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T. F. Torrance in the light of Stephen Holmes's critique of contemporary Trinitarian thought

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Keywords: Athanasius; Karl Barth; Cappadocian Fathers; church Fathers; Cyril; Eastern Orthodox; Colin Gunton; Stephen Holmes; Karl Rahner; T. F. Torrance; Trinity.

I. Introduction

Speaking of T. F. Torrance, Colin Gunton appreciatively states that he provides 'a reopening of a major historical conversation',¹ while George Dragas elucidates, 'few contemporary theologians in [Torrance's] tradition have so thoroughly and consistently appropriated the spiritual wealth of Greek Patristic Theology'.² Torrance stands out in the midst of the late 20th-century *ressourcement* of the Fathers and revival of Trinitarian theology and he sees himself as returning to the patristic consensus on, among other central dogmas of the church, the doctrine of the Trinity.³

By contrast, in his recently published book, *The Holy Trinity*, Stephen Holmes has called into question these so-called Trinitarian 'revivals' of which Torrance was a part.⁴ Holmes's thesis is that the 20th-century Trinitarian revival, while ostensibly patristic, in fact has more to do with the preconceptions and commitments of the 20th-century figures leading the revival and less to do with classical (i.e. patristic, medieval, and Reformation) Trinitarian theology.⁵ Embedded within this is Holmes's critique of the tendency towards a strong bifurcation of East and West on the doctrine of the Trinity, as popularized by the 'de Régnon thesis',⁶ and Holmes's assertion of a seamless garment of the classical Christian

1 Colin Gunton, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Essays Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 51.

2 George Dragas, 'The Significance for the Church of Professor Torrance's Election As Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland', *EΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΟΣ ΦΑΡΟΣ LVIII*, no. III–IV (1976), 216.

3 See Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988) and *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

4 Stephen R. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012).

5 See e.g. Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 2, 200.

6 On the sharp distinction between Greek (Cappadocian) Triadology, which focuses on the threeness of the persons in God, and of Latin (Augustinian) Triadology, which focuses on the oneness of the being of God, see Théodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité* (Paris: Retaux, 1898).

tradition on the doctrine of the Trinity spanning East and West, Greek and Latin.⁷

Torrance stands in the midst of the late 20th-century Trinitarian and patristic revival of which Holmes is critical. Torrance sees himself as following the Fathers in nearly every element of his theology, not least on his doctrine of the Trinity. For example, in his magisterial text *Trinitarian Faith*, Torrance traces the ‘inner theological connections that gave coherent structure to the classical theology of the ancient Catholic Church’.⁸ In *Christian Doctrine of God*, Torrance offers a doctrine of the Trinity he calls ‘heavily influenced’ by Greek patristic theology.⁹ Torrance says that the Greek fathers shaped his work from the beginning of his theological development.¹⁰ Therefore, we must ask, ‘does Holmes’s critique apply to Torrance?’ Is Torrance actually returning to the Fathers or is he presenting his readers more with a Torrancian and 20th-century theology?

In order to answer these questions, this article will first introduce Torrance’s overall reading of the Fathers in light of Holmes’s critique. It examines how Torrance’s reading is a creative attempt to produce a Reformed and evangelical version of the patristic tradition on the doctrine of the Trinity which involves significant changes to both standard readings of the Fathers and Torrance’s own Reformed evangelical tradition. This article will argue that, overall, Torrance does *not* fall under Holmes’s critique. After all, Holmes himself does not include Torrance in his critique of 20th-century Trinitarian ‘revival’. Second, this article will explore points where Holmes’s critiques may apply to Torrance, namely, their somewhat different visions of the patristic era, Torrance’s close identification of the immanent and economic Trinity (in a fashion similar to Rahner), and Torrance’s emphasis on epistemology (in a fashion similar to Barth). Third, this article will explore the points where Torrance’s vision is highly relevant for the current conversation of which Holmes is a part by means of examination of Torrance’s work in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue.¹¹

7 Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 144–46. Holmes is in good company. See e.g. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011); John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Michel René Barnes, ‘Rereading Augustine’s Theology of the Trinity’ in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* ed. by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* ed. by Aristotle Papanikalou and George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008).

8 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 2.

9 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine*, ix.

10 See *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum: T. F. Torrance—My Theological Development*. The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Princeton Theological Seminary. Box 10.

11 See Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume I* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985); *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches Volume II* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993); and *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

II. Torrance's reconstruction of the Fathers

In his book Holmes says: 'We could have returned to careful readings of the Fathers and the classical tradition, but we chose to see the doctrine taught by the Fathers as the problem, not a potential solution.'¹² Throughout his many writings, Torrance urges for churches and theologians to return to the 'Athanasius-Cyril axis' of classical theology in order to avoid various forms of heretical developments.¹³ Torrance's foreword to his collection of essays published as *Theology in Reconciliation* is a plea to Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants to return to this Athanasius-Cyril axis and leave behind their cultural additions (while at the same time keeping their distinctive pietistic differences) and embracing the 'patristic foundation' of their common faith.¹⁴ Torrance, with Holmes, believes the Fathers are the answer, not the problem.

In a letter written in 1988, Torrance's ecumenical dialogue partner, the then Eastern Orthodox Archbishop Methodios of Aksum, writes, 'I admire your patristic expressions and your use of catholic terms'.¹⁵ Methodios's language captures the essence of Torrance's approach to the Fathers: Torrance does not simply return to the Fathers attempting to offer a narrow representation of their concepts. Rather, he constructs (or to use his language, 'reconstructs')¹⁶ the Fathers around catholic (or ecumenical) themes and figures.¹⁷ As Dragas puts it, Torrance 'seeks to build up his theology on the one, historical common ground of all three traditions and... he is prepared at the same time to confess in full modesty and sincerity their historical particularities and fortify himself only with their positive forces'.¹⁸ Torrance essentially extrapolates what he sees as the best of the patristic era, the best of the Reformation, and the best of the modern eras of the theological tradition and synthetically combines them, re-centering them upon Jesus Christ and his Gospel of grace. This synthetic combination makes Torrance a theological figure of ecumenical import inasmuch as his reconstruction has points of contact with many different Christian traditions.

Torrance's reading of the Fathers is a creative attempt to produce a Reformed and evangelical version of the patristic consensus which involves significant changes to both the standard interpretations of the Fathers and Torrance's own Reformed and evangelical tradition. This truly Torrancian consensus has many constructive achievements which have sometimes been overlooked by his com-

12 Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 199.

13 See e.g. Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 9.

14 Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 7–14.

15 Torrance Manuscript Collection, Box 172.

16 Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996).

17 See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith* for the flowering of his reconstruction. However, it exists throughout his published and unpublished material. See further Jason Radcliff, 'T. F. Torrance and the *Consensus Patrum*: A Reformed, Evangelical, and Ecumenical Reconstruction of the Church Fathers', PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2013.

18 Dragas, 'Significance for the Church', 226.

mentators and his contemporaries on account of his being evaluated simply as a historian of Christian thought. When Torrance is viewed rather as a Reformed and evangelical theologian constructing a Reformed and evangelical version of the patristic consensus his many contributions emerge.

Torrance approaches the Fathers as a dogmatician and not as a patrologist. In essence he reads and appropriates the Fathers Christologically rather than historically. Thus, Torrance's reading and use of the Fathers neither simply resembles traditional patrology nor traditional Reformed dogmatic theology but is rather a truly unique Reformed and evangelical reconstruction of patristic theology involving reform to his own Reformed tradition. Throughout the many texts where he appropriates the Fathers, Torrance remains consistently centered on this reconstruction of the Fathers, allowing him fresh insight into the Fathers by means of his creative connections, re-reading, and re-situating of them.

The Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρὶ ('one being with the Father') serves as the cornerstone of Torrance's creative Reformed evangelical reconstruction of the church Fathers. Torrance's ὁμοούσιος is taken from Nicene theology and it is a patristic reconstruction of the Reformation principle of *Solus Christus* (Christ alone). As such it exemplifies Torrance's approach to a truly Greek patristic theme, the ὁμοούσιος, from a Reformed and evangelical perspective, Word-centeredness. Torrance sees the flowering of the evangelical theology of the Fathers in the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιος, which (for him) means that 'God Himself is the actual content of his revelation and God Himself is really in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself'.¹⁹ The core of Torrance's patristic consensus is the ὁμοούσιος, and for Torrance all theology must be centered upon it in an objective and realist manner. In this way it affects all other doctrines and acts as a lynchpin for theology.²⁰ The ὁμοούσιος is the center of the Torrancian vision of the patristic tradition and Torrance's entire imaginative reading of the Fathers is done on the basis of it and through it and he reconstructs everything around it.²¹ A reading of Torrance portrays the fact that his reconstruction of the patristic dogmatic tradition begins with Christology, for which the ὁμοούσιος is central, and remains anchored there throughout. For him, everything in theology rests upon this Father-Son relationship and, accordingly, every single one of the themes arising in *Trinitarian Faith* and *Christian Doctrine of God* rest upon and arise from the ὁμοούσιος; they can only be discussed because they do.

For Torrance, the Nicene doctrine of ὁμοούσιος contains key epistemological and evangelical/soteriological implications. Primarily the ὁμοούσιος means, 'God is really like Jesus'.²² In turn, this means that due to the ὁμοούσιος God can

19 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 7.

20 Torrance says that it is, 'the organic pattern integrating all the doctrines of the Christian faith' (*Theology in Reconciliation*, 264).

21 A reading of any chapter in *The Trinitarian Faith* portrays this; the entire book is organized around this patristic concept. However, see particularly the chapter on this, 110–90.

22 Thomas F. Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today: The Gospel and Scientific Thinking*

be known internally *in himself*.²³ Due to Jesus's and the Holy Spirit's *ὁμοούσιος* with the Father on the one hand and Jesus's *ὁμοούσιος* with humankind on the other God is now knowable as he is *in himself* by means of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ Torrance sees the *ὁμοούσιος* implying epistemologically that God is knowable as he is *in himself* by means of the Son and the Spirit who are *ὁμοούσιος* with the Father.²⁵ That is why Arianism and all other heresies, which were inevitably rooted in some form of dualism for Torrance, are so problematic.²⁶ For, the only reason that anything can be said about God is because of the *ὁμοούσιος*, the objective reality of God in Christ. The *ὁμοούσιος* also has key soteriological/evangelical implications. Primarily it means that the acts of Jesus are the acts of God. Thus, God is really in Jesus reconciling the world to himself.²⁷

Torrance reconstructs the patristic tradition around the *ὁμοούσιος* into streams or threads in theological history. In Torrance's vision there is one overarching stream running throughout the church's history: the evangelical stream. Torrance believes that certain eras of theological history capture the inner structure of the Gospel best.²⁸ Torrance sees these eras connected to one another as a sort of 'golden thread' running throughout theological history.

According to Torrance, the three instances that best captured this inner structure are Nicaea (particularly Athanasius), the Reformation (particularly Calvin), and contemporary evangelical theology (particularly Karl Barth).²⁹ Herein, Torrance sees the Reformation emphasis on grace as complementary to the Nicene emphasis on the *ὁμοούσιος*.³⁰ As such, he creatively connects Nicene theology and his Reformed evangelical tradition, seeing the two as better understood in light of each other.³¹ The Reformation, therefore, complements the patristic tradition.³²

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 55–56; Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 86.

23 Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 241; Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 66–68, 72.

24 For Torrance this is why the incarnation is so central. Only God can reveal himself and only God can save mankind. See e.g. *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992).

25 Khaled Anatolios, at the forefront of current patristic scholarship on Nicaea in general and Athanasius in particular, agrees with Torrance substantially on this emphasis. See Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 205–07.

26 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 119.

27 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 7.

28 See further Elmer Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 360.

29 Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 14–15. See also, *Preaching Christ Today*, 20, and *Theology in Reconciliation*, 235–37, 285. See also Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 267.

30 Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 225. Torrance considers grace to be intrinsically personal as it was connected to the person of Jesus Christ. See Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today*, 20–21.

31 Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 21–22.

32 Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 265. See also Thomas F. Torrance, 'Karl Barth

Torrance sees Barth as inheriting these two traditions, combining them dynamically.³³ As such, Barth is the funnel through which the Nicene theology of the ὁμοούσιος of Christ and the Reformation theology of the ὁμοούσιος of grace are dynamically combined and filtered into contemporary theology. In many ways Torrance sees Barth as a modern Athanasius and Athanasius as an ancient Barth. For Torrance, Barth is the theologian who brought the Trinity back to the forefront of theology and in doing so returned modern theology to classical theology.³⁴

Torrance connects Barth and Athanasius primarily in his doctrine of the Trinity and the emphasis on the dynamic nature of the being of God. He consistently maintains that both Barth and Athanasius asserted a doctrine of the Trinity that affirms *God to us* is *God in himself*. He believes Barth was doing this in order to preserve the conception that the gift of grace and the Giver are identical.³⁵ Torrance states this in a number of ways including his argument that for both theologians, God is 'Being in Person'. Elsewhere, he elaborates upon this in more detail when he connects the Athanasian concepts of ἐνούσιος λόγος ('word intrinsic to essence') and ἐνούσιος ἐνέργεια ('energy intrinsic to essence')³⁶ directly to the Barthian conception of 'Being-in-Act and Act-in-Being'.³⁷ Torrance sees these two concepts as not only mutually informing but as asserting the same basic theology, that there is no epistemological disconnection between the *ontological Trinity* and the *economic Trinity*.³⁸

Torrance understands this evangelical stream to have run from the Athanasius-Cyril axis through Anselm,³⁹ Kierkegaard,⁴⁰ certain figures in Scottish theol-

and the Latin Heresy', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39, no. 4 (January 1, 1986), 462–63.

33 There is precedent for this insightful connection. See Johannes Roldanus, *Le Christ et l'homme dans la théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Leiden: Brill, 1968). See especially 2, 4, 218–19, 359, and 373. In this groundbreaking work, Roldanus explores the anthropology of Athanasius as created 'according to the image of God'. He argues that Athanasius, like Barth, asserts a strict distinction between God and creation. Torrance would likely agree with this and might say: Athanasius was a Barthian and Barth was an Athanasian.

34 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 7–10; Torrance, 'Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy', 462.

35 Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology* (London: SCM, 1962), 146. Torrance also argues that Calvin and Gregory Nazianzen were similar in the doctrine of the Trinity. He says that they both held that the Ἀρχή of the Godhead, rather than being rooted in one Person, is rooted in the being of God. See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 62–63.

36 See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 72.

37 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 149. See also *Mediation of Christ*, 40.

38 See Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 28.

39 See *God and Rationality*, 100–01.

40 Torrance connects Athanasius, Anselm, and Kierkegaard together as propagating 'axiomatic' thinking. See *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 86–93. This perhaps explains why Torrance included both Anselm's *Epistle on the Incarnation* and *On the Procession of the Spirit* and Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* in his assigned reading for his

ogy, and finally to its climax in Barth (and H. R. Mackintosh who was a conduit of Barthian theology into Scotland). The fount of this evangelical stream is the Nicene stream (and its best exponent, Athanasius) and the themes (especially the ὁμοούσιος).⁴¹ Torrance also sees other, diverging, streams of theological history. He contends that the dualist elements of Reformed theology were inherited from Augustinian thought⁴² and is critical of the Augustinian stream (leading into Latin Scholasticism).⁴³ He is also critical of the Cappadocian distinction⁴⁴ which he believes leads to the dualist Byzantine tradition.⁴⁵

Torrance's positive appraisal of Barth and his intimate connection of the immanent and economic Trinity might raise some suspicion for the reader of Holmes's book. Holmes is, on the one hand, appreciative of both Barth and Rahner's starting point: 'Insisting that revelation, divine identity, and the narrative of redemption demand a doctrine of the Trinity' for Barth and 'insisting that accounts of the immanent Trinity must be somehow responsible to the economy of salvation' for Rahner.⁴⁶ However, on the other hand, Holmes is critical of Barth's semi-collapsing of the Trinity into his doctrine of revelation and his novel Trinitarian terminology,⁴⁷ and Rahner's too-intimate ontological identification of the immanent and economic Trinity.⁴⁸

Torrance sees 'obvious connections' between Barth and Athanasius on the important connection between the doctrine of the Trinity and revelation and he sees a broad tradition in the church following in this stream.⁴⁹ However, despite Torrance's language occasionally sounding like he considers the Fathers to have been saying essentially the same thing as Barth, it is clear he does not really intend this meaning. Rather, he simply sees Barth insisting upon truthful theological concepts complementary to the Reformation and the patristic era.

Dogmatics courses at New College. See his 'Dogmatics Syllabus' in The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 51.

41 Torrance, 'Athanasius: A Study in the Foundations of Classical Theology' in *Theology in Reconciliation*, 215–66.

42 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume I*, 13. He is particularly critical of Calvin's doctrine of election, presumably the disconnection of this from his Christology.

43 Torrance's attack is typically more on Augustinian thought than Augustine himself. See, e.g., Torrance, *Gospel, Church, and Ministry*, ed. by Jock Stein (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 209, and Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume I*, 12. Perhaps Augustine was not really an Augustinian.

44 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume II*, 32; 119; *Trinitarian Faith*, 316–17.

45 See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 38–39, especially fn. 69. Torrance is critical of the way in which Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and Gregory Palamas used the distinction between essence and energies introduced by Basil. Torrance believes they were influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius's extreme *apophaticism*. See also *Theology in Reconciliation*, 252 for a critique of John of Damascus.

46 Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 199.

47 Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 5–9.

48 Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 9–12.

49 Torrance, 'Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy', 464, 476.

Torrance asserts that there were three stages/instances of theology that affirmed the notion that divine revelation is God revealing his very self to humankind: patristic (ὁμοούσιος), Reformation ('the immediate act of God in the presence of his Being as revealed'), and Karl Barth (bringing the two together; being-in-act and act-in-being).⁵⁰ Elsewhere, Torrance explicates that the Fathers emphasized the being of God in his acts and the Reformers emphasized the acts of God in his being. Thus, for Torrance the connection between Barth and the Fathers on the doctrine of the Trinity is simply a complementary emphasis on the Trinity and the revelatory/epistemological implications of the Trinity.

In his article on Rahner's Trinitarian theology,⁵¹ Torrance raves about the import and relevance of Rahner's intimate connection of the economic and immanent Trinity. He states: 'what [Rahner] seems to be intending in his own way is basically in agreement with St Athanasius on the one hand and Karl Barth on the other hand'.⁵² Throughout this important article, Torrance is highly appreciative of Rahner's insistence on the centering of knowledge of God on God's self-communication rather than some sort of abstract knowledge.⁵³ Notably, his hesitation about Rahner is precisely the same point where Holmes is critical, on the potentially ontological implications of Rahner's epistemological assertions.⁵⁴ Torrance states: 'There would appear to be some ambiguity, in the course of Rahner's exposition, between the doctrine of the Trinity and the Trinity'.⁵⁵ He criticizes Rahner in a substantially similar way to Holmes pointing out that if 'Rahner's Rule' is solely epistemological that is good but, if ontological, certain problems arise.

Thus far, Holmes and Torrance would seem to be in essential agreement. Yet, Torrance is doing something different from Holmes; Holmes exposts the Fathers whereas Torrance reconstructs the Fathers. Torrance appropriates figures such as Barth and Rahner of whom Holmes is critical; however, Torrance is simply taking what he sees as their positive qualities and is, notably, critical in similar areas to Holmes. One might question whether Torrance's reconstruction is a viable project; nonetheless, he and Holmes are doing substantially different things. However, this leads to particular discrepancies between Torrance and Holmes on their reading of what the patristic era looked like and some Trinitarian specifics.

50 Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 14–15. See also, *Preaching Christ Today*, 20; *Theology in Reconciliation*, 235–37 and 285; Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 230.

51 Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 77–102.

52 Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 81. High praise indeed from Torrance!

53 See throughout the article but particularly *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 81.

54 Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 79–80.

55 Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 79.

III. Torrance in light of Holmes

The theme that East and West spoke with 'one voice' runs throughout Holmes's book.⁵⁶ Holmes's one voice of Eastern and Western patristic theology is in many ways a combination of Augustine (as traditionally viewed) whereby we must start with God's essential unity, and of the Cappadocians (as traditionally viewed) whereby the distinctiveness of the three hypostases are distinguished by their relation to each other.⁵⁷ Holmes's section on the *filioque* debate brings this view to its apex and he concludes that 'neither position on the filioque does violence to the received orthodox and catholic tradition'.⁵⁸

Torrance also departs from the traditional western emphasis on the *filioque* without simply returning to the eastern rejection of the doctrine. Rather, his Trinitology is a Reformed version of the classical eastern patristic viewpoint and, as such, he offers a *via media* of ecumenical importance, as does Holmes.⁵⁹ According to Torrance, it is only through the Nicene ὁμοούσιος that one is able to approach the doctrine of the Trinity. He holds that for the Nicene Fathers the ὁμοούσιος safeguards the key evangelical doctrine of the connection between the ontological and immanent Trinity. Torrance contends that the Fathers did not adhere to a general/abstract notion of God's being (οὐσία), rather, the term has 'an intensely personal and concrete meaning'.⁶⁰ Torrance wants to preserve the dynamic nature of the οὐσία because he sees the term as personal as opposed to abstract and static, which he contends is Athanasian.⁶¹ Citing Prestige, Torrance contends that the Fathers believed that 'hypostasis lays stress on concrete independence, ousia lays stress on intrinsic constitution. Hypostasis means "a reality *ad alios*", ousia "a reality *in se*"; the one word denotes God as manifest, the other connotes God as being'.⁶² For Torrance, this means 'being in internal relations'.⁶³ Embedded within this is his discussion of περιχώρησις ('perichoresis'). For Torrance this term implies the mutual indwelling of each member of the Trinity.⁶⁴

Torrance propagates the Athanasian concept of ἐνούσιος λόγος in support of the dual view that (a) God's οὐσία is dynamic and (b) the Word (Λόγος) is intrinsic/inherent to God's οὐσία, two concepts arising directly from his conception of the ὁμοούσιος.⁶⁵ Herein the key doctrine that God really is like Jesus is

56 See throughout his book but he states this view explicitly in *Holy Trinity*, 144.

57 Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 146, 199–200.

58 Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 147–64, citing 164.

59 See further Jason Radcliff, 'Thomas F. Torrance's Conception of the *Consensus Patrum* on the Doctrine of Pneumatology', *Studia Patristica LXIX* (2013), 417–34.

60 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 129. See 125–129 for the full discussion. See also Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 9 and 218–19.

61 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 104.

62 Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 15.

63 See Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 243–44.

64 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 102–03.

65 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 125–26. See also *Theology in Reconciliation*, 226–27.

preserved.⁶⁶ Torrance contends that Athanasius asserted this doctrine because of his doctrine of revelation through Christ since his approach to knowledge of God was strictly through the Son.⁶⁷ In support of this, Torrance asserts that Athanasius and Gregory Nazianzen held that the Son comes not from the person of the Father but from his being.⁶⁸

Torrance argues that Athanasian Triadology focuses on the wholeness of the Godhead and viewed each person of the Trinity ‘in terms of their coinherent and undivided wholeness, in which each person is “whole of the whole”’.⁶⁹ Torrance believes this is rooted in Athanasius’s method and starting point: the ὁμοούσιος.⁷⁰ Thus, he views Athanasius as rooting his doctrine of the Trinity in the oneness of the Godhead, rather than the threeness of the divine persons. This is why Torrance says: ‘Athanasius actually preferred to speak of God as Μονάς rather than as Ἀρχή, since his understanding of the Μονάς was essentially as the Τριάς’.⁷¹ For Torrance this came out the clearest in Athanasius’s understanding of the procession of the Spirit: from the being of the Father (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς).⁷² For this is not a procession from the person of the Father (ὑποστάσις τοῦ Πατρὸς) as for the Cappadocians.

This does not mean that Athanasius did not discuss the plurality. Rather, Torrance simply understands him to have rooted the three persons intrinsically in the one essence and thus, for him, the unity necessarily was the starting point. Torrance sees this Athanasian and Nicene emphasis to have derived from the doctrine of ὁμοούσιος and the implied dynamic nature of God’s essence. As such, he sees Athanasius’s Triadology with the Son and Spirit rooted in the Father’s οὐσία not in his ὑποστάσις.

According to Torrance, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzen, Epiphanius of Salamis, Didymus the Blind, and Hilary of Poitiers followed Athanasius in this approach. These figures are connected on the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity that arose from their shared methodological commitment. Torrance sees in this stream a focus on the dynamic nature of God’s οὐσία meaning emphasis on neither unity nor Trinity but unity in Trinity. He garners this Trinitarian emphasis from a focus on the ὁμοούσιος which he sees in the Nicene stream. He connects Cyril to Athanasius via the conception that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (ἐκ Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ).⁷³ Additionally, he connects Epiphanius and Didymus on the basis of their conception that the Son and the Spirit were ἐνυπόστατος (*substantiated/subjectified*) in God.⁷⁴ These concepts, for Torrance,

66 Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 86.

67 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume II*, 111, 2.

68 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 140–41.

69 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 238.

70 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 304–05.

71 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 313.

72 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 236.

73 See Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 338–39.

74 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 221, 210; *Christian Doctrine of God*, 189.

preserve the dynamic and personal nature of God's οὐσία. Finally, he sees Gregory as following the thread of Athanasius more than his fellow Cappadocians.⁷⁵ Torrance argues that the Council of Constantinople, though without doubt indebted to the Cappadocians, was actually more Athanasian in its assertion that the Son and the Spirit come from the Father, rather than the ὑποστάσις of the Father (which Torrance thinks implies the οὐσία of the Father).⁷⁶

Holmes's connection of Eastern and Western patristic theology on the doctrine of the Trinity is, in some senses, a sentiment with which Torrance wholeheartedly agrees. Despite the widespread assumption of the strict distinction between East and West on the Trinity, Torrance sees Augustine as basically Greek in his doctrine of the Trinity. Torrance asserts that John Calvin adopted his doctrine of the Trinity from Augustine, who despite a lack of knowledge of the Greek language, was steeped in Greek patristic theology due to the influence of Hilary on his theology.⁷⁷ Thus, according to Torrance, Hilary acted as a conduit bringing Greek patristic theology to the west. As such, Torrance was a pioneer in his time portraying the Latin and Greek approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity to have substantial overlap.

Torrance, however, finds a divergence from this patristic consensus on the doctrine of the Trinity in certain aspects of the Cappadocian tradition, a divergence he sees magnified in the later Eastern Orthodox tradition. Any divergence means for Torrance a subtraction from the central patristic assertion that due to the ὁμοούσιος humankind has knowledge of God *in himself* and is truly united to God and saved. In general, he sees these departures as falling into some sort of theological dualism which cuts off knowledge of and union with God *in himself* and thus is unfaithful to the meaning of the Nicene ὁμοούσιος.

Torrance's problem is with the dual Cappadocian move to (1) make οὐσία refer to the general and ὑποστάσις refer to the particular in God, and (2) the securing of the *monarchy* in the ὑποστάσις. The problem is that this seems to him to imply some level of subordination in the Trinity. However, more deeply he takes issue with what he sees as inherent theological dualism in the move. For Torrance this move severs God's economy from God's ontology, which if true means that (a) humankind cannot really know God as he is *in himself*, and (b) humankind cannot really be united to God; these two assertions are for him core assertions of orthodoxy and the patristic tradition flowing from the inner meaning of the ὁμοούσιος.⁷⁸

It is important to note Torrance does see certain nuances between each of the Cappadocian Fathers as well as in their theology. In general, Torrance is appreciative of Basil's pneumatology.⁷⁹ He even asserts that Basil held to basically

75 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 112–13.

76 Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 182.

77 Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 22.

78 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume II*, 32, 119.

79 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 218.

the same pneumatology as Athanasius.⁸⁰ He understands the main Cappadocian development in Triadology to have been the assertion of God as one being, three persons (μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις); a development that *could* be understood in an Athanasian sense, which some of the later Fathers in fact did. However, according to Torrance, Basil introduced a new way of conceiving of οὐσία and ὑποστάσις, holding that οὐσία referred to what was common or general and ὑποστάσις to the particular.⁸¹ Torrance argues that Basil did in fact agree with the Athanasian concept of coinherence. However, he believes that Basil's view is distinct from Athanasius inasmuch as he equated οὐσία with φύσις ('nature'), which carries a more abstract meaning in patristic Greek.⁸²

It is notable that Torrance's writings on the Cappadocian distinction develop throughout his life. In the 1960s, he voices hesitation about the ascetical slant of Basil's pneumatology as opposed to what he saw as the more Athanasian Christological emphasis.⁸³ It is notable that during his writings from this era Torrance does not discuss his later emphasis on the procession of the Holy Spirit from the οὐσία of the Father nor the 'Cappadocian distinction' as such. By the 1970s he begins to discuss what he sees as a division between God's essence and energies in the Cappadocians and later Byzantine theology, particularly John of Damascus.⁸⁴ It is only by the 1980s and in *Trinitarian Faith* as well as his immense work in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue that his strong aversion to the Cappadocian distinction emerges and a full-fledged critique of it becomes prevalent. As such, Torrance's aversion to the Cappadocian distinction is more about the 1980s than the 380s. By the time of the publication of *Trinitarian Faith* Torrance was deep in an ongoing heated debate with his one-time assistant at New College, John Zizioulas, who is now the Metropolitan of Pergamon.

Holmes is critical of Zizioulas in the first chapter of his book and he considers how Zizioulas's reading and presentation of the Cappadocians shows more about Zizioulas's own convictions than the approach of the Cappadocians themselves.⁸⁵ Accordingly, whereas at first glance Torrance's critique of the Cappadocians may look like a divergence from Holmes's 'one voice' approach to the patristic consensus, if Torrance's view is seen, rather, as the critique of John Zizioulas that it really is, the substantial agreement between Torrance and Holmes becomes apparent.

In addition to the above, Torrance's reading is in line with the traditional Protestant version of the fourth century as popularized by Adolf von Harnack nearly a century earlier.⁸⁶ Harnack and other Protestant, mostly liberal, schol-

80 Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 217.

81 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 218–19.

82 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 316–17.

83 Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 219, 224.

84 Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 252.

85 Holmes, *Holy Trinity*, 12–16, 145–46.

86 'Harnack read through Hanson', according to Robert L. Wilken, *Review of Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* cited by T. F. Torrance, *Theological Studies*

ars, contend for a view of the fourth century consisting of the 'Old Nicenes' and 'New Nicenes'.⁸⁷ The Old Nicenes were faithful Athanasians emphasizing fluidity of theological terms and focused on God's presence with humankind. The New Nicenes became more theologically rigid and dogmatic, influenced by Origenist subordinationism in their theological content. It is the Old Nicene group from which Protestants see themselves arising. Though this view was once a widely accepted scholarly consensus, this is no longer the case and most contend that the fourth century was significantly less simply categorized than this. The large majority of patristics scholars today consider the Harnackian division as far too simplistic. Many now conceive of the Cappadocians as faithful Athanasians.⁸⁸ The current scholarly trend, as seen in Holmes, tends to depart from these categories and view Nicene theology in a more synthetic and nuanced fashion than Torrance's broad categories and distinctions.⁸⁹ Here it seems Torrance assumes and works with the accepted categories of his time, which are now out of fashion.

IV. Points where Torrance is highly relevant for Holmes

Torrance's approach is highly relevant for the current scholarly conversation. His work in the Reformed-Orthodox theological dialogue reveals Torrance's wide ecumenical relevance in his approach to the patristic consensus on the Trinity. The impetus for the dialogue came from 'deep theological rapport' between Torrance (on the Reformed side) and Methodios (on the Orthodox side) over the understanding of classical Alexandrian theology as represented by Athanasius and Cyril.⁹⁰

Torrance believes that the best approach towards theological and ecumenical dialogue is on the basis of the Trinity, Christology, and Pneumatology; and, on that basis the Eucharist, the church, and the ministry.⁹¹ This is the approach he proposes in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue. He contends that the best

57, no. 4 (December 1, 1996), 744. See also James Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 13 and Matthew Baker, 'The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to Thomas F. Torrance', *Participatio: The Journal of the T. F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* vol. 2 (2010), 43. Though, as Baker notes, it is 'unacknowledged' by Torrance.

87 Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1894), vol. 4, 80–107. Sara Parvis says that much of patristic scholarship from the 20th century was 'ineluctably Hegelian.' See Sara Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325–345* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

88 For example, J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A. and C. Black, 1958), 263–65. However, there are also some patristics scholars today who are similar to Torrance, even Orthodox. See John Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Part I* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 27–28. Behr argues that the Harnackian conception is far too simplified but that there is merit to his distinction between the two camps.

89 See e.g. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*; Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*.

90 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume I*, x.

91 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume I*, 10.

method for discussion and the best approach for agreement is on the basis of Athanasian-Cyrrilline theology.⁹² Torrance reminisced that in the discussions following the papers presented, everyone 'kept returning to the need for a dynamic understanding of the living Triune God in the inseparability of his Being and Act', or, the ὁμοούσιος.⁹³ By means of this focus, Torrance thought the Reformed and Orthodox traditions would be able to return to their common fount and 'cut behind' the cosmological and epistemological dualism problematically informing later developments in the Byzantine east and Augustinian west.⁹⁴ Such an approach, he thinks, would bring about agreement between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians, Orthodox and Reformed, and Roman Catholics and Evangelicals.⁹⁵

The outcome of the dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed churches was the Agreed Statement on the Holy Trinity drafted by Torrance and his former student George Dragas (on the Orthodox side).⁹⁶ Ultimately, though the Reformed and Orthodox agreed they had differences of approach to the doctrine of the Trinity 'they insisted that they agree on the content of the doctrine'.⁹⁷ The main points of the Agreed Statement have to do with: (1) the centrality of God's revelation of himself as Trinity; (2) the distinctiveness of the three Trinitarian hypostases; (3) the order of hypostases in the Trinity begins with the Father who has monarchia; (4) yet the Godhead is undivided and One; (5) the perichoretic mutual indwelling of all members of the Trinity; (6) the affirmation of the formula *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*, and; (7) the doctrine of the Trinity is the core of the Apostolic and Catholic Faith. A close comparative study of the Agreed Statement to Holmes's list of the key elements of the received doctrine of the Trinity in the patristic consensus reveals an essential similarity.

Torrance's many connections and reconstructions in exploration of the connections between Greek patristic and Reformed evangelical theology raise the question as to whether Torrance is fair to the Fathers. One might reasonably ask whether Torrance's ὁμοούσιος is the same as the Nicene ὁμοούσιος. Georges Florovsky warns of the danger of a 'Western captivity' of the Fathers when their theology is forced into categories foreign to them.⁹⁸ Is Torrance open to this accusation? Is the Nicene ὁμοούσιος which Torrance emphasizes really just western (or even Barthian) theological concepts in the Greek language? Some cri-

92 According to the Minutes, in the discussion, Emialonos from the Orthodox side states: 'Is not Torrance in danger of over-absolutizing Athanasius in relation to the Cappadocians?' See The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library. Box 170.

93 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume I*, xxiii.

94 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume I*, 11.

95 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume I*, 10–11.

96 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume I*, 219–26; Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 115–22.

97 Torrance, *Theological Dialogue, Volume II*, xxi.

98 See John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (London: Mowbrays, 1974), 128.

tique him along these lines. Foremost in the critiques is that Torrance's reading of the Fathers, primarily Athanasius and the ὁμοούσιος, sounds too Barthian.⁹⁹ Gunton puts a related critique forward. He argues that Torrance's reading of the ὁμοούσιος is western and sounds more Augustinian than Athanasian.¹⁰⁰

This article has shown how, in one sense, this critique could be extended to Torrance and it must be asserted that, for example, Athanasius's use of the ὁμοούσιος is not exactly the same as Torrance's,¹⁰¹ and thus Holmes's critique of so-called Trinitarian 'revival' is semi-applicable here.¹⁰² However, this would not be an entirely fair critique. In a sense, Torrance would have contended that he understands what these Fathers meant and implied better than they did due to his own situation, hundreds of years later reconstructing their ideas post-Reformation and post-Barth.¹⁰³ Historically, this may be unhelpful but theologically it is extremely insightful and constructive; furthermore, Torrance may actually be right. The themes while perhaps not explicitly from the pen of the Fathers in the form Torrance presents them, are fair theological statements to make inasmuch as Torrance reads the Fathers from a theological and Reformed evangelical perspective and unpacks the inner logic behind patristic concepts. This allows deeper understanding of what they meant and their connections to Torrance's own evangelical tradition. In this sense it is not far-fetched to say that Torrance understands the implications of the Fathers better from his point of view post-Reformation and post-Barth.

Ultimately, all interpreters of the patristic tradition have a lens through which they view the Fathers; the key is to balance historical faithfulness with confessional commitment. Torrance does this successfully. His reading of the Nicene Fathers on the doctrine of the Trinity is a creative Reformed evangelical rendering of the patristic consensus that is neither statically Reformed nor statically patristic; rather, it is dynamically Reformed *and* patristic.

Torrance is really only able to be critiqued in this regard historically. However, Torrance never places his project in the field of history; rather, it is constructive systematic theology, which ultimately makes it a tenable possibility. He uses historical sources and therefore he must be held at least somewhat accountable historically. His lack of clarity regarding what elements are his own interpretations and what is truly patristic can be historically unhelpful at times.

99 Ernest, *Bible in Athanasius*, 17. See also Paul Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 325, for an account of this critique put forward by Muller.

100 Gunton, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 44–52.

101 Torrance applies the ὁμοούσιος and other patristic terms much more broadly than the Fathers did themselves by combining it with his own Reformed commitments.

102 It is notable that Holmes would perhaps critique Torrance regarding his close identification of God's economy and ontology. See e.g. Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 7.

103 In this sense there is substantial overlap between Torrance and Newman. Torrance's *consensus* could very well be viewed as a Reformed version of Newman's 'development of doctrine'.

Ultimately, Torrance's reading and imaginative reconstruction of the Fathers around the *ὁμοούσιος* has much to offer. His emphasis on the *ὁμοούσιος* may be influenced by a Barthian commitment to God's self-giving in revelation and reconciliation, but if anything this allows Torrance fresh insight into Athanasius and the other Fathers. Torrance sees in Athanasius and the other Fathers on the *ὁμοούσιος* a commitment to Barthian views and thus uses this shared mindset to draw out what had not been drawn out before.¹⁰⁴ Torrance's emphasis on the *ὁμοούσιος* and the inner meaning behind it – that revelation and reconciliation come from the side of God – provides fresh insight into the Fathers by paring away patristic theology that did not focus on it and highlighting the classical theology that did.

V. Conclusion

Overall, this article has argued that Torrance evades any potential critique from Holmes inasmuch as Torrance is doing something entirely different. Torrance's approach is a reconstruction of the patristic consensus and, while this may be historically unsatisfactory for some, it is a viable theological (especially Reformed and evangelical) reconstruction of the Fathers on the Trinity. Torrance's reading of the Fathers on the doctrine of the Trinity, particularly upon the *filioque* debate, is a fresh insight and his *ὁμοούσιος* centered reconstruction allows him this new reading. His connection of God's being and acts and emphasis on God's immediate presence in Christ sheds further insight in the *filioque* debate. As Tom Noble notes, Torrance offers a potential answer to the ongoing debate between social Trinitarians and those emphasizing the unity of God.¹⁰⁵ Here Torrance provides great insight into the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit. It is highly unfortunate that scholars writing on the subject today do not often discuss Torrance's significance.¹⁰⁶

Holmes has shown that the long-held 'de Régnon thesis' which sharply distin-

104 Despite the strong similarities between Barth/Athanasius and Arianism/19th-century liberal theology, the two surely had their differences. See e.g. Torrance, 'Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy', 461–82, where he paints a picture of Athanasius and Barth all fighting the perennial battle against dualism. Notably, Brian Daley brings forward a similar critique of Newman's view of Athanasius and the Arians. See Brian Daley, 'The Church Fathers', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, edited by Ian Ker and Terrence Merrigan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 31.

105 Basically, theologians emphasizing the unity of God and his immediate presence with creation in his economic activity (e.g. Barth and Rahner) and those who emphasize the distinctiveness of the three Persons of the Trinity (e.g. Moltmann and Zizioulas). See T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 201–03, for an excellent summary of the debate.

106 E.g. Siecienski wrote a chapter on contemporary discussion and there was no mention of Torrance. Though, of course, some do: Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*.

guishes between Latin and Greek doctrines of the Trinity is currently falling out of fashion with patristics scholars. Therein, Gunton's categories (and critiques of Torrance) are somewhat out of date, and current scholarship is moving forward seeing Augustine and Latin Triadology in line with Greek (both Athanasian and Cappadocian) Triadology – or, at least not necessarily contradictory to one another.¹⁰⁷ Torrance, though still falling into some now outdated categories (such as Cappadocian vs Nicene) is at the same time a pioneer in his time inasmuch as he sees Augustine in line with Greek Trinitarian thought.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, Torrance helps to show the essential unity of East and West on the Trinity. As such Torrance's scholarship in this area has much to offer the current Trinitarian conversation and he is seriously under-utilized by patristics scholars and theologians alike on this topic. As Noble states: 'Torrance's Trinitarian theology holds out the best hope of combining the concerns for divine Unity with the concerns of the social Trinitarians.'¹⁰⁹

In the final analysis, Holmes's *Holy Trinity* and Torrance's reconstruction of the patristic consensus are complementary. They share a commitment to the importance of the Fathers on the doctrine of the Trinity. They share the view that the Eastern Fathers and the Western Fathers are, in substance, propagators of the same doctrine of the Trinity. In substance both offer a much more dynamic conception of the doctrine seeing God as Three-in-One and One-in-Three, starting neither with the Unity nor the Trinity.

Torrance stands apart from Holmes inasmuch as Torrance offers a Christologically conditioned reconstruction of the Fathers in light of the Reformed and evangelical tradition. Holmes stands apart from Torrance inasmuch he offers a less reconstructive approach to the patristic consensus but he does remain theologically focused. As such, Holmes's approach is likely more palatable for the historically leaning. Herein, Holmes's book is an encouraging development in and an important addition to theological approaches to the Fathers balancing historical faithfulness with theological centeredness most admirably.

Abstract

This article examines T. F. Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity in the light of Stephen Holmes's recent critiques of the so-called 20th-century Trinitarian 'revival'. This article (1) analyzes Torrance's reading of the Fathers in light of Holmes, (2) explores areas where Holmes's critique has potential to apply to Torrance, and (3) offers suggestions concerning where Torrance is relevant and complementary to Holmes. This article argues that Torrance 'reconstructs' the patristic doctrine of the Trinity from a Reformed, evangelical, and Christocentric perspective and, as

107 Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*.

108 In his recent book Noble makes a similar connection, pointing to Augustine as not necessarily absolutely opposed to the eastern Fathers. See Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 215–17.

109 Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 215 fn. 41.

such, his project is different from but complementary to Holmes. Yet Torrance's reconstruction is relevant and under-utilized by the current scholarly conversation. Building upon the ground cleared by Holmes, this article offers new insight into (1) Torrance's reading of the Fathers, (2) Torrance's version of the patristic doctrine of the Trinity, and (3) Torrance's relevance in the current scholarly conversation on the doctrine of the Trinity in the Fathers.