

T. F. TORRANCE AS AN INTERPETER OF ST. ATHANASIUS

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Abstract: *The aim of this article is to elaborate on T. F. Torrance's reception of Athanasius of Alexandria. The article is structured in accordance to the threefold division of God's Incarnation present in the seventh-century monk Maximus the Confessor, that is: incarnation of God in the created order, incarnation of God in the letters of the Holy Scripture, and finally the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. The main reason for this structure is the similarity of Torrance's reading of Athanasius with the Maximian ontological framework. One may notice the corresponding order of progression in all three realms of the divine incarnation. It always begins with reason (λόγος) and faith (πίστις) and progresses in accordance with the nature (κατα φύσιν) of the things toward the divine realities expressed as truth (αλήθεια). The final result and the purpose of the incarnation is deification or θεοποίησης that includes the introduction of the deified in the centre of the divine life, the loving relationship between the Father and the Son.*

Every student of Maximus the Confessor, especially if interested in the saint's doctrines of the Logos and *logoi* or of the Mystery of Christ, would be delighted to read Thomas F. Torrance's account of Athanasius of Alexandria. This is due in no small part to the fact that these doctrines, which are considered by the current Maximian scholarship as the lonely meteorites in the sky of the patristic thought, seem to appear already in the works of Athanasius. Andrew Louth, a former student of Torrance, has described Maximus as an heir of the Alexandrian Christological tradition of Athanasius and Cyril,¹ the tradition to which T. F. Torrance refers as the "Athanasius-Cyril axis" of Greek patristic theology.² Maximus was

1 Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 27.

2 Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 9.



clearly indebted to the Alexandrians in their understanding of the Incarnation as the Son of God assuming a human nature and living a human life. However, this strand of Byzantine theology, dominant from sixth century onward due to Christological debates, did not always fully exploit ideas developed by Athanasius in his earliest works *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione Verbi*. For Torrance these works were crucial:³

For they broke new ground and put forward a new scientific method in showing how a conjunctive and synthetic mode of thought could penetrate into the intrinsic subject-matter of theology with positive results: in disclosing the organic way in which creation and redemption are to be understood from a point of central reference (or *skopos*) in the Incarnation of the Word or Son of God, and in developing an intelligible structure of understanding reaching back to a creative centre in God, which throws an integrating light upon all theological relations and connections.⁴

These two major contributions of Athanasius mentioned by Torrance may be easily transposed to ideas found three centuries later in Maximus. First, for both Athanasius and Maximus the Incarnation is a point of central reference for understanding creation and deification. Second, the development of an intelligible structure of understanding is dependant upon the creative center in God, evident in Athanasius' intrinsic rationality of the created order and in Maximus' hierarchy of *logoi* of creation and their link with the Logos. The third point of convergence between Athanasius and Maximus derives from the application of the aforementioned rational capacities to the interpretation of Holy Scripture. According to Torrance, and similar to Maximus' view, Athanasius holds that the relationship between the Logos of God and the *logoi* of the Scripture is discerned through engagement in rational exegesis, which is in conformity with "the speaking and acting of God upon us in Jesus Christ."⁵

The aim of the present essay is not to prove the impact of Athanasius on Maximus, but rather, in line with Torrance's intention, to elucidate the role of Athanasius in developing an overall theology of reconciliation. Yet the reference

3 According to the testimonies of T. F. Torrance's former student George D. Dragas, Torrance considered Athanasius' *De Incarnatione* one of the three most important books for his theology students to read. The other two books were Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* and Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*.

4 Thomas F. Torrance, "Athanasius: Foundations of Classical Theology," in *Theology in Reconciliation*, 256. Also reprinted in Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 219.

5 Thomas Torrance, "The Hermeneutics of Athanasius," in Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 234.

to Maximus is pertinent for at least two reasons. First, it seems that Maximus' theology, more than the theology of any other later Greek or Latin author, embodies the Alexandrine Christological tradition of Athanasius and Cyril, so crucial for Torrance. Second, the recent developments of Maximus' scholarship prove the reconciling capacity of his theology, not only in the ecumenical context, but also in the broader context of the whole creation. Thus, it is in accordance with Maximus' major claim that the incarnation of the Logos is to be found in threefold form (in the creation, in the Scripture, and in the Person of Jesus Christ)⁶ that we intend to explore Torrance's interpretation of the thought of Athanasius.

I. The Peculiarity of Torrance's Reception of Athanasius

Before pursuing further, it would be pertinent to shed some light on the context in which Torrance employs the theology of Athanasius. The reception of Athanasius in modern scholarship is far from being unanimous. The tendencies to lionize Athanasius so evident in the nineteenth century theological reception of the Alexandrine bishop, found especially in the works of Johann Adam Möhler and John Henry Newman,⁷ were replaced by images of Athanasius as a manipulative politician,⁸ or even a rogue,⁹ in the twentieth century reception.¹⁰ The reception of Athanasius' Christology, a central subject for Torrance, is mostly seen from the perspective of later developments. According to these views the significance of the humanity of Christ especially was undervalued. Two important Christological accounts, Aloys Grillmeier's in *Christ in Christian Tradition* and Richard Hanson's in *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*,¹¹ follow the twentieth century trend of the vilification of Athanasius. They debunk Athanasius' Christology with the same accusation that he underestimated Christ's human agency. In

6 *Amb.* 7, 91:1084CD; *Amb.* 33, 1285C-1288A.

7 J. A. Möhler, *Athanasius der Grosse* (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1827); J. H. Newman, *Arians of the Fourth Century* (London: Rivington, 1833).

8 Eduard Schwartz, *Gesammelte Schriften 3: Zur Geschichte des Athanasius* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1959).

9 R. Klein, *Constantius II. und die christliche Kirche* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977).

10 Joseph T. Lienhard, "The 'Arian' Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 416n3.

11 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1975), 308-29; Richard P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 446-58.

his analysis of Athanasius on the human soul in Christ, Grillmeier argues for the deficiency of Athanasius' view of Christ's humanity, in that the Logos was deprived of Christ's inner experiences such as anguish and ignorance.¹² And though Hanson admits that Athanasius in his *Tomos ad Antiochenos 7* and *Ep. ad Epictetum* teaches that Christ possesses a human soul, he mostly relies on Grillmeier's portrayal of Athanasius' Christology as based on the saint's refusal to acknowledge human mind and soul in Jesus.¹³ Hanson concludes that one does not have to go as far as Harnack to conclude that Athanasius' Christology erases every feature of the historical Jesus of Nazareth,¹⁴ instead portraying the Logos as taking on himself "ignorant flesh" in order to accomplish redemption, just as the astronaut puts on a space-suit to operate in the universe where there is no air.¹⁵

Torrance's approach to Athanasius is completely different from those of Grillmeier and Hanson. This is due especially to his vision of the Alexandrine bishop as a severe opponent of every cosmological and epistemological dualism in the doctrine of Christ. For Torrance, a return to the obsolete categories of *Logos-sarx* versus *Logos-anthropos* Christologies, or "body" versus "flesh," would not serve to express the proper Christological position while combating Gnosticism and docetism, but would only lead one to lapse back into dualism.¹⁶ Torrance provides convincing evidences that the interpretation of the Athanasian notions of human soul and mind or the "ignorance of the flesh" offered by Grillmeier and Hanson are erroneous, as Charles S. Twombly has also demonstrated.¹⁷ Although in Torrance's view the claim that Christ lacked a rational soul and mind is so excessively distorted to such an extent that he does not bother to refute it, he nevertheless touches on this issue in order to prove that the Christ of Athanasius is not deprived of human agency:

Redemption was not accomplished just by a downright *fiat* of God, nor by a mere divine 'nod', but by an intimate, personal movement of the Son of God himself into the heart of our creaturely being and into the inner recesses of the human mind, in order to save us from within and from below, and to restore us to undamaged relations of being and mind with himself. Thus throughout his

12 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 315.

13 Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 451–52.

14 Adolf Von Harnack, *History of Dogma* (London: Oxford, 1898), 4:45.

15 Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 448–51.

16 Thomas F. Torrance, "Athanasius," in *Theology in Reconciliation*, 225; Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 189.

17 Charles S. Twombly, "The Nature of Christ's Humanity: Study of Athanasius," *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 8 (1989): 238–40.

earthly life Christ laid hold of our alienated and darkened human mind in order to heal and enlighten it in himself. In and through him our ignorant minds are brought into such a relation to God that they may be filled with divine light and truth. The redemption of man's ignorance has an essential place in the atoning exchange, for everything that we actually are in our lost and benighted condition has been taken up by Christ into himself in order that he might bring it under the saving, renewing, sanctifying, and enlightening power of his own reality as the incarnate wisdom and light of God.¹⁸

The firm evidence of Christ's human activity lies in his restoration of the human mind and soul through his earthly life. Torrance's intention here is not to challenge Grillmeier's position that Christ assumed only human flesh without human soul and mind – such an endeavor would mean for him to seek a proper solution to a false problem.¹⁹ Rather, he shows, Athanasius taught that Christ healed the darkened mind by his human agency, and not merely by an immediate act of divine power.

For Torrance the origins of dualistic tendencies of the modern Athanasian scholarship do not lie in its indebtedness to pre-Nicene Greek patristic concepts, but in the adoption of the Tertullianic and Augustinian dualism so evident in the clear-cut distinction between Incarnation and Redemption present in post-Reformation theology.²⁰ Torrance himself attempts to bridge this gap between Incarnation and Atonement that was opened up by post-Reformation theology. Though he does not directly mention R. P. C. Hanson's position concerning Athanasius' Christology, which propagated this rift between Incarnation and Redemption, nevertheless he strongly refutes it. By emphasizing that the human agency of Christ is evident in His role of High Priest, Torrance offers a response to Hanson's allegations that Athanasius' doctrine of Incarnation almost swallowed up his doctrine of Atonement.²¹ According to Torrance, the human priesthood and the saving mediation of Jesus Christ in and through his kinship with humankind are the crucial elements that witness in favor of Christ's active humanity.²² Torrance rejects Hanson's view that the redemption in Athanasius is accomplished simply by the act of the Logos assuming human flesh. The saving economy of the Incarnation for Torrance entails a threefold atoning exchange or reconciliation: a) ransom, b) the redemption of suffering, and c)

18 Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 187–8.

19 Thomas F. Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 230.

20 *Ibid.*, 230.

21 Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 450.

22 Thomas F. Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 228.

deification or *theopoiesis*.²³ Hanson's insistence only on the *redeeming* aspect of the Incarnation completely overlooks the other two features emphasized by Torrance. Deification aside, Torrance's elaboration of Athanasius' treatment of the vicarious role of Christ suggests a response to Hanson's claim that despite his belief in Atonement Athanasius cannot really explain why Christ should have died. Relying on Athanasius' assertion that "our resurrection is stored up in the Cross,"²⁴ Torrance states that the profound interaction between incarnation and atonement in Jesus finalized and sealed the ontological relations between him and every human being, for he "has anchored human nature in his own crucified and risen being."²⁵

This highlighting of atoning exchange or reconciliation, which according to Torrance features strongly in Athanasius' theology, is something that is evidently lacking in other scholarly approaches to the bishop of Alexandria. According to Torrance, Athanasius' theology, enriched with the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria, may serve as a platform for the ecumenical reconciliation of Orthodox, Monophysite, Roman Catholic and Evangelical churches, precisely because of its reconciling capacity in overcoming not only ancient, but also modern dualisms.²⁶ This makes Athanasius a figure of central significance for the unity of the Church and the main subject of our investigation in the present article.

II. The Incarnation of the Logos in the Created Order

Since the topic of the "incarnation" of the Logos in the created order requires a lengthy exposition, this portion of our investigation will be limited solely to the place of the human rational capacities within the created order. The common presupposition concerning this issue is that the human mind and soul have been sanctified and renewed in the Incarnate Logos. Thus, by restoring in his own human mind and soul the paradisiacal state, Jesus Christ has removed any stain of the fall from the human intellectual faculties as such. As a consequence of this, human nature is able by progressing toward deification to embrace God fully, and the human mind was able to perceive God. However, Torrance approaches this issue from a different perspective.

Torrance begins by pointing to two important features, not only of human nature, but also of every created nature: (a) its correspondence with truth and

23 *The Trinitarian Faith*, 181–90.

24 Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 1.43.

25 *The Trinitarian Faith*, 182–3.

26 Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 8–9.

(b) its dynamic character. Firstly, Torrance claims, for Athanasius nature (φύσις) is equivalent to truth (ἀλήθεια). Thus, to think “in accordance with nature” (κατα φύσιν) of things, a phrase frequently employed by Athanasius, means to think truly (ἀληθως) of them.²⁷ Secondly, according to Torrance, the notion of human or created nature in Athanasius differs from the corresponding notion in pagan philosophy, the latter being characterized by unchanging static patterns and immutable relations.²⁸ Human nature and its intellectual capacities are in a state of flux. According to Torrance, this departure of Athanasius from the Greek conceptual framework led him to abandon the abstraction of form from being in favor of a concept of nature that refers beyond itself.²⁹ This implies that the proper understanding of human nature is not to be acquired by abstracting from all its particular features that constitute it, but rather precisely the opposite: to consider all these particular, sometimes conflicting, moments of human existence as reconciled in reference to its final state. The truth about the created natures is also the truth about their final destiny, enabling every particular being to test in regard to that truth whether its existence is “in accordance with nature” (κατα φύσιν). Torrance maintains that God through creation has conferred intelligibility on the world of created being in such a way that form inheres in being, and logos inheres in human being. This unity between logos and being imposed by God on creation actually resembles the unity of Logos and Being in God.³⁰ Even before His historical incarnation, the divine Logos is present as reflected in the cosmic order of created beings through this metaphysical principle of unity between being and logos.

By relying on this principle Athanasius claims in the opening lines of *Contra Gentes* that to reveal the purpose of our godliness and to obtain the true knowledge about everything one does not need instruction from human beings, as both may be attained by themselves.³¹ The purpose of human godliness may be attained by itself, but this does not mean that worship, prayer and godly life have their purpose in themselves, but rather in something beyond them. Athanasius continues by saying that the purpose of godliness is revealed through the teaching of Christ. This means that Christ, as the Incarnate God, and his teaching, is the purpose of godliness – or, as the apostle put it, that the mystery of godliness (της ευσεβείας μυστήριον) is revealed in the incarnation

27 Thomas F. Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 247–8.

28 Ibid., 248.

29 Ibid., 249.

30 Ibid., 249.

31 *Contra Gentes* 1.1–3 in *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, ed. Robert Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 2–3.

of God in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16).³² The Pauline term ευσεβείας is a synonym to the term θεοσεβείας used by Athanasius. By following Athanasius here, Torrance couples θεοσεβείας with θεολογία. Although Athanasius does not use the term θεολογία in *Contra Gentes*, it is not difficult to conclude that for him the “true knowledge of all” (της των ὄλων αληθείας γνωσις) may be only attained by theology. Torrance defines the exact purpose of theology for Athanasius:

Theology is concerned to penetrate into the inherent order, the innate coherence, the essential pattern of God’s self-communication to us in revelation and reconciliation, and in and through that to rise in the Spirit to an understanding of God in his Triune Being (as far as that is allowed for finite creatures) which Athanasius called *theologia* in its strictest sense (εν τριάδι η θεολογία τελεία εστι) (*Contra Arianos* 1.18, 4).³³

Thus, both godliness as worship, prayer and godly life, and theology as the means to acquire the knowledge of everything, including God, serve the purpose of knowing God as Trinity and of being reconciled with Him. The human capacities of worshiping and knowing God are inseparable, since the genuine knowledge of God may be reached and maintained only in the context of continuous worship.³⁴ In his later article “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity according to St. Athanasius,” a paper delivered at a meeting of the Orthodox/Reformed Theological Dialogue, Torrance actually claims that *theologia* is equated by Athanasius with the knowledge and worship of God “both as he is known through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit and as he is eternally in himself, with the doctrine of Trinity.”³⁵

Further, in *Contra Gentes*, while Athanasius acknowledges the significance of both Scripture and the treatises of Church authors in revealing the truth of Christian religion, he chooses to rely only on the knowledge that derives from the faith in Christ (κατα τον Χριστον πιστιν), in order to prove the genuine correspondence between knowledge and faith.³⁶ The knowledge of God, which brings with it knowledge of everything else, is inseparable from faith in God, just as θεοσεβείας is inseparable from θεολογία. Moreover, the ground for θεοσεβείας is actually in the faith (πιστις) that Jesus Christ is Son of God, the Incarnate

32 Cf. Torrance’s essay “Logic and Analogic of Biblical and Theological Statements,” in *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 30–45; reprinted in *Divine Meaning*, 374–91, especially 378.

33 Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 250.

34 Ibid., 248.

35 Thomas F. Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity according to St. Athanasius,” *Anglican Theological Review* 71 (1989): 395.

36 Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 1.13–16.

Logos, inasmuch as the true knowledge of God and His creation provides the basis for the true θεολογία. Regarding θεολογία, Torrance is very clear that true theology begins with the orderly structure of the saving *oikonomia* or the economic Trinity and proceeds further to the inner relations of God in himself or to “the ontological Trinity” or “the immanent Trinity.”³⁷ This is a daring statement, since it (a) opens the possibility to the human mind to penetrate the inner relationship between the Persons of the Trinity, a domain considered by many theologians as inaccessible; and (b) it implies a certain analogy between the economic and ontological Trinity. We will leave the matter of “the ontological Trinity” for a moment and return to it while discussing Torrance’s view on the Incarnation of the Logos in Jesus Christ. For now, it must simply be noted that in Torrance’s view, the saving *oikonomia* includes the orderly created structure of the cosmos as well as the revelation of God through other means.

One may reflect further on the features and structure of the divine economy. If godliness, as a crucial dimension of true theology, is the way by which the Old Testament Jews expressed their relationship with God, then the pagan theology that recognizes the fundamental ontological structure of cosmos as entailing a genuine correspondence between being and logos was a model with which God chose to guide the Greeks and others who did not revere Him on the basis of the common covenant. Actually, the purpose of Athanasius’ *Contra Gentes* is to show to the Greeks that Christian faith is not only rational, but that is actually based on this genuine correspondence between being and logos, which resembles the same correspondence of Logos and Being in God and which is implanted in the creation. Therefore, understanding of the saving economy includes two features: first, the recognition of the *logoi* of the Logos in created beings; and second, the revelation of the Trinity in the economy *strictu sensu*.

However, this does not imply that nature and revelation are identical, nor that the Logos, together with the *logoi*, constitutes an intervening divine element between God and the world. For indeed, the Logos, the Mind and the Word of God, is identical with Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of the Father.³⁸ Thus, Torrance claims that the knowledge of God and the purpose of His creation embedded in the *logoi* of creation, derived from cosmological systems, may not be “attained prior to or independently of the knowledge of God as the Father of Jesus Christ.”³⁹ θεοσεβείας is an inseparable part of θεολογία, since the faith in God through Christ is the precondition for penetrating into the intrinsic order and

37 Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 250.

38 Torrance, “Hermeneutics of Athanasius,” 229–30.

39 Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 255.

intelligibility, first of the cosmos and then further of the Trinity on both economic and ontological levels.⁴⁰ According to Torrance, faith and obedience to God in Jesus Christ actually yields the knowledge of things “in their own compulsive movement and in their innate coherence.”⁴¹

Athanasius develops the Stoic argument that the order (τάξις) of the cosmos indicates that it has a creator:

For seeing the circling of heaven and the course of sun and moon, the positions and revolutions of the other stars, which are opposed and different but in their difference all keep a common order, who would not think that they do not order themselves but that there is another who orders them and who made them?⁴²

However, a common order reveals more than just the existence of a creator. In accordance to λόγου ὄντος φυσικου,⁴³ “the intrinsic rationality of things,”⁴⁴ or the “rational law,”⁴⁵ the common order is not one of many, but is actually the *one* common order. The one common order implies that there is only one cosmos, which is the creation of one, and not of many creators.⁴⁶ Moreover, according to Athanasius, due to the orderly movement of the cosmos, one may also conclude that it is led by one Lord and King and not by many (ενα και μη πολλους).⁴⁷ The fact that the world is both created and governed by one and the same Creator and Ruler, points out to a certain divine purpose (σκοπος) conceived before the beginning of creation. According to Athanasius, this purpose is revealed in the Incarnation of Logos as the mystery of Christ (το Χριστου μυστήριον).⁴⁸ Thus, the demarcation line between nature and revelation, but also their meeting point, is the Incarnation of the Logos, which restored the unity of the creation.⁴⁹ The rationality that has been embedded in the cosmos is the guarantee of the unity of the creation. This unity of the cosmos, given in potentiality through the rational order, is fully realised in the Incarnation of the Logos, when God became man.

The human intellectual capacities may lead one just to conclude that one

40 Ibid., 255.

41 Ibid., 256.

42 Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 35.30–4.

43 Ibid., 39.24.

44 Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 257.

45 Thomson, *Contra Gentes*, 109.

46 Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 39.

47 Ibid., 38.44–47; 39.33–35.

48 Athanasius, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 27.112c.

49 Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 7.

single order of the cosmos refers to one creator and ruler, but this creator and ruler becomes known as the all-holy Father of Christ only by the Incarnation of the Logos.⁵⁰ The unity of the cosmos is fully realized only as the unity of many *logoi* in the Logos of God revealed in Christ. For Athanasius, the Logos of God, or the Son of the Father, revealed Himself as the Creator and the Provider by His incarnation:

The Father calls him King in regard to his works in time, lest anything in the measured character of the Incarnation should detract from glory that inheres in him by nature. For even after his economy he remains no less in him, begotten of his Royal Father, and as King and God, he is said to enter in his Royal Rule through becoming flesh.⁵¹

For Torrance, Athanasius' view of the cosmos – its origin, history, and purpose – as well as metaphysics and ontology, natural philosophy and cosmology, become linked to a distinctive Christological and soteriological perspective. However, this Christological perspective, evident in both *oikonomia* and *theologia* also has a Trinitarian character, since the knowledge of the Son, which is only possible in the Spirit, leads further to the Father:

As by looking up to heaven and seeing its order and the light of the stars one can form an idea of the Word who sets their order, so when thinking of the Word of God one must also think of his Father, God, from whom he proceeds and is therefore rightly called the interpreter and messenger of his Father. One can see this from what happens with us. For if, when a word is spoken by men, we think that its source is the mind and, concentrating on the word, we perceive by reasoning the mind which it reveals, all the more, by a greater and far superior effort of the imagination, when we see the power of the Word we form an idea of his good Father.⁵²

Torrance develops Athanasius' analogy between divine and human uttered word by directing the whole christological issue to the purpose of Father's utterance of His Word. Thus, the love of God toward human beings, as the inner reason for the Incarnation of the Logos, has a twofold purpose: (a) to restore the unity of creation, and (b) to reconcile the creation, particularly humankind with the Father. Myk Habets aptly remarks that to acknowledge the unity of the creation by

50 Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 40.11–16.

51 Athanasius, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 27.565a in T. F. Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 269.

52 Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 45.1–10.

referring to one Creator is “one, but not the highest step.”⁵³ The highest step is to acknowledge the Creator as Father and to call and know him as Father of the Son.

At the level of human intellectual faculty the restoration of the creation to its previous state took place as restoration of the rationality in the human being through and in the Logos.⁵⁴ The practical display of this restored human rationality is the acknowledgement of the one Creator beyond the created order and the realization that the purpose of the creation is not in itself, but in something higher. However, while this saves one from the attempt to seek the meaning of universe in the created order, without elevating one’s mind beyond it, it does not fulfil the entire purpose of the Incarnation of the Logos. According to Torrance, Christ achieved the reconciliation with the Father for human beings and *from the side of* human beings through His crucifixion and resurrection. The cross and resurrection, as the reconciliation of humanity with the Father, are not only sufficient reasons to understand the Incarnation; they are also the realization that every concrete human being might be reconciled with the Father only by following in Christ’s footsteps and by being with Christ in the Spirit.⁵⁵ Thus, by being led by Christ’s example the restored human rationality realizes the purpose of the universe in general, and the meaning of every concrete human existence in particular. In short, for Athanasius, the Mystery of Christ is stored up in the intrinsic rationality of things (λόγου οντος φυσικου) revealed in the general order as well as in the profound interaction between the Logos of God and the logos of every human being.

III. The Incarnation of the Logos in the Scriptures

Athanasius’ approach to the Scriptures was a long-lasting inspiration to Torrance. He dedicated a lengthy article to this topic, entitled “The Hermeneutics of Athanasius,” first published in the journal of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*.⁵⁶

John Webster argues that Torrance’s view of Scripture is structured with two movements, from (a) a trinitarian and incarnational theology of revelation,

53 Myk Habets, “How ‘Creation is Proleptically Conditioned by Redemption,’” *Colloquium* 41 (2009): 8.

54 Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 262.

55 *Ibid.*, 262–4.

56 The article was published in four issues of the journal *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 1 (1970): 446–468; 2–3 (1970): 89–106; 4 (1970): 237–249; 1 (1971): 133–149. The full-length article is reprinted in chapter eight of Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 229–88 from whence this quote is taken.

through (b) an ontology of the prophetic and apostolic texts to c) a hermeneutics of repentance and faith.⁵⁷ This is the exact structure of Torrance's dealing with Athanasius' scriptural account. Moreover, a similar structure may be noticed in his view of creation, since the understanding of the *logoi* or the words of the Scripture corresponds to the understanding of the *logoi* or the rational principles of the creation, in that both are acquired in relation to Logos:

That is the *Logos*, God himself speaking to us and acting upon us in Jesus Christ, whom we must hear and understand if we are to interpret the divine words of Holy Scripture according to their proper sense and nature. Apart from the *Logos* of God there is no truly *logical* thinking or speaking for the Logos is the source of all rationality in thought and speech. Applied to the interpretation of the Holy Scripture, that means that only when we discern the relation between the words (λόγοι) and the Word (Λόγος) are we engaged in the rational exegesis in accordance with the speaking and acting of God upon us in Jesus Christ.⁵⁸

The basic center of reference of the Scriptures is Jesus Christ, both as the originator of the words (λόγοι) of Scripture and as Scripture's final scope and *telos*.⁵⁹ This is not to oppose Christocentrism to the Trinitarian pattern in the understanding of the Scriptural message. Torrance claims that the essential conceptuality of Scripture in its basic form of thought and speech as derived from the *oikonomia* of the Logos of God is founded in and through the Logos in the *theologia* or the Being of the triune God.⁶⁰ Similar to the rationality of the Logos embedded in the creation as part of the divine economy, the *logoi* of Scripture are economical embodiments of the Logos in the form of thought and speech. Again, Torrance points out the analogy of *oikonomia* with *theologia*. The words of Scripture do not reflect only the rationality of the Logos⁶¹ – they also lead the human mind to penetrate into the inner relations of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Torrance maintains that the incarnation of the Logos actually discloses the impossibility for the human mind to penetrate by its own power into the Mystery of God. At the same time, however, it makes possible the knowledge of God through the Logos in the form of thought and speech.⁶² This knowledge of God through the

57 John Webster, "T. F. Torrance on Scripture," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65 (2012): 37.

58 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 234.

59 Ibid., 240.

60 Ibid., 270.

61 Ibid., 274.

62 Ibid., 286.

Logos is possible only in the Spirit, since for Torrance Athanasian Christocentrism implies “the intrinsic mutuality of the indwelling between the Son and the Spirit, each receiving from the other.”⁶³ Torrance applies the Athanasian principle of “coordination and unity,” which describes God’s activity as moving through the Son in the Spirit,⁶⁴ to the proper understanding of the scriptural message as shaped within the Spirit-led Church:

It was out of this corporate reciprocity centred in and creatively controlled by Christ through the outpouring of his Spirit of Truth upon it that the New Testament Scriptures were born and took shape within the church. They constitute, therefore, the divinely-provided and inspired linguistic medium which remains of authoritative and critical significance for the whole history of the church of Jesus Christ. Its purpose in this written form . . . is to enable us to stand with the original witnesses under the creative impact of the Word which they received and obeyed, and to be drawn into the sphere of its effective operation in the world.⁶⁵

The words of the Scriptures are the divine-inspired medium through which God acts upon us. The Spirit commences the effective divine operation by relating divine words to divine acts. The divine operation of the Spirit of Truth, who inscribes the Logos in the hearts of the interpreters, leads from a Trinitarian and incarnational theology of divine self-revelation to an ontology of the written text. This connection of the texts with the divine actions of God’s Spirit opens up the possibility for understanding the *logoi* of scripture as true *reality*, which Torrance equates with truth (αλήθεια) itself.⁶⁶

Torrance here makes a shift from the economic and theological dimensions of God’s self-revelation to the ontological or paradigmatic significance of the scriptural account. According to Torrance, there exists an analogy between the nature (φύσις) or the reality (αλήθεια) of the scriptural statements (λόγοι) and the nature of the created beings. One should understand the scriptural statements in accordance with their correspondence with divine realities and their dynamic character. The scriptural statements are equivalent to truth (αλήθεια) if they point to divine realities, or have an *ostensive* function.⁶⁷ For Torrance, theological

63 Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 254.

64 Ibid., 251.

65 T. F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 92–3.

66 Torrance, “Hermeneutics of Athanasius,” 232.

67 Ibid., 253, 257; Thomas F. Torrance, “Logic and Analogic of Biblical and Theological Statements,” *Divine Meaning*, 376.

statements, as derived from the message and the content of the statements of Scripture, can be considered as true only "when they manifest in themselves a 'logic' that corresponds with the actual way which the Word of God has taken in becoming flesh among us, and so raises us up to communion with the eternal God."⁶⁸

This leads to the second feature of the scriptural statements, their dynamic character. Torrance claims that there is no allegorical and tropical interpretation of the Scriptures, since the scriptural statements are pointers to the dynamic divine acts.⁶⁹ In other words, the common meanings of the scriptural words are abstracted from their ordinary experience, by referring upward (*ανα*) to God. Thus, they attain their meaning within the scope of divine Being.⁷⁰ Torrance relies here mostly on Athanasius' distinction between biblical terms that refer to both human and divine realities:

And if so be the same terms are used of God and man in divine Scripture, yet the clear-sighted, as Paul enjoins, will study it, and thereby discriminate, and dispose of what is written according to the nature of each subject (*κατα την ἐκάστου τῶν σημαιομένων φύσιν τα γεγραμμένα διαγινώσκειν*), and avoid any confusion of sense, so as neither to conceive of the things of God in a human way, nor to ascribe the things of man to God.⁷¹

Nevertheless, Torrance brings the biblical figures used to discern the divine realities into close relation with the economic divine self-revelation or, to use the language of Athanasius, illustrations (*παραδείγματα*) of these images. These illustrations are not human similes or metaphorical devices, but the means of divine economy to refer to something beyond created nature. As such they open up the possibility for human beings to know God.⁷² Since these illustrations have a common point of reference, which is the Incarnation of the Logos, they provide the knowledge of God just in the context of divine *oikonomia*. The knowledge of God is not acquired by human intellectual capacities and presented in the form of statements, but God communicates it in the dim form of illustrations to those

68 Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 378.

69 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 232.

70 Torrance, "Logic and Analogic of Biblical and Theological Statements," 377.

71 Athanasius, *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* 10.6 in H. G. Opitz, *Athanasius Werke*, vol. 2.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940). The English translation from A. Robertson, *St. Athanasius. Select Works and Letters*. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd ser., ed. H. Wace and P. Schaff (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 4:156.

72 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 255; Thomas F. Torrance, "Logic and Analogic of Biblical and Theological Statements," *Divine Meaning*, 376. Cf. also *De decretis* 12.3.

who may discern their spiritual sense and their cryptic character. The spiritual understanding of the Scripture as distinct from the profane character of the biblical terms is possible only through the Incarnate Logos in the Spirit, and also requires religious experience based on faith and godly and reverent reasoning (εν πίστει καί εὐσεβεί λογισμῶ μετ' εὐλαβείας).⁷³

According to Webster, the hermeneutics of faith occupies the third and the last level in Torrance's structuring of Athanasian scriptural account, immediately after the ontology of biblical text.⁷⁴ For Torrance the connection between the knowledge of the divine nature (φύσις) – for Athanasius, synonymous with reality (αλήθεια)⁷⁵ – and faith (πίστις) and godliness (εὐσεβείας), is also substantiated by the scriptural account. In his exegesis of the Old Testament meaning of the Hebrew term *ʿemeth*, Torrance concludes:

The usual translation of *ʿemeth* in the LXX is *aletheia*, but *aletheia* is not used to signify abstract or metaphysical truth, but what is grounded upon God's faithfulness, i.e. truth not as something static, but as active, efficacious reality, the reality of God in covenant-relationship. It is the steadfastness or the reality of God which is the ground of all truth. Primarily, truth is God's being true to Himself, His faithfulness or consistency. God's Truth means, therefore, that He keeps truth or faith with His people and requires them to keep truth or faith with Him. Thus the Hebrew *ʿemeth* is translated not only by *aletheia* but also by *pistis* and *dikaioσune*.⁷⁶

Torrance relies on A. G. Herbert's claim that in the biblical usage the term "faith" does not refer to some human capacity or virtue, but it refers to the tendency in human nature to take refuge from human frailty and instability in God who is firm and steadfast.⁷⁷ However, Torrance points out that the Old Testament concept of faith differs from the one proclaimed by the Gospels since in the latter, the steadfast faithfulness of God has achieved its end in righteousness and truth in Jesus Christ, because Truth has been actualized in Him as Truth, and fulfilled in our midst.⁷⁸ This statement of Torrance perfectly corresponds

73 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 243–244. Cf. Athanasius, *Epistulae quattuor ad Serapionem* 1.20 in K. Savvidis, *Athanasius: Werke, Band I. Die dogmatischen Schriften, Erster Teil, 4. Lieferung* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010).

74 John Webster, "T. F. Torrance on Scripture," 37.

75 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 247–8.

76 Torrance, "One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith," *The Expository Times* 68 (1957): 112.

77 A. G. Herbert, "Faithfulness' and 'Faith,'" *Theology* 424 (1955): 374.

78 Torrance, "One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith," 113.

with his view of Athanasius' scriptural interpretation as operating "within the scope of faith, under the direction of the Word made flesh, and in accordance with His truth."⁷⁹ From his earliest works Athanasius consistently claimed that the study and true knowledge of Scripture is inseparable from godliness and faith:

But in addition to the study and true knowledge of the Scriptures are needed a good life and pure soul and virtue in Christ, so that the mind, journeying in this path, may be able to obtain and apprehend what it desires, in so far as human nature is able to learn about God the Word.⁸⁰

There is no doubt for Torrance that Athanasius keeps to the scope of the Scripture by keeping within the scope of faith.⁸¹

The relationship between the interpretation of the Scriptures and the faith, however, is one of the most criticized aspects of Torrance's method of biblical exegesis. Thus, James Barr refutes Torrance's metaphysical-theological type of approach to scriptural thought-structures as evidencing an inability to keep to linguistic method strictly and to see and present linguistic evidence properly. According to Barr, Torrance, in his exegetical method, expresses a tendency to replace linguistic analysis with theological and philosophical argumentation.⁸² Darren Sarisky suggests that Barr's criticism of Torrance might be summed up by the words of Barr's follower John Barton:

One cannot establish what the Bible means if one insists on reading it as necessarily conforming to what one already believes to be true – which is what a theological reading amounts to.⁸³

In his attempt to respond to Barton's comment in defense of Torrance's view of Scripture, Sarisky emphasizes that the interpretative framework is not constituted by some subjective belief of the interpreter, but rather by the ultimate faith in the Holy Trinity.⁸⁴ This is evident in Torrance's treatment of Athanasius' interpretative method:

79 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 238.

80 *De Incarnatione* 57.1–5.

81 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 279.

82 James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 204–05.

83 John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 164. See also Darren Sarisky, "T. F. Torrance on Biblical Interpretation," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11 (2009): 336.

84 Sarisky, "T. F. Torrance on Biblical Interpretation," 336.

Thus while Athanasius is not a Biblicist, yet he appeals to the Scriptures for the demonstration of the faith...He treats biblical statements, however, not as embodying the truth in themselves, but as pointing, under the direction of the Spirit by whose inspiration they were uttered, to the words and acts of Christ who is himself the Truth.⁸⁵

The interpretative framework within the scope of faith in the Holy Trinity is actually the result of divine self-revelation, as much as the particular forms of thought and speech that express the divine realities are generated by the self-revealing Trinity.⁸⁶ Torrance maintains that Athanasius' contribution is crucial to the hermeneutical method that subjects terms to the realities to which they refer, instead of subjecting realities to the terms which refer to them as Barr does.⁸⁷ Moreover, the scriptural statements or *logoi* as embodiments of the Logos not only provide the understanding of the realities to which they refer, but also lead one to move toward their *telos*. Thus, Torrance argues, for Athanasius divine self-revelation and his saving activity operate as one movement of self-communication to human being.

This movement of God as revealer and reconciler toward human beings, however, is located within a specific ecclesial context, which allows us to establish a proper link between the general framework of revelation and individual divine acts, between reality and the scriptural forms of thought and speech, and between historical and ontological factors of divine self-communication. Torrance maintains that it is only *in the Church* that "the faith and language and mind are brought in the conformity with the nature of Christ."⁸⁸ Thus, not individual belief, but the coherent ecclesial faith in Christ as the interpretative scriptural framework, may provide proper reception of his revealing and reconciling deeds. The same is applicable to the language or text of the Bible. Only within the scope of faith do the common human terms used in the Scripture acquire the spiritual or ecclesiastical sense, which prevails over existing human conceptions.

Thus, finally, the true ecclesiastical understanding of the *logoi* of Scripture allows us to recover the properly disposed *mind*. This is not a natural process, but one of the fruits of the Incarnation of Logos, who restored human nature

85 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 284.

86 Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 21.

87 Thomas F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), x. Cf. also T. F. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), 50; and "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 274.

88 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 241.

to its previous state. The proper understanding of Scriptural *logoi* results in acquiring the mind remade and renewed in Christ (αλλα τον εν Χριστω κτισθέντα και ανακαινισθέντα νου).⁸⁹ The main feature of this ecclesiastical mind is to discern the divine acts within the historical, prophetic and apostolic framework of Scripture. This mind does not divorce the Scriptural *logoi* from their historical actuality, but rather penetrates the surface of both biblical syntax and historical events in order to discern the deeper history of revelation. Therefore Torrance, following Athanasius, refers here to this ecclesiastical mind also as the "apostolic mind."⁹⁰

Torrance expresses the mutual relationships that exist among *logoi* of Scripture, the properly disposed mind, and faith and piety in the conclusion to his essay on Athanasian hermeneutics:

But when in accordance with true piety we allow our thoughts to take forms in accordance with what is given to us from God, so that our minds are opened out towards his self-revelation, then we are in a position to read the Scriptures and listen to what they have to say, and through rational reflection upon their message formulate trains of thought which may provide a medium through which the Scriptures may continue to reflect their meaning, and reflect it ever more profoundly.⁹¹

It should be carefully noted here that the triadic structure of Torrance's scriptural interpretation proposed by Webster corresponds exactly with the structure previously observed in Torrance's view of divine rationality embedded in the created order. Thus, the interpretation of both created order and the Scripture are structured around three basic principles: (a) divine self-revelation, displayed through cosmological, scriptural and incarnational activity; (b) genuine correspondence between divine realities on the one hand, and cosmological and rational arrangement, scriptural syntax and historical deeds of the Incarnate Logos on the other hand; and c) the role of faith and piety in the process of understanding and appropriating the Mystery of Christ and, through Christ, the Mystery of the Holy Trinity.

IV. The Incarnation of the Logos in the God-man Jesus Christ

One may presume that the general triadic pattern of Torrance's interpretation of both the rational order of cosmos and the Scripture applies also in his description of the embodiment of the Logos in the Person of Jesus Christ. Moreover, as

89 Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem* 1.9.

90 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 288. Cf. Athanasius *De Synodis* 5 in *Athanasius Werke*, ed. H. G. Opitz, vol. 2.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940).

91 Torrance, "Hermeneutics of Athanasius," 288.

both the rationality embedded in cosmos and the Scripture serve as *signa* to the Incarnation of the Logos, it is highly unlikely that the Incarnation of the Son of God in the Person of Jesus Christ refers just to itself. Therefore, it would be pertinent to explore whether for Torrance the Incarnation of the Logos is a *signum* of some higher reality.

In his analysis of Athanasius' thought, Torrance emphasizes the importance and centrality of the Incarnation for the Alexandrine bishop. Before embarking on investigation of the various implications that the Incarnation has for Athanasius, it would be more relevant to define first what is meant here by Incarnation. For Torrance, the Athanasian identification of God the Son, the eternal Logos, with Jesus Christ represents the crucial contribution in relation to previous theological developments.⁹² Moreover, in order to refute some modern misinterpretations of Athanasius' view of Incarnation, such as the above-mentioned stances of Grillmeier and Hanson, Torrance emphasizes that God the Son was not simply incarnated *in* human being, but *as* human being. For Torrance this fact actually refers to the double role of the Incarnation, since Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos of God, "*ministered not only of the things of God to man but ministered of the things of man to God.*"⁹³ Torrance signifies the latter implication of the Incarnation by what he calls the "vicarious humanity" of Christ. The vicarious humanity of Christ presupposes a certain reciprocity. On the one hand, God the Son appropriates the fullness of fallen humanity.⁹⁴ On the other hand, by his saving deeds God the Son has exalted humanity to the extent of being deified and adopted by the Father, in the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵ By his role both as a High Priest taken from among human beings and as an Apostle from God,⁹⁶ Christ accomplishes the saving work which, according to Torrance, consists of the following: atoning expiation, priestly propitiation, substitutionary sacrifice and victory over the forces of evil, sanctifying

92 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 227.

93 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 228, emphasis original. On the basis of *Contra Arianos*, 1.4. 50, 2.7, 12, 50, 65, 74, 3.30, 38, 4.6.

94 The question of Christ's appropriation of "fallen" humanity remains an open one for theology. Torrance followed Barth on this point in arguing for an assumption of "fallen" humanity, but it seems that he was open to reconsider and accommodate as well the patristic account and the stance of his former supervisor Hugh R. Macintosh, who in his *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913) stressed the sinlessness of Christ's humanity as well. See the lecture of George Dion Dragas, "T. F. Torrance a Theologian for Our Times: an Eastern Orthodox Assessment," 2012 Annual Meeting of the T. F. Torrance Theological Fellowship, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Frhvk-MY3dg> (accessed on the May 3, 2013).

95 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 230.

96 Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 2.9.

exaltation and finally deification or *theopoiesis*.⁹⁷ While many of these categories are really developed in later works such as *Contra Arianos*, Torrance also states that the most important elements of Athanasius' soteriology such as the doctrine of deification are already present in *De Incarnatione*:

For he [the Word of God] became man (ανηνθρώπησεν) that we might become divine (θεοποιηθώμεν); and he revealed himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father; and he endured insults from men that we might inherit incorruption (αφθαρσίαν).⁹⁸

This renowned passage from *De Incarnatione* 54 reveals how deep and subtle was Torrance's reading of Athanasius. First, accenting the reciprocity of inhomination and deification, Torrance emphasizes the double role of Christ, who as God becomes human being, and as human being becomes God — corresponding also to His "double account" (διπλην απαγγελίαν).⁹⁹ For Torrance, this means that the God who became man was the only one able to elevate man to union with God, on account of the deification of Christ's "vicarious humanity" in the hypostatic union of divine and human natures. The Incarnation of the Logos actually yielded and secures the human receptivity of deification.¹⁰⁰ The deification of mankind is not automatic or natural because of Christ's introduction of human nature into the life of the Holy Trinity, but it is made possible by the grace of God through Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, Torrance pays considerable attention to the end of this chapter from *De Incarnatione*, where Athanasius claims that the achievements of the Lord effected through His incarnation are as the innumerable waves of the ocean that are impossible to grasp by one single gaze. According to Torrance, the metaphor applied by Athanasius actually suggests not only the multiform activities of the Logos that are impossible to seize, but also the dynamic of the divine economy manifested in Christ's deeds. Thus, Torrance states:

Theology that proceeds strictly by thinking *κατα φύσιν* of God in his economic condescension to us in Jesus Christ, cannot proceed by determining certain fixed positions and then arguing deductively from them as axioms in the old Euclidean or Aristotelian way, for that would involve operating with a kind of necessity which is alien to the nature of God and the activity of his Spirit.¹⁰¹

97 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 228–30.

98 Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 54 in Thomson, 268–9.

99 Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 3.29.

100 Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 80.

101 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 260.

However, Torrance argues further, "some way must be found to discern the coherent relation or chain of connection in God's saving *economy*."¹⁰² In fact, the previously quoted passage suggests precisely such a possible chain of connection. Before turning to his metaphor of the multiplicity of the waves and to the inability of the human gaze to comprehend them, Athanasius mentions two fruits of the Incarnation: (a) the knowledge of the Father and (b) the inheritance of incorruption. While the knowledge of the Father is certainly only possible through the Son, the state of incorruption is something that mankind already possessed, lost and regained in Christ. Thus, the knowledge of the Father, as Myk Habets points out, is not the knowledge of God as creator, but rather the knowledge of the Father through His intimate relationship with the Son.¹⁰³ The new relationship between God and mankind is no longer exhausted in the relationship between the Creator and the creation, but is elevated to a new level as the relationship between God the Father and His children through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Thus, even incorruptibility, while being a fruit of the Incarnation, should not be understood as the pinnacle of salvation. According to Torrance, the chain of relation within the divine economy "reaches back to the original order of creation and far transcends it in the amazing purpose of the divine love, as the order of the new creation."¹⁰⁴ The appropriation of incorruptibility does not presuppose automatic deification, as the so-called "physical redemption" theory implies; rather, it represents the first step on the long road of deification that necessarily includes the life in the Spirit.¹⁰⁵

Torrance's intention is to develop both the soteriological aspect of Incarnation that sums up its anthropological consequences, as well as the *theological* or strictly Trinitarian aspect. Concerned with both epistemological and ontological dimensions of the Incarnation, Torrance focuses his interest on the relation among the divine persons within the Holy Trinity first in *oikonomia* and next toward *theologia*.¹⁰⁶ According to Torrance, the relation between the Father and the Incarnate Son constitutes the epistemological heart of Athanasius' theology,¹⁰⁷ because the revelation of the Father through the Son is crucial for the human understanding of the relations in the Holy Trinity. Thus, Torrance heavily relies on Athanasius' insistence on this relationship for theological understanding:

102 Ibid.

103 Habets, "How 'Creation is Proleptically Conditioned by Redemption,'" 8.

104 Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 2, *The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel* (London: Lutterworth, 1960), 15.

105 Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*, 57–8.

106 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 250.

107 Ibid., 240.

It is more godly and accurate to signify God from the Son and call him Father, than to name him from his works and call him unoriginate.¹⁰⁸

Torrance draws from this the conclusion that the knowledge of the Son leads to the knowledge of the Father, and that the knowledge of the Father is the knowledge of his own essential Nature, which provides the knowledge of God in the internal relations of his eternal Being.¹⁰⁹

Here Torrance distinguishes three levels of knowledge of God. The first is the knowledge that one derives from the revealing and saving acts of God in the "incarnate parousia" of his only begotten Son in Jesus Christ. The second is the knowledge of God that is revealed through the relationship between the Father and the Son, described by the Nicene formula *homoousios to Patri*. The third and final is the knowledge of the eternal relations and distinctions within one Being of the Godhead.¹¹⁰

Since Torrance exposed this view in the context of the official international dialogue between Reformed and Orthodox theologians as an implication of Athanasian theology that might serve as a basis to attain ecclesial unity, I would dare to comment it from an Orthodox perspective. While the first two claims are undisputable, the third – knowledge of internal relations – is highly problematic, implying not only that human beings may know the divine essence, but also a questionable use of analogy between the Holy Trinity in the divine economy and the Holy Trinity in their innate relations within the Godhead.

First, before insisting on the primacy of the Father-Son relation over the Creator-creation relation, Athanasius makes two distinctions: (a) between the originate and the creator or the maker of what is originate;¹¹¹ and (b) between the *being* and the *will* of God.¹¹² It is important to emphasize that the distinction between the creator of what is originate and the originate¹¹³ does not coincide with the distinction between originated and unoriginate,¹¹⁴ because the former

108 *Contra Arianos* 1.34, in K. Metzler & K. Savvidis, *Athanasius: Werke, Band I. Die dogmatischen Schriften, Erster Teil, 2. Lieferung* (New York: De Gruyter, 1998); *De Synodis* 48 in Opitz 2.1. Here we make use of Torrance's English rendering from "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity according to Athanasius," 396.

109 Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity according to Athanasius," 396.

110 *Ibid.*, 396-7.

111 *Contra Arianos* 1.20.

112 *Contra Arianos* 2.2.

113 *Contra Arianos* 1.20: οὐδὲν ὄμοιον κατ' οὐσίαν ἔχει πρὸς τὸν πεποιηκότα.

114 Kahled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 103.

implies dependence of the originate on the grace and will (χάριτι και βουλήσει) of the creator.¹¹⁵ The nature of the things originated is restrained by their creator and restricted by their “beginning,”¹¹⁶ as well as their proper limits (οροις ἰδίοις).¹¹⁷ By stressing that the omnipotent and perfect (ὁ παντοδύναμος και παντέλειος) Logos of the Father himself is present in all things and extends his power everywhere, Athanasius actually argues in favor of the Logos’ *complete unlikeness* to the world. Athanasius expresses this unlikeness between the world and the Logos by claiming that the Logos, as the Father’s power in creation, possesses all the properties of the Father, not by participation like the rest of creation, but absolutely.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the Son of God does not participate in the Father, but rather the creation is related to God through participation in His Logos and the Son.¹¹⁹

By the second distinction pointed above, between the divine being and divine will, Athanasius strengthens the relationship based on likeness between the Father and the Son, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Athanasius describes the relationship between the Father and the Son *ad intra* or within the divine being in terms of nature and not of will, since the Son is the offspring of the Father’s own essence. Claiming further that “as far as the Son transcends the creature, by so much does what is by nature transcend the will,”¹²⁰ Athanasius does not downgrade the divine will, but establishes the priority of the Son over the world and his difference from it.

Regarding the Father-Son relations *ad extra*, i.e. in the creation, by giving the examples of Genesis 1:26 and Proverbs 8:27, Athanasius emphasizes that the creation of the world is willing action of both the Father and the Son.¹²¹ This not only proves the genuine intention of God to create; it also shows (a) that the act of creating was agreed upon between the Father and the Son, and (b) that this same act was granted by the Father to the Son. By giving power to things to come into existence, the Son created, formed and ordered the universe.¹²²

115 *Contra Arianos* 1.20.

116 Georges Florovsky, “The Concept of Creation in St Athanasius,” *Studia Patristica* 6 (1962): 32–57. Reprinted in Florovsky, *Aspects of Church History*, vol. 4, *Collected Works* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1975), 39–62.

117 *Contra Gentes* 42 in Thomson, 114–17.

118 *Contra Gentes* 46.52–60 (Thomson, 130–131).

119 Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, 105.

120 *Contra Arianos* 3.62: ὅσω οὖν τοῦ κτήματος ὁ υἱὸς ὑπέρκειται, τοσούτω και τῆς βουλήσεως τὸ κατὰ φύσιν.

121 *Contra Gentes* 46.52–60 (Thomson, 130–31).

122 *Contra Gentes* 46.47–50 (Thomson, 128–131).

Athanasius also emphasizes the role of the Son as the provider of the creation. As in the case with the creation of the world, in exercising this role the Son is always with the Father and there is no distance that separates them. Athanasius claims not only that there is no interval or distance between the Father and the generation of the Son, but also that the Son's active involvement in creating and governing the world does not separate him from the Father.

The other possible implication of the relationship between the Father and the Son *ad intra* and *ad extra* is the distinction between the divine being and the divine will. Here, one has to recognize the basic difference between the divine *theologia*, i.e. the inter-Trinitarian relations among the persons, and the divine *oikonomia*, i.e. the relationship of God with the creation, in Athanasius. As Khaled Anatolios suggests, the essence-power distinction parallels the nature-works distinction.¹²³ This does at all not mean, however, that the divine power is an accidental exposition or display of divine being in a form of created grace. On the contrary, the divine power essentially belongs to the divine being, or the divine essence. By denying the interval in the act of creation, Athanasius not only claims that there is no distance or interval between the power of the Son and the Father, since it is one and the same power or will or energy springing from the divine essence, but also that there is no interval between the divine being or essence and the divine power employed in creating and governing the world. On one hand, Athanasius contrasts the divine will to the divine nature in order to emphasize the ontological differences between the Son as the product of the nature and the world as the product of the will. On the other hand, Athanasius differentiates the divine will from the temporal process of the divine economy, by claiming that the creative act remains timeless and mysterious.

All that has been said above inevitably leads to the conclusion that Athanasius attempted to show the bond of the Son to the Father within the divine essence on the one hand, and to differentiate ontologically God as creator from the creation on the other hand. Athanasius denies the existence of any distance between the Father and the Son, claiming the existence of an inseparable divine unity, without mediation or distance. Likewise, the Alexandrine bishop goes a step further, arguing for the lack of distance between the Father and the Son in creating and governing the world. Thus, while the Son is the Father's will and the tool in creation, He remains inseparably united to the Father. If the difference between the divine being and divine will and power is acknowledged in Athanasius, it is possible to discern both the lack of distance between the Son and the Father in

123 Anatolios, *Athanasius. The Coherence of His Thought*, 46.

the divine power or energy, and the absence of any interval that may separate God's essence from the divine power employed in the temporal order of the world. The divine activity may appear as temporary since it is revealed to us in a chronological sequence, but it is the everlasting expression of God's activity *ad extra*.

We may draw two conclusions that are relevant for the present study. First, Athanasius' intention is not to claim the ultimate understanding of the Father through the Son, but by connecting closely the being of the Son with the being of the Father he argues against the Arian tendency that equates the Son with a creature.

Torrance states that, as the controlling centre of Athanasius' thought, the term *homoousios* carries the conception of coinherent relation or mutual indwelling of each divine Person in the other two.¹²⁴ Torrance emphasizes the strategic importance of the concepts of *homoousios* and *perichoresis* for Athanasius, because they help him to move from the second level dealing with the economic Trinity to the third level of the ontological Trinity.¹²⁵ However, the thorough analysis of Athanasius' corpus does not substantiate Torrance' claim that the concepts of *homoousios* occupies the controlling centre of Athanasius' thought. Lewis Ayres lists the historical reasons why *homoousios* can hardly be described as fundamental to Athanasius' theology.¹²⁶ Athanasius neither uses the term *homoousios* to describe relations within the Trinity nor the Father's relationship to the Son. He applies the term almost exclusively to the relationship of Son to Father.¹²⁷ Apart from applying *homoousios* with a strictly traditional Eusebian argument, which intends to secure only the Son's being from God and distinguish it from the creatures,¹²⁸ Athanasius introduced principles of divine immateriality and indivisibility, none of them dealing strictly with Trinitarian issues. Therefore, the view that as the negative term *homoousios* does not disclose, but preserves the divine nature impenetrable by pointing that it differs from the created

124 Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity according to Athanasius," 397.

125 Kris Miller, *Participating in the Knowledge of God: An Engagement with the Trinitarian Epistemology of T. F. Torrance*, (PhD Diss., Durham: University of Durham, 2013), 115.

126 Lewis Ayres, "Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term 'ὁμοούσιος': Rereading the De Decretis," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12:3 (2004): 337–39.

127 Ayres, "Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term 'ὁμοούσιος,'" 358. On the basis of Christopher Stead, "Homoousios dans la pensée de Saint Athanase," in *Politique et théologie chez Athanase d'Alexandrie*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), 231–53.

128 Ayres, "Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term 'ὁμοούσιος,'" 358–59.

nature,¹²⁹ would be the main Orthodox objection to Torrance's understanding of *homoousios*.

Moreover, later, especially Cyrillian and Maximian, development of *homoousios* proves that the term is more pregnant with economical than with Trinitarian implications. The doctrine of Christ's "double consubstantiality," based on the claim of the Council of Chalcedon that Christ is "consubstantial with the Father" and "consubstantial with us,"¹³⁰ neither reveals the content of divine, nor the content of human nature, but it rather affirms the reciprocity between the human and divine nature in Christ. It may be the case that Torrance has been reading these later developments into the term, because the Athanasian theological vision can hardly be pressed into such a static notion as *homoousios* was in the fourth century.

One may draw the same conclusion from the concept of *perichoresis*. With the concept of double *perichoresis* or coinherence this term ceases to express the static aspect of union of two persons or two natures, but it acquires the meaning of an active reciprocity.¹³¹ As Andrew Louth points out "the tendency to interpret Christological terminology in terms of Trinitarian terminology, and vice versa, was by no means well-established, or even commonplace, in the century before Chalcedon."¹³² Thus, one should not expect to find in Athanasius consistent terminology that is applicable in both Christological and Trinitarian contexts. However, it would be wrong to accuse Torrance for attributing something to Athanasius that was not in his work. Torrance rightly sensed the general direction of Athanasius' main theological endeavors, but he wrongly tried to capture them with two notions that underwent significant development in centuries after Athanasius.

Second, by denying any separation in nature and will between the Father and the Son, Athanasius actually rejects any separation between the divine essence and activities. By acknowledging that the Holy Trinity is homogenous and unitary, not only in the oneness of his activity, but also in the indivisibility of his eternal being,¹³³ Torrance draws an analogy between the divine activity and

129 Cf. John Zizioulas, "The teaching of the 2nd ecumenical council in the historical and ecumenical perspective" in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum: Atti del Congresso Teologico Internazionale di Pneumatologia* (Rome: Libreria, Editrice Vaticana 1983), 32.

130 *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. N. P. Tanner, 2 vols. (London: Sheed & Ward, and Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 86–7.

131 Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1995), 28–9.

132 Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 49.

133 Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity according to Athanasius," 398.

being. The lack of separation between the divine being and will led Torrance to conclude that theology may smoothly progress from "the economic Trinity" into "ontological Trinity."¹³⁴

Torrance understands the identification of the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity in the sense that all knowledge of God proceeds from God's saving activities in the economy.¹³⁵ Thus, all the knowledge of God is acquired in and through the economic Trinity, but not being restricted to the economic Trinity advances toward the immanent Trinity. If one acknowledges that the basic duality between economic and ontological Trinity is rooted in the distinction between God's essence and activities, then the knowledge of the ontological Trinity is somehow higher than the knowledge of the economic Trinity, since the divine essence is ontologically prior to the divine activities. However, the distinction between the higher, ontological knowledge of God and the lower, economic knowledge of God may appear as a hindrance for progressing in apprehension of God. This view is evident in Maximus the Confessor who claims that "the affirmation of the knowledge of what is ranked above is a negation of the knowledge of what is ranked below, just as the negation of the knowledge of what is below implies the affirmation of what is above."¹³⁶ Thus, the analogy between the economic and the immanent Trinity implies the reversed analogy between the knowledge of economic and the knowledge of the immanent Trinity, since the later is negation of the former and vice versa. It is highly unlikely that Torrance had this in mind.

Another solution is to reject the claim that distinction between the divine essence and energies serves to distinguish between the ontological and the economic Trinity and further between the knowledge of both. Then, we figuratively speak of the two levels of knowledge, since the process of apprehension of God is not a successive two-stage process, but rather a simultaneous process comprising two components. The first component consists in establishing God as the object of knowledge by acknowledging his saving economy, while the second component includes rejecting a duality between "I" as the subject of knowledge and God as the object of knowledge by rushing into simple union with Him. By relying on Athanasius, Maximus the Confessor developed the view of a knowable God who transcends knowledge. The previous sections of this study thoroughly elaborates the basic Athanasian pattern, pointed to by Torrance, in

134 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 253.

135 Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance. Theologian of the Trinity* (Ashgate, 2009), 68.

136 *Ambiguum ad Joannem* 20 (PG 91:1240d). The English translation of Brian E. Daley is available in H. U. von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy. The Universe According to St Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatium Press, 2003), 93.

which reason (λόγος) empowered by faith (πίστις) leads to the divine reality or Truth (αλήθεια), which is synonymous to the knowledge of the divine nature (φύσις).¹³⁷ The aforementioned elements such as reason (λόγος), faith (πίστις), knowledge (γνώσις), truth (αλήθεια) and nature (φύσις) or essence are present in Maximus, but structured in two simultaneous and mutually dependent processes, one leads to God as essence (ουσία), and another to God as energy (ενέργεια). For Maximus, the grace of the apprehension of the divine essence is granted to the mind, while the reason is endowed with the knowledge of divine energy.

Reason (λόγος) proceeds toward God by its power, habit, and action. The power (δυναμικ) of reason is prudence (φρόνησις), the habit (εξίς) of reason is action (πράξις), and activity (ενέργεια) of reason is virtue (αρετή). The inward and unchangeable bond of prudence, action and virtues as the power, habit and activity of reason generates faith (πίστις). Faith leads reason further toward God as Good (τό αγαθόν), which is the energy (ενέργεια) of God.¹³⁸

In a similar vein, the power (δυναμικ), the habit (εξίς) and the activity (ενέργεια) of mind (νοῦς) are wisdom (σοφία), contemplation (θεωρία), and knowledge (γνώσις). By actualising its potency in wisdom, by discovering its habit in contemplation and by performing its activity in knowledge, the mind ends in enduring knowledge (αληστος γνώσις).¹³⁹ The enduring knowledge is “the perpetual and unceasing movement” of wisdom, contemplation and knowledge as potency, habit and activity of mind around the essence (ουσία) of God as the Truth (αλήθεια).

Finally, Maximus concludes that by the grace of Holy Spirit and its own work, every soul can unite mind with reason into reasonable mind, wisdom with prudence into prudent wisdom, contemplative with practical activity into an active contemplation, knowledge with virtues into virtuous knowledge and finally faith with enduring knowledge into enduring knowledge which is faithful and unchangeable.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the two processes are genuinely one since there is no real differentiation between the essence and activity in God, nor differentiation between the two kinds of knowledge.

By acknowledging the interdependence of θεοσεβεία and θεολογία in Athanasius, Torrance anticipated the Maximian solution. Nevertheless, Torrance expressed his position (a) by claiming that the movement of knowledge is the

¹³⁷ Torrance, “Athanasius,” *Theology in Reconciliation*, 247–8.

¹³⁸ *Mystagogia* 5.10–11 (PG 91:677CD).

¹³⁹ *Mystagogia* 5.8–9, (PG 91:676C-677A).

¹⁴⁰ *Mystagogia* 5.13, (PG 91:680A).

reversed movement of God himself from the ontological Trinity through the economic Trinity,¹⁴¹ and (b) by considering the concepts of *homoousios* and *perichoresis* as the linkage between the economic and immanent Trinity. While the latter has been proved to be problematic, especially in regard to Athanasius' thought, the former may be considered not as false, but rather as an optional reading of Athanasius.

According to Torrance, the order of deification or the elevation of human beings *to* the Father *through* (and *with*) the Son, *in* the Holy Spirit, is actually the reversed order of the divine activity in the world, which is always *from* the Father, *through* the Son, *in* the Holy Spirit.¹⁴² This so called organic structure of Athanasius' theological understanding allowed Torrance to conclude that there must be coordination between the concrete pattern of divine condescension and the inherent order in the Trinitarian relations in the Godhead.¹⁴³

Contrary to Torrance, Justin Popovich, an Orthodox theologian of the twentieth century, fits human deification into the classical paradigm, that is, from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. Popovich's interpretation of Athanasius goes further towards a dynamics of love that is untypical to a closed circular model advocated by Torrance, in which the divine operation descends from the Father, while the human action, through worshiping, ascends again to the Father. Torrance's closed model describes to a certain extent the Incarnation and deification as the two paradigmatic processes, by being in accordance with Athanasius' axiom that God became man, that man might become god,¹⁴⁴ but it does not portray the Trinitarian life of the deified creation. Popovich's insistence on the classical formula from-through-in (εκ-δια-εν) actually describes a new reality. As he insists that the Incarnation of the Logos of God signifies a new reality, which by its value surpasses both the divine and human values, the Trinitification of the creation brings a new reality that is constantly renewing and it makes new.¹⁴⁵ The newness, which arises from a new life in Christ, is a continuous growth of deified beings in love within the relationship of the Holy Trinity. Thus, the love of the Father to the Son, perfected and confirmed by the Holy Spirit, is transferred to us and continually renews us and makes us new through the process of deification (θεώσις) understood as Athanasian θεοποίησις, theo-humanization,

141 Kris Allen Miller, *Participating in the Knowledge of God: An Engagement with the Trinitarian Epistemology of T. F. Torrance* (Durham University DPhil thesis, 2013), 120.

142 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 251–53.

143 *Ibid.*, 251.

144 *De Incarnatione Verbi* 54 (Thomson, 268–9).

145 Justin Popovich, *Pravoslavna filosofija istine: dogmatika* (Valjevo: Manastir Ćelije, 1978), 3:91.

Christification and Trinitification.¹⁴⁶ The deification as θεοποίησις does not only mean that human beings are called to become gods, but also requires their active participation in the very process of being made gods themselves. The fullness of deification is in Christification, because Christification implies the introduction into the eternal loving union of the three divine persons. The goal toward which created beings strive for is the Trinitification, as admittance in the beginningless and endless love of the Holy Trinity. However, this is not the end of deification, but always a new beginning and renewal.

The problematic of divine being and divine activity leads to another significant issue in Torrance's approach to Orthodox theology by way of Athanasius. Taking a critical attitude toward the Cappadocian distinction between divine *ousia* and energies, Torrance argues that any diversity in energies would endanger the unity of divine Being supposed by Athanasius.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, he proposes that for the purpose of ecumenical unity the Orthodox should renounce the stance that the aforementioned distinction between the essence and energies in God is a faithful development of Athanasius.¹⁴⁸ It seems that we deal here with Torrance's failure to properly understand the Cappadocian contribution. Like some modern scholars, Torrance perceives the divine energies as diverse and possibly temporary.¹⁴⁹ In the Orthodox understanding, however, the divine energies are acts by which God reaches down to creatures and manifests himself to them, and they are certainly not "automatic" emanations from the essence, nor by-products of the internal activity, but are based on the deliberate choice of God to act *ad extra*. The divine foreknowledge of creation, as well as the creative and providential activities, is clearly dependent on God's will to create and govern his creation. The divine names "creator" and "provider" designate these activities and these activities may be considered as the features that necessarily accompany any manifestation of God, but they also do not constitute the divine essence.

The ways in which God chooses to reveal himself through his activities to human beings may be as various as the names that derive from these activities. If one acknowledges that the divine names refer to various divine energies and that divine energies are God Himself, then Torrance's claim that the unity of the divine being might be at risk would be logical. However, if one presupposes that the divine names do not refer to particular energies, but instead are *derived*

146 Letter of Justin Popovich to a student, Nov. 19, 1968, "Bogočovečanska evolucija," in Justin Popovich, *Na bogočovečanskom putu* (Beograd: Manastir Ćelije, 1980).

147 Torrance, "Athanasius," *Theology in Reconciliation*, 236.

148 Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 9.

149 Cf. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 196.

from particular energies, then we have a different picture regarding diversity. For example, both Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa maintain that God's goodness and wisdom, as observed from the created order, reveal God as the Creator, or, to be more precise, His creative activity. Thus, divine goodness and wisdom are not necessarily the divine energies, but they are more aspects of God's creative activity. One may make a similar remark in regard to other activities of God and to the way in which they are perceived. The distinction between the divine names that *are* divine activities and the divine names that *derive from* the divine activities points out the distinction between the names that have the same point of reference and the names that do not necessarily have the same point of reference. By referring clearly to the divine creative and providential activities, divine names such as "creator," "provider" or "judge" have God as the only point of reference. Thus, the identification of these names with the divine activities seems to be justified. Other divine names, such as goodness and justice, observed by people from the created order and from the Scriptures refer actually to divine creative and providential activities and not to the divine activities of goodness and justice, because divine goodness and justice are the features that people attribute to the creative and providential energies of God. The point of the diversity of the energies in God may be only applicable if it is considered that every divine name refers to a different specific activity of God. If, however, the diversity of names is derived from the creative, providential and other essential activities of God toward the world, then Torrance's objection is not valid, because it is one and the same energy of God directed toward the creation. This one energy of God, manifested as foreknowledge before the creation, as creative activity during the creation, as providence while preserving the world in its existence, and as divine judging activity at the end of the world, is actually simultaneous and eternal divine activity *ad extra* since God is not subjected to time.

There are two more issues that Torrance allegedly draws from Athanasius and raises in his approach to the Orthodox that are problematic. By the identification of the Being of God with the divine "I am," Torrance intends to equate the Holy Trinity not with some impersonal essence, or abstract generic notion of being, but with the active self-revelation of God as "he who is who he is."¹⁵⁰ For some Orthodox theologians, Torrance's proposal may resemble the approach of Fr Sergii Bulgakov, who also embarked on the refutation of the Aristotelian concept of substance as philosophical abstraction,¹⁵¹ and propagated a more

150 Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity according to Athanasius," 403.

151 Sergius Bulgakov, *The Wisdom of God* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), 46.

dynamic concept of divine *ousia*, which introduces creation in the life of the Holy Trinity. Bulgakov developed his Sophiology by substituting the philosophical concept of the essence of God as something hidden by the essence of God as the self-revelation in love or Sophia-Ousia, which allows the whole creation to participate in the very life of God, without sharing its tri-hypostatic nature. The Orthodox Church has not accepted Bulgakov's Sophiological project, which received the official condemnation of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in 1935. George Florovsky, in one of his letters to Torrance, accused both Bulgakov and Karl Barth as having "attempted to *rationalize* the antinomic mystery, and then the Timeless is *ontologically* involved in the Time-process."¹⁵² By referring to Bulgakov's and Barth's failures in the rationalization of the mystery, in my opinion, Florovsky implies that he and Torrance may also be liable to such a failure if they do not preserve this antinomy-mystery intact.

Another problematic issue is the rift that Torrance opens in the theology of the Cappadocians in regard to the *monarchia* of the Father. It seems that Torrance here fights some modern interpretations of the Cappadocian view on the monarchy of the Father.¹⁵³ Even though all three Cappadocian Fathers share the general view on *monarchia* of the Father, their motifs for introducing the notion are different, if not divergent. Thus, for Basil the concept of *monarchia* served to establish the unity of God on the causality of the Father, while for Gregory of Nyssa it helps to distinguish between the persons of the Trinity.¹⁵⁴ Although for Gregory the Theologian the *monarchia* is the root of both the oneness of the Trinity and uniqueness of the persons,¹⁵⁵ some scholars consider that Gregory applies this term not to the Father, but to the divine essence.¹⁵⁶ Thus, not only

152 Georges Florovsky to T. F. Torrance, Oct. 21, 1973. Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, 104. See the publication of the correspondence between Florovsky and Torrance in this issue of *Participatio* for the full letter, edited and introduced with commentary by Matthew Baker.

153 Cf. John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 113–54.

154 Michel R. Barnes, "Divine Unity and Divided Self," *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 483–84. Vladimir Cvetkovic, "St Gregory's Argument Concerning the Lack of *Diasthema* in divine Activities from *Ad Ablabium*" in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism*, ed. V. H. Drecoll and M. Berghaus (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 369–82.

155 *Oratio* 20.6, (PG 35:1072D). Cf. Christopher A. Beeley. "Divine Causality and Monarchy of God the Father in Gregory of Nazianzus," *Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007): 204–08.

156 Richard Cross, "Divine Monarchy in Gregory of Nazianzus," *Journal of Early Christian*

alleged Athanasian causeless equality of the divine persons, but also Nyssen's interpretation of *monarchia* of the Father as a means to distinguish between the divine persons and Nazianzen's view of *monarchia* of the divine substance avoid any of Torrance's feared subordinationism within the Trinity. Therefore, from the Orthodox perspective, the main objection to Torrance in regard to *monarchia* would be that instead of grasping this richness of the internal dynamism and variety of the respective theologies of the Cappadocians¹⁵⁷ in the light of their indebtedness to the Athanasian contribution, he embraced the view that causeless ontological equality as supposedly advocated by Athanasius is the only viable form of Orthodoxy.

In spite of these minor obstacles – which are perhaps due more to the inconsistencies of Orthodox theologians with their own tradition¹⁵⁸ than to Torrance's failure to grasp the importance of this same patristic tradition – Torrance's intention to develop an ecumenical theology of reconciliation on the basis of Athanasius and Cyril deserves great respect from all sides that participate in the dialogue.

The references to Maximus the Confessor proved to be useful, since the salient points on which Torrance built his understanding of Athanasius underscores the theology of the Byzantine monk. The Athanasian doctrine of the intrinsic rationality of things, which reveals the Logos of God in the general order, is developed by Maximus as the doctrine of the *logoi* of creation. The scriptural statements or *logoi*, similarly to the intrinsic rationality embedded in the cosmos, which provide the understanding of the divine realities and lead human beings toward their *telos*, deeply resemble Maximus' view on Scripture. Finally, the Mystery of Christ for both Athanasius and Maximus is seen in the context of the preconceived divine plan of the Incarnation of the Logos in the human person, who introduces the assumed humanity into the life of the Holy Trinity and opens up the way to humankind for salvation and deification. Moreover, Maximus' theology contains the full realization of the Athanasian ideas on which Torrance heavily relied.

Studies 14 (2006): 116, Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 244-45. Mainly on the basis of Gregory's *Oratio* 31.14.

157 Najeeb G. Awad, "Between Subordination and Koinonia: Toward a New Reading of the Cappadocian Theology," *Modern Theology* 23 (2007): 181-204.

158 One of the main inconsistencies of modern Orthodox theologians with their own tradition is overstating some elements from the tradition, while understating the other. Thus, Bulgakov's overstated divine essence at the expense of the energy of the divine persons, Florensky overstated Trinitarian theology at the expense of Christology, Lossky overstated epistemological apophaticism at the expense of ontological encounter and Zizioulas overstated person at the expense of grace.

Issues, such as the analogy between God *in se* and God *ad extra*, or between one divine being and diversity of energies that are mentioned above as potential problems in the interpretation of Athanasius, find their successful handling in Maximus. By his doctrine, Maximus not only gathered various contributions of Athanasian, Cappadocian and Cyrillian theological endeavours in one perfect synthesis, but also built one overall theology that might serve as a point of unity and reconciliation for disparate confessional strands.

It is a pity that Torrance, apart from some slight indications of a sporadic reading of Maximus, never engaged the Byzantine monk in any serious way, especially given that so much of his reading of Athanasius, and his theology as a whole, intuitively converges with the Maximian development. Torrance's theological legacy will undoubtedly play a significant role for understanding the ecumenical reconciliation in a broader perspective of the reconciliation of the creation with the Father in the Mystery of Christ. Moreover, his theological intuition, which sometimes inclined toward rationalization of the Mystery, may be of greater importance, because in accordance with his method, it opens up the right path to encounter and to know the incomprehensible God.