

**THE CONCEPT OF ENERGY
IN T. F. TORRANCE AND IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY**

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Abstract: *The motivation for this paper is fourfold: (1) to emphasize the fact that the teaching on the distinction between Divine essence and energies is an integral part of Orthodox theology; (2) to provide an analysis of why Torrance did not adhere to it; (3) to correct certain erroneous perceptions regarding Orthodox theology put forward by scholars who have already discussed Torrance's view on the essence-energies distinction in its relation to deification or theosis; and finally (4) to suggest an analysis demonstrating the correlation between Torrance's engagements with particular themes in modern physics and the content of his theological positions. This last analysis is made by comparing his scientific theological approach to the approach of Christos Yannaras. The comparison provides an opportunity to demonstrate the correlation between their preoccupations with specific themes in modern physics and their specific theological insights. Thomas Torrance has clearly neglected the epistemological insights emerging from the advances of quantum mechanics in the 20th century and has ended up neglecting the value of the Orthodox teaching on the distinction between Divine essence and energies. This neglect seems to be associated with his specific pre-Chalcedonian understanding of person/prosopon/hypostasis. As a result he has expressed opinions that contradict the apophatic character of the distinction between Divine essence and energies and the subtlety of the apophatic realism of Divine-human communion. The conclusion offers a very brief comparison of some of Torrance's key theological ideas with the ideas of*



two Orthodox theologians - Metr. John Zizioulas and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae. It is suggested that the discussion of Torrance's specific theological positions, including his critique of the distinction between Divine essence and energies, should be considered as a fruitful resource in some of the ongoing Orthodox theological discussions.

I. Introduction

The distinction between the essence and energy of God is a basic principle of the Trinitarian thinking of the Eastern Church.¹ While some tend to associate it exclusively with the works of St. Gregory Palamas and the theological controversies of 14th century Byzantium, Gregory himself considered his theological efforts as a direct elaboration on the dogmatic definitions of the 6th Ecumenical Council (Constantinople III, 680/681), referring back to the works of Sts. Athanasius and Cyril, the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Maximus the Confessor, and St. John of Damascus. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the link between Palamas' teaching and the Greek Fathers before him, as well as the early Christian appropriation and transformation of Hellenic philosophical understandings of *energeia*.² The fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks initiated centuries of struggle during which Orthodox theology, in particular the teaching on the Divine essence and energies, did not find a strongly articulate voice. However, the theology of Palamas was "rediscovered" in the first half of the 20th century. The rediscovery was initiated by the theological controversies associated with some Russian monks on Mount Athos who were accused of claiming that the name of God is God Himself (the so-called Name-worshipers or *Imiaslavtzi*), and whose teaching was associated with the theology of St. Gregory Palamas.³ This rediscovery, together with

1 See Amphiloque (Radovic) du Montenegro et du Littoral, *Le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité selon Saint Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2012).

2 Jean-Claude Larchet, *La théologie des énergies Divines des origines à saint Jean Damascène* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2010); David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

3 See Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Hilarion Alfeev, *Le Mystère sacré de l'Église – Introduction à l'histoire et à la problématique des débats athoniques sur la vénération du nom du Dieu* (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2007); Stoyan Tanev, "ENERGEIA vs ΣΟΦΙΑ: The contribution of Fr. Georges Florovsky to the rediscovery of the Orthodox teaching on the distinction between the Divine essence and energies," *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 2, No. 1 (2011): 15-71; and Stoyan

the controversy revolving around the sophiology of Fr. Sergii Bulgakov,⁴ is of particular interest, as it initiated a renewal of Orthodox theology by reopening some key theological themes, including the essence-energies distinction, which have impacted Orthodox theology to the present.⁵

In parallel to the Orthodox theological renewal in the first half of the 20th century there were ongoing inter-confessional debates (predominantly between Orthodox and Roman Catholics) focusing on the relevance of the theology of St. Gregory Palamas. These debates emerged within theological circles associated with the Russian diaspora in France and clearly contributed to the rediscovery and the appropriation of the teaching on the distinction between Divine essence and energies.⁶ This distinction has become a quite sensitive topic in inter-confessional discussions ever since, due to its relation to all-important chapters of Christian theology as well as to such controversial issues as the *filioque*. According to Duncan Reid, the distinction between essence and energies runs “directly contrary, it seems, to one of the basic principles of the Western Trinitarian tradition, viz. ‘that we have no formula for the being of God in Godself other than the being of God in the world.’”⁷ In Reid’s view, the Western position is an “*a priori*, though not always acknowledged, methodological principle,” while in the East it is “a recognized doctrine, confirmed by ecclesiastical synods, that has in

Tanev, “The Theology of Divine Energies in 20th Century Orthodox Thought” (Phd Diss., Sofia University, 2012).

4 For a summary of Bulgakov’s sophiological doctrine, see Sergius Bulgakov, *Wisdom of God: A Brief Summary of Sophiology* (New York: The Paisley Press–Williams and Norgate, 1937).

5 Here the following works are representative and of special historical importance: Georges Florovsky, “Tvar’ I tvarnost’,” *Pravoslavnaia Mysl’* 1 (1928): 176–212; and “L’idée de la création dans la philosophie Chrétienne,” *Logos: Revue Internationale de la Pensée Orthodoxe* 1, (1928): 3–30; Vasily Krivocheine, *Aspeticheskoe i bogoslovskoe uchenie svyatogo Grigoriya Palamy* (Praha: Seminarium Kondakovianum 8, 1936); Dumitru Staniloae, *Viata și învătatura Sf. Grigorie Palama*. Cu trei tratate traduse (Sibiu: n.p. 1938); Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l’Église d’Orient* (Paris: Aubier, 1944); Jean Meyendorff, *Introduction à l’Étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1959); John Romanides, *The Ancestral Sin: A comparative study of our ancestors Adam and Eve according to the paradigms and doctrines of the first-and second-century Church and the Augustinian formulation of original sin* (Ridgewood: Zephyr, 2002).

6 See the Introduction to Jean-Claude Larchet, *La théologie Odes énergies Divines des origines à saint Jean Damascène* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2010).

7 Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology* (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1997), 3, referring to F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, ed. M. Redeker (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960), 2:589.

turn certain methodological ramifications.”⁸ Here Reid refers to the relevance of the Church councils in 14th century Byzantium that provided the most explicit doctrinal articulation of this teaching. The importance of these councils for Orthodox theology is well expressed by a statement of Fr. Georges Florovsky: “This basic distinction (i.e., between Divine essence and energies) has been formally accepted and elaborated at the Great Councils of Constantinople in 1341 and 1351. Those who would deny this distinction were anathematized and excommunicated. The anathematisms of the council of 1351 were included in the rite for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, in the Triodion. Orthodox theologians are bound by this decision.”⁹

The motivation to focus on this theme of Divine energy in a special issue dedicated to Thomas F. Torrance and his theological relations with Orthodoxy is fourfold. First, it is to emphasize the fact that this teaching is an integral part of Orthodox theology, and second, to provide an initial analysis of why Torrance did not adhere to it. Third, I hope that the discussion suggested here will help in correcting certain erroneous perceptions regarding Orthodox theology put forward by scholars who have already discussed Torrance’s view on the essence and energies distinction in its relation to deification or theosis. Fourth and finally, the motivation for the present paper is to suggest an analysis demonstrating the correlation between Torrance’s engagements with particular themes in modern physics and the content of his theological positions. This last analysis is of particular relevance since it is directly associated with his interpretation of the distinction between essence and energies.

II. Torrance against dualisms

Before going into the details of Torrance’s views on the essence-energies distinction, it is worth highlighting one major aspect of his theological preoccupations – his passion for addressing theological and scientific dualisms. This is a major point since, as it will be shown later, it provides a key for understanding Torrance’s view on the relationship between science and theology. Torrance repeatedly highlighted the struggle of the Church throughout all her history with cosmological and epistemological dualisms that threaten to destroy the meaning

8 Ibid., 4.

9 Georges Florovsky, “St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers,” *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View, The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Vaduz, Europa: Buechervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 1:105–20.

of the Gospel. The Christian doctrine of the incarnation was articulated against a philosophical background characterized by a fundamental disjunction between the real world of the intelligible and the shadowy, less real world of phenomenal or sensible.¹⁰ In Torrance's own words:

The Church found itself struggling with two powerful ideas that threatened to destroy its existence: (a) the idea that God himself does not intervene in the actual life of men in time and space for he is immutable and changeless, and (b) the idea that the Word of God revealed in Christ is not grounded in the eternal Being of God but is detached and separated from him and therefore mutable and changeable.¹¹

According to Torrance the split between God and the world in modern thought has been most damaging following Kant's arguments for an axiomatic distinction between unknowable things in themselves and what is scientifically knowable, i.e. the things as they appear to us. In other words, for Kant knowledge was limited to the appearances of things without any grounding in their inner dynamic nature and the lack of grounding severed the connection between science and faith, depriving faith of any objective or ontological reference and emptying it of any real cognitive content.¹²

According to Colin Gunton, Torrance's concern with dualism has two distinct aspects.¹³ First, there is the division between the world of sense and the world of intellect, which deprives modern intellectual life of its basis in material being. The continuity of the human mind with the material world is essential for the integration of thought and experience, without which neither natural nor theological science can operate. According to Gunton, Torrance's approach generates a realist parallel to Kant's essentially idealist epistemology, since for Torrance all theological concepts must have a corresponding empirical grounding if they are not to detach into a theology which is not rooted in the Gospel. The

10 T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 34, 175, 211; T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 15, 43; T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 47 and 275; T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 224. For more insights on Torrance's view on dualisms, see Andrew Purves, "The Christology of Thomas F. Torrance," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, ed. Elmer Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 52.

11 Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 261.

12 T. F. Torrance, *Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1980) 26-7.

13 Colin Gunton, "Eastern and Western Trinities: Being and Person. T. F. Torrance's Doctrine of God," in *Father, Son & Holy Spirit* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 34.

second dualism with which Torrance is concerned regards the relation between the being and act of God.¹⁴ Interestingly, Torrance associates this dualism with what he calls “the Latin Heresy”: for in theology at any rate its roots go back to a form of linguistic and conceptual dualism that prevailed in Patristic and Mediaeval Latin theology.¹⁵ According to Torrance, this heresy has entrenched in the tradition the breach between the act of God (what he does) and his being (what he is) leading to a radical distinction between the person and work of Christ. Torrance seeks to avoid this dualism and its resultant external, transactional notion of redemption through the adoption of an incarnational model of atonement.¹⁶ Further, Torrance’s Trinitarian theology appears to be a continuous effort to overcome the same dualism. For him the danger of the dualistic disconnect between God and man requires a knowledge of Jesus Christ on his own ground as he reveals Himself to us and according to His nature (*kata physin*) within the objective frame of meaning that he has created for the church, through the apostolic testimony to him. Here Torrance follows the basic Barthian axiom that God’s being is known only through his act, and that the person and work of Christ are inseparable.¹⁷ In Torrance’s own words, “Christ is what he does, and does what he is.”¹⁸ If the identity and mission of Jesus Christ form a coherent whole, then it is both the person and the work that have redemptive significance. “The Redemption is the Person of Christ in action; not the action itself thought of in an objectivist impersonal way.”¹⁹

One should point out that the above statements manifest Torrance’s unwarranted preoccupation with the danger of a potential disjunction between person and agency, as if personal acts and activity may exist somehow independently of the person itself. Such preoccupation may be explained with Torrance’s predominant focus on the theology of St. Athanasius and the Christian theological debates of the 4th and the 5th centuries, when the distinction between essence (*ousia*), nature (*physis*), person (*hypostasis* or *prosopon*) and activity (*energeia*) was not fully articulated yet. It is undisputed that Torrance’s argumentation against dualism never loses its basis in the Arian controversy and Nicene theology.²⁰

14 Ibid., 35.

15 T. F. Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986): 461–82.

16 Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 50.

17 Torrance, *The Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, 150.

18 Ibid., 150, 165.

19 Ibid., 151.

20 Tapio Luoma, *Incarnation and Physics: Natural Science in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 90.

For Torrance the coexistence of the Divine and human natures in the person of Christ is not a dualism but "the only way to safeguard a real, dynamic, and open (that is, free of deterministic causalities) relationship between God and the world."²¹ For him dualism does not consist in a mere appearance of two poles but in the specific understanding of the nature of the relation between the two poles involved. His emphasis on the *homoousion* is an expression of a realism that could be applied to both theology and science: "what is observed is of the same being with reality itself so that an observation does not relate to a superficial phenomenon only but to reality in its ontological depth. Apparent phenomena and reality, then, do not live their own separate lives but are actually one and the same."²² In this way the link between theology and science in Torrance's thought emerges not as mere academic endeavor but as part of an integrated vision of God, man, and the world. This point should help later in clarifying part of the motivation for his critique of the distinction between essence and energies.

III. Distinction Between *Theologia* and *Oikonomia*

Torrance equates the distinction between the being of God (what he is) and his act (what he does) with the patristic distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, and emphasizes that this distinction should not be understood dualistically: "Due to the epistemological dualism (*chorismos*) pervading Hellenistic thought the Church had constantly to struggle against a threat to sever 'economy' from 'theology' (*oikonomia* from *theologia*), for it would have done away with the ontological reference of the Gospel and of faith to any real ground in the being and activity of God."²³ Here Torrance refers positively to Florovsky's essay "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius" for support; yet it is interesting that in this paper Florovsky expresses exactly the *opposite* concern.²⁴ In Florovsky's words:

In fact, St. Athanasius carefully eliminates all references to the *oikonomia* of creation or salvation from his description of the inner relationship between the Father and the Son. This was his major and decisive contribution to the Trinitarian theology, in the critical situation of the Arian dispute. And this left him free to define the concept of creation properly. *Theologia*, in the ancient

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., 91.

23 Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*, 7.

24 A similar point was made by Matthew Baker, "The Eternal 'Spirit of the Son': Barth, Florovsky, and Torrance on the *Filioque*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (2010): 382–402.

sense of the word, and *Oikonomia* must be clearly and strictly distinguished and delimited, although they could not be separated from each other. But God's 'Being' has an absolute and ontological priority over God's action and will . . . There are two different sets of names which may be used of God. One set of names refers to God's deeds or acts – that is, to His will and counsel – the other of God's essence and being. St. Athanasius insisted that these two sets of names had to be formally and consistently distinguished. And, again, it was more than just a logical or mental distinction. There was a distinction in Divine reality itself. God is what He is: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an ultimate reality, declared and manifested in the Scriptures. But Creation is a deed of the Divine will, and this is common to and identical in all Three Persons of the One God . . . the actual mystery is double. There is, indeed, the mystery of the Divine Being. But there is another mystery of the Divine *oikonomia*. No real advance can be achieved in the realm of 'Theology' until the realm of 'Oikonomia' had been properly ordered.²⁵

Florovsky points out here that the differentiation between Divine generation, as an effect of nature, and creation, as an effect of will, is one of the distinctive marks of Eastern theology, which was systematically elaborated later especially in the theology of St. Gregory Palamas. St. Gregory's emphasis that "unless a clear distinction had been made between the 'essence' and 'energy' of God, one could not distinguish also between 'generation' and 'creation' . . . was a true Athanasian motive," says Florovsky. "Not only do we distinguish between 'Being' and 'Will'; but it is not the same thing, even for God, 'to be' and 'to act.' This was the deepest conviction of St. Athanasius."²⁶ In his earlier essay "Creation and Creaturehood," Florovsky elaborated on this theme even further, pointing out that the "life-giving acts of God in the world *are God Himself* – an assertion which precludes separation but does not abolish distinction."²⁷ One can see how in Florovsky the fear of dualism is replaced by a subtle understanding of the important distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, Divine nature and will, Divine being and act, Divine essence and energies. It is the perception of this subtlety that provides a hint of the dynamic apophatic realism²⁸ of Divine-human communion.

25 Georges Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius," *Studia Patristica* 4, (1962): 48, 54.

26 *Ibid.*, 56-7.

27 Georges Florovsky, "Creature and Creaturehood," in *Creation and Redemption*, Collected Works (Belmont, Mass: Nordland, 1976), 3:65-6 (a careful examination of part III and IV of Florovsky's "Creature and Creaturehood" will illustrate its relevance to the topic and its relation to the teaching on the divine essence and energies).

28 The term was recently discussed by Haralambos Ventis, *Toward Apophatic Theological Realism: An Orthodox Realistic Critique of Postmodernism with Special Attention to the*

Torrance's concerns, however, go in the opposite direction, stressing the identity of *oikonomia* and *theologia*:

While for Athanasius *economy* and *theology* (*oikonomia* and *theologia*) must be clearly distinguished, they are not to be separated from each other. If the economic or evangelical Trinity and the ontological or theological Trinity were disparate, this would bring into question whether *God himself* was the actual content of his revelation, and whether *God himself* was really in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to himself . . . The economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity overlap with one another and belong to one another, and can no more be separated than the Act of God can be separated from his Being or his Being from his Act. It is in that interrelation between the two that the redemptive significance and evangelical relevance of the Holy Trinity become disclosed.²⁹

What is important here for the present study is that Torrance directly associates the discussion of the distinction/identity of the ontological and economic Trinity to the distinction between Divine essence and energies:

The question must be asked how far the Byzantine elaboration of the distinction between the uncreated energies (*energeiai, dunameis*) and the Being (*ousia*) of God retreats from the Athanasian position as to the real knowability of God, and how far it bars the way in an intelligible movement from the Economic Trinity to the Immanent Trinity.... The Byzantine thesis that all we can say positively of God manifests not his Nature but the things about his Nature³⁰ seems to put a question mark before any doctrine of oneness between the Immanent or Ontological Trinity and the Economic Trinity.³¹

III. Torrance on the Teaching Regarding Divine Essence and Energies

The theological insights of Thomas Torrance can be closely associated with his inspiration from two major theologians: Karl Barth and St. Athanasius of Alexandria. According to Colin Gunton,

Work of George Lindbeck (PhD Diss., Boston University, 2001).

29 Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*, 7–8.

30 This is a reference to John of Damascus' interpretation, *De fide orthodoxa*, 1.4, of Gregory Nazianzen's words in *Oratio* 38.7. Torrance considers this interpretation as inappropriate and misleading.

31 Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 222, 237.

Athanasius served Torrance as a theologian of God's being as Barth served as a theologian of his act (though the greatness of both is that they integrated the two) and it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance for him, in all aspects of his work, of the principle of the *homoousion*.³²

It is against this background that one should examine Torrance's comments about the distinction between Divine essence and energies.

Discussing John of Damascus' use of Athanasius, Torrance points out that "God is so wonderfully and transcendently free in his own eternal Being that he can do something new without changing in his *ousia* and can go outside of himself in the Incarnation without ceasing to be what he is eternally in himself in his own ineffable Being, for his *energeia* inheres in his eternal *ousia*." In Athanasius, the Greek notion of *energeia* was Christianized under the transforming impact of the biblical conception of the creative and providential activity of the living God:

The Athanasian view of God was one in which activity and movement were regarded as intrinsic to his very being as God. God is never without his activity, for his activity and his being are essentially and eternally one. The act of God is not one thing, and his being another, for they coinhere mutually and indivisibly in one another. Hence far from God being inactive in his inner being, it belongs to the essential and eternal nature of his being to move and energise and act.³³

However, according to Torrance, this "is an entirely different conception of God from that which developed in later theology when the *energeia* of God was distinguished from his *ousia*,"³⁴ as, for instance, in the Cappadocians and in St. John of Damascus.

Torrance is fully aware of the evolution of Greek philosophical terminology, in which the "meanings of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, *logos* and *energeia*, underwent a radical change through the use to which they were put in the hermeneutical and theological activity of the Church." In particular he believes that the Nicene *homoousios* marked a significant redefinition of *ousia*:

32 Gunton, "Being and Person: T. F. Torrance's Doctrine of God," 116.

33 Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 74–5. It is worth comparing this last statement to Florovsky's statement that "Not only do we distinguish between 'Being' and 'Will'; but it is not the same thing, even for God, 'to be' and 'to act.'" As we have already seen, for Florovsky "this was the deepest conviction of St. Athanasius": Georges Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius," *Studia Patristica* 4 (1962): 56–7.

34 Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 187–88.

The *homouosios to Patri* was revolutionary and decisive: it expressed the fact that what God is 'toward us' and 'in the midst of us' in and through the Word made flesh, he really is *in himself*; that he is in the *internal relations* of his transcendent being the very same Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that he is in his revealing and saving activity in time and space toward mankind. In precise theological usage *ousia* now refers to being not simply as that which is but to what it is in respect of its internal reality.... If God is in himself what he is in the Person and activity of his incarnate Word and Son, then the being or *ousia* of God must be understood in a very un-Greek way. Applied to God *enousios logos* and *enousios energeia* express the fact that the being of God is not intrinsically empty of word or activity, not mute or static, but is essentially eloquent and dynamic.³⁵

Moreover, Torrance repeatedly points out that "If the Word (*Logos*) and activity (*energeia*) of God manifest in the Gospel are not inherent (*enousioi*) in his eternal being, as Athanasius had insisted, then we cannot relate what God is toward us in his economic self-revelation and self-giving to what he ever is in himself or *vice versa*." However, in Torrance's view, this was precisely "the danger that lurked in the Basilian distinction between the Divine being and the Divine energies, which had the effect of restricting knowledge of God to his Divine energies, and ruling out any real access to knowledge of God in the intrinsic relations of his eternal triune being."³⁶ According to Torrance, the approach of St. Athanasius was quite different:

In speaking of the being or *ousia* of God, Athanasius used the term in its simplest sense as that which *is* and subsists by itself, but allowed that to be changed and transformed by the nature of God. Thus the *ousia* of God as Athanasius understands it is both *being* and *presence*, presence in being, and *being* and *activity*, activity in being, the transcendent Being of God the Creator who is actively, creatively present in all that he has made, upholding it by the Word of his power and by *his* Spirit.³⁷

Here one clearly finds articulated one of Torrance's main concerns with the essence-energies distinction, the introduction of which he blames on St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa. For Torrance, the distinction restricts the knowledge of God to his energies, which are something else than what God is in himself, i.e. not God himself. The distinction therefore rules out any real access

35 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 130-32.

36 *Ibid.*, 335-36.

37 Thomas F. Torrance, "Athanasius: a study in the foundations of classical theology," in Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 182.

to the knowledge of God in the intrinsic relations of his eternal triune being. This opinion of Torrance again goes against some of the key points of Florovsky in his papers "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius"³⁸ and "Creature and Creaturehood,"³⁹ where it is stressed that the Divine essence is God's inherent self-existence and the energies are his relations towards the other:

God *is* Life, and *has* life; *is* Wisdom, and *has* wisdom; and so forth. The first series of expressions refers to the incommunicable essence, the second to the inseparably distinct energies of the one essence, which descend upon creation. None of these energies is hypostatic, nor hypostasis in itself, and their incalculable multiplicity introduces no composition into the Divine Being. The totality of the Divine 'energies' constitutes His pre-temporal will, His design – His good pleasure – concerning the 'other,' His eternal counsel. This is God Himself, not His Essence, but *His will*. The distinction between 'essence' and 'energies' – or, it could be said, between 'nature' and 'grace' [φύσις and χάρις] – corresponds to the mysterious distinction in God between 'necessity' and 'freedom,' understood in a proper sense.⁴⁰

"Translating" the distinction between essence and energies to the distinction between necessity and will could be helpful in identifying the hidden dangers in Torrance's terminology. Although emphasizing the understanding of Divine *ousia* as being and presence, presence in being, and being and activity in the transcendent being of God the Creator who is actively and creatively present in all that he has made, is a wonderful way of expressing the dynamically active nature and presence of God in the world, it could be misinterpreted as referring to the assignment of necessity and homogeneity to the Divine activity in the world. This danger seems to emerge from the predominant emphasis on preserving the Divine unity expressed in Torrance's energetic terminology. This emphasis explains Torrance's focus on the epistemological and soteriological role of the *homoousion*. However, it leaves open the question about the specificity of the Divine activity within the created order. As Florovsky points out:

Out of eternity God sees and wills, by His good pleasure, each and every being in the completeness of its particular destiny and features, even regarding its future and sin . . . 'Christ will behold all the numberless myriads of Saints, turning His glance away from none, so that to each one of them it will seem that He is looking at him, talking with him, and greeting him,' and yet 'while

38 Georges Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius," *Studia Patristica* 4 (1962): 36–57.

39 Florovsky, "Creature and Creaturehood," 43–78.

40 *Ibid.*, 68–9.

remaining unchanged, He will seem different to one and different to another.⁴¹ God, in the counsel of His good pleasure, beholds all the innumerable myriads of created hypostases, wills them, and to each one of them manifests Himself in a different way. And herein consists the 'inseparable distribution' of His grace or energy, 'myriadfold hypostatic' in the bold phrase of St. Gregory Palamas, because this grace or energy is beneficently imparted to thousands upon myriads of thousands of hypostases. Each hypostasis, in its own being and existence, is sealed by a particular ray of the good pleasure of God's love and will. And in this sense, all things are in God – in 'image' *but not by nature*, the created 'all' being infinitely remote from Uncreated Nature.⁴²

In this paragraph one may sense the advantage of the essence-energy distinction in providing a more subtle picture of Divine-human communion.

As we have seen, Torrance's main objection to the essence-energies distinction is that it appears to suggest that "we cannot know God through the immediate activity of his Being, or according to what he is in himself, but only through mediating forces emanating from him, and not according to what he is in himself."⁴³ However, drawing on Florovsky's subtle reading of Athanasius and other Greek Fathers – a reading to which Torrance himself appeals as authoritative – we can also see that Torrance's reading is not quite satisfactory or accurate on this point. To repeat Florovsky's unpacking of the essence-energies distinction: "The life-giving acts of God in the world *are God Himself* – an assertion which precludes separation but does not abolish distinction."⁴⁴

Remarkably, Torrance suggested that the specific use of the "Basilian" distinction between essence and energies by Sts. Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus and Gregory Palamas had the effect of introducing into Byzantine theology a "damaging dualism of an Augustinian kind."⁴⁵ This is a serious and very unfortunate (and un-historical) claim, which only demonstrates that Torrance did not have the chance to seriously engage with later Byzantine thought articulated, for example, in the dogmatic formulations of the 5th, 6th and 7th ecumenical councils. Unfortunately, by keeping himself so restrictively to the theological legacy of Sts. Athanasius and Cyril, he framed himself within pre-Chalcedonian terminology, missing the opportunity to enjoy the subtleties

41 Here Florovsky refers to St. Symeon the New Theologian.

42 Florovsky, "Creature and Creaturehood," 72–3.

43 Thomas F. Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity in Gregory Nazianzen and John Calvin," in *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1994), 38.

44 Florovsky, "Creature and Creaturehood," 65–6.

45 *Ibid.*, 38.

of its later theological refinement in the works of Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus and Gregory Palamas. Undoubtedly, there were understandable reasons for this, since his main audience consisted of fellow Reformed Christians, and he may have used his interaction with the Orthodox Church as a way for the careful initiation of a respectful and very much needed renewal of his own tradition.⁴⁶ Perhaps it was some awareness of this limitation that allowed him on occasion to be soberly insightful about the value of the Orthodox teaching on the Divine essence and energies, as in one place he admits, reflecting a more accurate understanding:

Yet Orthodox theology does not rest content merely with an Economic Trinity, for the uncreated energies through and in which God makes himself known to us are proper to and inseparable from the Divine Being who nevertheless remains unapproachable and unknowable in his innermost essence. The distinction is intended to reject any surrender of God's transcendence, while maintaining an ontic relation between God's economic self-revelation and what he is inherently in himself . . . It is the essence of the Being (or Essence) of God that we can never know, but in *God* the Son and in *God* the Spirit we really are given to know God in his Being or *Ousia*, for in them God really reveals *himself through himself*.⁴⁷

IV. A Science and Theology Interlude

One of the most popular and passionate themes in Torrance's works is related to theological importance of the relational understanding of space. Why is the relational notion of space so important for Torrance? The reason is that, according to him, the Newtonian understanding of space as static and absolute would shut God out of the world in a way that he could not enter into any relation with his creation. For Torrance, therefore, the discussion of the relational character of space has a definite epistemological import, since it is related to his understanding of Divine activity as a way for God to manifest himself and act in the world. "If we are really to have knowledge of God we must be given a point of access to him which is both in God himself and in our creaturely existence."⁴⁸ The actuality and the reality of the presence of the incarnate God in space and time enabled the Fathers of the Church to develop relational conceptions of

46 An idea suggested in private conversation with Fr. George D. Dragas, one of the Orthodox students of Thomas Torrance.

47 Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 222, 237.

48 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 52-3.

space and time applying them in different ways to God and to created beings: "to God in one way in accordance with his transcendent nature, and to creaturely beings in another way in accordance with their contingent natures."⁴⁹ The Church Fathers therefore were "able to relate the being and activity of the Son of God to bodily place (*topos*) when he entered into our human space (*hora*) and became man, without leaving God's 'place' and without leaving the universe empty of his presence and rule."⁵⁰ Space is regarded here within the context of the creative and redemptive activity of God in Christ; this is not the conception of space understood as infinite receptacle or as infinite substance. There emerges a concept of space in terms of the relations between God and the physical universe established in creation and incarnation: "Space in this formulation is a sort of differential concept that is essentially open-ended, for it is defined in accordance with the interaction between God and man."⁵¹

For Torrance, however, the emergence of the relational understanding of space was not without problems and difficulties. Torrance comments:

The rise of these difficulties is particularly clear in the thought of John of Damascus, with whom the two poles in the Nicene concept of space began to draw apart. On the one hand, he appropriated fully the Aristotelian conception . . . which tended to give his notion of place or space a closed or rigid character; on the other hand, however, in order to balance this he had both to develop a concept of 'mental place' and to carry his theology much further in an apophatic direction than Athanasius could go, even to claiming, like Basilides, that we cannot know what God is but only what he is not.⁵²

One can see again that for Torrance the main issue here is epistemological, and the specific understanding of space entails a specific understanding of the nature of the relation between God and the world.

In Torrance's view, "the Nicene conceptions of space and time have proved more fruitful and adaptable, and certainly have a much closer relation to more modern notions of space and time."⁵³ For him the relational view of space adopted by the early Church anticipated the later emergence of the view of space expressed in the field theory introduced by James Clark Maxwell and in Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.⁵⁴ The new scientific understanding of space-time has

49 Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 104.

50 Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 371.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., 372–73.

53 Ibid.

54 Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press,

emerged as an alternative to Newtonian physics by providing a new ontological status of space-time. Newton made the successful hypothesis that space and time are fixed structured background entities underlying material reality, which participate in governing the motion of physical objects. What Einstein discovered is that Newton had mistaken a physical field for a background entity.⁵⁵ The two entities hypostatized by Newton, space and time, could be actually considered as a particular local configuration of a physical entity – the gravitational field. Einstein’s discovery was that Newtonian space and time and the gravitational field were the same entity. To emphasize the relational aspect of space-time one may express the meaning of Einstein’s discovery in a radical way by saying that “there are no space and time: there are only dynamical objects. The world is made by dynamical fields. These do not live in, or on, space-time: they form and exhaust reality.”⁵⁶

It is a fact that Torrance was a great admirer of the scientific contributions of James Clark Maxwell and Albert Einstein. This fact is quite revealing since it illustrates Torrance’s preferences for a relatively narrow spectrum of ideas within modern physics. However, according to John Polkinghorne, although Maxwell and Einstein are among the greatest scientists ever and definitely deserve their status as scientific heroes of Torrance, they are “the last of the ancients rather than the first of the moderns.”⁵⁷ For Polkinghorne it is quite unfortunate that Torrance did not engage more seriously with the developments of quantum mechanics, which has developed a more subtle sense of reality. Torrance’s appreciation of Einstein led him to stay on the same front with him in the debate concerning the possibility of a realist interpretation of quantum mechanics, a fact that evidently prevented Torrance from engaging in further dialogue with modern quantum physicists, especially with those who do not adhere to Einstein’s interpretation.⁵⁸ For example, Torrance expressed multiple times his distrust of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics and specifically of the epistemology of Niels Bohr. According to him, there were “difficulties which we still have with quantum theory, particularly as it stems from Bohr, Heisenberg, and Born, which may be

1969), 57–9.

55 Carlo Rovelli, “The Disappearance of Space and Time,” in *The Ontology of Spacetime*, Philosophy and Foundations of Physics Series, ed. Dennis Dieks and Miklos Redei (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 1:25-36.

56 Ibid.

57 John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 80.

58 Tapio Luoma, *Incarnation and Physics: Natural Science in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67.

traced, in part at least, to Kantian presuppositions."⁵⁹ He also points out that there is a tension that arises between critical realism and the epistemological presuppositions latent in the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum theory.⁶⁰ According to Tapio Luoma, "the primary reason for Torrance's reluctance to the widely accepted Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics lies precisely in his view of realism."⁶¹ The particular feature in Torrance's thought that makes it incompatible with the Copenhagen interpretation of the behavior of elementary particles is associated with the problem concerning the real objective existence of the physical entities observed in quantum mechanical experiments. In Torrance's view the standard interpretation of quantum mechanics remains agnostic with regard to the existence of an objective reality independently of the observer. This view is not unique to Torrance. For example, according to Fr. Stanley Jaki – a Roman Catholic priest and theologian whose ideas Torrance respected very much:⁶²

The possibility for Bohr consisted in restricting discourse to *aspects* of reality while barring questions about reality itself, and especially about its objective existence. In Bohr's case this was all the more laden with further problems because the *aspects* in question were more opposite, nay mutually exclusive, than merely distinct. He tried to hold them together by offering the idea of complementarity. These aspects could *really* complement one another only if they inhered in a deeper reality, about which Bohr could only be agnostic. A harmony of relations or aspects, complementing one another, such was Bohr's epistemological message, a message void of reference to the ontological reality of anything harmonious. About the entity which embodied the harmony of relations he was not permitted by his own premises to make any claim and he carefully avoided doing so.⁶³

Unfortunately, the views of both Torrance and Jaki seem to be the result of a mere misunderstanding of Bohr's position. Bohr made a clear distinction between the unique identity of a quantum object and the specific complementary ways

59 Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), 75.

60 Thomas F. Torrance, *Preaching Christ Today: The Gospel and Scientific Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 41.

61 Luoma, *Incarnation and Physics*, 67–8.

62 I am grateful to Fr. Prof. George Dragas from the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA, who pointed out to me Torrance's admiration for the works and ideas of Fr. Stanley Jaki.

63 Stanley L. Jaki, "The Horns of Complementarity," in *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978).

of its *energetic manifestation*. This distinction is crucial for Bohr in emphasizing the reality of the quantum world while at the same time accepting that it does not make sense to speak about its "being in a certain way" independent of the interaction with a specific experimental arrangement. Such a view does not conform to the classical understanding of realism; it adopts a more subtle way of looking at reality allowing for a self-subsisting object to manifest mutually exclusive (or complementary) types of natural properties depending on the specific circumstances of the interaction between the observer and the object.

How can we explain this misunderstanding of Bohr's ideas? One might point out two different reasons. The first one is the fact that both Torrance and Jaki formed their opinions before some of the most recent decisive experiments in quantum physics which proved the inconsistency of their suspicions about Bohr's epistemological viewpoint.⁶⁴ The latest developments in quantum physics suggest that:

we can no longer assume that the properties we measure necessarily reflect or represent the properties of the particles as they really are. As Heisenberg had argued, "we have to remember that what we observe is not nature in itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning." This does not mean that quantum particles are not real. What it does mean is that we can ascribe to them only an *empirical* reality.⁶⁵

According to Christos Yannaras, in quantum physics it became evident that the result of the observation of the micro-world is connected with the specific type of instruments, and also with the specific method of observation and description.⁶⁶ The specific model that could be used to describe a physical system depends on the observer and the nature of the apparatus it is interacting with. Our perception of reality can change in accordance with our instruments or our method of observation; conversely, observed reality can be transformed by the fact of observing it. "What this means is that the nature of existing reality is not independent of human action, yet the answer nature gives us as the result of the individual measurement is random. The result is beyond our control, which indicates an independent physical reality."⁶⁷

64 S. Groblacher, T. Paterek, R. Kaltenbaek, C. Brukner, M. Zukowski, M. Aspelmeyer, A. Zeilinger, "An Experimental Test of Non-Local Realism," *Nature* 446 (April 2007): 871.

65 Jim Baggott, *The Quantum Story: a History in 40 Moments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 356.

66 Christos Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, trans. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), 90–3.

67 Anton Zeilinger, "Quantum Physics: Ontology or Epistemology?," in *Trinity and an*

The second reason for Torrance's misunderstanding of Bohr's realist position is the lack of a proper understanding of the concept of hypostasis. It was already pointed out that Torrance had an unwarranted preoccupation with the danger of a potential disjunction between person/hypostasis and act/agency as if hypostatic acts and activity may exist independently of a specific hypostasis. This preoccupation seems to have been the source of Torrance's sense of dualism in relation to both the teaching on the distinction between essence and energies and Bohr's interpretation of quantum mechanics. It is true that Bohr did not use a well formed terminology allowing him to better articulate the inherent relationship between quantum entities and their specific natural manifestations. However, one may definitely see his struggle with the lack of such terminology. Just as an example, at one place he pointed out:

Information regarding the behavior of an atomic object obtained under definite experimental conditions may . . . be adequately characterized as complementary to any information *about the same object* obtained by some other experimental arrangements excluding the fulfillment of the first conditions. Although such kinds of information cannot be combined into a single picture by means of ordinary concepts, they represent indeed equally essential aspects of any knowledge *of the object in question* which can be obtained in this domain.⁶⁸

Here "*the same object*" and "*the object in question*" refer exactly to the quantum entity which triggers its specific natural manifestations during a specific quantum mechanical experiment. Werner Heisenberg noted several times that Bohr did not have a problem with language but was in the process of inventing a new one. In this process he "tried to keep the words and the pictures without keeping the meanings of the words and of the pictures, having been from his youth interested in the limitation of our way of expression, the limitation of words, the problem of talking about things when one knows that the words do not really get hold of the things."⁶⁹

It is quite interesting that Torrance, who had developed a great sensitivity for the ways of using of language in theology and physics, did not show any empathy towards Bohr's efforts to develop a proper language in articulating the subtlety of quantum mechanical realism. On the other hand, the potential for a mutual

Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 38–9.

68 Niels Bohr, "Natural philosophy and human cultures," in *Essays 1932-1957 on Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge*, The Philosophical Writings of Niels Bohr (New York: Wiley, 1958), 2:23–31.

69 Ibid.

terminological enrichment between theology and quantum mechanics has been already discussed within the context of Orthodox theology. For example, Christos Yannaras points out that when we speak of relations in quantum mechanics, we do not refer to predictable correlations, but rather "to a mode of correlation, referentiality, and coordination which has the character of the unpredictable, of the probable, of the possible, and which could be compared only with the dynamic freedom of interpersonal human relations."⁷⁰ This is a key point suggesting that we may actually get closer to a better understanding of quantum phenomena if we describe quantum entities in terms of the theological terminology of essence, nature, hypostasis, and energy.⁷¹ The basis for this claim is the fact that, by distinguishing essence or nature from person or hypostasis as well as the energies both from the nature and from the hypostasis, the theology of the Eastern Church has adopted a terminology that is very helpful in interpreting the reality of existence, the appearance, and disclosure of being.⁷²

What is, however, even more interesting is that Yannaras provides a theological interpretation of space by using the concept of energy within the context of a relational understanding of person (*prosopon*): "we recognize space as the accommodation of personal reference, as a fact of relation."⁷³ The external view of personal relations objectifies space as the distance between the two terms of the relation and establishes distance as the basis for the measurement of space. The objectification of physical reality, however, does not negate the experience of space in terms of interpersonal relation. The ecstatic reference of the person is a fact that transcends the categories of measurable space. According to Yannaras, the second term of a personal relation may be here or elsewhere, present or absent, but is always referring to the same non-dimensional space of personal reference. "The power of personal relations negates the measurable dimensions of here and there, of nearer and farther, and points to both presence and absence as the experience of non-dimensional nearness."⁷⁴ The Byzantine theologians saw in personal energy the non-dimensional place both of the human person and of the Person of God. He refers specifically to John of Damascus (whose

70 Christos Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, trans. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), 93.

71 Stoyan Tanev, "The language of Orthodox theology & quantum mechanics: St Gregory Palamas and Niels Bohr" (Thessaloniki: n.p., forthcoming).

72 Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith, an Introduction to Orthodox Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 43.

73 This section follows very closely the insights in: Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros* (Brookline, Mass: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 105.

74 *Ibid.*, 107.

understanding of space Torrance considered as problematic), who defined the space of God's disclosure of his personal energy as the place of God: "What is called the place of God is where his energy becomes manifest."⁷⁵ This is a statement that provides a link between the relational understanding of space in John of Damascus and modern physics where space and time are considered as a result of the presence of matter and energy. For Yannaras, God's personal energy becomes manifest primarily in the space of cosmic reality and the world is revealed to humanity as the non-dimensional place of Divine personal energy. Cosmic space acquires its meaning only as a Divine place. It is then not measured as conventional distance from humanity or as the interval between objects. The cosmos accommodates or gives space to the mutual relation between God and humanity. Humanity discovers the accessibility of God in the fact of the reality of the world, without this accessibility removing the *natural* distance of God from the world, the distance separating uncreated from created nature. The closeness of humanity to God within the context of the world is not natural but *personal* – a closeness defined by a relationship. In this sense, one could say that it is not the world that accommodates God or his personal energy, but the Divine will and energy which accommodates or gives space to the world, a space outside God which is simultaneously God's place, the disclosure of the non-dimensional immediacy of his personal energy. The distinction between the nature and the energies of God, without denying the reality of the natural distance of God from the world, preserves the world as a space of the immediate personal nearness of God and manifests God as the place of the universe: "For God is not contained, but is himself the place of all."⁷⁶

The theological understanding of space suggested by Christos Yannaras provides an example of an alternative approach to the encounter between theology and physics. Yannaras develops a comprehensive theological perspective of the world by borrowing ideas from both Albert Einstein (general relativity) and Niels Bohr (quantum mechanics) in combination with a genuinely personal understanding of Divine-human communion which includes the distinction between Divine essence and energies. The comparison of Yannaras' and Torrance's approaches provides an opportunity to demonstrate the correlation between their preoccupations with specific themes in modern physics and their specific theological insights. Thomas Torrance has clearly neglected the epistemological insights emerging from the advances of quantum mechanics in the 20th century and has ended up with neglecting the value of the Orthodox teaching on the distinction between

75 John of Damascus, *An exact exposition of the Orthodox faith*, 1.13.

76 Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus*, 2.3: What has become of the gods?

Divine essence and energies. This neglect seems to be also associated with an underdeveloped understanding of *person/prosopon/hypostasis*. The overall result is the appearance of statements that contradict the apophatic character of the distinction between Divine essence and energies and the subtlety of the apophatic realism of Divine-human communion.

V. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to review and discuss Thomas Torrance's interpretation of the Orthodox teaching on the distinction between Divine essence and energies. As a way of conclusion one could make two final points:

First, some of Torrance's main concerns are associated with: (i) the danger of falling into dualistic divisions between what God is in himself and what he is towards us, and (ii) the danger of an understanding of the Trinitarian Monarchy on the basis of the Person of the Father as compared to a Monarchy of the Trinity based on the unity of the Divine essence and agency. Torrance does not accept any ontological ordering within the Trinity starting with the Person of the Father and considers such teaching to be correlated with the distinction between essence and energies. This is one of the reasons for him to be suspicious in his interpretation of the teachings of St. Basil concerning the Divine unity and the possibility to know God through the Divine energies. There are two interesting "moments" in this approach. The first is that it goes directly against the theology of one of the major Orthodox theologians alive today – Metropolitan John Zizioulas.⁷⁷ What is even more interesting, however, is that Metropolitan John is himself also quite suspicious about the teaching on the distinction between essence and energies and its role in Orthodox theology in particular.⁷⁸ The discrepancy between the two theologians could be (schematically) expressed in terms of their different understanding of the ontological sources of Divine energy or activity. If Divine activity is grounded in the being and essence of God as tri-unity (Torrance), the Divine monarchy cannot be other but Trinitarian and *perichoretic*; on the other hand, if the Divine activity, will and love are grounded in the person or hypostasis (Zizioulas), the Divine monarchy requires a single hypostasis – the hypostasis of the Father, as a guarantee of the Divine unity.

77 See for example the relevant sections in John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. P. McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

78 Ibid. See for example the theological context of all the references to St. Gregory Palamas.

The second “moment” is that Torrance’s approach has some interesting similarities with the theological synthesis of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, for whom the unity of the Trinity is both essential and personal. The essential unity is based on the common *ousia* which is not seen as a separate reality or in separation from the Divine persons. The personal unity is based on the inter-subjectivity of the Persons in their coinherence or *perichoresis*. Interestingly, however, Fr. Dumitru is one of the few Orthodox theologians who have systematically employed the teaching on the distinction between Divine essence and energies to provide probably the most comprehensive synthesis in Orthodox theology today. There have already been some good attempts at a systematic comparison of the theological approaches of Zizioulas and Stăniloae.⁷⁹ It would be quite relevant for future studies to concentrate on a more comprehensive comparison of the Trinitarian theologies of Torrance and Stăniloae.

Second, although Torrance has clearly vocalized his concerns with some key Orthodox theological teachings, his theology has been perceived quite sympathetically by contemporary Orthodox theologians. Without any doubt there will be more studies focusing on exploring his theological contributions. One of the subjects of such explorations should focus on Torrance’s approach to the interplay between theology and science (see for example the paper by Fr. Alexei Nesteruk included in this special issue). At the same time, the discussion of his specifically theological positions, including his critique of the distinction between Divine essence and energies, should be considered as a fruitful resource in some of the ongoing Orthodox theological discussions.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Matthew Baker for the multiple fruitful discussions. His editorial suggestions to me were not only helpful but also insightfully encouraging.

79 Calinic Berger, “Does the Eucharist make the Church? An Ecclesiological Comparison of Stăniloae and Zizioulas,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 51 (2007): 23–70; Kevin Berger, *Towards a Theological Gnoseology: The Synthesis of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae* (PhD Diss., Washington: Catholic University of America, 2003); Tanev, *The Theology of the Divine Energies in 20th Century Orthodox Thought*, PhD thesis, University of Sofia, 2012 (in Bulgarian).