

THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN T. F. TORRANCE AND GEORGES FLOROVSKY (1950-1973)

Matthew Baker, MDiv, ThM, PhD (cand.)

Fordham University

matthew.j.baker77@gmail.com

Abstract: *This article introduces the correspondence between Georges Florovsky (1893–1979) and Thomas F. Torrance (1913–2007). The correspondence spans the years between 1950 and 1973, and includes 15 letters between Torrance and Florovsky, as well as one letter of Florovsky to Oliver Tomkins, and an appended commentary of Florovsky concerning an ecumenical draft of Torrance from 1953. The letters reflect the two theologians’ cooperation and dialogue within the Faith and Order movement as well as their continued intellectual friendship. Several themes predominate: eschatology, the Eucharist, and the Church; Christian disunity and (inter)communion; and space, time, and created contingency. While the correspondence bears witness to crucial disagreements between Florovsky and Torrance regarding the historic unity of the Church, apostolic succession, and the nature and means of overcoming Christian disunity, a certain agreement regarding Christocentrism in ecclesiology, and on creation and contingency, as well as a common love of the Greek Fathers, is evident between them.*

The intellectual friendship between Thomas F. Torrance, sometimes regarded as the major British theologian of the 20th century, and Georges Florovsky, often called the leading Orthodox theologian of the same period, is of interest both for an understanding of the respective work of both theologians as well as for the glimpse it provides into the ecumenical dialogue between Orthodoxy and Protestant theology, particularly of the so-called “Barthian” or “neo-orthodox” variety, in the last century. The present publication introduces fifteen letters between Torrance and Florovsky written between the years 1950 to 1973, plus a letter of Florovsky to Oliver Tomkins and an appended commentary by Florovsky relating to an ecumenical proposal of Torrance.



It is uncertain when exactly Georges Florovsky and Thomas Torrance first met. The correspondence here begins in January 1950, but seems to indicate a friendship already well-established beforehand. Father Georges Florovsky was at this time Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York and already an international name, both in Orthodox theology and in the ecumenical movement. T. F. Torrance, then thirty-six years old and twenty years junior to Florovsky, was at this time still a relatively unknown parish minister, but one who had already behind him a period of study with Karl Barth, experience as a chaplain during World War II, as well as two published books, and was about to take up a post as professor of Church History at New College, Edinburgh.

The letters give a window into the dominant concerns of both theologians during this period, in particular as relating to their dialogue within Faith and Order. At the heart of this discussion was ecclesiology and communion, particularly in light of Christian disunity and the ecumenical imperative. Torrance's first letters to Florovsky reflect the focus on eschatology, particularly in relation to the doctrine of the Church, found also in his publications of this period: his parish homilies on the book of Revelation, later published as *The Apocalypse Today* (1959), his book on the eschatology of the Reformers, *Kingdom and Church* (1956), and his volume of sermons, *When Christ Comes and Comes Again* (1957).¹ In fact, the apocalyptic note, while less evident in Torrance's later work, was somewhat characteristic of theology in general within Faith and Order in this period.

A certain eschatological emphasis and, at times, an apocalyptic tone can be found in Florovsky's lectures of this time as well.² In an article on the preparatory documents for the Amsterdam Assembly, published in 1949, Torrance had himself praised Florovsky's "eschatological conception of the Church."³ Florovsky

1 For a study of Torrance's eschatology of this period, see Stanley S. MacLean, *Resurrection, Apocalypse, and the Kingdom of Christ: The Eschatology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

2 See, for instance, Florovsky's Amsterdam speech, "Determinations and Distinctions: Ecumenical Aims and Doubts," *Sobornost*, 4, series 3 (Winter 1948): 126–32, and his sermon, "Consider Your Ways (Haggai 1:4–7): An Orthodox Sermon on the Evanston Theme," *The Pulpit* 25, no. 6 (June 1954): 5–7. It is unfortunate that Florovsky never produced the article on history and eschatology that Torrance repeatedly requested from him in the letters below for *Scottish Journal of Theology*; a fine example of his thinking on eschatology can be found in his essay (originally written for a *Festschrift* for Emil Brunner) "The Last Things and the Last Events," in Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption* (Belmont, MA.: Nordland Press, 1976), 243–65.

3 Torrance, "Concerning Amsterdam. I. The Nature and Mission of the Church; a discussion of volumes I and II of the Preparatory Studies," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 2 (1949): 241–70, reprinted in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, *Order and Disorder* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 195–225.

and Torrance concur strongly in understanding the Church as the Body of Christ, understood in Eucharistic and eschatological terms. Both, too, agree in identifying Jesus Christ as the “sole priest” of all sacramental action in the Church. Yet – to strike a note often sounded by Florovsky as well as by Barth in their ecumenical dicta – it is precisely through this agreement that serious *disagreements* between Florovsky and Torrance become manifest.

These disagreements concerned particularly the respective understanding of eschatology and its relationship to the Church in history. Torrance, while affirming Church order – even episcopate – as of the *esse* (not just *bene esse*) of the Church as Body of Christ, understood the relationship between eschatology and historic church order largely in terms of a *negative dialectic*.⁴ The kingdom of God pronounces a judgment on all claims of history, including those of historic priestly succession. Given that the Eucharist itself is an in-breaking and a foretaste of this coming kingdom, the Lord’s Supper thus relativizes all historical claims to apostolic succession as constitutive of the Church and a litmus test for ecclesial communion.

In contrast, Florovsky understood the Church *in via* as being herself a “proleptic eschatology” constituted in the sacraments. In Florovsky’s emphasis, history and eschatology should never be simply opposed in negative dialectic. The history of the Church *zwischen den Zeiten* is no mere waiting room. Something is being built up which, though presently veiled, is a real and positive anticipation of the kingdom to come, and which will endure beyond its threshold. Through the historic episcopate, each local church is inserted into the eschatological community of the Twelve and the Jerusalem Church, the reconstituted Israel. “Eschatological” here means primarily “permanent,” “once and for all,” and can

4 For evidence of this, see especially the appendix of lectures dealing with eschatology in Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove: IVP/Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008). Torrance’s early views on Church order can be found especially in the volumes *Royal Priesthood*. *Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers*, No. 3 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955) and *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, *Order and Disorder* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959); *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 2, *The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960) (republished by Wipf and Stock in 2 volumes in 1996), and in the essays collected in Jock Stein, ed., *Gospel, Church and Ministry* (Eugene, OR.: Pickwick Publications, 2012). In his later work, what I have called the “negative dialectic” of relationship between eschatology and historic Church order fades considerably, and is displaced by a new emphasis – drawn in great part from Torrance’s reading of Irenaeus – on the “embodied” character of the Gospel in the apostolic order of the Church: see, for instance, “The Trinitarian Foundation and Character of Faith and Authority in the Church,” in Torrance, ed., *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), 79–120.

in no wise be set in opposition to the “historical.” Apostolic succession and church order are therefore no “merely” historical principle, but a charismatic reality, a continuation of Pentecost and an anticipation of the last things.⁵ *Some* kind of objective unity still exists among Christians ecclesially divided – an objective unity, uniting all who confess Christ as God and Savior. Yet no “intercommunion” is possible between divided bodies. Communion is possible only on two conditions: full agreement in the complete faith of the Ecumenical Councils and a sharing in the historic apostolic and catholic Church order. For Protestantism, this requires an act of reintegration and restoration, as the Reformation marked a definite departure from historic priesthood.⁶

Together with Anders Nygren and Edmund Schlink, Torrance and Florovsky were instrumental in persuading the Faith and Order assembly at Lund in 1952 to establish a special theological commission on Christ and his Church.⁷ Three items from Florovsky published below (numbers 12, 13, and 14) concern the draft of a paper that Torrance was asked to write for a sub-committee of this commission. Florovsky was asked to write a critique of Torrance’s draft and Oliver Tomkins was to revise and reduce it, in order that the paper might then be used as the working paper for the Faith and Order section at the 1954 Evanston Assembly. Torrance later published the paper in his volume *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, *Order and Disorder* as “Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity

5 Florovsky’s criticisms of Torrance’s eschatology and its impact on ecclesiology in this period would have likely been similar to his criticisms of Barth, with whom a crucial disagreement (as acknowledged on both sides) concerned eschatology; for discussion of this, see my “‘*Offenbarung, Philosophie, und Theologie*’: Karl Barth and Georges Florovsky in Dialogue,” in *Karl Barth in Dialogue: Encounters with Major Figures*, ed. George Hunsinger (Eerdmans, forthcoming).

6 For a summary of Florovsky’s ecumenical views, see Matthew Baker and Seraphim Danckaert, “Georges Florovsky,” in *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism: Resources for Christian Education*, ed. P. Kalaitzidis, T. FitzGerald, C. Hovorun, Aik. Pekridou, N. Asproulis, G. Liagre, D. Werner (Volos: Volos Publications in partnership with Regnum, 2013), 209–213. A historical overview of Florovsky’s ecumenical activities can be found in Andrew Blane, ed., *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual, Orthodox Churchman* (Crestwood, NY.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993); readers interested in Florovsky’s ecclesiology should refer to the bibliography found in the back of that volume. For a study of Florovsky against his Russian background, see Paul Gavriilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). A full bibliography of literature on Florovsky can be found in Matthew Baker, “Bibliography of Literature on the Life and Thought of Father Georges Florovsky,” *Transactions of the Association of Russian-American Scholars in the U.S.A.*, 37 (2011–2012), 473–546.

7 Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999,) 97.

as Churches.”⁸ In his response, Florovsky is concerned to underscore the reality of Christian divisions as rooted, not simply in a loss of charity, but in real disagreements about the truth – disagreements maintained in good faith, and for which no “repentance” alone will suffice in healing. Not least among these disagreements is the conflict concerning the very significance of historic Church structures. Florovsky opposes Torrance’s call for theological latitude regarding Eucharistic doctrine, as well as Torrance’s tendency to negate historic claims by reference to “eschatology.” Stating his own characteristic emphasis, Florovsky underscores that “‘Eschatology’ in the Church is mediated through History and her ‘structures.’” The ecumenical task and the cause of truth could not be helped in the long run by hasty common measures that paper over what are in reality serious and unresolved disagreements regarding the very nature of the Church as founded in the will of her Head and Lord.

As is evident from his response to Torrance’s ecumenical draft, a great part of the thrust of Florovsky’s ecumenical work during this period lay simply in his attempt to convince his Protestant interlocutors to take seriously the importance of the historic doctrinal disagreements that stood behind Christian divisions. It was typical of Florovsky to stress the need for “ecumenical patience,” and for greater “molecular work” in common theological study. It is interesting that in attempting to illustrate the difficulty of this ecumenical task in which every apparent agreement even in basic matters only reveals a hidden disagreement (thus making the approach of doctrinal minimalism futile), Florovsky named his relations with Torrance as an example. Speaking of the doctrinal minimalism and historical relativism of the ecumenical proposals of his Russian colleague Lev Zander’s *Vision and Action* in an unpublished talk from 1955, Florovsky said:

here begins probably a very terrible experience. You may say sometimes it is a confusing embarrassing experience. You do everything that Professor Zander wants you to. You discover – excuse me for using just the name – Tom Torrance is an awfully nice fellow, but unfortunately he is a Calvinist. I might love him as a man, and then we have a terrible row. He is a very close friend of mine, but twenty years younger, and an excellent theologian. We know each other as brothers and yet we disagree; this is a real experience. We agree at a certain point, well then we cannot agree. The point is, one may say, that because I was educated in Russia and he was educated in Scotland . . . this would be fatalism and probably all the circumstances had some importance, but there is something else.⁹

⁸ See Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, *Order and Disorder* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 263–83.

⁹ Typescript of an audio lecture, “The Vision of Unity,” p. 24, Carton 3, folder 1, 1955,

Florovsky's disagreements with Torrance were not limited to matters of eschatology and Church order. At a Faith and Order Commission meeting at Davos, Switzerland in July 1955, Florovsky challenged Torrance's teaching regarding Christ's assumption of "fallen human nature."¹⁰ Indeed, it may have been precisely this disagreement that Florovsky had in mind in his above comments referencing Torrance's "Calvinism." The two found reason to agree emphatically, however, on the need for a Christocentric doctrine of the Church and pneumatology, and on the need to guard against the modern tendency to "de-christologize" ecclesiology, as manifested especially in various Romantic, Slavophile, and Neo-Protestant theologies taking their starting point in a pneumatology rooted in notions of religious self-consciousness or "community."¹¹

Apparently, no correspondence between Florovsky and Torrance from the 1960's now survives. It is certain, however, that the two were in contact at least during the beginning of that decade. The Special Commission on Christ and his Church appointed at Lund in 1952 lasted ten years. And with Florovsky's interventions, a Faith and Order patristics study group was established, choosing the *Ad Serapionem* of St. Athanasius and the *De Spiritu Sancto* of St. Basil as its study texts.¹² This group met in Paris in March 1962.¹³ It seems that Torrance's important paper, "Spiritus Creator: A Consideration of the Teaching of St Athanasius and St Basil," grew out of this study.¹⁴

While there is little to gauge the possible influence of Torrance's thinking over Florovsky (whose basic thinking was already well established before the two met), there is plenty to suggest that Florovsky's influence and example were important for Torrance. Torrance's student, longstanding friend, and collaborator

Princeton University Firestone Library Rare Books and Archives.

10 *Commission on Faith and Order. Minutes of the Working Committee, July 1955, Davos Switzerland* (WCC). For my comments on this debate, see Matthew Baker, "The Place of St. Irenaeus of Lyons in Historical and Dogmatic Theology According to T. F. Torrance," *Participatio: The Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* 2 (2010): 5-43.

11 *Commission on Faith and Order: Minutes, Commission and Working Committee*, no. 17 (1955), 18. For discussion, see Matthew Baker, "The Eternal 'Spirit of the Son': Barth, Florovsky and Torrance on the *Filioque*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (Oct 2010): 382-403.

12 A note found in the Florovsky archive at St Vladimir's Seminary seems to suggest that it was Florovsky who determined this choice of texts.

13 See *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, vol. 2, 1948-1968, ed. Harold E. Fey (London: SPCK, 1970), 160.

14 Published in Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 209-28. Again, see my "Eternal Spirit of the Son."

Father George Dragas has recalled how Torrance once remarked to him that Florovsky was one of the few who could force him to reconsider his position on a given theological point.¹⁵ Such a change of mind is certainly evident in Torrance's view of the Greek patristic teaching on *theosis*. In the first letter of Torrance reproduced below, written in Jan. 1950, Torrance registers his rejection of the doctrine of *theosis* as "un-Hebraic and un-biblical."¹⁶ By 1964, however, he would address the World Alliance of Reformed Churches with a plea "for a reconsideration by the Reformed Church of what the Greek Fathers called *theosis*."¹⁷ In his 1970 lecture "The Relevance of Orthodoxy," Torrance described *theosis* as the experience of "our participation in the Holy Spirit, in which we come under the direct impact of God's uncreated energies in all their holiness and majesty, and are sanctified and renewed by them ... God Himself acting upon us personally and creatively."¹⁸ It was surely no coincidence that in this same published sermon, when remarking on how ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox had often led him to reconsider his Reformed presuppositions in his reading of the Bible, Torrance stressed the crucial influence of Florovsky in particular.¹⁹ He would later cite Florovsky's essay on "St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers" approvingly for its understanding of *theosis* in terms of "personal encounter."²⁰

Although increasingly critical of the direction of the WCC from the late 1950's onward, Florovsky continued to be involved directly all through the 60's, his last participation being at the 1971 Louvain Assembly of Faith and Order. Torrance, however, had little such direct involvement after the early 1960's in official events of Faith and Order or the World Council of Churches, where he would have been afforded contact with Florovsky. In 1964, Florovsky moved to Princeton, where he would spend the remainder of his life researching and teaching at both Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1971, Torrance

15 Remarkably, Dragas recounts also how, when he first met Florovsky in Princeton in 1971, Florovsky said a similar thing about Torrance.

16 Torrance echoes here the Harnackian view of theosis put forward in his dissertation, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (1948 reprint: Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 140n3: "The idea of deification was taken up even by such good theologians as Irenaeus and Athanasius. Nothing could be more characteristically Hellenistic."

17 T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Eerdmans, 1975), 243; cf. 214.

18 T. F. Torrance, *The Relevance of Orthodoxy*, edited with Introduction by John B. Logan (Stirling: The Drummond Press, for The Fellowship of St. Andrew, 1970).

19 Ibid., see this issue of *Participatio* for a reprinting of this valuable sermon.

20 *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 96.

spent his sabbatical in Princeton. It seems that it was during this time that the two theologians renewed their old friendship.

The last three letters reproduced below, dating from shortly afterward in 1973, reflect a very different set of interests than those of the 1950s. The conversation has shifted from ecclesiology, communion, and the Eucharist, to created contingency, space and time, and the relationship between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, with a more obvious stress in Torrance on the foundational importance of Greek patristic theology. Florovsky's October 21, 1973 letter dealing with the theology of time is a small gem of concise theological reflection, and provides crucial clues into Florovsky's views on the theology of Karl Barth²¹ as well the concerns driving his objections to the sophiology of Fr. Sergii Bulgakov – the controversy over which had long before been a major determining force in Florovsky's development as a theologian and churchman.

One sees from these last letters, too, that it was not only his reading of Florovsky's essays,²² but also personal exchanges that led Torrance to credit Florovsky particularly for his insight into created contingency.²³ It is telling that Torrance dedicated his 1981 book *Divine and Contingent Order* to Florovsky along with Eric Mascall and Stanley Jaki, calling them "champions of contingency."²⁴ Torrance brought his own characteristic notes here: where Florovsky tended to stress indeterminism and divine and human freedom, Torrance highlights contingent *order* or *rationality*.²⁵ Yet Torrance's later thought builds heavily on

21 See the discussion and references in the footnotes appended to letter 16 below.

22 Torrance refers repeatedly in his later works to Florovsky's essays "Creation and Creaturehood" (1928), "The Idea of Creation in Christian Philosophy" (1951), "St. Athanasius' Concept of Creation" (1962), confessing a special indebtedness to the last.

23 In his book *The Christian Frame of Mind: Reason, Order and Openness in Theology and Natural Science* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 2, Torrance writes: "As the late Professor Georges Florovsky used to point out, this idea of the radical contingency of the universe and its inherent rational order was utterly alien to and indeed quite unintelligible to the Greek mind. For classical Greek thought the universe was necessary and self-explanatory, eternally co-existing with God. The rational forms immanent in the universe which gave it its beautiful geometrical order were held to be divine, so that to speak of the universe as created in form and being out of nothing was regarded as an act of impious atheism."

24 I owe this observation to Taylor Carr. The dedication is only found in the original edition, not in subsequent reprints of the book. For succinct summary of Florovsky's thinking on creation, see Matthew Baker, "Georges Florovsky (1893–1979): *Agon* of Divine and Human Freedom," in Ernst Conradie, ed., *Creation and Salvation: A Medley of Recent Theological Movements* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012), 29–35.

25 In Torrance's definition, "By contingent order is meant that the orderly universe is not self-sufficient or ultimately self-explaining but is given a rationality and reliability in its

Florovsky's interpretation of how "the idea held by Origen that God's relation to the universe is necessary to his own Being was comprehensively destroyed by Athanasius."²⁶ This insight had broad implications, and was perhaps crucial in helping to lead Torrance away from the charge of "Hellenization" against patristic thought found in his earliest work (e.g., his dissertation on *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*) increasingly toward something like Florovsky's affirmation of the "Christian Hellenism" of the Fathers: "far from a radical Hellenization having taken place [in patristic thought]," says Torrance, "in making use of Greek thought-forms Christianity radically transformed them."²⁷

In his introduction to the first volume of papers from the official Orthodox-Reformed dialogue initiated in 1977, Torrance noted that serious theological dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Christians really began at Amsterdam (1948) and Lund (1952), and was continued especially through the special ten-year Commission on Christ and his Church appointed at Lund. Torrance took occasion here to note the crucial importance of Florovsky for this dialogue: "Particular mention must be made of the late Very Rev. Professor Georges Florovsky, whose profound theological instinct, at once catholic and evangelical, and whose Christocentric and Trinitarian interpretation of Greek Patristic Theology won the admiration and inspired the lasting confidence of his Reformed colleagues."²⁸

While granting us only a tantalizing glimpse into the historical dialogue between these two important figures, the present publication of the correspondence between Florovsky and Torrance should be an encouragement to devoted students of each theologian to read the other, and to learn from both their labors. To know that Florovsky read Torrance's work on the relationship of the incarnation to space in Nicene patristic theology "with great interest and satisfaction" and regarded it as "a magnificent piece of work, and very convincing" suggests that Florovsky would not have disapproved of a further extension of the neopatristic program into the realm of theology/science dialogue, such as Torrance opened up, as an item on the agenda of Orthodox theology today – and also that, clearly, Orthodox theologians have hardly yet to learn from all that Torrance's work has

orderliness which depend on and reflect God's own eternal rationality and reliability," *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), viii. For further discussion, see Matthew Baker, "Cosmological Contingency and Logical Necessity According to G. Florovsky and T. Torrance," in *Orthodox Theology and the Sciences*, ed. Stoyan Tanev, Pavel Pavlov, and George Dragas (Columbia, MO.: New Rome Press, 2013).

26 Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 4.

27 See Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 68.

28 Torrance, ed., *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, ix.

to offer. Conversely, to read from Torrance that it was Florovsky's "agreement and support" that encouraged him "above all others," and that it was the Greek Fathers that remained his "main love," to which he repaired all the time, learning from them "more than from any other period or set of theologians in Church history," suggests an apt program of study for his contemporary devotees – from Torrance "back to the Fathers." The dialogue begun by these two Christian thinkers over a half century ago has yet to reach its full fruition.

*

*

*

Several of the originals of the letters below lack a date for the year; these have been dated here based on internal evidence – this is indicated where the year is placed in brackets. Underlinings in the original have been retained, but foreign words and book and journal titles have been placed in italics. Except where indicated otherwise by footnote, the originals of the letters are to be found in the Florovsky archive at the Firestone Library of Princeton University. Thanks are offered to the Firestone Library of Princeton University, Department of Rare Books and Archives, and to the libraries of St. Vladimir's Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary for allowing the publication of these letters from their archives. A debt is owed to the Very Rev. Prof. George Dragas for many conversations in which he shared his personal reminiscences of T. F. Torrance as well as of Georges Florovsky – an invaluable source of historical insight. Finally, we wish to express our warm gratitude to Benjamin Taylor for his labor of love in transcribing these letters in preparation for their annotation and publication.

1.

Beechgrove Manse,
39 Forest Road,
Aberdeen.
Jan. 25, 1950

My dear Professor Florovsky,

I have to thank you for your kind thought in sending me a Christmas card which was very much appreciated; and also for several contributions from your pen which I have read with the greatest interest. I like the best the one on 'the Lamb of God'²⁹ – there being, I suppose, least to disagree with in it! I would

²⁹ Torrance refers here to Florovsky's essay, "The Lamb of God," in *Lovet være du Jesus Krist. Inkarnationen. Seks Forelæsninger*, ed. Louise Berner Schilden-Holsten (Bringstrup: Theologisk oratoriums forlag, 1949), 66–83.

like one day to examine carefully this notion of *theiosis* [*sic*] which is extremely un-Hebraic and un-biblical.³⁰ The most the Bible will say is that we are made partakers of the divine nature in Christ.³¹ But to go a hair's breadth beyond that is the most dangerous speculation! Besides what more could mortal man want! But I enjoyed that article enormously and have marked down passages for close study when I am working on that subject.

At the moment I am working on a paper for the Intercommunion Conference.³² I declined to do one for the *Student World* in which you have one³³ as I really could not have found the time, and besides it would have been duplicating to a large extent what I shall say elsewhere. This is however the crucial point.

I understand your Orthodox teaching about the Church and its plenitude and subscribe to it pretty fully; and I believe too that orders belong to the articles of faith – this has always been a Calvinist doctrine. But I believe firmly that the Eucharist is made for man and not man for the Eucharist and that the Son of man (*Eschatos*)³⁴ is Lord also of the Eucharist. This means we cannot lord it over the Eucharist, but receive from the Eucharist our orders. In every Eucharist there comes the moment when we are confronted with the *Eschatos* and we are carried beyond the Eucharist into the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb, and so at every Eucharist there comes a point where we must surrender our earthly and ecclesiastical authority to the final Authority of the Judge: the Lamb of God.

30 For discussion of how Torrance's views changed on this later, see the introduction to these letters above; for further systematic discussion, see the studies by Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) and Øyvind Rise, *"Sharing in the Life of God": A Study and Discussion of the Theme of Participation in Divine Life* (Stavanger: Misjonshøgskolens forlag, 2012).

31 2 Peter 1:4.

32 The conference to which Torrance refers was a meeting of the 3rd Theological Commission appointed by the "Continuation Committee" of Faith and Order, charged with theological work between major conferences; its proceedings were published in the volume edited by Donald Baillie and John Marsh, *Intercommunion* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952). Torrance's paper, included in the volume, was entitled "Eschatology and the Eucharist" – a connection that occupies him also in this letter; Florovsky published two essays in this volume: "Terms of Communion in the Undivided Church," and "Confessional loyalty in the Ecumenical Movement."

33 Florovsky, "Confessional Loyalty in the Ecumenical Movement," *The Student World* 43 no. 1 (1950): 57–70; cf. also, Florovsky, "Intercommunion: An Inter-'Catholic' Discussion," *The Student World* 43 no. 2 (1950): 169–171.

34 Torrance likely has in mind here Rev. 22:13: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last [*ho protos kai ho eschatos*], the beginning and the end." See also 1 Cor. 15:45: "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [*ho eschatos Adam*] was made a quickening spirit."

That is the point where in every true Eucharist "The Spirit and the Bride will say, 'Come.' And let him that heareth say, 'Come.' And let him that is athirst come. And WHOSOEVER WILL, let him take of the water of life freely".³⁵ Who is the Orthodox Church therefore, or the Roman Church or the Reformed Church or the Anglican Church so to lord it over the Eucharist as to repel and prevent sinners from coming to the table of the Lord? Will not the *Eschatos* ask questions of us in that day and say in judgment that will surprise the Churches, or the Church as you would have it, at any rate every one of the seven branches of the Church as we have it in the Apocalypse³⁶: "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink."³⁷ That parable has been spoken to us, I feel convinced, to teach us the meaning of intercommunion.³⁸ I pray and am fearful for those who would turn the *Kuriakon deipnon* into their *idion deipnon*³⁹ thus introducing, as Paul says so plainly, *schismata* into the Church.⁴⁰

I am ready to understand the theological significance of defection from a united Eucharist, behind which there is a certain theological earnestness and sincerity so often lacking in those who are not very pained at our divisions; but ultimately refusal of intercommunion can only mean for me a lack of trust in the opus Dei in the Eucharist and a fear that it is not so powerful as to overcome our mistakes and heal our divisions, and bring medicine to our mortal strifes. If the real presence of the Lord, the Son of Man, the *Eschatos*, the Lamb of God, is with us in the Eucharist, as I most firmly believe it is, then I am ready to put the Lord and Head of the Church before Church Order, before Doctrine, before Tradition. All our Church Order and Doctrine come as the result of the *charismata* given us by the Lord of the Church in his Ascension-gifts; but, says Paul, even these *charismata* will pass away, though faith, hope, and love will remain. Even the *Ämter*⁴¹ of the Church, as Eugen Walter of Freiburg says in a recent powerful

35 Revelation 22:17.

36 Revelation, chapters 2–3.

37 Matthew 25:42.

38 The parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 (a rarely cited text in Torrance).

39 1 Cor. 11:20-21: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper [*kuriakon deipnon*]. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper [*idion deipnon*]: and one is hungry, and another is drunken."

40 Torrance has in mind Paul's reference to divisions (*schismata*) in the context of discussing the Eucharist in 1 Cor. 11:18. Torrance does not note, however, the fact that here (see verse 19) as well as elsewhere (Rom. 16:17 and 1 Cor. 1:10), Paul associates these *schismata* precisely with heresy and disagreement in faith.

41 German: "offices," "orders."

book (*Das Kommen des Herrn* – R.C.!)⁴², will pass away before the apocalypse of the New Creation which is absolutely one with the risen Body of the Saviour.⁴³

This is the notion that the Reformed Church takes seriously, the Lordship of the Real Presence in the Church, and not the domestication of the Real presence to be the manipulable tool of Church history and ecclesiastical orders that are necessarily fraught with the misunderstandings of this passing world. The Reformation stands for a Christological correction of the doctrine of the Church and sacraments in accordance with the principles of Nicaea and Chalcedon, which was NEVER carried out anywhere until a beginning was made at the Reformation. This is what it means to put on the wedding garment for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb – “not being conformed to this world but being transformed by the renewing of the mind . . . Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” etc.⁴⁴ But there is no need to say all this to you, for as a Biblical theologian you will agree with it.⁴⁵ Our divisions come however where we arrest some particular doctrine and freeze it a special point, and refuse for [?] pride or prejudice or history to carry this doctrine critically through the whole pleroma of our Church life and thought and practice. This may be painful to you, but I submit that as we look over at the Catholic sections of the Church, conscious though we may be that we have yet to reform ourselves anew in areas where we became deficient through defection at the Reformation, there are areas in the Catholic Churches where a refusal to submit to self-correction in terms of the great Christological Councils is the greatest stumbling block to reunion.

One of the burning points here is where Church Order concerns the Eucharist. You are right to put your finger on this point! I do wish I could spend several days with you going over all the relevant passages in the Scriptures and the Fathers of the first four centuries on these matters – that is the only way to come to a closer understanding, is it not?⁴⁶

42 “R.C.”: Roman Catholic. Walter’s study *Das Kommen des Herrn* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1948-1950) was published in two volumes: *Die endzeitgemässe Haltung des Christen nach den Briefen der heiligen Apostel Paulus und Petrus* (1948); II. *Die eschatologische Situation nach den synoptischen Evangelien* (1947).

43 Torrance notably does not address here the apostolic thrones still to be found in the kingdom of God (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; Rev. 20:4), of which the ancient Orthodox liturgical *synthronon* of bishop and presbyters is an eschatological image.

44 Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:5.

45 Note how Torrance’s regard for Florovsky as a “Biblical theologian” – quite a different perception than the one that obtains in recent criticisms of Florovsky and neopatristic theology among academicians in the Orthodox sphere.

46 In his 1970 sermon “The Relevance of Orthodoxy,” reprinted in this issue of *Participatio*, Torrance reflected on his experience of precisely such common study of Scripture in the

Meantime I send you a paper I wrote for the Faith & Order Commission of the British Council of Churches. I am conscious of its deficiencies, and hope to expand it into a book when I get time.

Actually I shall be in New York for a few hours on the night of the 3rd/4th June or probably on the day of the 3rd. I have to catch the night train then for Montreal where I have some lectures to give. If I have longer to spare I will try to get in touch with you then.

I am not by the way a professor – not yet anyway. I have a very busy parish on my hands, and it is very hard going especially with the amount of theological work I have to do.⁴⁷ But before very long I hope to be engaged all the time in theological and academic work – but this is a very good discipline for a living theology, and indeed the only true training ground!

I hope you will write a rejoinder to this letter if you have time. But I do feel that if we take the eschatological significance of the Eucharist⁴⁸ more seriously

Faith and Order Commission on Christ and His Church and admitted: "Again and again ... when passages of the Bible were being interpreted by others – Professor Florovsky, for example – I had to take a new hard look at the Greek text of the New Testament to see whether it really did mean what he said, and again and again found that I had been misreading the New Testament because I had been looking at it through Presbyterian spectacles. Our conjoint discussion, to which we brought our several Church traditions and outlooks, enabled us in the give and take of criticism, to read what was actually written in the Bible and to interpret it as far as possible undistorted by this or that ecclesiastical tradition. I myself learned, I think, from the Orthodox more than from any other."

47 Torrance was at this time minister of the parish of Beechgrove Church in Aberdeen, a position he took up in the fall of 1947. In addition to parish ministry and the publication of numerous essays and book reviews, he had already by this time founded the Scottish Church Theology Society in 1945, published his dissertation on *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (1946/1948), launched (with J. K. S. Reid) the *Scottish Journal of Theology* in 1948, and published his book-length study, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949).

48 In fact, Florovsky also viewed the Eucharist in eschatological terms, but did not draw the same conclusions from this as did Torrance regarding intercommunion – likely because he viewed the relationship between eschatology and history differently. This was not the first time Florovsky had opposed "intercommunion" proposals; a similar proposal was offered by Fr. Sergii Bulgakov in the early 1930s within the Anglican-Orthodox Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, but was opposed by both Orthodox and Anglicans, following the arguments of Florovsky. The eschatological vision of the Eucharist is altogether characteristic of Orthodox theology, but has not led to an acceptance of intercommunion; see for instance, Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987); John Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church* (Brookline, MA.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), and *The Eucharistic Communion and the World* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 1–97; and Nikolaos Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity* (Brookline, MA.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010).

and probe into its real depth, we shall remove not only misunderstandings but actual mistakes on all sides. Who of us will be able to protest doctrinal and sacramental integrity, complete integrity, when we meet our King?

With every good wish and Christian love,
Your sincere friend,
Tom Torrance

P.S. Have you sent for the *Scottish Journal of Theology* your promised Article on Christianity and History?⁴⁹ It has not arrived, and I have been wondering whether it has gone astray. We are looking forward very, very much to having the honour of publishing that. TFT.

2.

March 31st. [1950]

My dear Professor Florovsky,

I am indebted to you for your kind letter. I shall look forward all the more for your article on Christian Faith and History.

I see what you mean about the difficulties our respective communions, and the unconscious attitudes they import into our theological thinking. But I don't think I am in the least inclined to despair over this – for biblical studies are helping us.⁵⁰ What amazes me (in a recent study of the Epistle to the Hebrews) that where in the NT the liturgical sacrifices are mentioned, there is least of the succession idea! But we won't argue that out now.⁵¹

49 The article was never published.

50 This stress on the importance of biblical studies for ecumenical convergence is characteristic of the early Torrance, but became less pronounced in his later work – perhaps following James Barr's 1961 criticism of his scriptural exegesis; increasingly, Torrance – somewhat like Florovsky – came to emphasize rather the ecumenically crucial importance of patristic *ressourcement*, particularly in the form of a return to the "Athanasian-Cyrline axis" of Greek patristic theology, as well as the need to overcome the influence of outmoded and unhelpful scientific dualisms in theology that had contributed to doctrinal divisions.

51 Torrance expended considerable energy during this period attacking the concept of linear historic apostolic succession, in favor of a classically Protestant conception of apostolicity. It seems his main objection was to the rather mechanical conception common among Anglo-Catholics. For a striking attempt to synthesize Eastern and Western patristic accounts of apostolicity in a way that transcends the tendencies criticized by Torrance, see John Zizioulas, "Apostolic Continuity and Succession," in *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 171–208, and "Apostolic Continuity of the Church and Apostolic Succession in the First Five Centuries," *Louvain Studies* 21 (1996):

I wonder if we need any special permission to publish that article of yours on the Lamb of God? Croxall simply sent his to us, as it had been printed only privately.⁵² But if you feel that permission should be sought, I wonder if you would be so good to write to the appropriate quarter? That would be helpful.

I sent Vladimir Weidle's recent *The Baptism of Art* to a man to review who has since died and I am unable to recover the booklet. If you have a copy would you care to write for us a short review? It is, I think, a supremely important book, and for me most illuminating, for its view of baptism and Eucharist as forming one whole, and also of the "signitive" nature of pre-liturgical sacrament and art⁵³ is just what strove after in his attempt to return to the early fathers. That is even more true perhaps of certain early and classical Anglicanism.

I am to go to a Chair in Edinburgh next Session (October) and shall have much more time for theological writing.⁵⁴ I hope we will be able to get you over too sometime to visit us in New College.

With every good wish,
Yours very sincerely,
Tom Torrance

3.

21 South Oswald Road.
Edinburgh, 9.
March 30th, 1951

153–86.

52 T. H. Croxall, an Anglican priest and theologian residing in Copenhagen, later known primarily for his work on Kierkegaard.

53 Vladimir Weidlé, *The Baptism of Art: Notes on the Religion of the Catacomb Paintings* (Londres, 1950). Torrance makes use of Weidlé in his 1955 work *Royal Priesthood*. *Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers*, No. 3 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1955), 93–94, in order to underscore this idea of the "signitive" character of early Christian art; in the same context, he criticizes the developed Orthodox iconography and its corresponding theology as indicative of "Platonizing" tendencies derived from Philo of Alexandria. His thoughts on the icon were to change significantly later to a much more positive view, with fascinating insights into the inverse perspective of Byzantine iconography and its paradigmatic status for theological epistemology: see *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 15, 23; *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 18; *Reality and Scientific Theology* (1985 reprint: Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 127.

54 Torrance's invitation to the chair of Church History at New College, Edinburgh was publicly announced to his congregation at Beechgrove Church on March 26, 1950 – just days before the writing of this letter.

My dear Professor Florovsky,

It is some time since I wrote to you. We were glad to publish your article on the Lamb of God in the current number of the *Scottish Journal of Theology*.⁵⁵ The off-prints are being sent off to you now.

I write also to ask when you can let us have the long-promised article on Eschatology and History? We are looking forward very much to having and publishing that. I wonder if you are to be over here this summer? We might manage to have you visit Edinburgh. Do let us know if you are to be in this country and when.

With every good wish,
Yours very sincerely
T. F. Torrance

4.

At: The Brow, Combe Down,
Bath, Somerset.

August 4th, 1951

As from: 21 South Oswald Rd. Edinburgh

My Dear Professor Florovsky,

I see by the circular which came in this morning about the International Patristic Conference to be held in Oxford that you are to be there too.⁵⁶ I am reminded at the same time that I owe you a letter, and hasten to write to you therefore.

You may be in Europe by the time this letter gets you, but they will forward it to you, I am sure. In any case I will write another to you c/o the WCC in Geneva!

You must be a terribly busy man – I only hope that you do not overdo things, for your letter contained a frightful catalogue of lectures and work in which you were engaged – and in the midst of all this here I am a sort of *narkē*⁵⁷ to trouble you!

55 Florovsky, "The Lamb of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4, no. 1 (1951): 13-28.

56 The International Conference on Patristic Studies was organized by Frank Leslie Cross (1900-1968), Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford; its first meeting was in September 1951 and counted 260 persons in attendance. For Florovsky's reports on the second conference, see "The Oxford Conference on Patristic Studies. September 1955," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 4, nos. 1-2 (Fall 1955-Winter 1956): 57-62, and "Second International Conference on Patristic Studies," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 2, no. 1 (Easter Issue): 121-23. Florovsky's paper at this second conference was also on patristic eschatology, and was presumably based on material worked up for the presentation Torrance asked him to give in 1952 (letters 6 through 8 below); for the published paper, see Florovsky, "Eschatology in the Patristic Age: An Introduction," *Studia Patristica* 2 Part 2 (1956): 235-50.

57 Greek, *νάρκη*: an explosive landmine.

I write to ask how you are getting on with your two papers for the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, on History and Eschatology. I hope very much that you will be able to give them to me when I see you in Oxford next month – that would be grand. But please do not overwork – we would rather wait than have them from you posthumously!

Your review of Vladimir Weidles' little work on the Baptism of Art appears in September in *SJT*.⁵⁸ In the same number I also take note of that work in a lecture on History and Reformation – but I take a better view of Weidle than you do or appeared to do!!!⁵⁹

One of these days I will be demanding from you an article on Baptism – I feel that the Orthodox Church has a lot to teach us here, and I am eager that we have it – and from no one better than yourself. But I leave that in your hands.

I have been on holiday here with the family and return to Edinburgh next week.

With every good wish,

Yours very sincerely,

T. F. Torrance

5.

At: The Brow, Combe Down, Bath, Somerset.

As From: 21 South Oswald Rd., Edinburgh 9.

August 4th, 1951.

My dear Professor Florovsky,

I have just written to you an air-mail to New York, but am writing this to you c/o WCC at Geneva, in the hope that it may reach you sooner.

I have been very long in answering your letter, and when you say that last time it took me 12 months to do, I feel ashamed. It looks as if I am the base sort of man who only writes when he wants something!

To tell the truth I have been almost as busy as you! and have been enjoying a holiday here. But when I saw that you are to be at the International Conference on Patristics, I felt I must write to you. I was to be in Greece in September, but the forthcoming elections have made me postpone that visit, so that I can now go to the Conference on Patristics also. I hope to see you there, therefore.

58 Florovsky, Review of Wladimir Weidlé, *The Baptism of Art*, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4, no. 3 (1951): 331–34.

59 Florovsky in his review critiques Weidlé for neglecting the biblical background of early Christian art, its typological character, and its foundation in salvation history, in which types and realities are closely correlated.

I hope too that you will be able to give me your papers on History and Eschatology for publication in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*. I note that they have now been put into two papers which is very agreeable to us. We look forward very much indeed to having them.

Your review of Weidlé: *The Baptism of Art* appears in *SJT* for September, 4/3.

I hope you keep well and are managing something of a holiday in your visit to Europe.

With every good wish,

Yours very sincerely,

Tom Torrance

T. F. Torrance

6.

21 South Oswald Rd.

Edinburgh 9.

January 26th. [1952]

My dear Florovsky,

I have two of your letters to answer. It was a great joy to get your Christmas greeting, with its lines. Thank you kindly. I was so overwhelmed both with work and illness in the family during the Christmas season that I did not get much done.

I am delighted to hear you have by now one of your articles on History and Eschatology finished for the *Scottish Journal of Theology*. I will be glad to have that as soon as you can let me for the Journal. I would like to get it into the June number, as we have a Conference on the Subject in July and it would be good to have your paper to discuss then. I look forward very much to the second as well. Could we have it in time to publish for the September number of *SJT*, which would mean having it in our hands by June? Thank you very much. It will be a great honour to have these in *SJT*.

We are now issuing a pamphlet on *SJT* for distribution and are advertising in it your articles. This pamphlet we hope to get widely distributed in USA and on the Continent.

We are starting a Society for Historical Theology over here, and we shall be having our first meeting in Cambridge just before you go to the WCC Advisory Commission.⁶⁰ So we would be very glad to have you come to it. I will send you the printed material about it later. The subject of the Conference is the History of

60 Torrance refers here to the Society for the Study of Theology. For information, see <http://www.theologysociety.org.uk>

Eschatology from NT and Patristic times down to the present day – so you ought to be in your element. We hope to have there most of the leading theologians of the country and some visitors from overseas too. So do try to come, for you would be one of our Star visitors!

Can you give me names of works on Patristic Eschatology dealing mainly with the Greek Fathers and later Orthodox Theology – works in a language readable to me such as French or German, though I might manage modern Greek? I would be very grateful. I have myself lectured on the theology or rather the eschatology of the first 6 centuries this session, and am now on to the Reformation. Very little has been done in English on Patristic eschatology, and there is a great deal to be done.

I look forward to hearing from you and also to having your papers to study.

I hope you are as happy in New York as we are in Edinburgh though the amount of work we both have to do seems equally fearful!

With all kind greetings,

Yours aye,

Tom Torrance

7.

21 South Oswald Rd.

Edinburgh 9.

Feb. 12th. [1952]

My dear Florovsky,

This letter is in the nature of an S.O.S.

In my last to you I spoke of the Conference of the forthcoming Society for Historical Theology, and its plans for meeting in July 22–25 at Queens' College, Cambridge. I know you are to be over for the WCC Advisory Commission of 25, and hope and expect you can be with us. We have had great difficulty with dates, and these dates do not suit all but suit most, though they knock out several of our speakers. I write to ask if you would be so good as to give us a paper on Patristic Eschatology, later period – roughly from Chalcedon to Joachim (but excluding him) dealing with both East and West, and with Augustine perhaps in particular. Our great difficulty is to find men who understand eschatology as well as having a good knowledge of Patristics. We had two men on our original committee marked down to do this paper, one failing the other, but both have pulled out, and I am compelled to look overseas, and there is no one more eminent than yourself. It would be a very great honour and stimulus to us if you could help us out in this way, in giving us a paper as well as engaging in our discussions.

We are hoping that the papers may be printed, if not in a composite volume, then in *SJT* or some similar periodical. But of course they do not need to be in final form by the time of the Conference – they can be revised for publication later – if so desired.

I'd be very grateful for a reply as soon as is convenient.

With every good wish,

Yours aye,

Tom Torrance

8.

21 South Oswald Rd.

Edinburgh 9

Feb. 26. [1952]

My dear Florovsky,

I am very delighted that you are coming to the conference for the Society for Historical Theology – and will give us a paper on Patristic Eschatology: Later Period. The dates are July 22–25, Queens College, Cambridge. I will send you full particulars later. If you want hospitality in England, please let us know, and we will try to find it for you as it will be congenial.

We will be glad also to publish this paper on Patristic Eschatology in *SJT* – if it does not go into a conference volume with the others. We must wait till July to see if the others want to publish a composite vol. of all our essays!

With kindest regards – my wife has the greatest sympathy for yours!

Love from us all in New College

Yours aye,

Tom Torrance

9.

21 South Oswald Rd.,

Edinburgh 9

Oct. 3rd. [1952]

My dear Florovsky,

Thank you for sending me the copy of your *St. Vladimir Journal*,⁶¹ which I find most interesting. We shall be glad to exchange *SJT* for this, if that is your intention, is it?

61 The *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, later renamed *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, was founded on Florovsky's initiative in March 1952 and published under his editorship until 1956. Its first issue was published in Fall 1952, with an editorial by Florovsky himself: "The Challenge of Our Time" (see <http://www.svots.edu/content/svtq-first-issue-quarterly>). The journal continues successfully under the present editorship of Prof. Paul Meyendorff.

I hope you are somewhat recovered after your arduous tour on the continent. We certainly work you hard when you come over. I look back with great pleasure to your address to the new SST in Queens' College, Cambridge. The other addresses are now coming in and I am hoping to receive yours as soon as possible, so that we can publish them all together in one volume. Yours need not be just as you gave it, but if it covers the field allotted to you, we shall be most grateful. It is of the utmost importance for the New Theological Society that this volume appears as promptly as we can publish it, so that the Society gets off to a good start.

It is such a pity USA is so far away, but we hope that as soon as we can we will be able to have you over here in Edinburgh before very long. I always revel in what you have to say!

With every good wish,
Yours ever,
Tom Torrance

10.

At: The Brow,
Combe Down, Bath,
Somerset
Jan. 2, 1953

My dear Florovsky,

Thank you and Fr. Schmemmann very much for your kind Xmas card & its good wishes.⁶² Hope 1953 will be a very blessed New Year for you all at St. Vladimir's.

I am now sending to the Press the 4 addresses given last July in Cambridge minus yours & Mackinnon's!⁶³ I'd like it printed before June — unless we receive your lecture before the end of January we shall have to omit it! I hope very, very much yours will be in by Jan 25. Sorry to be such a *vápkñ!*

62 Fr Alexander Schmemmann (1921–1983) was a prominent Orthodox priest and liturgical theologian who began teaching at St Vladimir's Seminary in 1951 and served as dean there from 1962 until his death.

63 Donald MacKinnon (1913–1994), Scottish philosopher and theologian, and a friend to T. F. Torrance. The other four addresses were as follows: William Manson, "Eschatology in the New Testament;" G. W. H. Lampe, "Early Patristic eschatology;" T. F. Torrance, "The Eschatology of the Reformation;" and W. A. Whitehouse, "The Modern Discussion of Eschatology." The papers by Manson, Lampe, Torrance, and Whitehouse were published together as *Eschatology: Four Occasional Papers read to the Society for the Study of Theology*. Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, No.2 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1953).

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN T. F. TORRANCE AND GEORGES FLOROVSKY

With every good wish
Yours aye,
Tom Torrance

P.S. For *SJT* 6/1 I've an article on Lund!⁶⁴

11.

21 South Oswald Rd.
Edinburgh 9.
Feb. 4, 1953

My dear Florovsky,

Thank you very much for your air letter. We shall be delighted to get your paper on Patristic Eschatology by the end of February. The other lectures have gone to the press, but I feel sure we can get yours in in time also if we have it – as soon as possible now – say by end of February.

No! I'm not angry with you, dear brother, but rejoice that the Lord uses you so [illegible], though I covet everything from your pen for *SJT*! I wonder what you will think of my article on Lund in *SJT* 6/1 due to appear at the end of February? I shall be glad of your reactions if you have time to write.⁶⁵

With every good wish
Yours aye,
Tom Torrance

64 The 1952 Faith and Order assembly held in Lund, Sweden, with both Florovsky and Torrance in attendance. Torrance refers here to his article, "Where do we go from Lund?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 6 (1953): 53–64.

65 Torrance mentions Florovsky in his Lund essay. Commenting on the impact of recent studies on the tenor of the Lund Assembly, he writes: "To find great patristic learning in Professor Calhoun, and Calvin's language on the lips of Professor Florovsky, were but two indications of the theological interpenetration that is going on among theologians, but what has made that possible is the concern of theologians to think out together the doctrines of the faith on the basis of biblical study," "Problems of Faith and Order: Where do we go from Lund?" reprinted in Thomas F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, *Order and Disorder*, 227. We do not have Florovsky's response to the essay. We can be certain, however, that Florovsky would appreciate Torrance's stress on a Christocentric ecclesiology conceived with reference to the "historic Christ" and the Chalcedonian analogy, but would disagree with Torrance's defense of the Reformation critique of ecclesiology and his characterization of the relation between theology and ecclesiastical form in the Orthodox Church as "statically formulated."

12.

Georges Florovsky to Oliver Tomkins⁶⁶ (December 26, 1953)

537 West 121 Street
New York 27, N.Y.
26/XII. '53

My dearest Oliver:

First of all excuse me for the delay, and secondly for the most inadequate character of the draft which I am now presenting.⁶⁷ Strictly speaking, it is no more than loose paragraphs submitted to you for a tentative incorporation in the Working paper. My personal conviction, which I reached after a long scrutiny and heart-searching, is that no such "incorporation" is possible. T.'s draft is excellent – for those who can accept it.⁶⁸ There is a clear plan and his argument develops coherently. I have no desire to pose as an "Advocatus diabolicus," and no desire to spoil the document which, from his point of view, is the best I could have expected. The only thing I have to say is that most Catholics are unable to concur. Probably, if you are really going to undertake a drastic revision, just in order to fit the essence of the document within the required maximal amount of words, what would of course imply some adjustment in the structure, you will be able to insert some of my points. You are well acquainted with the Anglo-Catholic position, from which you are not very far, and you can easily imagine what Michael Ramsey⁶⁹ would have said in my place, and therefore you can do full justice to both sides, if "sides" they are. To say the truth, I do not see any organic link between the Section I and Sections II and III. If you agree with the I, you are not yet committed to anything that is offered in II or III. My guess is that in I no adequate attention is given to the Historical structure of the Church. Christ is obviously One, and His Church is, and should be one.

66 Oliver Tomkins (1908–1992), Anglican priest and secretary to the World Council of Churches; Warden of Lincoln Theological College from 1952; named Bishop of Bristol in 1959. Tomkins was for a long time closely involved in ecumenical discussions on the theme of intercommunion.

67 See the text at number 14 below.

68 "T."=Torrance. Florovsky is referring to Torrance's draft, "Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches," reprinted in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, *Order and Disorder*, 263–83.

69 Michael Ramsey (1904–1988), leading Anglican theologian of the Anglo-Catholic party, with a deep sympathy for Orthodoxy; at this time Bishop of Durham (1952–1956), later Archbishop of York (1956–1961) and finally Archbishop of Canterbury (1961–1974). Ramsey was a friend of Florovsky since the 1930s; with Florovsky and Karl Barth, he held a prominent place at the 1948 Amsterdam Assembly. See

But it does not follow that this One Church is adequately represented in the discordant crowd of historical denominations, and that the only trouble is that they do not exhibit enough the hidden Unity and exaggerate dissensions which "ultimately" are irrelevant. I admit that T. means something more, but what he had written will be read and sponsored by many who would not go the whole way with him. In any case, I do not believe that it is fair to offer this document as a balanced ecumenical draft. And probably the fairest thing would be to leave it as it stands, and only add a foot-note at the end, to the effect that the two Orthodox members of the Working Committee were unable to join. By the way, Chrysostomos Constantinidis⁷⁰ is publishing – in Greek, of course – his detailed report on our meeting at Bossey, in "Apostolos Andreas;" it is not yet completed (in the issues I received as yet). I hope to prepare a special memorandum before Evanston, and probably early enough to circulate it to the members of the Working Committee. So, I am handing my sketch to you, and leave it to you to decide, whether my stuff should be incorporated at all – if you decide to leave the paper as it is, do not forget the foot note. Copies of all this go simultaneously to Nelson and Torrance.⁷¹ I am very anxious to hear from you all at your first convenience.

I have now two weeks for myself, free from the school. But I have "unfinished business" at least for six months. I hope to finish four books this spring (?). In any case, I have to complete two urgent articles by Jan. 5.

Love.

Ever yours

[Georges Florovsky]

13.

Georges Florovsky to Thomas F. Torrance⁷²

Dear Torrance:

Do not be angry with me. Your paper is fine.⁷³ But it is not an "ecumenical" document. There is another point of view also within the Ecumenical

70 Metropolitan Chrysostomos Constantinidis (1921–2006), Bishop of Myra and Ephesus, professor of dogmatics at the theological school at Chalki, near Istanbul. An ecumenical spokesman for the Patriarchate of Constantinople and a friend to Torrance, he was later the head from the Orthodox side in the official Orthodox-Reformed dialogue inaugurated by Torrance.

71 See letter 13 and the draft of comments at 14 below.

72 This letter is not dated, but the copy of it in Florovsky's archive is printed on the last page of the letter December 26, 1953 letter to Oliver Tomkins.

73 "Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches," in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, 263–83.

movement. My belief is that no ecumenical statement on the subject, and especially no proposal (and your section III is actually a proposal),⁷⁴ is possible at the present stage. Except we frankly admit that we do not agree: such a statement will be ecumenical, because it will be factually true. It is our tragedy that we cannot travel beyond a certain narrow limit. It would not help at all if I, as it were, "pass" the document. It would not make it any more "ecumenical," and somebody else will point it out. I am terribly disturbed that, being brethren and friends in the sacred name of Jesus, we cannot meet at His table. But the tragedy is that we cannot, simply and purely. Let us pray together and for each other, and do what we can do together, trusting in the mercy of the Lord.

One of the four books mentioned above is on the Meaning of History, a small one – under 100 pages.⁷⁵ I intend it for the Cahiers de l'Actualite Protestante (but I am writing it in English).

Love and affection.

Ever yours,

[Georges Florovsky]

14.

Florovsky's draft of comments on Torrance's paper, "Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches":⁷⁶

I was given an impossible task: to add to a document which was already too long, and is going to be drastically abridged. Again, I had to insert paragraphs in a context which was not congenial to me. The only thing I could attempt was just to offer a very tentative draft which had to be used by the final editor and fused or melted with what might have survived from the existing text. I have to emphasize briefly my main points.

74 A proposal for latitude regarding Eucharistic doctrine and, implicitly, for intercommunion: see *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, 279–83.

75 Florovsky is referring to his comment to Tomkins that he is hoping to publish four books in the spring. This is a clear indication that Florovsky sent this letter to Torrance precisely as it is found in the archives: as appended to the letter to Tomkins commenting on Torrance's ecumenical proposals. Sadly, none of the four books Florovsky had intended to publish ever appeared; a substantial portion of one of them, on the history of Christian divisions in ecumenical perspective, is to be found in the Florovsky archive at Princeton University.

76 This draft was appended to Florovsky's letters to Tomkins and Torrance (Dec. 26, 1953; letters 12 and 13 above), and is a commentary on the paper of Torrance later reproduced in Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church*, vol. 1, 263–83.

In the section II I want to have an explicit statement on the major tension in doctrines: the Schism is, and has been, about the Truth, as sinful and criminal schism as such obviously is. In a sense, I was pleading for the Reformation. The quarrel with Rome, in any case, cannot be settled just by "repentance". Who should repent? And of what? Just of disunity? But on both sides there is a firm conviction that the other part is in a dangerous error. For me personally, as for an Orthodox, both are in error, while both are preserving some truth. I do not feel desirable to introduce any elaboration on Ecclesiology at this point. The chief thing is however this: Schism is not only guilt, but also a witness to the ultimate disagreement about the Truth. Should it be made clear that for "the Protestants" (some, at least) all schisms are to such an extent and in such a sense inside of the *Una Sancta*, that they can be overruled just by an increase "in charity", whereas for "the Catholics" the separation went much further and many of the existing Christian denominations are if not "outside" of the *Una Sancta*, yet in fact so loosely and, if it were, "symbolically" related to it as not to be fully in it, as her "parts" or "members." It is very difficult to say all this in a compact manner: it would require a very accurate and detailed elaboration. Has the Church a structure? Granted, everything historical will be superseded and surpassed by what no eye had seen and no imagination could have visualized, but the Historical has its own status in the progress of salvation – pointing to the Beyond, – in a double sense, to the transcending work of the Glorified Christ (which of course, does not "relativize" the structure of the Church) and to his final and concluding "Eschatological" consummation-intervention. As any reunion belongs to the Historical, involving our responsibility and loyalty in a given historical context, it cannot (and should not) be treated outside of the Historical structure, as it were, immediately and directly, in "eschatological" categories. "Eschatology" in the Church is mediated through History and her "structures". It is here that the controversy about "Succession" would set in.

2. Christ's Body, the Holy Church, is one. Her unity and uniqueness is her very being and character. There can be but One Church, as there is but One God and One Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of the Father. And yet – Christians are divided. Christendom is divided. The Christian World is in schism. There are, in fact, several Christian bodies (and they are numerous indeed) which claim the name of the Church for themselves, and for themselves alone, – and they are out of communion with each other, sometimes in open and bitter antagonism. The unity of the faith has been broken. The unity of love has cooled. The body of Christians has been utterly disrupted. This is the flagrant scandal of Christian history and its major mystery and paradox. Because, and this is the basic assumption and

axiom of Christian faith and hope, the Church simply cannot be divided, just as Christ cannot be divided either, and there is but One Lord, and not many. But the impossible seems to have happened. The divisive and disruptive power of sin seems to have crept even into the New Humanity, initiated by Christ's victory on the Cross and manifested in His Resurrection and Glory. The Old Adam seems not to have died, and continues even in the New Age. The sting of tragedy and paradox is, however, in the fact that, in the concrete context of Christian existence, schisms and divisions seem to have been imposed so often precisely by the loyalty to Christ and zeal for the true faith, by a sincere desire to preserve and to exhibit the true Unity and to disentangle the New out of the oppressive Old, of "this World." Strangely enough, in many situations, "disruption" seemed to be the obvious demand of Christian conscience. And for that reason it is quite impossible to check the existing divisions just by their confrontation with a general postulate of Unity. No Christian wants schism as such. But, as tragic as it is indeed, Christian Unity, even the Unity of the Holy Church, is variously apprehended and interpreted. And it would be idle just to expatiate on the ideal of Unity, pure and simple. All Christians suffer from the burden of disruption, and all have some share in its guilt. Thus all should repent. But even at this crucial point there is division. The nature and meaning of the existing schism are differently viewed. Even from a purely practical point of view, an unqualified pleading for Unity is not convincing and will not bring together those who feel themselves estranged from each other by the claims of their Christian conscience and faithfulness to the truth which had been once delivered unto the saints. It is precisely in the name of the true Apostolicity of the message and of the Holiness of life that Christian groups persist in their mutual separation, even when they have re-kindled the spirit of charity and have assumed the burdens of each other. Even when Christians are ready to stay together – in charity and love, they find themselves in an inextricable predicament of a conscientious separation. In spite of the common ground, which all Christians possess in Christ and His Gospel, they cannot meet in a common profession of faith. It may be true that modern divisions and disagreements cut across many denominational barriers erected in the past ages. And yet, there are major disagreements, if in a modern shape, and ultimately it is just a distribution of adherents that had been changed, but the very crux of dissension is rather the same. And probably, even the very fact that, in our days and, at least partially, under the impact of the ecumenical conversation, individual Christians of various and divergent backgrounds can meet and agree across the structural boundaries of the historical Christendom, reveals the tragedy of the schism in its ultimate sharpness. The meaning of

this "meeting" and "agreement" can be differently assessed. Some would say that it just reveals the underlying Unity of the "Holy Church," which had been obscured and screened by and in the unhappy confusion of empirical history, and consequently would urge those who have recovered the sense of Unity to exhibit it in external acts of witness and testimony. Some others, however, would interpret this cross-meeting as an attempt to escape the tragedy of the Church Schism by a precarious arrangement between individuals and groups, and would oppose any such venture as disloyal and unreal. It is obviously true that the final and comprehensive judgment over history, even over the history of Christendom, belongs solely to the Judge, to Whom all power had been given in heaven and on earth, and that His final ruling and judgment will be unexpected for many. And yet, the Church on earth, i.e. in history, has been given an authority and responsibility – to bind and to loose. It had been established in history as a Pillar and foundation of the Truth. Charity should never be set against the Truth. There can be no contradiction between what is essentially of God. Christendom is sick indeed. But can it be healed just by an evasive call to unity? Evasive? Yes, because the root of sickness is in the confused and inadequate vision and apprehension of the Revealed Truth. One should take quite seriously the existing opposition within Christendom, however difficult it may be to describe or to define in rigid terms the very point of dissension. One should be frank and sincere: there is dissension.

3. In our ecumenical conversation and fraternal exchange of convictions, we have reached a critical stage, at which it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak with a common voice, or to make agreed statements. All agree that the Church's Unity is God's will and purpose, and all are aware of an impending duty to recover the lost unity. But then the path bifurcates, and practical advises [*sic*] diverge. At the present moment it would mean violence and compulsion, and this would mean an ultimate blow to the ecumenical companionship, if one proposes a single policy of the Ecumenical action and claims for it a binding authority. There is an ultimate cleavage. For many the present state of schism and disruption does depend primarily upon the spirit of divisiveness, in which secondary dissensions are over-emphasized and pretexts for the continuing separation are discovered in things which should not prevent communion in sacraments and confession, even if it is impossible to realize at once all inherent implications. They feel it as a sinful obstinacy that "churches," in spite of their agreement in basic things and against the expressed will of God, "that they should be one" and perfected in one, persist in their isolation. There is Unity, and it must be manifested at once. But there are many others, and the question of

numbers and of proportions is absolutely out of order and of place in the realm of Christian freedom and of ultimate convictions and commitments of faith, who are as strongly convinced that the tragedy of the Christian disruption goes much deeper and affects the very basis of the Divine institution. There is not only a lack of togetherness and spirit of disruption, but also objective losses in the historical process of that Christian disintegration which constitutes the main predicament of the Christendom at the present. Without any lack of charity, and with an earnest and brotherly affection for those with whom they utterly disagree, those who are conscientiously committed to the "High" or "Catholic" conception of the Church would insist that first of all those structural losses and distortions should be recovered or healed, and that, unless it had been done, any manifestation of "Christian Unity" would be unreal and insincere. They would not impose their convictions upon those who cannot and, in fact, do not share them, simply because they are not convinced, but they are compelled, by their love for their brethren and in an ultimate obedience to the will of God, as they read it in the Scripture and in the experience of the Church, to register their conviction and to abstain from any action, in which they cannot conscientiously share. Obviously, it would be as futile to suggest to "Catholics" that they should not regard the Apostolic Succession as being of the *esse* of the Church and that no doctrinal interpretation of the Sacraments is of any ultimate relevance, as to expect from the "Protestants" an acceptance of doctrines and convictions which they conscientiously repudiate. To do such thing, and to try to make on the common behalf any statement which obviously is just a "party-statement," to whichever "party" the preference is given, would mean either to indulge in dreams, beautiful perhaps but utterly unreal, or to attempt a subtle conversion of the dissidents, in disguise. The will of God is clear and has been emphatically stated: that all should be one. One should obey God. But the meaning and scope of that Unity is not yet unanimously assessed, and a further search in common is unavoidable. The Cross of Patience should be still carried further.

15.⁷⁷

Department of Christian Dogmatics University of Edinburgh
The Rev. Professor T. F. Torrance
The Mound
Edinburgh, EH1 2LX
TEL: 031-225 8400

77 Source: St Vladimir's Seminary, Georges Florovsky Library archive.

37 Braid Farm Rd
Edinburgh EH10 6LE

June 12th, 1973

My dear Georges,

How are you, and how is the work going, to which we are all looking forward so eagerly, which will produce an edition of your works in English?

My immediate purpose in writing is to ask where you published your superb paper on "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius" in 1962? You sent me a xeroxed copy of it some years ago, and I appreciated it greatly.⁷⁸ I made use of it in a recent lecture I gave in Addis Ababa in their remembrance of the death of St. Athanasius 1600 years ago, and would like to put in the references to the journal concerned.⁷⁹

I had a very interesting time in Addis Ababa – I was the guest of the Greek Orthodox Church and Archbishop,⁸⁰ but lectured in the Ethiopian Orthodox Institutions, Faculties of Theology and Philosophy. I was much impressed with their learning, theological and philosophical agility, and open-mindedness.

The Greek Orthodox Church make [*sic*] me a Protopresbyter within the Alexandrian Patriarchate, which astonished me! This is an act of ecumenical union, on the ground of patristic theology, which I appreciate greatly.⁸¹ I found

78 Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius," *Studia Patristica* 6 (1962): 36–52.

79 See Thomas F. Torrance, "Athanasius: A Reassessment of His Theology," *Abba Salama* 5 (1974): 171–84. In the same issue of this journal, Torrance published the following other talks from his Ethiopia trip: "The Evangelical Significance of the *Homoousion*: Sermon on John 5:17," 165–8; "Science and Philosophy in the Era of Cosmological Revolution," 168–70; and "The Contribution of the Greek Community in Alexandria to the Intelligent Understanding of the Christian Gospel and Its Communication in the World of Science and Culture," 188–92.

80 Methodios Fouyas (1925–2006), Metropolitan of Axum in Ethiopia, a close friend and collaborator of Torrance, and later archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church in England (1979–1988). Methodios was much active in ecumenism and in theological publishing, having founded and edited the journals *Abba Salama*, *Ekklesia kai Theologia*, and *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, all of which Torrance was involved with. A biographical study by his brother Panagiotis Fouyas was published as *Μεθόδιος: Ο αδικημένος ιεράρχης* (Athens: Melliariis Paideia, 2009). Torrance himself also devoted an essay to him: "Archbishop Methodios Fouyas," *Ekklesia kai Theologia* 10 (1989–91), 11–15.

81 In a highly unprecedented gesture, Torrance was given the title of "honorary protopresbyter" by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, Nicholas VI, in recognition his work on the Greek Fathers, and was given the pectoral cross of a protopresbyter by Methodios Fouyas to mark the occasion.

the Greek Orthodox there very ready to find every way possible to realise the 'one Christ-one Church' teaching of the NT and the Fathers, and I can foresee the day when there will be only one Orthodox Church serving Greeks, Ethiopians and Copts, and Reformed, within the ancient bastion of Christianity, which will then become the theological and missionary "Brussels" of Africa (I am thinking of the remarkable place now increasingly being occupied by Brussels in Europe).

Every good wish and kindest regard to both of you – I think of you often.

Yours very sincerely,

Tom

PS: I wonder if you could let me know the paper in which you have written on time (in English or French), whether on [*sic*] connection with patristic or in connection with modern theology? I want one of my postgraduate students to study what you have written, as part of a discussion on time and eternity which he is working on. I hope this is not too much trouble for you! TFT

16.⁸²

Princeton, NJ 08540

October 21, 1973

Dear Tom,

I was recently permitted to see the proofs of your article in my *Festschrift*.⁸³ I read it with great interest and satisfaction. It is a magnificent piece of work, and very convincing.

I would not go into detail now. I want to suggest that a similar analysis should be applied to the problem of time – it is also a problem of Christology: in the Incarnation an hypostatic unity has been established between the *timeless* and the *temporal*, between the perfect or absolute and the "growing" – from nativity to ascension. An antinomy is implied in the very fact or mystery of the

82 The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Box 104, Letter by Georges Florovsky to T. F. Torrance, Oct. 21, 1973. I thank my colleague and friend Seraphim Danckaert for finding and sharing this letter. A translation in Serbian of this letter as well as letter 16 above, with commentary, has been published in Seraphim Danckaert, "Tri pisma ota Georgija Florovskog o ekumenizmu," *Trkvene studije* 9 (2012), 221-244.

83 Florovsky refers to Torrance's essay, "The Relation of the Incarnation to Space in Nicene Theology," in the *festschrift* edited by Andrew Blane, *The Ecumenical World of Orthodox Civilization: Russia and Orthodoxy*, vol. 3, *Essays in Honor of Georges Florovsky* (Paris: Mouton, 1974). The essay was republished in Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

Incarnation which cannot be dissolved or evaded. In fact, it is a special case in which the relationship between the timeless and the temporal is to be conceived. And we are confronted with this problem already when we introduce the concept of Creation. Creation has a beginning, or is a beginning, but we can visualize this only in retrospect – by going back to the beginning, to “in the beginning.” But no temporal concept can be used of the Eternal, or rather Timeless, God. Creation has begun. But there is no “beginning” in the Timeless Godhead. God does not *begin* to create, the phrase would have no sense because any “beginning” implies time. It is not enough actually to distinguish strictly between the “Being” (in God) and the Divine “Will,” as it has been done by St. Athanasius, because the Will of God is also “timeless.” Here is the limit of the cataphatic theology – we cannot rationally comprehend the mystery – both of the Divine Timelessness and the Divine Providence in which the timeless will is directing and guiding the temporal process of the coming into existence.

Now, the same problem reappears in many forms and in many circumstances, including worship or prayer in which the temporal contacts the timeless, and the contacts originate at both ends. The focal point is precisely this “coordination” of two dimensions: *time* and *eternity*. St. Augustine was fully aware of this mystery-antinomy.⁸⁴ Father Bulgakov – and Karl Barth in his own way – attempted to *rationalize* the antinomic mystery, and then the Timeless is *ontologically* involved in the Time-process.⁸⁵

84 Florovsky is likely referring to Augustine’s reflection on the created nature of time in *Confessions* 11. Florovsky frequently credited Augustine with the insight of recognizing the created character of time.

85 Florovsky has in mind Barth’s treatment of election in volume II/2 of *Church Dogmatics*. Florovsky makes the same point in his lecture, “The Renewal of Orthodox Theology – Florensky, Bulgakov, and the Others: On the Way to a Christian Philosophy,” given at a March 1968 symposium on “Idealist Philosophy in Russia” in Aix-en-Provence: “There is an unexpected and incomprehensible paradoxical similarity between this conception developed by Bulgakov and the conception of Karl Barth in the fourth volume of his *Dogmatics*, in which you find that Jesus of history actually has been eternally with the Holy Trinity and the Holy Trinity never existed without Jesus.... They started from different angles, different points; their inspiration was not identical, but there was one thing to which we now come. Not only continuum, but supertemporal continuum, in which actually the real time plays very little role” (unpublished typescript; Andrew Blane archive – in my possession). Florovsky’s observations anticipate in a remarkable way the recent debates regarding the Trinity and election in Barth. For the most important recent contributions to this debate, see especially the essays by Hunsinger, McCormack, and Molnar in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Michael T. Dempsey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). For discussion in relation to Florovsky and Bulgakov, see Matthew Baker, “*Offenbarung, Philosophie, und Theologie: Karl Barth and Georges Florovsky in Dialogue*,” and Brandon Gallaher, “Separated at Birth? Barth and Bulgakov on

This is but a childish sketch of what should be accurately formulated – on the limit of rationalization. I am not yet satisfied now with what I was able to suggest years ago in my article on Creation – in all its different versions – French, Russian, English.⁸⁶ And probably no presentation of these thoughts in rational terms can be satisfactory. The problem belongs to the realm of *apophatic theology*, which presupposes the insight and commitment of faith.

Last Wednesday, the 17th, there was a special reception at the Princeton Seminary – in cooperation with the Boston College, S.J. – and a *Festschrift* in my honour was handed over to me. It appeared just recently in the series of the *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, published by the Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies in Rome, No. 195.⁸⁷ It is an impressive volume – with articles by Danielou, Congar, Henry Chadwick, Cruzel, Lampe, W. H. C. Frend, and others. I was deeply moved by this undeserved present.

In the same *Festschrift* to which you have contributed your essay there is an interesting article by Msg. Moeller⁸⁸ in which he describes my own contribution from the Roman point of view: I have called their attention to the constructive importance of Patristic theology. Personally I would underline two basic ideas: *Ecumenism in time* and the *Neo-Patristic synthesis*, which are obviously correlated.⁸⁹

Dialectic, Election and Trinity," in *Karl Barth in Dialogue: Encounters with Major Figures*, ed. George Hunsinger (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

86 Georges Florovsky, "L'idée de la création dans la philosophie chrétienne," *Logos: Revue Internationale de la Synthèse Orthodoxe* 1 (1928): 3–30; "Tvar' i tvarnost'," *Pravoslavnaia mysl'* 1 (1928): 176–212 [English translation: "Creation and Creaturehood," in *Creation and Redemption* (Belmont, MA.: Nordland Press, 1976), 43–78]; and "The Idea of Creation in Christian Philosophy," *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (1949): 53–77. The 1949 article is not the same as the one published in 1928.

87 The *Festschrift* referenced is David Neiman and Margaret Schatkin, ed., *The Heritage of the Early Church: Essays in Honor of George Florovsky*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 195 (Rome: Pontificale Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973). In a note from Florovsky to Schatkin found in the Princeton University Florovsky archive, responding to Schatkin's request for suggestions as to whose essays to invite for the *Festschrift*, Florovsky recommends his "close friend" T. F. Torrance. Another *Festschrift* for Florovsky had been planned in the early 1960s by Torrance's friend, the Greek-American theologian Angelos Philippou, but never came to fruition.

88 Charles Moeller, "Nouveaux Aspects de l'Oecuménisme," in *The Religious World of Orthodox Civilization: Russia and Orthodoxy*, ed. Andrew Blane: *Essays in Honor of Georges Florovsky* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 2:215–241.

89 For discussion of this connection in Florovsky's thought, see Matthew Baker, "Neopatristic Synthesis and Ecumenism: Towards the 'Reintegration' of Christian Tradition," in *Orthodox Christian Encounters of Identity and Otherness: Values, Self-Reflection and Dialogue*, ed. Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (Palgrave-MacMillan, forthcoming 2014).

I have asked the Nordland Press to send to you a copy of my Collected Essays. The second volume is now being printed. The third is in preparation. They also plan to produce a translation of my Patristic volumes. But I shall have to revise the text. Originally it was but my lectures at Paris, without references and footnotes.

Best regards for your family and for all my friends in Scotland.

Love. Yours as Ever

Georges.

17.⁹⁰

Faculty of Divinity
New College
Department of Christian Dogmatics
The Mound
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh. EH1 2 LX
From:
Professor T. F. Torrance
TEL: 031-225 8400

37 Braid Farm Rd
Edinburgh EH 10 6LE
Oct 30th, 1973

Dear Georges,

Thank you for your letter – it is always very good to hear from you. And thank you also for having the publisher send along the review copy of your Collected Works vol. 1, which I am very glad to have. We shall see that it is well reviewed in *SJT*.

I am greatly encouraged by your reaction to my piece in the Festschrift in your honour. Actually the editors several years ago cut it down by about 25 pages leaving out most of the patristic evidence I had adduced – but to have this agreement and support from you above all others pleases and encourages me greatly. The Greek Fathers remain my main love and I repair to them all the time, and learn from them more than from any other period or set of theologians in Church history. I have been reinforced by reading the works of Sambursky⁹¹ in

90 Princeton University Firestone Library, Rare Books and Archives.

91 Samuel Sambursky (1900–1990), Israeli scientist and historian, whose works include

Jerusalem on the physical world of the Greeks and Stoics and Late Antiquity in my interpreting of people like Origen and Athanasius: to see them against that scientific background throws into considerable light much of their thinking which we fail to grasp adequately if we read them over against the background simply of Platonic and Aristotelian thought.

I have been meaning to write on time in much the same way as space, and am grateful to you for your clues. Actually I have a draft on Time, Space and Resurrection (parallel to *Space, Time and Incarnation*) but have not had time to work at the patristic material properly.⁹² After the editors of your Festschrift cut out the patristic material, I wrote a long essay (about 90 pages) on space in Greek thought from the death of Aristotle to the second century AD, mostly dealing with non-Christian thought, but it has so much Greek in it that I have not yet published it. Methodios of Aksum⁹³ has promised to publish it for me, but it needs some pruning a little first. But I shall get down to that, God willing, one of these days. Before publishing material on time, however, I would like to read all your material, as I learn so much from you – always. In a long article I wrote during the summer on Ecumenism for the new 20th century *Encyclopedia Italiana*, I made use of your Bible, Church, and Tradition, and included it among the selected biography.⁹⁴

I am delighted to hear that another Festschrift has come out in your honour published from Rome, and look forward to seeing that. No word has yet come in about when “our” Festschrift for you is to appear.

George Dragas has just come back to Edinburgh, to complete his work on the *Contra Apollinarum* for a doctorate . . .⁹⁵

The Physical World of the Greeks (1956), *Physics of the Stoics* (1959), and *Physical World of Late Antiquity* (1962).

92 Published as *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1976). The patristic material was never included and, as Torrance indicates in his preface to the work, the book has a rougher quality than the earlier *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), which gave more attention to patristic thought and to historical theology in general.

93 See footnote 80 above.

94 Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Press, 1972). Torrance’s article was published as “Ecumenismo,” in *Enciclopedia del Novecento come lessico del massimi problemi* (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana – Ricordi, 1975), 294-313. Torrance’s later use of Irenaeus in essays and books of the 1980’s and 90’s seem to reflect Florovsky’s interpretation of that father, found in the Florovsky volume cited above.

95 George Dragas was a student of Torrance at Edinburgh in the late 1960’s and wrote his Masters thesis on Athanasius at Princeton Theological Seminary under Florovsky and Torrance in 1971 when Torrance was on sabbatical there. Dragas’ DPhil thesis, finished

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN T. F. TORRANCE AND GEORGES FLOROVSKY

Next week we are to have our Athanasius celebrations here when Chadwick and Frend will be giving lectures – but frankly, I do not expect to learn anything fresh or deep theologically from them – although they are excellent historians.

I hope that your wife keeps well, and that both of you have as full a measure of strength and peace as possible.

My wife and family join me in sending you both our Christian love and prayerful good wishes.

Yours ever,

Tom

at the University of Durham, was published as *St Athanasius Contra Appollinarem: The Questions of Authorship and Christology* (Athens: Ekklesia kai Theologia, 1985), headed with an enthusiastic introduction written by Torrance himself. Torrance later dedicated his book *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* to Dragas and his wife Ina.