic dimensions of Scriptural language regarding the work of Christ on an *ontological* basis, while resisting both juridicism and reduction to a single metaphor. Torrance distinguishes three Hebrew roots providing background to NT and Irenaean soteriology: (1) *pdh*, a dramatic act bringing deliverance through the offering of life for life, as in the Exodus Passover; (2) *kpr*, cultic expiation which removes the barrier between God and man through priestly sacrifice; and (3) *g'l*, debt-redemption by the *go'el,* an advocate "who is related to the person in need through kinship or some other bond of affinity or covenant love," and who thus "claims the cause of the one in need as his own, and stands in for him since he cannot redeem himself."[126]

According to Torrance, it is the *g'l* mode in its *ontological* sense that supplies the framework within which Irenaeus interprets the others. Irenaeus conceives of the dramatic (*phd*) and propitiatory/judicial (*kpr*) dimensions, as also debt-redemption (*g'l*), as operating on the ground of God's incarnational kinship with human nature and recapitulation of all mankind in covenant love (*g'l*): an *internal relation* of exchange taking place within the person of the Mediator himself.[127] As in his contributions to British legal debate,[128] so in this appeal to Irenaeus, Torrance challenges the nominalist divorce between law and nature, situating law within a dynamic ontology of nature and person: the redemptive power of Christ's obedience is grounded in God's healing and reconciling hypostatic assumption of humanity in its actual historical state – "under the law" (Gal. 4:4).[129]

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[126] Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 170-71.
[127] *Ibid.,* 172-4.
[128] T.F. Torrance, *Juridical and Physical Law: Toward a Realist Foundation for Human Law* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1997).
[129] See "Atonement and the Oneness of the Church," in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement,* vol. 1, 253-255 especially.

This insistence upon Irenaeus' dynamic interlocking of incarnation and atoning obedience challenges not only Calvinist theories of penal atonement, but also a work of no small influence on modern treatments of soteriology, both Western and Eastern: Swedish theologian Gustaf Aulen's 1930 *Christus Victor*. Aulen posits a radical opposition between a Greek patristic and Lutheran emphasis upon dramatic divine victory over death, and the "Latin theory" made popular by Anselm, hinging upon Christ's satisfactory human offering. According to Aulen, Irenaeus "does not think of the Atonement as an offering made to God by Christ from man's side . . . When Irenaeus speaks in this connection of the 'obedience' of Christ, he has no thought of a human offering made to God from man's side, but rather that the Divine will wholly dominated the human life of the Word of God."[130]

Torrance shares Aulen's misgivings with the Latin stress upon *"satisfaction"* derived from Tertullian, and agrees that unless the *agent* of atonement is God himself, "atonement would have to be understood as a Pelagian deed placating God by human sacrifice." However, he objects that Aulen conceives of atonement as "a pure act of God over the head of man": "Certainly, the atonement is an act of God . . . , but that act of God is incarnated in human flesh, giving the human full place within the divine action issuing out of man's life."[131] In sum, "Aulen's fault is that he has failed . . . to understand the full place occupied by the Humanity of our Lord in the divine act of reconciliation."[132]

Against Aulen's rather monothelite reading, Torrance agrees with a second major Swedish scholar, Gustaf Wingren, in his apprehension that, for Irenaeus, there is no dualism between divine and human action: salvation in the Irenaean teaching is a unitary act wherein God works not simply *in* man, but *as* man [133] – "simultaneously an act from God to man

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[130] Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor (*New York: MacMillan, 1937*)*, 33-34.

[131] T.F. Torrance, "Atonement and the Oneness of the Church," *op. cit.*, 243.

[132] T.F. Torrance, review of F.C. Schmitt (ed.), *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia, op. cit.,* 89.

[133] Cf. Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation* (Edinburgh, 1959), 106.

and an act from man to God."[134] Torrance observes: "It is typical of Irenaeus that he could not think of our salvation in simple expressions of a mighty act of God and a powerful fiat, but in terms of the assent of humanity to God's Word in the humble obedience of Jesus, in whom God creates our Adam anew and transforms Adam's disobedience through Christ's obedience."[135]

In calling attention to *Irenaeus* as witness to this unity of incarnation and atoning obedience, Torrance appears in some ways to be extending the insights of Emil Brunner[136] who, far more than Barth, sought consciously to recover a "theology of the type of Irenaeus," attacking precisely the Kantian dualism between "physical" and "ethical" which runs through Harnack's treatment of Irenaeus.[137] Unlike Brunner *or* Barth, however, Torrance affirms the Orthodox doctrine of deification suggested in Irenaeus as the ultimate *telos* of redemption,[138] appropriating Irenaeus' stress on the ascension as mankind's entry into participation in the divine life and communion of the Holy Trinity.[139] Torrance likewise favors Irenaeus' sequential figuration of Christ's *katabasis* and *anabasis* in terms of the movement from cross to ascension,[140] in some contrast with Barth's stress upon the simultaneity of humiliation and exaltation in the event of the Cross.[141]

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[134] Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 159: On this, Torrance cites *Adv. Haer.* 3:19:6 (Latin text of Harvey; English editions number 3:18:7), which contains the following: "For it was incumbent upon the *Mediator* between God and men, by His relationship to both, to bring both to friendship and concord, and present man to God, while He revealed God to man."

[135] Torrance, "Ein vernachlässigter Gesichtspunkt der Tauflehre," full citation above. All quotations from this text are my own translation.

[136] Emil Brunner, *The Mediator* (London, 1934), 222, 249-264. Torrance refers repeatedly to this work throughout his 1938-39 Auburn Lectures: *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2002), *passim.*

[137] Harnack, *op. cit.,* 245, 272-5.

[138] Cf. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 189.

[139] Torrance, *Resurrection,* 133, cites Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer* 1.10.1.

[140] *Ibid.,* 123, cites Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.,* 3.1.6, 18.2, 19.3; 5.21.1, 36.3, etc.; cf. also *Epideixis,* 83f.

[141] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* V/1 (Continuum, 1977), 59.1.

Baptism

Torrance is dependent on Irenaeus for another departure from Barth: his theology of "Baptism as the Sacrament of the vicarious obedience of Christ the Servant-Son."[142] This is most evident in Torrance's article, "Ein vernachlässigter Gesichtspunkt der Tauflehre," written during his involvement with the Church of Scotland's Commission on Baptism (1953-1962), and originally intended for Ernst Wolff's 1956 Barth festschrift.[143] Here, countering Barth's 1943 attack on infant baptism, Torrance appeals to "the first great biblical theologian of the Church after the apostolic period, Irenaeus,"[144] whom Torrance believes offered the finest theology of baptism in the early Church.[145]

According to Torrance, Irenaeus' baptismal theology unites "a) the Johannine doctrine of the Word with the Pauline teaching regarding the Spirit, and b) the Pauline teaching of the new Adam with the Synoptic and Johannine doctrine of the birth of Christ."[146] Irenaeus reads John 1:13 in the singular, referring to Christ's own virgin birth by the Spirit, the summation of the old Adam and creation of the new.[147] Man's rebirth is accomplished already in the birth of Christ, and the Spirit's baptismal impartation to humanity tied to the Son's recapitulation of every age:[148]

> Being thirty years old when He came to be baptized . . . He also possessed the age of a Master, not despising or evading any condition of humanity, nor setting aside in Himself that law which He had appointed for the human race, but sanctifying every age, by that period corresponding to it which belonged to Himself. For He came to save all through means of Himself — all, I say, who through Him are born again to God — infants,

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[142] Torrance,"My Interaction with Karl Barth," *op. cit.*, 135.

[143] Due to time constraints, never included: see Torrance's remarks in Elmer Colyer (ed.), *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001)*,* 318.

[144] Torrance, "Tauflehre" (full citation above), 481.

[145] Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 94.

[146] Torrance, "Tauflehre," 481.

[147] Torrance, *Incarnation,* 90-91. See Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3:9:2; 3:11:2; 5:1:1,3.

[148] On this, see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5:1:1.

and children, and boys, and youths, and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of piety, righteousness, and submission.[149]

Infant baptism finds its "objective foundation" in Christ's birth and growth in wisdom and grace, of which it is the clearest similitude.[150] Yet "Irenaeus does not think that the birth of Christ was saving in itself: the birth of the new man is not to be separated from his development and maturity as new man in the whole course of his human life." Infant baptism, inseparable "from the whole life and growth of the believer in Christ," belongs together with faith; as Torrance writes: "children who have been baptized into Christ can, in keeping with the character of the virgin birth, grow up in Christ in the holiness which his whole life, from birth to death, gives to our humanity."[151]

Crucial here is the Irenaean stress on Christ's recapitulative – or, in Torrance's terms, "vicarious" – humanity. Virgin birth signifies a salvation wrought by "'grace alone,' . . . yet worked out within our actual humanity": "the powerful act of God in the midst of our humanity in the Man Jesus Christ, through whose obedience we are freed from Adam's bondage into a life of communion with the Word and renewed to obedience in the power of the Spirit."[152] By the Spirit, "what is accomplished reality in Christ becomes also reality in us":[153] "God unites us with Christ in such a way that his human agency in vicarious response to the Father overlaps with our response, gathers it up in its embrace, sanctifying, affirming and upholding it in himself, so that it is established in spite of all our frailty as our free and faithful response to the Father in him."[154] Baptism and the Christian life are thus an active participation in the baptism and

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149 Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2:22:4, in Roberts and Rambaut, *The Writings of Irenaeus,* vol. I, 197-98.
150 Torrance, "Tauflehre," 485-86.
151 *Ibid.,* 486.
152 *Ibid.,* 483-4, 489.
153 *Ibid.,* 483.
154 Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 103.

obedience of Christ, in whose humanity "all the promises of God are Yes and Amen" – a vicarious Amen which, as infant baptism especially testifies, precedes and enfolds our own.[155]

However, Torrance argues, the shift from Irenaeus' "biblical" theology to Tertullian's "Latin" doctrine[156] introduced a false objective/subjective dualism from which Western sacramental theology has yet to recover.[157] Tertullian recommended deferring baptism "until the child was capable of carrying the weight of baptism himself and attaining the whole faith which is necessary for redemption."[158] Here baptism "is no longer a sacrament of the incarnation," but a sealing of satisfactory repentance: a sacrament of meritorious faith, dependent "not so much on the divine promise as on our vows."[159] Torrance sees a variant of this Western problematic in Barth's sharp distinction between *Wassertaufe* and *Geisttaufe,* rejected by Irenaeus as a form of Gnostic dualism,[160] wherein "the meaning of baptism is found not in a direct act of God but in an ethical act on the part of man made by way of response."[161] Against Barth and by way of appeal to Irenaeus, Torrance lays forth a doctrine of baptism as an act of the Spirit in the Church enabling a real (not merely "symbolic" in the modern sense of the term) sacramental participation in Christ's virgin birth and baptism, his incarnational reversal of Adam's curse and creation of a new humanity in the resurrection: "not a separate or a new baptism but a participation in the one all-inclusive baptism common to Christ and his Church, wrought out vicariously in Christ alone but in which he has assimilated the Church

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[155] Torrance, "Tauflehre," 492. Torrance especially emphasizes the connection made by Irenaeus between the virgin birth and the resurrection (*Epideixis,* 38-39) as well as the eschatological conditioning of baptism inherent in the fact that, for Irenaeus, this baptismal participation in Christ's virgin birth will be fully apparent only in the resurrection of the body: cf. "Tauflehre," 487, citing *Adv. Haer*. 3:19:1-3.

[156] *Ibid.,* 491.

[157] *Ibid.,* 491-2.

[158] *Ibid.,* 490; cites Tertullian, *De bapt.,* 18 and *De anima,* 39.

[159] *Ibid.,* 491.

[160] Torrance, "My Interaction with Karl Barth," *op. cit.*, 134.

[161] Torrance, *Reconciliation,* 99.

through the baptism of the one Spirit, and which he applies to each one of us through the same Spirit."[162]

As George Hunsinger has argued regarding Torrance's Eucharistic theology, Torrance's "Irenaean" vision of Christian baptism essentially arrives at something like the *Orthodox Catholic center,*[163] while also securing certain historic Reformed concerns. Likewise, one might add, for an Orthodoxy presently enjoying an enthusiastic scholarly and popular rediscovery of ascetic theology, Torrance reminds us of an important truth, emphasized especially by a great Father whose works are included in the *Philokalia*, St. Mark the Monk, but often overlooked: namely, that it is baptism into Christ's vicarious assumption of man's "debt" and "curse" that underwrites and makes salutary Christian repentance.[164]

Hermeneutics

The differentiated, sacramental unity between Christ and the Church observed in Torrance's treatment of baptism is extended to Torrance's hermeneutics, for which scriptural and doctrinal statements "participate sacramentally in the mystery of Christ as the Truth to whom they refer and upon whom they rely for their reality."[165] Here again Irenaeus is a major touchstone, providing "the most enlightening account of the Deposit of Faith."[166]

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[162] *Ibid.,* 88.

[163] George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[164] Mark the Monk, *Bapt 5.139-42; Paen 7.25-6; Causid* 15.12-23. Thanks to Alexis Torrance for these references: see Alexis Torrance, "Repentance as the context of sainthood in the ascetical theology of Mark the Monk," in P. Clarke and T. Claydon (eds.), *Sainthood and Sanctity*, Studies in Church History Vol. 47 (Oxford: Boydell & Brewer, 2010). A similar interpretation of Christ's baptism in terms of the Divine Judge's vicariously assuming as man the judgment due to sinners is to be found in Homily IV *On Theophany* attributed pseudepigraphically to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus. Like Thomas Torrance, the Orthodox services of Matins and Vespers for the feast of Theophany also associate Christ's baptism in the Jordan with his taking on of the *forma servi.*

[165] Torrance, *Theological Science*, 150.

[166] Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation . . .," 93.

As with baptism, so with the canon or "*kerygma* of truth" communicated in baptism,[167] Irenaeus' stress (according to Torrance) falls decidedly on the *objective genitive* pole. *Kerygma* refers "not merely to proclamation about Christ but to the Reality proclaimed . . . embodying his self-proclamation in the proclamation of the Apostles."[168] The "objective and dynamic core" of the *kerygma* is the *depositum fidei,* constituted as a "body of truth" (*tō tēs alētheia sōmation*).[169] In Irenaeus' use, the terms *traditio*, *kerygma*, *kanon*, *regula* and *depositum* are operative variants, with differing emphases.[170] "In so far as the rule of faith is the rule of truth Irenaeus looks upon it as imparted to the Church by the Spirit, and in so far as the rule of truth is the rule of faith he looks upon it as formed and handed down to us by the Apostles acting under the guiding of the Spirit."[171] Crucial here is Irenaeus' sense of "embodied doctrine," marked by a unity between historical form and "charismatic principle."[172]

Regarding historic form, Irenaeus realized that Christian truth is not given "in an abstract or detached form but in a concrete embodied form in the Church." True theological knowledge takes form, not only in doctrine, but also in "'the ancient constitution of the Church'," the Body of Christ, authenticated through apostolic succession and the identity of faith mediated by it.[173] Yet this historic form is *itself* a charismatically given reality, in which the deposit "'by the Spirit of God rejuvenates itself and rejuvenates the vessel in which it is lodged'": "For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the

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[167] *Ibid.,* 93-94; cf. also *Divine Meaning,* 60; *Trinitarian Faith*, 289 (cites *Adv. Haer.* 1:1:14, 20; 1:3).

[168] Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation...," 91; cf. also *Trinitarian Faith,* 260, where *Adv. Haer.* 3:9-11 is cited on this point.

[169] *Ibid.,* citing *Adv. Haer.* 1:1:20.

[170] Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation...," 95; on this point, Torrance cites *Adv. Haer.* 1:1:20; 1:15; 2:8:1; 2:40:1-41:3; 3:1-5; 3:11:7; 3:12:6-7; 3:15:1; 3:38:1-2; 4:57:2,4; 5. pref; 5:20; *Epideixis.*

[171] Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation...," 124-5.

[172] *Ibid.,* cf. *Adv. Haer.* 4:40:2.

[173] *Ibid.,* 115, citing *Adv. Haer.* 4:53:2.

Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth."[174] Thus, Torrance points out, in the *Epideixis,* Irenaeus does not even speak of the "Church," but rather the "community of union between God and man" brought about by the Spirit.[175] The Church is the body of truth, yet oriented so *beyond itself* that Irenaeus does not hesitate to re-phrase Paul's statement regarding "the pillar and ground of Truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), calling "the Gospel and the Spirit of Life" instead "the pillar and ground of the Church."[176]

The *depositum fidei,* then*,* spans two levels inseparably coordinated, the second governed by the first: (1) the whole incarnate reality of Christ and the resulting Pentecost-event; (2) the Church's faithful reception and interpretation of this, inseparably embodied in the apostolic ministry and scriptures. The criterion of truth at both levels, Christ is known only through Apostolic church and *kerygma,* while, contrariwise, ecclesiastical authority and doctrine function rightly only when pointing beyond themselves, through the Apostles, to "the objective self-revelation of God through Christ and in the Spirit as the actual source of our knowledge."[177]

The *depositum fidei* is further characterized by an intrinsic *order*, reflecting the divine economy and therefore Trinitarian in structure. Proper Scriptural interpretation "repose[s] upon the truth itself,"[178] through the inherent design of its economic order. *Depositum fidei* is a heuristic instrument in this interpretation, a canon allowing the Church to demonstrate the truth's intrinsic order against perversions. Such demonstration ultimately took form in creeds, arising from the *depositum* through consensus and controlled by its implicit structure. Creedal statements are "integrated from beyond themselves in their common ground in the Apostolic Deposit and, in the final analysis, in the objective

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[174] Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith,* 257, citing Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3:38:1 and 3:24:1.
[175] Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 256-7: cites *Epideixis* 6ff., 31, 37f., 47ff., 98ff.
[176] *Ibid.,* citing Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3:11:11.
[177] Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation...," 115.
[178] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2:27:1.

self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ."[179] Theology, then, is more than the linking together of biblical statements or self-assessment of the Church's own historical mind. Doctrine is not a system of logical deductions from first principles, but a disclosure of the internal harmony of the *corpus veritatis*, inseparably conjoined to and dependent upon this body for its truth, which it expresses only "in part."[180]

This circular hermeneutic – the deposit being at once the truth itself, the means of uncovering its internal order, and the rule of its maintenance – rests crucially upon a realist philosophy of truth as *self-evidential*. God is incomprehensible, man's knowledge limited, but in the incarnation, God opens the way to knowledge of himself through *love*[181] – an adoptive participation in the Son's own relation with the Father. Faith is a response to truth deriving its intrinsic rationality from the truth itself: as Irenaeus writes, "And faith is produced by the truth; for faith rests on things as they truly are. For in things that are, as they are, we believe."[182] Thus, Torrance observes, "the canon of truth is properly the truth itself in its own self-evidencing authority . . . and only in a secondary sense the regulative formulation of the truth."[183] Doctrine, then, can only be incomplete, an open-ended summary of the truth as it is in Jesus, the Church's ultimate rule, the *regulam ipsam veritatem.*[184] Torrance pointedly concludes: "Irenaeus thinks of the constitution of the Church and the rule of faith as structured together in the truth, yet in such a way that the Church always and everywhere arises out the truth itself which is none other than Jesus Christ and is always subordinate to him as the truth."[185]

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[179] Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation...," 97.

[180] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 108-10, citing *Adv. Haer.* 2:15:3f:"*ek merous*" (which in turn echoes 1 Cor. 13:9, 12).

[181] *Ibid.,* 108-110, citing *Adv. Haer.* 2:26:1, 2:13:4, and 4:12:2; 33:8.

[182] Irenaeus, *Epideixis,* 3.

[183] Torrance, "Trinitarian Foundation...," 102, citing *Adv. Haer.* 2.4.1; cf. *Divine Meaning,* 115.

[184] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 112, citing *Adv. Haer.,* 2:28:1.

[185] *Ibid.,* 127.

In his interpretation on these points, Torrance has been accused of clothing Irenaeus in philosophical categories of *Hermeneutik,* "which do not fit well."[186] Doubtless, Torrance's reading is informed by his sophisticated critical realism: he makes explicit reference to Polanyi, Clerk Maxwell and Einstein in his treatment of the deposit of faith,[187] and his repeated emphasis on doctrine as a partial *disclosure* of the form *inherent* in the body of truth, rather than an imposition upon it, is driven in part by an anxiety to overcome the Kantian denial of man's ability to know reality-in-itself (*Ding an sich*) and the ravaging effect of this denial upon Christian faith and theology in the modern age.[188] But to those who recognize the reality of Irenaeus' *depositum juvenescens,* not imprisoned within a narrow historicism, the crucial question is rather whether Torrance does justice to Irenaeus' *objective faith:* a matter ultimately decided by agreement with the Church of all ages.[189]

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[186]   Kyle Keefer, *The Branches of the Gospel of John: The Reception of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 50.

[187]   See Torrance, "Deposit of Faith," and "'The Substance of the Faith': A Clarification of the Concept in the Church of Scotland," *SJTh* 36 (1983), 1 and 337.

[188]   See especially "The Making of the 'Modern' Mind from Descartes and Newton to Kant," in T.F. Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1984), 1-60.

[189]   A fairer criticism would be the one offered by John Behr and, in a similar vein, John Webster. Behr regards Torrance's comments on Irenaeus' treatment of the divine economy as "perceptive, but not sufficiently sensitive to the scriptural, or literary, fabric of the discussion": J. Behr, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 130n. Likewise, Webster writes that in Torrance's work, "patristic theology is presented largely as a conceptual rather than exegetical enterprise": J. Webster, "T.F. Torrance 1913-2007," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (vol. 10, no. 4, Oct. 2008), 370. In reality, *both* concepts *and* exegesis hold a subordinate place in Torrance's theology, neither being allowed to substitute for the other or for the reality of the divine economy itself. Recent scholarly interest in the exegetical matrix of patristic theology brings many appreciable fruits. However, to insist upon theology as an exegetical but non-conceptual enterprise, disengaged from questions of objective rationality, is only to fall into the same idealist dualism and divorce between the "two cultures" of humanities and sciences critiqued by Torrance.

In this connection, an Orthodox reader cannot help noting how Torrance's *hermeneutical* appeal to Irenaeus seems to have had its origins in dialogue with Orthodoxy.[190] Torrance's exposition of Irenaeus on the *depositum fidei* is accompanied by a critique of propositionalism in both Roman Catholic and Protestant confessions;[191] with Orthodox theology, Torrance is concerned to stress the primacy of the divine truth deposited in the Church over all its formulations, and the centrality of the worshipping Church, most especially in the Eucharist,[192] as the locus of communion wherein the truth of God is embodied and known.

Likewise, although we have had occasion to note above one significant point of disagreement, one further observes the particularly close convergence of Torrance's interpretation of Irenaeus with that of the Orthodox Georges Florovsky.[193] Like Torrance, Florovsky employs Irenaeus to emphasize the *objective* and *charismatic* pole of tradition: "not just a transmission of inherited doctrines," but "the witness of the Spirit,"[194] "n'est pas seulement . . . une authorité historique imposée du dehors, mais la parole continuelle de Dieu lui-même, saisir par la foi."[195]

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[190] "Trinitarian Foundation..." was offered for the Orthodox-Reformed Dialogue Consultation, Istanbul, 1981; "Deposit of Faith," 1983, concludes with a call for dialogue with Orthodoxy; "The Open Texture...," 1985, was offered for a festschrift for Archbishop Methodios Fouyas; "Early Patristic Interpretation..." was published in Fouyas' Greek journal, *EKKLESIA kai THEOLOGIA*, 1988; "Kerygmatic Proclamation of the Gospel..." was offered as a lecture at Holy Cross Orthodox School of Theology, Boston, 1991. The first three items overlap significantly with one another and with *Trinitarian Faith,* 31-35; compare also *Christian Doctrine,* 75-80.

[191] Torrance, "Deposit of Faith," 16-28.

[192] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 73-4.

[193] Most especially as in found in Florovsky's *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1972), a volume which Torrance both cited frequently and expressed his personal admiration for: see the letter of TFT to Florovsky, Oct 30, 1973, in the Princeton Firestone Florovsky archive. Torrance elsewhere praises Florovsky's "profound theological instinct, at once catholic and evangelical, and . . . [his] Christocentric and Trinitarian interpretation of Greek Patristic Theology": Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches,* vol. I, ix.

[194] Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition,* 80, 46.

[195] Florovsky, "Le corps du Christ vivant," in Jean-Jacques von Allmen (ed.), *La Sainte Église Universelle: Confrontation oecuménique* (Neuchâtel, 1948) [9-57], 42.

Florovsky equally objects to logical-deductive approaches in doctrine: "les dogmes ne sont pas des axiomes théoretique desquels on pourrait déduire des théorèmes nouveaux."[196] He likewise underscores the unity of "charismatic" and "institutional" in Irenaeus.[197] Similar to Torrance, who appeals to Irenaeus against the imposition of Roman imperial legalism in canon law, Florovsky refuses to allow any juridical formula which might pre-validate the authority of a council, insisting instead on consensus in "*Christ: The Criterion of Truth.*"[198] The highest authority in the Church is that of *witness,* subject to the truth: "la *potestas magisterii* n'est, au fond, que le pouvoir de témoignage, et par conséquent il est limité par le contenu de vérité témoigneé."[199]

Arguably, at the heart of this agreement is not only a common willingness to learn from Irenaeus, but a shared realist concern to transcend all dualisms between history and truth.[200] Both theologians apprehend

> the central significance of history in knowledge . . . Historical "events" are acts, mediated by further acts of interpretation . . . But this also means that Christianity is irreversibly committed to what has as a matter of contingent fact been constructed in its history: We cannot pretend that we can free ourselves of "Hellenism," or that the kerygma is directed to and from a timeless interiority . . . If we wish to go on speaking a Christian language at all, we cannot ignore or try to dismantle this set of determinations.[201]

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[196] *Ibid.,* 46.

[197] Florovsky, *Bible,Church, Tradition,*79.

[198] *Ibid.,* 97.

[199] Florovsky, "Le corps du Christ vivant," 52.

[200] As Torrance cites the following remark of Oscar Cullmann with respect to the theology of Irenaeus: "'the historical kernel is at the same time the dogmatic kernel'": "'The Substance of the Faith,'" *op. cit.,* 337.

[201] Rowan Williams, writing of Florovsky, in "Eastern Orthodox Theology," David Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 508. See Torrance's remarks in *Theological Science,* 152-4, which resonate strongly with the core emphases of Florovsky's theology: "[Christ's] Truth is both eternal and historical, Truth who is not timeless, for He so participates in time-relations and assumes time into Himself that time is an inalienable element in His nature as Incarnate Truth. Far from the historical being but the outward symbolic draping of the

While Torrance would doubtless emphasize more strongly that the "substance" of the historical *ekklēsiastikon phronēma* is none other than the *apostolic* tradition – not a simple canonization of all historical developments in the life of the Church[202] – both theologians follow Irenaeus in seeking to overcome all dualism between "truth" and "event," with the recognition that the historically-embodied mediation of truth in no way compromises a theological realism of access to the truth of God in Christ. And, on the other hand, precisely because Florovsky (again appealing specifically to Irenaeus) holds that "the true tradition is only the tradition of truth, *traditio veritatis,*"[203] this evangelically-minded Orthodox can meet the orthodox-minded Evangelical on his own ground, in the recognition that "l'Église se réforme sans cesse *parce qu'*elle vit dans la tradition."[204]

Conclusion

In the three themes surveyed above, one observes Torrance maintaining structures of differentiated unity: (1) the person of Word and his assumed humanity; (2) Christ's baptism and Christian baptism; (3) the truth of Christ and its historical embodiment in Church and doctrine. In each case, the unity is asymmetric, with a realist stress on the direct, active agency of the first reality in our apprehension of its internal relations. At work on all levels, arguably, is a deeply "Cyrillian" Christological analogy, wherein composite elements of the divine economy are approached in

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[*cont.*] Truth, it belongs to His very substance . . . eternal Truth encounters us also as *temporal fact,* requiring of us in our knowing relationship to it in time . . . Theological thinking is historical thinking; it is more than that, not by leaving the historical behind, but through participation in the eternal which has entered into the historical and gathered it into inalienable relation to the Truth in Jesus Christ."

[202] This is a major concern of Torrance, particularly vis-à-vis Roman Catholic theology, leading him to a nuanced treatment of tradition and of the "ecclesiastical mind": see, for instance, *Conflict and Agreement* vol. I, 235-6, and *Reconstruction,* 23, 42-45, 68, 129, 164, 244.

[203] Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition,* 106.

[204] Florovsky, "Le corps du Christ vivant," 43.

their *actual* reality as inseparable, distinguished "in thought alone" (*tē theōria monē*).

This emphasis on concrete unities and theological realism in Torrance's reading of Irenaeus renders a powerful dynamic vision of Christology, baptism, and doctrine alike. Torrance's notion of the vicarious humanity of Christ, moreover, must be regarded as a major restatement of the Irenaean doctrine of recapitulation, from which Orthodox theologians today can learn much – particularly in relation to twentieth century uses of St. Gregory Palamas, which all too often failed to relate adequately the doctrine of grace as uncreated *energeia* to the humanity of Christ in anything more than an instrumental way.[205]

At this point, however, a question must also be posed to Torrance. Torrance's undertaking represents a profound appropriation of Eastern patristic theology – up to the 5th century. Yet it could be asked whether, in some of his readings, especially of later Fathers, in his anti-dualist zeal, Torrance does not at times mistake for "dualism" what is simply duality. Why are Irenaeus' distinctions between *propter providentiam* and *propter eminentiam* (*Adv. Haer.* 2:6:1), or *secundem dilectionem* and *secundem magnitudinem* (*Adv. Haer.* 4:20:4), acceptable,[206] whereas the essence-energies distinction clarified by Cappadocian and later Byzantine theology is "dualist"?[207] Torrance's epistemological anxiety at times leads him to

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[205] This is true of Lossky especially, as well as numerous semi-popular presentations of the energies doctrine; but see, for contrast, Georgios Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).

[206] Torrance, *Divine Meaning,* 108-109.

[207] Cf. especially, T.F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (T&T Clark, 1994), 38, f. 69. A nascent form of this distinction is not lacking in either Athanasius (*Contra Arianos,* III. 30. 61-67*; De Decretis,* II) or Cyril of Alexandria (*Thesaurus* 18*, PG* lxxv, 312C), a fact noted by Florovsky in two essays which Torrance cites, "St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers" and "St. Athanasius and the Concept of Creation" – the latter to which he confesses his indebtedness, even while neglecting this basic insight: cf. Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1972), esp. 116-119, and *Aspects of Church History* (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 39-62; Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith,* 86 n. 43 especially (also 79, 85); *The Christian Doctrine of God,* 4, 96, 207; *Divine Meaning,* 181, 185.

elide unity into pure identity.[208] That said, it may be that Torrance is reacting to the rather one-sided apophaticism made widespread in contemporary Orthodox thought through V. Lossky's readings of the Cappadocians, Dionysius and Palamas: Lossky's formulations do at times at least *appear* to resemble something like that idealist dualism between economy and truth which Torrance aims to resist.

These points do raise urgent questions, requiring further critical consideration; yet, as Colin Gunton remarked, "What we find in Torrance is a reopening of a major historical conversation."[209] Thus, a student of the Orthodox Fathers can only express admiration for Torrance's momentous offering. There is good reason to repeat of Torrance in his own context what George Dragas, himself a former pupil of "Tom," has written of Newman: "he represents a concrete, living starting-point for the rediscovery of the Greek Fathers in the West today . . . he rediscovered the catholic truth of the Fathers and restated it for this time and this world."[210]

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[208]   A similar criticism applies to Torrance's reading of the Cappadocian treatment of the monarchy of the Father, as well as his views on the relationship between episcopacy and presbyterate, and his arguments in support of the ordination of women: Torrance at times mistakes causal differentiation and hierarchical structure for ontological subordination. Here again, Torrance's patrology reflects the unacknowledged influence of Harnack [*History of Dogma*, vol. IV (New York, 1961), 80–107], whose expansion of the theory of Theodor Zahn [*Marcellus von Ancyra. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theologie* (Gotha, 1867)], positing a subtle shift from an original "old Nicene" triadology towards a generic notion of *ousia* in the Cappadocians, is now generally regarded as unsustainable. Though differing in its rejection of causal categories, aspects of Torrance's reading of patristic Trinitarian theology bear striking resemblance to that of John Bekkos, the 13th century unionist patriarch of Constantinople condemned by the Council of Blachernae in 1285: see Peter Gilbert, "Not an Anthologist: John Bekkos as a Reader of the Fathers," *Communio: International Catholic Review,* Summer 2009, 259-291.

[209]   Colin Gunton, "Being and Person: T.F. Torrance's Doctrine of God," in Colyer (ed.), *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology,* 130.

[210]   George Dion. Dragas, *Ecclesiasticus* I (Orthodox Research Institute, 2004), 97, 101. Dragas has elsewhere exuberantly dubbed Torrance himself "a father of the contemporary church": George Dion. Dragas, "Professor T.F. Torrance on his 80th Birthday," *EKKLESIA kai THEOLOGIA* 12 (1993), 571.