



Fraser Prize essay 2013 – Highly Commended

Does the church in Scotland still need theology?

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‘Does the church in Scotland still need theology?’ This is an important and perennially pertinent question. The answer is (and must always be) a resounding ‘Yes!’ Why? Because, if the Church ignores theology she simply projects her own ideas and ceases to reflect God, thereby ceasing to act as the Church. First, however, a linguistic definition is needed. The word ‘theology’ (θεολογία) is from the Greek word for ‘God’ (θεος) and the Greek word for ‘word’ (Λογος).¹ As such, linguistically, it simply means ‘talk about God’.²

In order to answer the question the astute thinker must ask ‘What is the Church?’, ‘What is theology?’, and ‘If not theology, then what?’ Accordingly, this essay will explore why the Church always needs theology and why, if she ceases to be theologically conditioned, she ceases to, in fact, act as the Church.³ In order to answer this question, this essay will explore what it is that theology really is and does and examine what the options are if the Church departs from theology. Relevant examples will be given from Church’s current context in the Western world in general and Scotland in particular.

First, this essay will explore the definition of the Church in the classical tradition arguing that, for the Fathers, the Church is necessarily theologically conditioned. Second, this essay will explore how this flows into the life of individual members of the Church. The definition of theology offered by the early Church Fathers will be examined, particularly with regard to its intimate connection of theology and piety. Third, this essay will examine the basics of theology in the classical Christian tradition as a Spirit-enabled response to God’s self-revelation in Christ. Fourth, this essay will explore the alternative involved in the Church’s departure from

theology, namely, ‘mythology’. Finally, this essay will offer some constructive suggestions as to where the relevance of theology might be most evident in the Church in the West and in Scotland today.



The whole Church as ‘theologically conditioned’

In order to examine the necessity of theology for the Church it is essential to first explore the nature of the Church itself. Georges Florovsky states: ‘The theology of the Church is only a chapter, but a fundamental chapter of Christology. Without this chapter Christology itself would not be complete.’⁴ Today many forget, in practice, that the Church is the Body of Christ. Many parishes are run essentially like businesses. This is a practice popularized by the American ‘megachurch model’ but many, much smaller, parishes have adopted this approach as well (implicitly if not explicitly).⁵ One need only sit in a meeting among the leaders of a parish to hear discussion centred on finances, buildings, and membership. The minister has effectively become a C.E.O. concerned to offer a palatable sermon to the congregation. The congregation, in turn, has become a gathering of consumers arriving at the Sunday service ready to ‘get their money’s worth’.

This approach could not be further from the approach of classical Christianity. For the early Christian tradition, the central aspect of the Church is its relationship to God in Christ, its theological conditioning. Paul says in Colossians 1:18 that Christ is the head of the Church and he states in Romans 12:5 that the Church is in Christ. Paul elaborates his conception of the Church as the Body of Christ most comprehensively in 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. Here Paul insists upon the diversity of the members of Christ’s Body but emphasizes their essential unity in Christ. Paul captures and sets the tone for the early Christian understanding of the Church; not in a business model but, rather, in a mystical approach to the Church as the Body of Christ and community of the redeemed in Christ conditioned entirely by God, i.e. theologically conditioned.

According to Ephesians 5, the Church is the bride of Christ. She has been united to Christ from before the creation of the world. The Church has existed in three separate phases: (1) the Church before the creation of the world; (2) the Church transplanted onto the earth prior to the incarnation; and (3) the Church after the incarnation. At first, the Church existed between God and the angels.⁶ As John Chrysostom

says, the world and the heavens were created for the Church,⁷ which means that the Church is the end and not the means of salvation.⁸ Thus, the Church first existed before the creation of the heavens and the earth and was originally, as Gregory Nazianzen points out, a society of the Trinity with purely spiritual beings.⁹ Second, the Church was transplanted to the earth after the world's creation.¹⁰ At that point, the Church existed between God, the angels, and man in the Garden of Eden. As Genesis 3:8 puts it, the Lord used to walk in the Garden with Adam and Eve. However, when Adam and Eve sinned they tainted the holy Church and therefore, in his incarnation, Christ found the Church tainted with sin and saved her.¹¹ Thus, in his incarnation, death, and resurrection, Christ saved the Church. Pentecost was not the founding of the Church but rather the point when God made the Church a temple of the Holy Spirit.¹² Additionally, at Pentecost the gentiles were engrafted into the True Vine, Christ, according to the analogy found in John 15. Thus, the third phase of the Church superseded the second phase and is its fulfillment.¹³

The early Fathers elaborate upon this Christ-centred approach to the Church. As Dragas points out: 'Nowhere [...] in the Fathers does one find any definition of the Church. It is like life, which is not defined but simply described, as in the modern science of biology.'¹⁴ Indeed, the Fathers did not write treatises specifically on the Church. For them the Church is seen as the locus of salvation and God's plan for creation from eternity.¹⁵ T. F. Torrance helpfully states:

It was undoubtedly St Paul's teaching about the *Church as the Body of Christ* together with *baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*, that provided the basic convictions on which the early patristic doctrine of the Church, and of its unity and universality, took shape.¹⁶

The Fathers, accordingly, discuss the Church in their texts on Christology.

An excellent example of this in the early Fathers is Irenaeus of Lyons (died c. 202). Irenaeus did not write a text on the Church as such; however, this does not mean that Irenaeus did not have an ecclesiology – his works are full of teachings on the Church.¹⁷ For Irenaeus, the Church is the community of those who are united to Christ. The Person and Work of Christ condition it entirely. According

to Irenaeus, salvation was incurred through the recapitulatory work of Christ and entails union between God and humankind. This was done through the incarnation, life, and crucifixion of Christ. For Irenaeus, Christ, the second Adam completed and redid what the first Adam was supposed to do and thus replaced death with life.¹⁸ Christ recapitulated and redid everything that the first Adam undid.

For Irenaeus, the Church is the community of the saved and recapitulated. The Church is what the Garden of Eden was supposed to be. As Christ is the recapitulation of Adam, so the Church is the recapitulation of the Garden.¹⁹ Irenaeus states: ‘the Church has been planted as a garden in this world’ but now, in an allegorical twist, Scripture is the acceptable fruit and heresy the forbidden one.²⁰ As Behr makes clear, Irenaeus understands the creation of the Church to have been a part of the divine plan from the outset in the same way as the incarnation.²¹ From the creation of the world God planned to effect the incarnation and therein create the Church.²² The Garden of Eden points to the Church. Along the same lines it is the Church that receives all the benefits of the incarnate Christ’s saving life and obedience.²³

For the classical Christian tradition, therefore, the Church is conditioned by Christology. This means that the Church is not an entity unto itself in relation to God. Rather, the Church is a body united to God in Christ. The Church cannot help but be theologically conditioned, that is, conditioned by who God is and what God does. This means that in order for the Church to be the Church it must be theologically conditioned; to be otherwise is to cease to act as the Church. This is not just an abstract ontological statement about the Church’s nature; rather, this truth flows out into the life of each individual member of the Church. Each individual member of the Church cannot help but be theologically conditioned as well.



The individual members of the Church as ‘theologically conditioned’

Evagrius of Pontus (c. 345–399 C.E.) famously stated: ‘If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian.’²⁴ For Evagrius, then, theology and prayer are inextricably connected; one cannot be done without the other. As such, Evagrius takes the early Christian principle that the Church is conditioned

entirely by God in the daily pietistic life of the individual members of the Church. For Evagrius, each member of the Church is necessarily theologically conditioned. According to Evagrius, theology is not just an ‘ivory tower’ enterprise. Rather, everyone who prays necessarily does theology.

Gregory Nazianzen (c. 329–390 C.E.) expresses a similar sentiment. In his *First Theological Oration* preached in Constantinople in 380 C.E., Gregory says: ‘we ought to think of God even more often than we draw our own breath; and, if the expression is permissible, we ought to do nothing else.’²⁵ Here Gregory elaborates upon the trajectory taken up by Evagrius, namely, that each individual member of the Church is necessarily theologically conditioned. Gregory urges everyone to be continually conditioned theologically by means of always thinking of God.²⁶

Many other Fathers discuss this as well and it is captured in the dual principle of the Greek Fathers: piety (εὐσέβεια) and godliness (θεοσέβεια).²⁷ Origen (c. 184–254 C.E.) combines the careful scientific investigation advocated by Irenaeus and Hilary (c. 300–368 C.E.) with spiritual training.²⁸ Put otherwise, this is ‘asceticism’. As T. F. Torrance helpfully puts it:

To know God and to be holy, to know God and worship, to know God and to be cleansed in mind and soul from anything that may come between people and God, to know God and be committed to him in consecration, love and obedience, go inseparably together.²⁹

This is a common theme among the Fathers as can be seen in the plethora of monastic texts, especially those of the Desert Fathers. For example, Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373 C.E.) states: ‘But for the searching of the Scriptures and true knowledge (γνώσιν ἀληθῆ), an honourable life (βίου καλοῦ), a clean soul (ψυχῆς καθαράς), and virtue according to Christ (τῆς κατὰ χριστὸν ἀρετῆς) are necessary [...] for without a clean mind (καθαράς διανοίας) and an imitation of the life of the saints (τῆς πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους τοῦ βίου μιμήσεως), one would not be able to comprehend (καταλαβεῖν) the words of the saints.’³⁰ For these Fathers, knowledge of God naturally entails a response of piety and godliness and, indeed, asceticism.³¹

According to Origen, Clement (c. 150–215 C.E.), and Athanasius,

only through a leaping forward of the awakened mind can truth be known, a leaping forward gained by corporate pious living (κατ'εὐσέβειαν).³² T. F. Torrance adopts this Greek patristic emphasis into his own Reformed tradition in his discussion of the 'transformation and reconciliation of the mind', as he puts it.³³ According to Torrance, this is a transformation in which we come to have the 'mind of Christ',³⁴ and is a lifelong process, the result being a keen 'theological instinct'.³⁵

Therefore, for the classical Christian tradition, not only is the Church theologically conditioned as a whole, but each individual member of the Church is theologically conditioned as well. To be a member of the Church means to be conditioned by God in Christ, which, as will be shown, is a concise definition of theology.



The basics of theology

Theology as understood by the classical Christian tradition is Holy Spirit-enabled talk about God as he is *in himself*.³⁶ The Holy Spirit's role is primarily to reveal the Son and therein also the Father.³⁷ As such, theology is necessarily based upon God's divinely initiated self-revelation in Christ by the Holy Spirit.³⁸ In his classic text, *De Incarnatione*, Athanasius emphasizes this very point. After arguing that humankind was created to live a 'God-ward life' (κατὰ Θεὸν ζῆν) by the 'grace of the word' (τῆ τοῦ λόγου χάριτι)³⁹ from which they turned away (ἀποσραφέντες),⁴⁰ Athanasius says that God condescended (συγκαταβαίνον) towards humankind in his love for humankind (φιλαωθροπία),⁴¹ revealing himself in a human way.⁴² Athanasius' point is that God condescended to humankind in revealing himself after humanity had sinned originally. According to Athanasius, humankind had replaced their 'God-ward life' with a 'human-ward life' in perverted idolatry.⁴³

For Athanasius, the Holy Spirit necessarily enables the human focus upon God in his Word. He says, 'The Father works and gives all things through the Word in the Spirit.'⁴⁴ Athanasius' essential argument is that it is only by participation in the divine Holy Spirit, who united and unites humankind to the divine Word, that humans can know God, be renewed, and be sanctified.⁴⁵ Accordingly, for Athanasius, theology is simply this Holy Spirit-enabled response to God's objective self-revelation. Due to the Creator-creature distinction emphasized so

strongly by Athanasius and the other Fathers, it is only possible to know God through God and, therefore, God himself needed to unite himself to humankind, which was done by means of the incarnation of the Son and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ This is a point emphasized by many of the Fathers. Indeed, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Didymus, and Cyril of Jerusalem all contend that humankind ‘may know the Spirit of the Father and the Son only as he dwells in [them] and brings [them] into the communion of the Holy Trinity.’⁴⁷

This is the great import of the statement in the Nicene Creed that the Son and the Spirit are ‘the same essence as the Father’ (ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ). For the Fathers, the extremely important doctrine of the *homoousios* [ὁμοούσιον, meaning ‘of the same substance’] means that ‘God is really like Jesus’.⁴⁸ Because of the *homoousios*, God can be known internally *in himself*⁴⁹ and God is now knowable as he is *in himself* by means of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The *homoousios* implies epistemologically that God is knowable as he is *in himself* by means of the Son and the Spirit who are *homoousios* with the Father and that it is only through God that humankind can know God.⁵⁰

Intimately connected to knowledge of God is knowledge of humankind. This is a point taken up wonderfully by the great Reformer John Calvin. At the very beginning of his classic text, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin insists upon the intricate connection between humankind’s knowledge of God and knowledge of themselves, stating, ‘they are bound together by many ties’.⁵¹ Calvin argues that humankind cannot properly know themselves without knowledge of God and cannot properly know God without knowing themselves.⁵² His point is not that God needs creation but rather that God has freely chosen to inextricably bind himself to creation by means of his creation of humankind in his image, Jesus Christ. These two elements are even more deeply bound in the incarnation whereby God bound himself to humanity for eternity.⁵³

This is a point taken up by the Fathers in their discussion of all of creation as contingent upon God. Since creation came out of nothing, it is completely contingent upon God for its continued existence.⁵⁴ This is a point put forward by Athanasius, especially in *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione*, and also by John Philoponus and Basil the Great.⁵⁵ Essentially, it means that creation could not and cannot exist by itself for it is entirely dependent upon God.⁵⁶ The contingency of

creation means that it can be studied in itself, though this will not lead to any sort of knowledge of God as he is *in himself*.⁵⁷

Therefore, according to the classical Christian tradition from the Fathers right through to the Reformation, knowledge of God and knowledge of creation, especially humankind, has only been possible through God's self-revelation in his Word by his Holy Spirit. But, what is the alternative? If the Church is not theologically conditioned, that is, conditioned by God's self-revelation in his Word by his Spirit, what is the other option?



The problem of mythology

The Fathers see heresy as impiety/ungodliness (ἀσέβεια).⁵⁸ For them, the heretics are rooted in ἀσέβεια and do not know God as he is *in himself* according to his nature (κατὰ φύσιν). For example, Athanasius rejected Arianism, among other reasons, because of this Arian dualistic divide between God and the world.⁵⁹ According to Athanasius, from the Arian perspective only mythology (μυθολογία) (and not knowledge of God κατὰ φύσιν) is possible.⁶⁰

This sort of theology can never be orthodox for true theology could only be done from an objective point in God.⁶¹ According to Torrance, for the Fathers, and especially Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300–369 C.E.), ‘everything we actually think and say of God must be constrained and controlled within the bounds of the revelation of the Father in and through the incarnate Son.’⁶² The problem with heresy, for the Fathers, is that it starts from a human point and a human perspective. According to Athanasius, rather than thinking from a human point and projecting human things on God, the proper order is to think in a godly way and allow the reality of God's self-revelation to dictate the way in which humans think.⁶³

Karl Barth famously critiques liberal theology for asserting nothing more than ‘humanity writ large’ in their ‘theology’. This is precisely the same point put forward by the Fathers centuries earlier. Their common belief is that real objective knowledge of God is necessarily from a point of reference in God himself and must necessarily be from God's self-revelation.⁶⁴ Any other so-called ‘knowledge’ is not really of God but a self-projection of man.⁶⁵

The problem with the mythological approach is that it replaces the objectivity of the Holy Spirit with a subjective human spirit.⁶⁶ In many

ways, Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 C.E.) and Clement of Alexandria were responsible for developing this approach. Commendable for many elements in their theology, these early Greek Fathers were part of the earliest line of Christian apologists and their works are, in the words of Daniélou, ‘the missionary literature of the second century, the presentation of the Gospel to the pagan world.’⁶⁷ A major (and laudable) concern of these Fathers was to prove to pagans trained in philosophy that the Gospel was a viable belief system.

Central to Justin’s theology is the concept of the *spermatic logos* (λόγος σπερματικός) from Stoic philosophy. According to Justin, the *spermatic logos* is the activity and seed of the Word of God himself to be found in humankind; this was God’s revelation to the Greek philosophers prior to his incarnation. The actions of the *spermatic logos* could be seen throughout all of history. Thus, the *Logos* was known by all nations in some way prior to his incarnation. According to Justin, all those who lived according to reason knew the *Logos* and therefore knew Christ, making them semi-Christians. Justin, therefore, asserts that the Greek philosophers knew Christ in the same way the prophets of the Hebrews knew Christ⁶⁸ on account of the fact that the *Logos* was present in all humans wherever knowledge and reason were practised, such as the many schools of philosophy. In a famous passage, Justin states: ‘all who have lived in accordance with reason are Christians’.⁶⁹

Clement takes up this approach. For him, God covenanted himself, in the ultimate sense, to the Christian Church; however, pre-incarnation, Clement ascribes a covenant to the Hebrews through the Torah and a covenant with the Greeks through philosophy. Clement asserts that Greek philosophy, like the Hebrew Torah for the Jews, prepares the non-Jewish mind for the reception of the Gospel and of faith.⁷⁰ In the words of Clement: ‘Philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for their righteousness before the coming of the Lord [...] for it was training Hellenism for Christ just as the Law trained the Hebrews’.⁷¹ He elaborates his idea by saying that ‘philosophy was given [...] to the Greeks, as a covenant native to them, being a rung in the ladder [...] to Christianity’.⁷²

Justin and Clement identify the Word of God with the notion of *spermatic logos* in Stoic philosophy far too closely. Thus, these Fathers plant the seeds for natural theology. Their basic approach of identifying the Word of God with some sort of *spermatic logos*

embedded in creation and, indeed, their basic motivation, sharing the Gospel with the well-educated in society, is taken up most famously by Schleiermacher with his emphasis on the ‘feeling of absolute dependence’.⁷³ It was also carried forward by many theologians in the pietist-liberal tradition, where the Word of God was confused with the inner word in humans and the Spirit of God confused with the Spirit of man.⁷⁴ Paul Tillich takes up this approach in his convolution of the objective God and subjective human culture. In the chapter on revelation in his *Systematic Theology* he states of the mystery of revelation: ‘It appears as our ultimate concern. And it expresses itself in symbols and myths which point to the depth of reason and its mystery.’⁷⁵ For Tillich, therefore, theology is concerned, not so much with God’s objective self-revelation as with humanity’s ‘New Being in Christ’.⁷⁶ In his vehement attack on liberal theology with its emphasis on natural theology, Barth turned twentieth-century theology away from a focus on this *spermatic logos* embedded somewhere in the human spirit back to the objective Word of God himself.

Therefore, for the classical tradition of the Church, theology is not only an essential and intrinsic part of the Church as a whole and the individual members of the Church; to neglect theology is to self-project humanity and convolute God and culture.



Conclusion

To conclude with some brief examples of the necessity of theology in church life. The first area where the Church needs theology is in preaching. What else can the Church preach but the Word of God? Problematically, ministers often preach many other things: self-help, hospitality, and love, among other things. Following the liberal mythological tradition of Arius, Schleiermacher, and Tillich they preach the word of man instead of the Word of God. Such self-projection will do the Church no good at all! Ministers must be theologically conditioned and witness to the Word of God in their preaching.

The Church also needs theology on issues of social justice. In accordance with the mythological approach of Arius, Schleiermacher, and Tillich, the Church is often informed and transformed by culture. Yet if culture informs the Church, what can the Church actually know then about God or God’s will for the world? Nothing! The Church just

becomes a reflection of culture. One example of this in the Western world in general and in Scotland in particular can be found in the debate concerning homosexual marriage and ordination. Culture says that homosexuality is not a sin and therefore same-sex marriage and active church leadership should be allowed. This is a projection of culture onto the Church. However, if this is reversed into its proper order according to the classical tradition whereby the Church, conditioned by theology, informs the world, then culture is transformed according to God. Answers to social issues such as the homosexual debate would surely look much different.

In conclusion, for the Church to act as the Church, she must be theologically conditioned, not culturally conditioned. The Church must reject the mythological approach of Arius, Schleiermacher, and Tillich and follow the theological approach of Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory, Calvin, and indeed, the entire classical tradition in order to continue to act as the Church and reflect God. The whole Church most definitely needs theology, in particular, the Church in Scotland. Without it she will neither look nor act like the Church.

Notes

- ¹ See G. W. H Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 627 for the lexical information.
- ² Karl Barth states: ‘theology is a *logia*, logic, or language bound to the *theos*, which both makes it possible and also determines it.’ See Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (trans. Grover Foley; New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), 16.
- ³ Note, the Church does not, however, cease to *be* the Church. For, the Church’s existence is absolutely and always reliant upon God and not herself; there is nothing that that Church can do to make herself become or cease to be the Church. The Church’s existence is contingent upon God, not herself. But, the Church can cease to *act* like the Church, and this essay shall argue that she does so when she ceases to be theologically conditioned.
- ⁴ Quoted in: George Dion Dragas, “*Mysterium Christi and Mysterium Ecclesiae: An Orthodox Approach*”, *Greek Orthodox Theo-*

- logical Review* 43 (1998): 472.
- ⁵ Though, this is not really anything new. The dualistic separation of the Church from God has been a problem for centuries. There are traces of this in Origen and, later, the Arians viewed the Church as simply a community of like-minded believers. See further T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 270–78. Torrance argues that, in contrast, the Nicene approach entails real ontological union between the Church and God (in Christ).
- ⁶ John Karmiris, “The Ecclesiology of the Three Hierarchs”, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 6 (1960–61): 135–85.
- ⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homily Before the Exile*, 2.
- ⁸ See further Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2006), 21.
- ⁹ Gregory Nazianzen, *Discourse* 8.6.
- ¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.20.
- ¹¹ John Chrysostom, *Encomium to Maximus*, 2; Rom 9:25–26.
- ¹² See Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 33.
- ¹³ See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* for the best exposition of this point. See particularly 14, 19–30, 40–47, 99–120, 123f. See also John Chrysostom, *Eight Homilies Against the Jews*.
- ¹⁴ Dragas, “*Mysterium Christi* and *Mysterium Ecclesiae*”, 471.
- ¹⁵ See Karmiris, “The Ecclesiology of the Three Hierarchs”, 135–85 for a summary of this theologically-conditioned approach in three of the great Fathers, John Chrysostom (c. 347–407 C.E.), Gregory Nazianzen, and Basil the Great (c. 329–379).
- ¹⁶ T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 253.
- ¹⁷ See Thomas Halton, *The Church* (vol. 4 of *Message of the Fathers of the Church*; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985), 18.
- ¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, 1.22–23.
- ¹⁹ See further John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 65–67 and 110.
- ²⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.20.2.
- ²¹ John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, 46. This was also the approach of the three Hierarchs. See

- Karmiris, “The Ecclesiology of the Three Hierarchs”.
- ²² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.37.7.
- ²³ Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 151.
- ²⁴ Evagrius of Pontus, *On Prayer: One Hundred and Fifty-Three Texts*, 61, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text* (compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth; trans. and ed. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware et al.; 4 vols.; London: Faber and Faber, 1983–95), vol. 1, p. 62.
- ²⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 27.5*. Gregory does think theology should be done with care, however. See, earlier, *Oration 27.3*.
- ²⁶ This principle is also central to the thought of Athanasius. For him, God created humankind to live a ‘God-ward life’ focused upon God and the Fall consisted of ‘turning away’ from God and a perverted inward-turning. See *Contra Gentes*, 1–3. See below for elaboration upon this point.
- ²⁷ See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 13–46 for a clear and full account of this theme in the Fathers.
- ²⁸ See further Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 36, 41.
- ²⁹ T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 26. This concept is best captured by the classic compilation of Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and Makarios of Corinth, *The Philokalia*. An English translation exists – see n. 24.
- ³⁰ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 57. See J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursum Completus Series Graeca* (165 vols.; Paris: 1857–86), 25b, pp. 196f. for the Greek text.
- ³¹ This is a gracious, Holy Spirit-enabled work of Christ in the individual, however. See further Jason Radcliff, “Reformed Asceticism: The Place of Asceticism in the Contemporary Reformed Tradition”, *Theology in Scotland* 20 (2013): 43–56.
- ³² T. F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 84. See also his *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 74.
- ³³ See T. F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (ed. Robert T. Walker; Milton Keynes; Downers Grove, Ill.: Paternosp-

- ter; IVP Academic, 2009), 437–47.
- ³⁴ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 127.
- ³⁵ Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–47.
- ³⁶ See Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 15–25 for an excellent overview of theology as a response to the Word of God.
- ³⁷ See further Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 211, citing Didymus the Blind, Epiphanius of Salamis, and Cyril of Jerusalem: ‘the Holy Spirit is not directly known in his own *hypostasis* for he remains veiled by the very revelation of the Father and the Son which he brings.’ Torrance sees this view also put forth in the famous quote by Gregory Nazianzen, loved by the Reformer John Calvin: ‘No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am enlightened by the radiance of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of any one I think of him as the whole, and my vision is filled, and the greater part of what I conceive escapes me [...] I see but one luminary, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.’ See *The Trinitarian Faith*, 213 and also Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 40.1 and Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.17.
- ³⁸ See H. R. Mackintosh, *The Divine Initiative* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1921) for a classic defence of the necessity of the divine initiative in salvation and revelation.
- ³⁹ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 5.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁴² Athanasius says ‘from the works of the body’ (τοῦ σώματος ἔργων). See *De Incarnatione*, 14.
- ⁴³ See e.g. *De Incarnatione*, 5 and also *Contra Gentes* (especially 1–3), which is the ‘prequel’ to *De Incarnatione*.
- ⁴⁴ Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 2.14.4.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.22.3–1.25.5.
- ⁴⁶ This is Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 2. See further Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 60f.; T. F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 165–92; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 13; T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 232–41.
- ⁴⁷ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 208. See also Henry Barclay

- Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 211–29.
- ⁴⁸ T. F. Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today: The Gospel and Scientific Thinking* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 55f.; T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 86.
- ⁴⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 241; Torrance, *Atonement*, 236; Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 66–68; 72.
- ⁵⁰ Khaled Anatolios makes this point in his book on Athanasius. For Anatolios, both Athanasius and Irenaeus insisted upon the same element in their theology: only God can know God and only God can unite man and God; namely, the intricate connection between soteriology and epistemology. Anatolios makes much of the connection between Athanasius and Irenaeus in the realm of epistemology and soteriology needing to be from the side of God. Anatolios considers the belief that only God can unite creation to himself and thus only a divine mediator can renew the image of God within mankind as a major Irenaeian theme. Anatolios asserts that this was a theme that Athanasius picked up and though his early texts *De Incarnatione* and *Contra Gentes* were both slightly Irenaeian, it was not until *Contra Arianos* that a strong Irenaeus-Athanasius connection could be clearly detected in this regard. See Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 205–07.
- ⁵¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.1.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 1.1–1.2.
- ⁵³ Karl Barth states: ‘an abstract doctrine of God has no place in the Christian realm, only a “doctrine of God and man,” a doctrine of the commerce and communion between God and man.’ See Karl Barth, “Evangelical Theology in the 19th Century” in *The Humanity of God* (trans. Thomas Wieser and John Newton Thomas; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1960), 11.
- ⁵⁴ See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 95–102.
- ⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 98–100.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 100f. Torrance refers to Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* and Aristedes, *Ad Autolyicus*: ‘If [God] were to withdraw [his] presence

- from the creation it would vanish into nothing' (101). This is a concept substantially similar to the one put forth by Jonathan Edwards. See Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, 4.3.
- ⁵⁷ See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 102–104. Hence Torrance's massive amount of scholarship done in the field of natural science and why it can be done. See T. F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976).
- ⁵⁸ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 42, citing Athanasius, *De Decretis*, 1–3.
- ⁵⁹ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 224.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.
- ⁶¹ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 51.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 82, citing Hilary, *De Trinitate*, 1.13–19.
- ⁶³ See e.g. *Letters to Serapion*, 1.15.3. Athanasius' critique of the Arian heresy is on this very basic level. He says that the Arians assume God is like man. Thus, when they hear that the 'Son is begotten' they assume it happened in time (like human begetting) and thus, their famous adage, 'there was a time when the Son was not.' Athanasius says that because God is not like man, rather than projecting human notions of begetting onto God, theology must do the obverse and reform their human notion of begetting on account of what God has shown to be real begetting. See e.g. *Contra Arianos*, 1.8.26.
- ⁶⁴ See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (trans. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957–75): IV/1, 247: 'God is supremely God, that in this death He is supremely alive, that He has maintained and revealed His deity in the passion of this man as His eternal Son.'
- ⁶⁵ This is why Barth attacks natural theology so strongly; it is simply a projection of humanity and tells humankind nothing about God. See Barth's *Preface to Church Dogmatics* I/1.

- ⁶⁶ Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 234
- ⁶⁷ Jean Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 2: *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 9.
- ⁶⁸ Justin Martyr, *2 Apologia*, 10.8.
- ⁶⁹ Justin Martyr, *1 Apologia*, 46.1–4.
- ⁷⁰ Clement, *Stromata*, 7.3.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1.5.28.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 6.8.
- ⁷³ See e.g. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (trans. Richard Crouter; Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also Schleiermacher's systematic theology, *The Christian Faith* (eds. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928) which is centred around 'religious self-consciousness'.
- ⁷⁴ T. F. Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986): 471.
- ⁷⁵ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (London: James Nisbet, 1968), 123.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 56. This is expressed in symbols. See also Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).