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PARTICIPATING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD: AN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TRINITARIAN EPISTEMOLOGY OF T. F. TORRANCE

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ABSTRACT

PARTICIPATING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD:

AN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TRINITARIAN EPISTEMOLOGY OF T. F. TORRANCE

KRIS A. MILLER

The overall aim of this thesis is to assess the viability of a particular understanding of participation in the knowledge of God for the postmodern, scientific context in which it is now located. Through a critical engagement of the Trinitarian epistemology of T. F. Torrance, this thesis provides a more holistic, complex vision of participation in the knowledge of God that moves beyond the problems of reductionist accounts.

Part I of the thesis identifies and defines the modern problem of reductionist accounts of theological epistemology. To overcome these problems, this thesis proposes a complex vision of the knowledge of God through an engagement and expansion of Torrance's Trinitarian epistemology.

Part II delineates and analyzes seven general dynamics which comprise the nature of the knowledge of God for Torrance. Before moving to the center of his theological epistemology, this section provides an introduction and assessment of the general dynamics at work throughout his discussions of the knowledge of God.

Part III goes to the heart of Torrance's epistemology, the Triune God. This section begins by examining how the persons and relations of the ontological Trinity exercise a governing influence upon Torrance's theological epistemology. From this Trinitarian framework, this section then turns to expand and appraise three epistemological dynamics which consequently become centrally important: knowledge of God as personal, relational, and participatory. This section contends that these forms of knowledge involve the whole person and a way of life. This vision of participation extends the Trinitarian epistemology of Torrance with priorities to which his theological writings clearly point but which he himself did not develop.

Part IV concludes the thesis by drawing together the assessments made along the way concerning knowledge of God in a postmodern, scientific age and proposing an epistemological model that moves beyond the problems of reductionism.

STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

DECLARATION

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and none of it has been previously submitted to the University of Durham or in any other university for a degree.

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Part I: Introduction

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ABBREVIATIONS

BSCL   *Belief in Science and in Christian Life*

CD   *Church Dogmatics*

CFM   *The Christian Frame of Mind*

CTSC   *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture*

DCO   *Divine and Contingent Order*

GGT   *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*

GR   *God and Rationality*

KBBET   *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*

MC   *The Mediation of Christ*

RET   *Reality and Evangelical Theology*

RST   *Reality and Scientific Theology*

STI   *Space, Time and Incarnation*

STR   *Space, Time and Resurrection*

ST   *Summa Theologiae*

TCFK   *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge*

TF   *The Trinitarian Faith*

TP   *Trinitarian Perspectives*

TIR   *Theology in Reconciliation*

TR   *Theology in Reconstruction*

TS   *Theological Science*

CHAPTER 1

THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY AND MODERNITY'S REDUCTIONIST ACCOUNTS OF KNOWLEDGE: THE PROBLEM AND A COMPLEX PROPOSAL

1.1   Introduction

The overall aim of this thesis is to assess the viability of a particular understanding of participation in the knowledge of God for the postmodern, scientific context in which it is now located. For that assessment, this project will critically engage the theological epistemology of the twentieth-century Reformed theologian Thomas F. Torrance (1913-2007). Torrance was one of the most significant English-speaking theologians of the twentieth century and one of the very few theologians who gave sustained attention to the notion of knowledge of God in dialogue with twentieth-century epistemological developments occurring within the natural sciences. Modern reductionist accounts of epistemology atomized the knowledge of God, deforming notions of participation. In the wake of modernity, this leads to the following question: how can we assess the continuing force of the tradition of participation in the knowledge of God now that the explanatory capacity of modern reductionist accounts of knowledge is diminishing? By engaging and expanding the Trinitarian epistemology of T. F. Torrance, this thesis intends to provide a more holistic, complex notion of participation in the knowledge of God for the postmodern, scientific age.

This thesis begins by identifying and defining the modern problem of reductionist accounts of theological epistemology and proposing a complex vision of the knowledge of God through an engagement with Torrance's epistemology (Chapter One). Toward that end, this study delineates and analyzes seven general dynamics which comprise the nature of the knowledge of God for Torrance (Chapter Two). Next, this thesis goes to the heart of Torrance's epistemology, the Triune God, to examine how the persons and relations within the immanent Trinity exercise a governing influence upon his theological epistemology (Chapter Three). With this

central influence in mind, this study turns to appraise three resultant epistemological dynamics, namely that knowledge of God is personal, relational, (Chapter Four) and participatory, demonstrating how such participation involves the whole person and a way of life (Chapter Five). The thesis concludes by drawing together the assessments made along the way concerning knowledge of God in a postmodern, scientific age and proposing an epistemological model for moving beyond reductionism (Chapter Six).

This chapter commences by defining the problem of reductionist accounts of the knowledge of God in the modern age (1.2), utilizing perspectives from Karl Barth (1.2.1), Hans Urs von Balthasar (1.2.2), and other Christian theologians (1.2.3). Following this is a summary of the problem and a proposed solution (1.2.4). Next, this chapter explains why Torrance is a good interlocutor for helping to provide a vision of participation in the knowledge of God in the contemporary milieu (1.3). Furthermore, this chapter explains how an engagement with Torrance has implications for three distinct though inter-related contexts of theological conversation, including historic, global discussions concerning the knowledge of God (1.3.1), Reformed and Charismatic-Evangelical theology (1.3.2), and T. F. Torrance scholarship (1.3.3). Finally, this chapter will outline the goals and moves of this thesis (1.4), followed by a review (1.5). We turn now to defining reductionism in order to demonstrate its challenges for the theological tradition of participation in the knowledge of God.

1.2   The modern problem of reductionism for the knowledge of God

A problem now recognized across the intellectual disciplines from the modern era is that of reductionism.[1] The term reductionism is used to refer to those theories

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1. Arthur Peacocke, ed., *Reductionism in Academic Disciplines* (Guilford, Surrey: The Society for Research into Higher Education, 1985). Richard H. Jones provides a trenchant analysis of reductionism in philosophy, the natural sciences, the social sciences, and religious studies in *Reductionism: The Fullness of Reality* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2000). Also noteworthy for its inter-disciplinary discussions are the published papers from a conference of scholars from the sciences/mathematics, social sciences, and humanities/philosophy on the demise of fundamental premises concerning knowledge codified in the nineteenth century, including reductionism, is Richard E. Lee, ed., *Questioning Nineteenth-Century Assumptions about Knowledge II: Reductionism* (Albany: State University of New York, 2010). Nancey Murphy contends that there has been a catechretical extension of the reductionist "thinking strategy" from the natural sciences to most intellectual disciplines, particularly ethics, theology, political theory, philosophy of language as well as epistemology. Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion and Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 14-18, 208. Other helpful interdisciplinary discussions include Terrance Brown and Leslie Smith, eds., *Reductionism and the Development of Knowledge* (Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 2003), which engages biology, psychology, psychiatry, and sociology from a meeting of the Jean Piaget Society. There are many other resources that explore reductionism within one particular academic discipline.

according to which one can explain some reality by reducing it to a different and supposedly more basic level. "Classically, a reductionist thesis posits that complex high level phenomena, structures, and processes can be reduced, as far as their scientific explanation is concerned, to underlying lower level phenomena, structures, and processes."[2] Richard Jones writes,

> If a phenomenon is not deemed fully real, we must get down to the reality that is the source or substance of the phenomenon. We take it apart to see what makes it tick, or we retrace (from the Latin *reducere*, "to lead back") the development of the phenomenon to its roots. A reduction thus proposes what in the final analysis is real in the phenomenon and in terms which we must understand it. With such a reduction, we find that what is apparently real is ultimately "nothing but" something else—either its parts or something that is more basic. Thereby, one apparent reality is "reduced" to another.[3]

The most basic constituents of reality have "ontological priority" and are considered the source of a bottom-up, linear causality. This has consequences for many academic disciplines. Sociology can be reduced to psychology, psychology can be reduced to biology, biology to chemistry, and chemistry to physics.[4] The human person can be reduced to a body, the body to a gene-driven machine, the mind to the brain, the brain to networks of neural cells, and eventually back to physics. Even in literary studies, aesthetics and meaning give way to the psychological and political motivations behind the texts. While reductions vary according to the discipline, the common denominator is the explanation of one reality in terms of another reality that is considered more basic and thus the real cause. In other words, Xs are nothing more than an aggregate of Ys.

The "logical positivists" of the early twentieth century provide a supreme example of reductionism. The founding philosopher, Auguste Comte, categorized the history of thought in three developing stages, moving from the theological to the abstract philosophical and ultimately to the scientific. He envisioned a future where the "positive" statements derived from scientific observation and experimentation would displace statements derived from theological and philosophical speculation.[5]

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2. Jean Petitot, "Reduction and Emergence in Complex Systems," in *Questioning Nineteenth-Century Assumptions about Knowledge II: Reductionism*, ed. Richard E. Lee (Albany: State University of New York, 2010), 107.

3. Jones, *Reductionism*, 13.

4. Francis Crick famously quipped, "The ultimate aim of the modern movement in biology is in fact to explain *all* biology in terms of physics and chemistry." See Francis Crick, *Of Molecules and Men* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 10.

5. Gertrud Lenzer, ed., *Auguste Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

Consequently, the logical positivists attempted to construct a universal language for science by only using observational terms, which Rudolf Carnap first called "reduction statements," and thereby secure science and philosophy on a strictly empiricist foundation. Their aim was to unify the sciences based upon the most fundamental level, which was for Otto Neurath the reports of sensory experience. Using Kantian categories, they created a "principle of verification" whereby only analytic statements (statements of definition or logic) or empirically verified synthetic statements were considered valid or meaningful. All other kinds of statements were rendered meaningless, leaving no room for aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, or theology. Hence, with their strict form of empiricism, the logical positivists clearly demonstrate various types of reductionism.[6] While the positivists have been critiqued, their legacy of reductionism has continued in various forms.[7]

Because there are various types of reductionisms which are interrelated and are frequently not well distinguished, we will delineate four types for the purposes of this analysis.[8] There are *ontological* or *substantive reductionisms* which make the metaphysical claim that reality is constituted by its most basic level or fundamental parts. A substantive or ontological reductionist is most often a monist who maintains that reality is comprised of one substance, whether divine, mental, or material. Yet, reductions are held not only to make complexity simpler but oftentimes to locate the causes or sources of a reality under discussion to its fewer, primary agents. These are

6. The primary text is A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936; repr., Harmdondsworth: Penguin, 1971). Before Ayer, there was Rudolf Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World and Pseudoprolems in Philosophy*, trans. Rolf A. George (1928; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

7. For philosophical and theological critique, Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 156-68; Stephen T. Davis, "Theology, Verification and Falsification," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6 (1975): 23-39; Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 1999), 1-35; Jones, *Reductionism*, 46-47. Discussion and critiques from the science and theology genre include Paul D. Murray, "Truth and Reason in Science and Theology: Points of Tension, Correlation and Compatibility," in *God, Humanity and the Cosmos*, 2nd ed., ed. Chris Southgate (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 82-115, esp. 83-84; Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity*, 174; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science,* trans. by Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 29-71.

8. The four types of reductionism delineated above are most fitting for the purposes of this study, yet some authors have used other delineations. I have followed Richard H. Jones' delineation of five types of reductionisms, omitting the "structural" or "conceptual," Jones, *Reductionism*, 24-28. From the science and religion genre, a helpful discussion of ontological, epistemological, and methodological reductionism is Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2005), 78-82, 230-33, 256-57, 359. Nancey Murphy discusses five reductionisms adding logical/definitional and causal to Barbour's three in Nancey Murphy, "Reductionism: How Did We Fall Into It and Can We Emerge From It?" in *Evolution and Emergence: Systems, Organisms, Persons*, ed. Nancey Murphy and William R. Stoeger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23-25.

causal reductionisms which hold that one can find ultimate causal explanations at the lowest, most reduced levels of reality. In other words, the better we can identify the most basic units of matter, the better we can explain reality and its primary causes which are from the bottom-up. In relation to the previous two, there are also *epistemological* or *theoretical reductionisms* which maintain that knowledge and theories concerning any level of reality come from knowledge or theories at a lower, more basic level. More fundamental fields, such as particle physics, provide the explanations for higher-level fields, such as chemistry, biology or psychology. Knowledge from the higher-level fields is derivable from the lower-level fields and eventually, it is supposed, the higher-level field may no longer be needed. This can lead to *methodological reductionism*, which is the analytical approach of disassembling complex wholes into more basic components as the only legitimate method to understand them. This is the dominant scientific approach to problem-solving. The types of reductionisms need delineation particularly as we now consider the challenges of reductionism for the knowledge of God.

A primary challenge coming from *outside* Christian theology which the reductionisms of modernity present for the knowledge of God can be called *epiphenomenonalist reductionisms.*[9] With naturalist or materialist convictions, God—and therefore the knowledge of God—are held to be unreal. The phenomena of religious claims to knowledge of God are explained as the result of lower-level factors. While the phenomenon of religion—its cultural existence as human beliefs and practices—is deemed real enough, its ontological claims are not. Instead, the substance of their claims is explained by the "more fundamental" or "more real" layer of reality. For instance, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, knowledge of God has variously been reduced to sociological (Émile Durkheim),[10] economic (Karl Marx),[11] psychological (Sigmund Freud)[12], neurological (Edward O. Wilson)[13] and

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9. On religion as an epiphenomenal reduction, see Jones, *Reductionism*, 23-24, 224-332.

10. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1915).

11. Karl Marx argued that people act according to their economic interests, and thus, he famously reduced religion to the economic interests of humans: "Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement and its universal basis of consolation and justification… Religious suffering is at one and the same time *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people." Quotation from Karl Marx, introduction to "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin Classics, 1992), 244.

evolutionary (Daniel C. Dennet)[14] explanations. These naturalistic types of reductionism discredit knowledge of God as mere epiphenomena, derivable and explainable from lower levels.[15] Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that not only knowledge of God can be explained by lower levels, but all types of knowledge of any subject can be reduced to an epiphenomena under a consistent reductionism. It is also noteworthy that the reductionist theories concerning religion are in disagreement concerning the "real causal factor" of knowledge of God. According to a stringent reductionism, these "basic causes" are in conflict and would nullify each other until the real "basic cause" was established.

The various types of reductionisms have presented challenges *within* Christian theology as well. During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Christian theologians from various traditions have recognized and articulated problems with reductionism for theological epistemology. They have identified how epistemologies shaped in modernity have curtailed notions of knowledge, diminishing the fullness which knowledge of God has enjoyed within the Christian tradition.[16] To begin to present the problem of modern reductionism for the knowledge of God, we will first briefly consider how two representative, twentieth-century theologians understood and engaged the problem: Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988). Among twentieth-century theologians, these two theologians uniquely developed multifaceted, yet integrated theological epistemologies in response to the challenges of modernity. Though their theological writing came before discussions of postmodernity began in Christian theology, both theologians faced the problem of reductionism from the vantage point of their well-developed epistemologies.[17] In 1.3

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12. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. W.D. Robson-Scott, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor, 1964). Also, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. by Katherine Jones (1939; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1955). In an earlier book, Freud contends for the sociological origins of religion, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. by James Strachey (1913; repr., New York: Norton, 1950).

13. Edward O. Wilson explained religion in terms of the genetic evolution of the neural apparatus of our brains. See Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

14. Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (London: Penguin Books, 2007).

15. These epiphenomenalist reductionisms are ontological, causal, and epistemological reductionisms which, in turn, have led to methodological reductionisms in twentieth-century religious studies. For a nuanced discussion, see Jones, *Reductionism*, 298-332.

16. We will categorize how various Christian theologians have critiqued the problem of reductionism below in 1.2.3.

17. Both Andrew Louth and Mark A. McIntosh have noted the unique contributions of Barth and Balthasar in twentieth-century theology, who, like the Church Fathers, maintained the connection between theology and spirituality. Andrew Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), xi-xii; Mark A. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and*

below, this study will demonstrate why T. F. Torrance is a particularly strong interlocutor for developing a theological epistemology after Barth in the postmodern, scientific milieu. Yet first, in order to introduce the modern problem of reductionist accounts for the knowledge of God within Christian theology, this study moves to consider the epistemologies of Barth and Balthasar and the distinctive ways in which they confronted reductionism.

1.2.1   Karl Barth and the problem of reductionism for the knowledge of God

While Barth's relationship to modernity and postmodernity is complex and there are disputes on how he is to be interpreted, it seems clear that he intended to conceive and articulate the knowledge of God in response to modernity.[18] Without giving a full discussion to the knowledge of God within Barth's theology, we will note important, well-developed themes of his theology from which he challenged various reductionisms that affected theological epistemology.[19] By noting these theological themes, we will discover how Barth conceived and critiqued various epistemological reductionisms.

Theology (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 101-18. Discussions such as Louth's and McIntosh's which contend for the relationship between theology and spirituality (sometimes within the literature on "mystical theology") often note the need for the refurbishment of knowledge of God in the wake of modernity. For further example, see Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), *passim.* McIntosh, "Theology and Spirituality" in *Modern Theologians*, 3rd ed., ed. David F. Ford with Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), esp. 392-98; Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), esp. 33-95.

18. "One of the most fruitful ways of reading Barth is to look at his thought in the more general context of the breakdown of 'modernity'—the decline, that is, of idealist metaphysics and the philosophical, moral and religious culture of subjectivity." John Webster, *Karl Barth,* 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 14-15. Also, Daniel W. Hardy, "Karl Barth," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, 3rd ed., ed. David F. Ford with Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 21. Those who present Barth as a postmodern theologian include Hans Küng, "Karl Barth and the Postmodern Paradigm," in *Theology for the Third Millennium*, trans. Peter Heinegg (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 257-84; Walter Lowe, *Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993); Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); William Stacy Johnson, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), esp. 184-91.

19. More generally, on Karl Barth's conception of the knowledge of God, see Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 57-81; David L. Mueller, *Karl Barth* (Waco, TX: Word, 1972), 49-93; Webster, *Karl Barth*, 77-83; Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 27-82 (more generally), 136-59 (on natural theology); Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), esp. 155-62, 245-62. Whether or not "Barth's own conclusions about how God is known are more severe and stringent than the ways in which many now suppose that such knowledge occurs," the focus here is upon the key theological themes which helped him to resist epistemological reductionism. Quotation from Daniel W. Hardy, "Karl Barth," 37.

First, for Barth knowledge of God has its source and end in God. The supreme knowledge of God is had by God within God's being: "As he certainly knows Himself first of all, God is first and foremost objective to Himself."[20] Barth called this the "primary objectivity" of God. The objectivity by which He gives himself to be known in revelation Barth calls "secondary objectivity." [21] It is only by God's grace that, "although we are men and not God, we receive a share in the truth of His knowledge of Himself" which is secondary objectivity. "But in this share we have the reality of the true knowledge of Himself."[22] In both of these senses, primary and secondary, knowledge of God for Barth is objective.[23] That is, its fount and fulfillment is not found within human subjectivity but within and from God. Barth contended for this type of objectivity to meet the challenge of Feuerbach who had argued that statements about God were basically statements about human nature. For Barth, modern liberal theology influenced by Schleiermacher had fallen into assuming an anthropocentric basis and methods.[24] Barth understood this problem as an anthropological reductionism, basing the existence and knowledge of God on anthropological phenomena.[25] He aimed for a theocentric reversal of this anthropological reduction by contending for the objectivity of God in Christ and likewise the knowledge of God.[26] Especially early on in his theological writings, Barth maintained with Søren

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20. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* vol. II, pt. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 16. Hereafter, *CD* followed by the volume, part and page number: *CD* II/1, 16.

21. *CD* II/1, 16: "God is objectively immediate to Himself, but to us He is objectively mediate."

22. *CD* II/1, 51.

23. *CD* II/1, 3-62. See also George Hunsinger, *How To Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 35-39; Busch, *The Great Passion*, 72-76; Webster, *Karl Barth*, 77-9.

24. For instance, in his lecture at the end of the 1920s, "The Word of God in Theology from Schleiermacher to Ritschl," Barth attacked the "possession" of grace whereby God is brought to fit within any religious, ethical, or philosophical system. *Theology and Church* (London: SCM, 1962), 216: Grace, though described as free, "did not remain free for them. They claimed it as a right, a certainty, a possession of the Christian, the so-called believing Christian." For Barth, such a domestication of grace is commensurate with an anthropocentric reduction of the knowledge of God.

25. Instead, Barth contended that the Holy Spirit provided the subjective possibility for revelation. *CD* I/2, 242-79. In a critique of a particular hymn, Barth argued that a person's subjective experience of faith, "the spirit of human inwardness and seriousness, the spirit of mysticism and morals," should not become the source, criterion, or organizing principle for knowledge of God. *CD* I/2, 257.

26. On the freedom and objectivity of God's self-revelation, see *CD* I/2, 1-25. "What Barth has successfully countered… was the logic of Feuerbach's anthropological reduction. He had shown that the concept of God's self-revelation, as affirmed by faith, logically entailed the concept that faith's statements about God are objectively grounded. Although faith could not coherently find within itself the condition for its own possibility and all attempts to do so were logically self-defeating, faith could coherently believe that its basis lay not in itself but in God." Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 36. Also, on anthropocentric versus christocentric theology in Barth, Mueller, *Karl Barth,* 49-53.

Kierkegaard that there is an "infinite qualitative difference" between the transcendent God and creation, and consequently the knowledge of God could not be reduced to any aspect of creation.[27] In other words, God is known through God and through God alone.[28]

Barth maintained a second theological theme reinforcing the previous one, yet making its own contribution. He held that God's being is revealed in God's action.[29] To begin, he argued that the speech of God, God's Word, is itself the action of God.[30] This is why the Trinity informs and shapes his discussion of revelation.[31] He wrote that revelation

> insists absolutely on being understood in terms of its object, God… God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself *through Himself*. He reveals *Himself*. If we really want to understand revelation in terms of its subject, i.e., God, then the first thing we have to realise is that this subject, God, the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect. It is from this fact … that we must learn we learn that we must begin the doctrine of revelation with the doctrine of the triune God.[32]

Through God's actual and particular triune self-revelation, God has provided knowledge of himself. Before the activity of revelation, Barth used discussions of God's hiddenness to argue that God's nature is beyond human control and standards.[33] He wrote,

> At this very point the truth breaks imperiously and decisively before us: God is known only by God; God can be known only by God … In faith itself we are forced to say that our knowledge of God begins in all seriousness with the knowledge of the hiddenness of God …The assertion of God's hiddenness (which includes God's invisibility,

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27. For instance, from Barth's commentary, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 330f: "God, the pure and absolute boundary and beginning of all that we are and have and do; God who is distinguished qualitatively from men and from everything human, and must never be identified with anything which we name, or experience, or conceive, or worship as God… Above and beyond the apparently infinite series of possibilities and visibilities in this world there breaks forth, like a flash of lightning, impossibility and invisibility." An influential work for Barth's "crisis theology" and "dialectical theology" was Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna V. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

28. *CD* I/1, 296; cf. *CD* II/1, 44, 179-80.

29. George Hunsinger refers to the active motif within Barth's theology as "actualism" which he says "is present whenever Barth speaks, as he constantly does, in the language of occurrence, happening, event, history, decisions and act. At the most general level it means that he thinks in terms of events and relationships rather than monadic or self-contained substances. So pervasive is this motif that Barth's whole theology might well be described as a theology of active relations." George Hunsinger, *How To Read Karl Barth*, 30.

30. *CD* I/1, 143-62.

31. Barth's discussion of the Triune-shaped revelation is found in *CD* I/1, 295-489.

32. *CD* I/1, 295-96.

33. Barth's dialectic of divine veiling and unveiling is found in *CD* II/1, 179-204.

incomprehensibility and ineffability) tells us that God does not belong to the objects which we can always subjugate to the process of our viewing, conceiving and expressing and therefore our spiritual oversight and control. In contrast to that of all other objects, His nature is not one which in this sense lies in the sphere of our power.[34]

Barth's approach is in stark contrast with notions of the knowledge of God crafted in modernity without mention of God's triune activity. He virtually always moved from the particular of revelation to the general.[35] This means that he moved *from* the particular knowledge of God revealed in Christ as the supreme act of God's self-revelation *to* what this means for knowledge of God more generally. Stated emphatically in the Barmen Declaration, Jesus Christ is the "one Word of God that we are to hear."[36] Consequently, Barth considered much prolegomena in the wake of modernity as attempts to construct a non-theological basis for theology, making it possible outside the sphere of faith and the church: "The prefix *pro* in prolegomena is to be understood loosely to signify the first part of dogmatics rather than what is prior to it."[37] His is a theology from the particularity of God's self-revelation within the church.[38] Inspired by Anselm, Barth proceeded from faith in the "Credo," the church's confession of God's Word.[39] Instead of beginning with some aspect of human reason or experience, he began his *Church Dogmatics* with the doctrine of the

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34. *CD* II/1, 183, 187.

35. George Hunsinger describes this as the motif of "particularism" within Barth's theology. *How To Read Karl Barth*, 32-35.

36. "Jesus Christ, as He is testified to us in the Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, whom we are to hear, whom we are to trust and obey in life and in death. We repudiate the false teaching that the church can and must recognize yet other happenings and powers, images and truths as divine revelation alongside this one Word of God, as a source of her preaching." Cited in John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1982), 520.

37. *CD* I/1, 42. Furthermore, he wrote, "In order to give an account of the way of knowledge pursued in dogmatics, we cannot take up a position which is somewhere apart from this way or above the work of dogmatics. Such a place apart or above could only be an ontology or anthropology as the basic science of the human possibilities among which consideration is somewhere given to that of faith and the Church … In both cases, i.e., in both Modernist and Roman Catholic prolegomena, it can be known and said in advance, before actually embarking on dogmatics, what will be the proper way of knowledge. Evangelical dogmatics cannot proceed along these lines. It can only embark on its way, and then on this way, admittedly perhaps as its first task, yet genuinely on this way, concern itself with the knowledge of the correctness of this way. It knows that there can be no entering the self-enclosed circle of this concern from without, whether from a general human possibility or an ecclesiastical reality. It realises that all its knowledge, even its knowledge of the correctness of its knowledge, can only be an event, and cannot therefore be guaranteed as correct knowledge from any place apart from or above this event."

38. "Hence [dogmatics] does not have to begin by finding or inventing the standard by which it measures. It sees and recognises that this is given with the Church. It is given in its own peculiar way, as Jesus Christ is given, as God in His revelation gives Himself to faith." *CD* I/1, 12.

39. This approach is expounded definitively in Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, trans. Ian W. Robertson (London: SCM Press, 1960), 26f. In *Church Dogmatics*, Barth explicitly refers the reader to Anselm for this approach. *CD* II/1, 4.

Word of God. In so doing, Barth considered himself to be departing from nineteenth-century liberalism. Thus, Barth's theology had a theological anchor, namely the Triune God who has claimed human beings as his covenant partners by his powerful actions of self-revelation and redemption in Jesus Christ.[40] The Word of God revealed in Jesus Christ and witnessed to in the Scriptures is God's primary means of self-revelation that trumps all other claims to authority. From early on, some have argued that he has proposed a revelational positivism or foundationalism which is reductionistic. Barth did not allow God's initiative and grace at work in creation a place in providing a limited, general revelation which Scripture, Calvin, and others have maintained it had. In this way, Barth restricted an avenue of God's revelation, limited though it may be in comparison to the self-revelation in Christ.[41] Nevertheless, Barth pointed to God's irreducible self-knowledge and self-revelation as the ultimate source and criterion for the knowledge of God.

Consequently, Barth's theology challenged modern theology in foundationalist or apologetic forms.[42] He opposed laying a procrustean bed of abstract epistemological principles onto which knowledge of God must fit.[43] By contending for the freedom of God, he opposed reducing knowledge of God to one component

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40. Barth, "The Revelation of God," in *CD* I/1, 295-489. "In effect, Barth makes the doctrine of the self-revealing Trinity do the jobs which in many other dogmatic works are undertaken by independent accounts of theological prolegomena." Webster, *Karl Barth*, 53.

41. Henri Bouillard, *The Knowledge of God* (London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1969), 11-62; James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), esp. 1-20; 102-37; Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 1:267-72; Mueller, *Karl Barth*, 150. Some of the theologians who have charged Barth as promoting a type of revelational or otherworldly positivism include Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niehbuhr, and Emil Brunner. A good discussion of these critiques within their historical context is Gary Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology Without Weapons* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 131-67. A more recent critique of Barth's "canonical foundationalism" is William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology: From the Fathers to Feminism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 361-90.

42. Those who demonstrate parallels between Barth and a non- or post-foundationalism from within the "postliberal" school include George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), esp. 17-19, 23-24, 32-41; Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 38-46, 78-81, 147-63; William C. Placher, *Unaplogetic Theology: A Christian Voice In Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 135: "If my arguments have been correct, then Christian theology needs to take the form that Frei sees in Barth: a description of the world as seen from a Christian perspective that draws what persuasive power it has from the coherence and richness of the whole."

43. Although Barth did not use the language of "foundationalism," his position challenged the Enlightenment's constricting assumption that knowledge must be founded upon universally accepted categories of reason or experience. A noteworthy discussion is Stanley Haeurwas, Nancey C. Murphy, and Mark Nation, eds., *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).

within a larger philosophical system.[44] For Barth, such approaches began anthropologically, reducing knowledge of God to the expectations and constructions of a culturally dominant philosophy beyond the actual place of the knowledge of God. His avoidance of various foundationalisms undergirded his vigorous denunciations of the *analogia entis* or the possibility of natural theology.[45] God cannot be relegated to the category of "being."[46] Barth feared that natural theology could provide support to the German Christian synthesis of God, race, and *Führer*, diminishing the particularity and centrality of God's self-revelation in Christ.[47] For Barth, the Enlightenment and modernistic dogmatics had reduced revelation to religious history and experience of God in God's freedom to experience in a general human sense. As a result, instead of having its ground in the being and activity of God, modern notions of the knowledge of God are reduced to human grounds "in a greater nexus of being" or "a greater nexus of scientific problems."[48] Yet, for Barth the knowledge of God cannot be defined by anything less than God who is revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit: "A result of the uniqueness of this object of knowledge might well be that the concept of its knowledge cannot be definitively measured by the concept of the knowledge of other concepts or by a general concept of knowledge but that it can be defined at all only in terms of its own object."[49] Because of its ultimately unique

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44. John Macken, *The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics of Karl Barth and His Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

45. For Barth's discussion of the *analogia entis* or analogy of being, see Barth, *CD* I/1, xiii-xiv; *CD* II/1, 226-27. Furthermore, Barth's polemical book written against Emil Brunner's defense of natural theology in *Nature and Grace* is Barth's book *Nein!* published together with Brunner's work in *Natural Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002). In the 1937 and 1938 Gifford Lectures, a lecture event designed for the topic of natural theology, Barth did not so much engage the topic of natural theology as present on revealed theology as the proper theology of the Reformation. This is published as *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938). For discussion, Busch, *The Great Passion,* 67-72; Mueller, *Karl Barth,* 90-93. However, an incisive critique of Barth's dominant position against natural theology that he maintained throughout his controversy with Brunner, the Gifford Lectures and the early volumes of *Church Dogmatics*, is James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural*, *passim*.

46. The standard interpretation of Barth's development is that he decisively moved from a dialectical theology that opposed the "analogy of being" to a mediating position between liberalism, Roman Catholic theology, and his earlier dialectical theology that he defined as the "analogy of faith." This influential interpretation was first advanced by Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992). Also, Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology*, *1910-1931* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 48-147. Barth himself endorsed this interpretation in *Anselm: Fides Quarerens Intellectum*, 11. However, there has been debate upon how decisive a break there is in Barth's development between these positions, beginning with Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology.*

47. While it is agreed that political controversies raised the issue of natural theology for Barth, it is also agreed that his polemic against it was not motivated purely by politics. Mueller, *Karl Barth*, 42-43, 86-90; James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, 10-12.

48. *CD* I/1, 36-44, quotation on 36.

49. *CD* I/1, 190.

source—God's being and activity—the knowledge of God cannot be ultimately explained by a lesser cause than God.

In continuity with the theme that God's action reveals God's being, for Barth, the one supreme act of God is *both* the revelation *and* reconciliation which God accomplished simultaneously in Christ and by the Spirit. Barth contended that the Reformers did not hold together closely enough justification with the knowledge of God or reconciliation with revelation: "They saw and attacked the possibility of an intellectual work-righteousness in the basis of theological thought. But they did not do so as widely, as clearly and as fundamentally as they did with respect to the possibility of a moral work-righteousness in the basis of Christian life."[50] However, for Barth, just as the possibility of human righteousness is taken away by the grace of God, so "the capacity to know God is taken away from us by revelation and can be ascribed to us again only by revelation."[51] Thus, no part of human justification or knowledge of God can ultimately be rooted or reduced to the human or human capacities. By holding together reconciliation with revelation, Barth guarded against epistemological reductionisms that removed knowledge of God from its theological center and soteriological context.[52]

It should be noted that Barth's emphasis on the objectivity of God and God's being-in-action in Christ does not have to be interpreted as a disengaged theology without concern for human subjectivity in the knowledge of God. As noted from the vantage point of reconciliation, there is an essential anthropological component to the knowledge of God for Barth which he develops elsewhere.[53] While the Trinitarian theological center remained, Barth discussed humans as the hearers of God's Word and participants in the knowledge of God.[54] Therefore, Hunsinger notes that Barth's

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50. Karl Barth, *Nein!*, reprinted in *Natural Theology*, 102.

51. *CD* II/1, 184.

52. Rowan Williams has argued that when Barth discusses the Trinity to address questions of knowledge, he subsumes theology and soteriology into epistemology. R. Williams, "Barth on the Triune God," in *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*, ed. S.W. Sykes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 147-93. Nevertheless, Barth is explicitly answering epistemological questions using Trinitarian doctrine in *CD* I/1 and furthermore continues his discussion of the Trinity in volume 4 on redemption. Can the link between Trinity and epistemology as well as between Trinity and redemption that Barth maintains be read not as an instrumentalizing of the Trinity, but as the doctrine of God governing the discussions of epistemology and soteriology?

53. Barth affirmed that "it was and will be men who are intended and addressed and therefore characterized as recipients, but as also themselves bearers of this Word." *CD* I/1, 191.

54. All of chapter 6 in *CD* I/1, "The Knowability of the Word of God", 187-247, discusses the human recipients as the bearers of revelation. Furthermore, in chapter 5, "The Knowledge of God," in *CD* II/1, the place and role of humans in the knowledge of God receives much attention.

theology contains a distinct strand of personalism.[55] In fact, it can be argued that the objectivist motifs in his theology provided the framework for the human encounter with God. It is through God's gracious self-revealing and reconciling work that human encounter with God occurs, an I-Thou relationship.[56]

In summary, for Karl Barth it is supremely God who prohibits the domestication of His self-revelation and the reduction of knowledge of himself to anything less than what God has made it. God's triune being provides the knowledge of God with its own substance and integrity which cannot be reduced to any principle within creation, anthropological or otherwise. God's simultaneous reconciling and revelatory activity provides the means and content for knowledge of God which cannot be simplified to generic epistemological abstractions. In brief, because God's triune being and saving activity is irreducible, so knowledge of God is irreducible and cannot be explained by any object, dynamic, or philosophical principle less than God. Yet, some readers may wonder, is Barth's approach not reductionistic in other ways? Might this be a *Christomonistic reductionism*, confining the knowledge of God to what has been revealed through Christ? This thesis will not attempt to answer this question concerning Barth's epistemology. Yet, it is posed to demonstrate the possibility of other types of reductionisms, furthering the purpose of this section of introducing the modern problem of reductionist accounts of the knowledge of God. Before turning to consider how an engagement with the epistemology of T. F. Torrance might provide assistance in correcting the reductionist problem, we move to consider another twentieth-century theologian who had a distinct, well-developed epistemology from which he confronted the modern problem of reductionism.

1.2.2 Hans Urs von Balthasar and the problem of reductionism for the knowledge of God

To further develop this introduction to the modern problem of reductionist accounts of knowledge of God within Christian theology, this section, as with Barth in the previous section, will note important theological themes from which Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) conceived and critiqued various epistemological reductionisms. In some ways similar and in other ways quite distinct from Barth, Balthasar aimed to rehabilitate notions of knowledge of God in the wake of modernity

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55. Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 40-42.
56. *CD* II/1, 58.

by expanding some of its constricting assumptions.[57] His perspective of the nature of God's truth gave him hope for such an aim. He wrote, "God's truth is, indeed, great enough to allow an infinity of approaches and entryways. And it is also free enough subsequently to expand the horizons of one who has chosen too narrow a starting point and to help him to his feet."[58] Balthasar's fifteen-volume theological trilogy, *The Glory of the Lord, Theo-Drama,* and *Theo-Logic*, intended to provide theology with such an expansion by using the three Platonic transcendentals—the beautiful, the good, and the true—to demonstrate a proper use of the "analogy of being."[59] Edward T. Oakes notes that the order of his theological trilogy contains an implicit epistemology. Balthasar maintained that the epistemological approaches of René Descartes and Immanuel Kant have conditioned modern thinkers to begin with questions of truth, moving subsequently to questions of ethics and finally, if considered at all, aesthetics. Balthasar reversed this order, moving instead from aesthetics to ethics and then to truth.[60] To expand the constricted starting points that emerged in modernity, Balthasar reclaimed aesthetics, and in particular beauty, as an important dimension of being and thus a beginning point to properly perceive truth and knowledge of God.

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57. "And there is a recurring polemic throughout von Balthasar's writings against those who choose reductive explanations, historical, psychological or whatever, and thereby fail to do justice to the object of their study." Ben Quash, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *The Modern Theologians,* 3rd ed., ed. David F. Ford with Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 111.

58. Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Seeing the Form," in vol. 1 of *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 17. This is similar to the comment of Nicholas Lash when he wrote, "There is in certain scientific circles, a reductionism abroad according to which the *only* road to knowledge is that mapped out by techniques of enquiry which are today deemed 'scientific'. But this, of course, is nonsense. Most of the things that most people know, they have not learned this way. There is an irreducible diversity of ways in which, as human beings, we feel our way towards the truth." Nicholas Lash, *Holiness, Speech and Silence: Reflections on the Question of God* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 86.

59. In response to the Protestant challenge to Roman Catholic theology and in particular to Karl Barth, Balthasar defended the *analogia entis* or "analogy of being" from a Christological center. For his engagement and interpretation of Barth, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*. Bruce McCormack challenged Balthasar's interpretation that Barth shifted from "dialectic" to "analogy" through his 1931 study of Anselm. Instead, McCormack argued that Barth remained a "critically realistic dialectical theologian" in his book, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical*. More recently, Stephen D. Wigley has argued that Balthasar did not so much misinterpret Barth, but that he responded and defended the analogy of being. Furthermore, Balthasar demonstrated its use in organizing and developing his theological trilogy in response to Barth's challenge. Stephen D. Wigley, *Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Critical Engagement* (London : T&T Clark, 2007).

60. See chapter five of Edward T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 133-58; Also, Edward T. Oakes, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *The Routledge Companion to Modern Christian Thought* (London: Routledge, 2013). Edward Oakes allowed me to read a draft before publication, thus I am waiting to know the page numbers.

The proper perception of the form of revelation in its objective and subjective dimensions is the focus of volume one of *The Glory of the Lord*.[61] The perception of beauty serves as an important analogy for Balthasar, for it invites the subject out of himself and into dialogue with the form and content of the beautiful, as with God's self-revelation in Christ. Beauty takes into consideration the whole and thus the form of a presenting reality.[62] By beginning with beauty, Balthasar emphasizes, "For the moment, the essential thing is to realize that, without aesthetic knowledge, neither theoretical nor practical reason can attain to their total completion."[63] This is a different approach than that of the sciences which obtain precision by splitting and dissecting. In contrast with a reductionist approach, Balthasar wrote, "For we can be sure of one thing: we can never again recapture the living totality of form once it has been dissected and sawed into pieces, no matter how informative the conclusions which this anatomy may bring to light."[64] Consequently, he argued that under the pressure of modern rationalistic accounts of science, questions of fundamental theology shifted from asking, "How does God's revelation confront man in history? How is it perceived?" to questions like, "What basis acceptable to reason can we give to his [Jesus'] authoritative claims?" In short, the appropriate forms of perception were reduced down in the modern era to forms which are appropriate to one sector of reality, ignoring the larger, aesthetic question of perceiving form.[65]

Balthasar also discussed appropriate forms of perception to God's revelation in his *Theo-Drama*. Through the analogy of drama, Balthasar aimed to broaden notions of theological knowledge which had become "stuck fast on the sandbank of

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61. Edward T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption,*131-208; Jason Paul Bourgeois, *The Asethetic Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 23-49; Stephan Van Erp, *The Art of Theology: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics and the Foundations of Faith* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2004), 125-62; Oliver Davies, "The Theological Aesthetics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs Von Balthasar,* ed. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 131-42; Ben Quash, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," 110-12.

62. "And since the exact sciences no longer have any time to spare for it ['Beauty'] (nor does theology, in so far as it increasingly strives to follow the method of the exact sciences and to envelope itself in their atmosphere), precisely for this reason is it perhaps high time to break through *this* kind of exactness, which can only pertain to one particular sector of reality, in order to bring the truth of the whole again into view—truth as a transcendental property of Being, truth which is no abstraction, rather the living bond between God and the world. And finally: since religion in our modern period has renounced that word, it would not be idle to investigate at least this once what countenance (if we can still speak of a 'countenance') such a denuded religion may exhibit." Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 18. Balthasar further describes how faith takes in and responds to the whole in his essay "A Verse of Matthias Claudias" in *Elucidations*, trans. John Riches (London: SPCK, 1975), 10-20.

63. Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 152.

64. Ibid., 31.

65. Ibid., 173.

rationalist abstraction."[66] Moving from contemplation to action, he discussed here not aesthetic perception, but participation in the drama of salvation history as necessary for knowledge of God.[67] "Now we must allow the encountering reality to speak in its own tongue, or rather, let ourselves be drawn into its dramatic arena. For God's revelation is not an object to be looked at: it is his action in and upon the world, and the world can only respond, and hence 'understand,' through action on *its* part."[68] God's revelation has not only an aesthetic quality, but also a dramatic, active character.[69] While the aesthetic quality of God's self-revelation is centered in the beauty or glory of God, its active dimension has its center of gravity in the good.[70] God's good action in history and the free human response in history comprise a dialogical drama between God and humanity. It is by participation in God's dramatic activity through obedience that one perceives and thus has knowledge.[71] "The *good* which God does to us can only be experienced as the *truth* if we share in *performing* it (Jn 7:17; 8:31f); we must 'do the truth in love'… not only in order to perceive the truth of the good, but, equally, in order to embody it increasingly in the world."[72]

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66. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prologomena*, vol. 1 of *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 25.

67. Ben Quash, "The Theo-Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 143-57; Quash, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," 112-16; Edward T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 211-73; Jason Paul Bourgeois, *The Aesthetic Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hans Urs von Balthasar,* 39-49.

68. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Prologomena*, 15. Emphasis his.

69. "So the theodramatics makes a claim about the overwhelmingly dramatic character of the Christian revelation and the overwhelmingly dramatic response that it demands. It summons academic theology back from dessicated rationalism to a form and a register that are vibrant and forceful (and in touch with lived Christian life)."Quash, "The Theo-Drama," 144.

70. "There is nothing ambiguous about what God does for man: it is simply *good*. Theo-drama is concerned with the good…The good has its center of gravity neither in the perceiving nor in the uttering: the perception may be *beautiful* and the utterance *true*, but only the act can be *good*." Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 18.

71. "If by 'aesthetics' we are thinking more of the act of perception or its 'beautiful' object, we are succumbing to a static view which cannot do justice to the phenomenon [of God's self-revelation]. Aesthetics must surrender itself and go in search of new categories. … The 'forms', 'pictures', 'symbols', which an 'aesthetics' can present … are insufficient in themselves to interpret revelation in its absolutely unique, definitive form and in terms of theological 'universal validity'. This can only be done by the absolute commitment found in that drama in which the one and only God sets each of us to play our unique part. Death turns into life, and this is something that also takes place in our hearts so that, drawn into the action, they can look toward that center in which all things are transformed. But we have been appointed to play our part, and thus we share responsibility for our own understanding and expression of it." von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 16-17.

72. Ibid., 20. Emphasis his.

Briefly put, knowledge of God occurs within the performed drama of salvation history, and theologians play a part in the drama which they in turn describe.[73]

Turning directly to the nature of truth in *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar hoped to recover an early stream of the Christian tradition in epistemology which in modern times "has become slack and formed peculiarly stagnant pools."[74] He contended that the modern focus on proving the existence of truth is perhaps taking upon a defensive posture and allowing modern rationalism and skepticism to set the agenda. Such discussions of truth and knowledge are not commensurate with the understanding of Church Fathers like Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas when the aim becomes "scientific clarity" and "unassailable certainty" which "can only be purchased by selling off huge acreages of truth."[75] With a clear statement of the problem, Balthasar argued, "This reduction of knowledge of the truth to a purely theoretical evidence drained of all vital personal and ethical decisions so palpably narrows the scope of truth that it *ipso facto* loses its universality and, therefore, its very essence."[76] He maintained the interrelationship of truth, goodness, and beauty as transcendental properties of being when he wrote, "only a permanent, living unity of theoretical, ethical and aesthetic attitudes can convey a true knowledge of being."[77] While Balthasar acknowledged that each of these three properties of being are distinct points of view, he argued that it is necessary to hold onto their coinherence and interplay to avoid the problems which result from rationalist reductionism. Treating them as mutually exclusive only distorts them:

> Modern rationalism, attempting to narrow the range of truth to a supposedly isolable core or pure theory, has exiled the good and the beautiful from the domain of the rationally verifiable, relegating them to arbitrary subjectivity or to a world of private belief and personal taste. As a result, the picture of being, the unified view of the world, is torn to shreds, so that any real conversation about truth becomes impossible. Discourse remains at the level of the generically accessible, hence ultimately trivial, while the deepest questions of truth, which need decision and taste even to be seen, are buried under the

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73. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, vol. 2 of *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 53-59. His dramatic approach includes but goes beyond the focus upon "orthopraxy" in some modern theological discussions. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Prologomena*, 31-34.

74. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Truth of the World*, vol. 1 of *Theo-Logic I,* trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 28.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid., 28-29.

77. Ibid., 29.

silence of a false modesty. If truth lacks decision, then decision, the personal decision that determines one's view of the world, lacks truth.[78]

By maintaining the unity of truth with beauty and goodness, Balthasar intended to correct the reductionisms of modern rationalism upon truth and knowledge. Without aesthetics and ethics, truth and knowledge are reduced to an imperceptible and impracticable form.

In his book *Love Alone Is Credible*, which can serve as a condensed survey of Balthasar's trilogy, he critiqued theological approaches founded on the cosmos or world history as the problem of "cosmological reduction" in chapter one.[79] In chapter two, he critiqued theological approaches based on anthropology as the problem of "anthropological reduction."[80] He then argued that "we cannot verify God's Sign in terms of the world or in terms of man… There is no text that offers a 'foundation' for God's text, making it legible and intelligible. It must interpret itself, and this is what it wishes to do."[81] The alternative Balthasar presented to these two types of reductionisms is the self-interpreting love of God which interprets God's action and God's truth together.[82] God's love brings God's self-communication and thus God's self-knowledge, even though these cannot be reduced to the sphere of logic. He writes, "The absolute uniqueness of the One God's loving revelation to the unique persons of the saints cannot be reduced to general ontological and rational categories."[83] In other words, love brings knowledge, containing its own conditions of perception. Similar to how the love of a mother awakens love in a child and

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78. Ibid., 29-30.

79. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible*, trans. D. C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 15-30.

80. Ibid., 31-50. This is also discussed in his chapter "Anthropology as Philosophy," in *The God Question and Modern Man* (New York: Seabury Press, 1958), 33, where he states, "To an epoch in which anthropology has been recognized as the key to philosophy, it is self-contradictory to foster an intelligence that approaches things from a merely rationalistic and technical point of view, indeed it completely misunderstands its own being."

81. Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible*, 50. While Balthasar certainly contends for personal appropriation of the truth, the subject does not determine the truth of revelation. "The central presupposition of modernism, in a nutshell, is that every objective dogmatic proposition must be measured in terms of its suitability to the religious subject, in terms of its positive effects on and capacity to complete and fulfill that subject." On pages 40-43, he goes on to argue that subjective appropriation of the truth is important in the Church Fathers. "Nevertheless, the tradition never set the criterion for the truth of revelation in the center of the pious human subject, it never measured the abyss of grace by the abyss of need or sin, it never judged the content of dogma according to its beneficial effects on human beings."

82. Balthasar did not hold human love as the framework for understanding God's love, but in reverse, a weakened analogy of divine love. "The plausibility of God's love does not become apparent through any comparative reduction to what man has always already understood as love; rather, it is illuminated only by the self-interpreting revelation-form of love itself." Ibid., 56.

83. Ibid., 71, note 2.

consequently also awakens knowledge, God interprets himself to humans as love. [84]
In other words, God's love contains knowledge and yet "the inner reality of love can be recognized only by love."[85] So, for Balthasar, love precedes, encapsulates and enables knowledge.[86] Thus, "the site from which love can be observed and generated cannot itself lie outside of love (in the sphere of 'pure logicity' of so-called science); it can lie only there, where the matter itself lies—namely in the drama of love."[87] The relationship between love and knowledge held an important place for von Balthasar in prohibiting reductive, impersonal accounts of knowledge.[88] Without the governing reality and concept of love, the notion of knowledge of God is reduced to an unrecognizable, impractical, and illogical form.[89]

1.2.3 Other Christian theologians and the problem of reductionism for the knowledge of God

Unlike other twentieth-century theologians, Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar attempted to correct modernity's reductionist accounts of knowledge of God by attending to God's self-revelation in distinct ways.[90] However, there have been other ways that theologians after Barth and Balthasar have identified and critiqued problems with modernity's reductionist accounts of knowledge. Without attempting to be exhaustive, delineating some of these other critiques will help us to further grasp the modern problem of reductionism for theological epistemology. We will then be in a position to summarize the problem and offer a solution, turning to consider what resources there might be within the theological epistemology of T. F. Torrance for

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84. Ibid., 76.

85. Ibid., 75.

86. "Christian action is therefore a being taken up into God's action through grace, being taken up into God's love so that one can love with him. It is only here that (Christian) *knowledge about God* becomes possible, for 'he who does not love, does not know God; for God is love' (1 John 4:8)." Ibid., 116.

87. Ibid., 82.

88. "For the sake of the world, the world's own tendencies to reductive and impersonal knowledge need to be immersed in the habit of self-giving love." Mark McIntosh, "Von Balthasar," in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, ed. Gareth Jones (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 400.

89. We will also find the relationship between love and knowledge important in Augustine's theological epistemology and, moreover, for the continuing force of the tradition of participation in the knowledge of God in the current milieu.

90. Nancey Murphy points out that in order to overcome reductionism in the philosophy of science and beyond, there has been the recognition of top-down or whole-to-part causation. Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity*, 21-23, 30-34. As an interesting analogy, both Barth and Balthasar reformulated the knowledge of God "from above," that is from God and God's self-revelation, and Balthasar in particular gave attention to whole-to-part causation in "perceiving the form" of revelation. We will have more to say about the alternatives of holism and emergentism to reductionism below.

providing a robust alternative to reductionist accounts of knowledge for the postmodern, scientific age. For now, consider the following catalog of more recent theological critiques of reductionism.

There have been critiques of *Platonic* or *dualistic reductionisms* which relegated knowledge of God to the soul of the human person.[91] There have been critiques of *Cartesian rationalist* or *cognitivist reductionisms* which restricted the knowledge of God to the rational mind and its processes.[92] Some have critiqued *experiential reductionisms* which defined the knowledge of God in terms of the experience of the knower.[93] Others have critiqued the *cultural* or *linguistic*

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91. This type of reductionism is based upon a Platonic body-soul dualism, taken up by Augustine. Consequently, knowledge of God is relegated to the soul (or "mind") of the person which is distinct from the body. See Nancey Murphy, "Human Nature: Historical, Scientific and Religious Issues," in *Whatever Happened to the Soul: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 1-30; Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-37. However, see the trenchant defense of Augustine by Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's de Trinitate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

92. This type of reductionism has its roots within Descartes' notion of the self as a thinking-constituted being. Rationalist reductionisms have been critiqued by theologians who emphasize the affective or experiential dimensions of knowledge, most notably from Eastern Orthodox and Pentecostal traditions. For instance, from an Orthodox perspective, Dumitru Staniloae contends for the need for apophatic, direct, and mystical knowledge of God to complement rational, deductive knowledge. Dumitru Staniloae, *Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*, vol. 1 of *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, trans. and ed. by Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), esp. 95-124. Also, philosopher James K. A. Smith critiques this type of reductionism epistemologically and anthropologically from the vantage point of Pentecostal spirituality. He writes, "Implicit in the practices of Pentecostalism are both a philosophical anthropology and an epistemology that resist the slimmed-down reductionism of modern cognitivism." *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 59. He defines his use of "cognitivism" as a near synonym of rationalism or intellectualism on 56, n.19. In response to a cognitivist or rationalistic reductionism, he develops an affective, embodied epistemology which, with Pentecostalism's narrative emphasis, yields a "narrative knowledge" in chapter 3, "Storied Experience: A Pentecostal Epistemology," 48-85. On p. 53, Smith contends, "This incipient epistemology [of Pentecostal spirituality] is not anti*rational*, but antirational*ist*; it is not a critique or rejection of reason as such but rather a commentary on a particularly reductionistic model of reason and rationality, a limited, stunted version of what counts as 'knowledge.'" Also, theologians who emphasize the mystery or transcendence of God, retrieving an emphasis of pre-modern theology lost in modernity, bring critique to rationalist reductionisms. For instance, William C. Placher has developed the argument that "before the seventeenth century, most Christian theologians were struck by the mystery, the wholly otherness of God, and the inadequacy of any human categories as applied to God. That earlier view never completely disappeared, but in the seventeenth century philosophers and theologians increasingly thought they could talk clearly about God." William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thing about God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 6.

93. Following Descartes and Kant, who wished to insulate human free will from a reduction to the material world of necessity, Friedrich Schleiermacher rooted the fount of theology in the inner world or "feeling of absolute dependence" as the fount of knowledge of God. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (1822; repr., London: T&T Clark, 1999). Protestant liberalism has followed in their path and is categorized by George Lindbeck as the "experiential-expressive model" in *The Nature of Doctrine*, 63-72, 113-23. Karl Barth and those who have followed, including T. F. Torrance, have critiqued and attempted to counter this type of reductionism with their focus upon revelation.

reductionisms which identified knowledge of God with the tradition or language which has mediated that knowledge.[94] Still others have critiqued *ethical or practical reductionisms* which limit knowledge of God to what is embodied or practiced.[95] Nicholas Lash has critiqued *religious reductionisms* which contain knowledge of God to those settings and events which are demarcated as religious.[96] Michael J. Buckley has contended against the natural theology of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and its *philosophical reductionism* which attempted to define and defend knowledge of God on philosophical grounds without reference to Christology or Pneumatological experience.[97] On the other hand, various theologians and philosophers of religion

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94. The emphasis on this part of knowledge leads to the "cultural-linguistic model" for which Lindbeck contends in *The Nature of Doctrine,* esp. 18-27. This has been the emphasis of the "post-liberal" approach. One critique includes Alister E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997). A condensed, later version is found in Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 2:39-54.

95. Non-realists such as R. B. Braithwaite and Don Cupitt contend that because religious truth claims are false, they should be interpreted as basically ethical commitment. See R. B. Braithwaite, "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 81f. "The trouble is that Cupitt's scheme renders the idea of God almost exclusively functional," writes Rowan Williams, *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 228-54, quotation on 239.

96. This is the primary argument of Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflections on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). In his seven-chapter critique of William James' conception of "religious experience" and its reduction to an individual's private feelings, Lash argues that *ordinary human experience*, interpreted from within the community of Christian discipleship and its narratives and symbols, can "furnish us with experience and knowledge of the mystery of God" (8). Not all religious experience is the experience of God and not all experience of God is religious. In other words, for Lash the experience of God is not confined to a certain region of creation or sector of human experience or gifted individuals, but rather is part of all creation and thus, all ordinary human experiences and all individuals, because all is in relation to God. See also Lash, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 141-57; *The Beginning and End of 'Religion'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 171-74.

97. Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987). To trace the origins and development of the atheism that took hold in the wake of modernity, Buckley examines the going theisms to which atheism defined itself so successfully. "In the rising attacks of atheism, Christology continued to discuss the nature of Christ … but the fundamental reality of Jesus as the embodied presence and witness of the reality of god within human history was never brought into the critical struggle of Christianity in the next three hundred years. The Enlightenment gradually took over the discussion of the meaning and existence of god. There was no need for the philosophes to draw up their own state of the question. It had been given to them by the theologians … In the absence of a rich and comprehensive Christology and a Pneumatology of religious experience Christianity entered into the defense of the existence of the Christian god without appeal to anything Christian" (67-68). Cf. a critique of Buckley's interpretation and use of Aquinas, *The Beginning and End of "Religion"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 132-49. However, Buckley has updated and furthered this project of exploring the internal contradictions in theism which gave rise to the atheisms of modernity including a re-engagement with Aquinas in Michael J. Buckley, *Denying and Disclosing God: The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). In sum, the critique of a philosophical reductionism that Buckley provides is that knowledge of God cannot be reduced to that which is non-theological, specifically natural theology or philosophical argument. This is in line with the Barthian critique, which in a nuanced way is continued in John Webster's argument for a "theological theology" in John Webster, *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 11-31.

have critiqued *revelational reductionisms* which restrict the knowledge of God to the self-revelation of God in Christ and leave no room for a *sensus divinitatis* or a natural theology.[98] William J. Abraham has critiqued *epistemological* or *methodological reductionisms* which have replaced the ecclesial canons that give rise to and support knowledge of God with a number of epistemological methods throughout Christian history.[99] Particularly important in the postmodern era has been the critique of *foundationalist reductionisms* which reduced knowledge to what directly is, or indirectly can be, established by self-evident, indubitable foundations, requiring knowledge to have an infallible foundation and thus be universally accessible in order to be legitimate.[100] Given these various critiques of modern reductionist notions of the knowledge of God within Christian theology, how are we to conceive of the knowledge of God in a postmodern age?

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98. John Baillie, *The Sense of the Presence of God: Gifford Lectures, 1961-2* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). William P. Alston aims to justify religious belief by justifying the experiential awareness of God in *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). Alvin Plantinga contends for the *sensus divinitatis* and a "natural knowledge of God" which is part of "our original cognitive equipment" given us in creation which is repaired by the Holy Spirit through redemption. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. 167-98. Richard Swinburne sketches many thorough philosophical arguments for the knowledge of God, including: *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979); *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994). Related to the *sensus divinitatis*, William J. Abraham utilized the idea of the *oculus contemplationis* from Hugh of St. Victor in *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 58-78. This overlaps with the critique of Barth as a revelational positivist in footnote 40 above.

99. With a sweeping historical study, William J. Abraham argues that the canonical heritage of the church cannot be reduced to any one epistemological theory which ends up replacing the church's canons and making the church captive to a particular epistemic theory. He concludes, "We may have to be content with epistemic proposals which illuminate crucial tracts of Christian theology, rather than provide a single theory which will cover the whole terrain." William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology,* 479. Continuing this theme giving particular attention to the idea of revelation is his *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation.*

100. Postmodern critiques of foundationalism have pointed out that knowledge could not attain to the infallibility, certainty, objectivity, and universality promised. Theologically-informed critiques include J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey C. Murphey, and Mark Nation, eds., *Theology Without Foundations: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994); Stanley J. Grenz, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); F. Leron Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Placher, *Unapologetic Theology,* esp. 24-54, 154-174; Paul D. Murray, *Reason, Truth and Theology in Pragmatist Perspective* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2004), 3-8. There have been many, nuanced philosophical critiques of foundationalism, including John Thiel, *Nonfoundationalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994). It is noteworthy that contemporary epistemologists, like Robert Audi, distinguish between a "strong foundationalism" which argues that all justification comes from foundational beliefs and a "moderate foundationalism" which allows for other factors to contribute to justification. Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 183-216, esp. 193-95, 209-13. Also aware of the problems with foundationalism, yet contending for a reformulated weaker foundationalism is Laurence Bonjour, "The Dialectic of Foundationalism and Coherentism," in John Greco and Ernest Sosa, *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1999, 2001), 117-42.

1.2.4 Summary of the problem and a complex solution

Before turning to how an engagement with the theological epistemology of T. F. Torrance might serve as a strong antidote to modern reductionist accounts of knowledge, we will first summarize the problem and propose a coherent solution. With the aging of modernity, the epistemological wineskins of reductionism have hardened. The above critiques, each in their own ways, help us to see that the reductionist epistemologies inherited from modernity are too restricted to be adequate for discussing what knowledge of God entails. A criticism they have in common is toward reductionism's *atomistic* approach which attempts to define the whole by its parts. Reductionism is not mere dissection and analysis, but occurs when the whole is defined in terms of a part or parts. When this occurs within theological epistemology, the knowledge of God is atomized into basic "parts" which are separately considered either the essence or somehow constitutive for knowledge. The result is deformity, that is, the disfigurement of the *structure* and *function* of the knowledge of God. Concerning its *deformed structure*, reductionist accounts either totally neglect some aspects of knowledge or one aspect is defined over against the other, setting up an unnecessary contradiction within a multi-dimensional reality. The de-emphasized aspects of knowledge are not only less recognized but at times banished by the reductionist account, leaving knowledge of God in an abnormal shape. Concerning its *deformed function*, with the omission or de-emphasis of important co-determinants of a multi-causal reality, knowledge of God is reduced to the dynamic that is emphasized, deforming how knowledge of God actually functions. The complexity is reduced to a fundamental that is considered the foundation of a bottom-up, linear causality. Such ontological and functional deformities have at least distorted and at times disabled participation in the knowledge of God by restricting what knowledge of God *is* and therefore how human participation in the knowledge of God *occurs*. The atomized and deformed notions of the knowledge of God are problematic, which raises the central questions of this thesis. *How can we articulate a vision of participation in the knowledge of God in light of the dissipation of the explanatory capacity of modern reductionist accounts of knowledge? What sort of conceptual model is ontologically faithful to what knowledge of God is and to how it functions? What potency can the tradition of participation in the knowledge of God have in the postmodern, scientific context in which it is now set?*

The postmodern era can be characterized as the dissipation of reductionism.[101] Post-positivist philosophers of natural and social sciences, such as Roy Bhaskar and Margaret S. Archer, have argued against reductionism in favor of an emergentism, maintaining that while a substance, entity or system is dependent upon another "more fundamental" substance, entity or system, the form and function of the dependent substance is not reducible to that lower reality.[102] Likewise, theologians writing in the theology-science dialogue, such as Ian G. Barbour,[103] Arthur Peacocke,[104] and most recently Nancey Murphy[105] and Philip Clayton,[106] have challenged the problem of

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101. Nancey Murphy contends that just as "the predominant strategy in modern science as well as in modern philosophy has been analysis and reduction" so Anglo-American postmodernity "is at its root a rejection of reductionism in all its forms." Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity*, 8, 34. She further develops this theme more recently in "Anglo-American Post-Modernity and the End of Theology-Science Dialogue?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 472-87.

102. The primary works of Bhaskar and Archer which discuss reductionism and emergentism are Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 77, 89-90, 115-16, 181; *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences* (New York: Humanities Press, 1979), 124-37; *Reclaiming Reality* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 63-73, 114, 117, 175. Margaret S. Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 33-63, 61, 72, 105, 136; *Culture and Agency*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Archer prefers the term "conflation" over reduction in *Being Human: The Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), *passim*; *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-16, 154.

103. Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 324-37; *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1998), 233-37.

104. Arthur Peacocke, *God and the New Biology* (Gloucester, MA: Peters Smith, 1994), *passim*; *Theology for a Scientific Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress,1993), 25-84, 300-302; "A Map of Scientific Knowledge: Genetics, Evolution and Theology," in *Science and Theology: The New Consonance*, ed. Ted Peters (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 189-210; "Emergence, Mind, and Divine Action: The Hierarchy of the Sciences in Relation to the Human Mind-Brain-Body," in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion,* ed. Philip Clayton and Paul Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 257-78.

105. Nancey Murphy describes the move from medieval to modern science to include a shift from the Aristotelian concern with matter and form to a focus on the properties and behavior of the most fundamental components of matter. She describes this methodological reductionism as the "atomist-reductionist program" which includes the quest for the "most basic, indivisible constituents of matter." Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion and Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 12-18; *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 62-66; "Anglo-American Post-Modernity and the End of Theology-Science Dialogue?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, esp. 475-77. Her most cogent discussion of reductionism is "Reductionism: How Did We Fall Into It and Can We Emerge From It?" in *Evolution and Emergence: Systems, Organisms, Persons*, 19-39; Also, in relation to anthropology, "From Causal Reductionisms to Self-Directed Systems," in *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will*, ed. Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 42-104, esp. 78-84.

reductionism by developing the idea of emergence from the philosophy of science for theology.[107] For these theologians, emergence is antireductionist, recognizing an ontological hierarchy of levels of reality which have evolved over time. The emergent realities cannot be reduced to their lower levels upon which they are dependent. Instead, each level has its own integrity and causal powers, contributing to downward causation from higher-level entities to lower-level components, spectacularly demonstrated by the emergence of human life and our capacity for knowledge (i.e., consciousness, intelligence).

Alongside the discussions of emergence over reductionism has come the discussion of complexity and complex systems theory.[108] For the purposes of the argument here, we will note a few characteristics of complex systems theory and complexity as it relates to the postmodern critique of reductionism. Complex systems theory has inspired the development of cybernetics, synergetics, the mathematical study of nonlinear dynamics, general systems theory, systems biology, chaos theory, and various complexity studies. The ontological and epistemological commonality between them is that each gives attention to the multi-dimensional, interrelated causal processes of the emergent wholes. Complex systems theory has been applied to

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106. Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); "Conceptual Foundations of Emergence Theory," and "Emergence from Quantum Physics to Religion: A Critical Appraisal," in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion*, ed. Philip Clayton and Paul Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-31, 303-22; "Toward a Constructive Christian Theology of Emergence" in *Evolution and Emergence: Systems, Organisms, Persons*, ed. Nancey Murphy and William R. Stoeger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 315-44; *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 63-115.

107. Also noteworthy from the science-theology literature are the articles in *Zygon* 41, no. 3 (2006); H. Morowitz, *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); N. H. Gregersen, ed., *From Complexity to Life: On the Emergence of Life and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); J. Wetzel van Huysteen, *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), *passim*; in a shorter, earlier form is his chapter "Evolution and Human Uniqueness: A Theological Perspective on the Emergence of Human Complexity," in *The Significance of Complexity: Approaching a Complex World through Science, Theology and the Humanities*, ed. Kees Van Kooten Niekerk and Hans Buhl (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 195-215.

108. Basic introductions include Neil Johnson, *Simply Complexity: A Clear Guide to Complexity Theory* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010). A good introduction by a leading complex systems scientist is Melanie Mitchell, *Complexity: A Guided Tour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Textbook introductions to the contemporary discussion of complexity and science with extensive bibliographies include Klaus Mainzer, *Thinking in Complexity: The Computational Dynamics of Matter, Mind and Mankind*, 4th ed. (New York: Springer, 2004); Robert B. Northrop, *Introduction to Complexity and Complex Systems* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2011); Ilya Prigogine and Nicolis Grégoire, *Exploring Complexity* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1989). Applying complexity theory to various sectors of society, including education, health, international relations, from the 2005 "Complexity, Science and Society Conference" is Jan Bogg and Robert Geyer, eds., *Complexity, Science and Society* (Oxford: Radcliffe Publishing, 2007).

physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology, and economics to examine the intricate, multi-causal elements at work in the tapestries of physical, biological, technological, personal and social phenomena. Methodologically, because emergent wholes are more than a mere aggregate of their parts, holism instead of reductionism is the preferred approach in these nascent sciences.

Nicholas Rescher begins his philosophical discussion of complexity by noting that it is "first and foremost a matter of the number and variety of an item's constituent elements and of the elaborateness of their interrelational structure, be it organizational or operational."[109]Rescher distinguishes between ontological, functional, and epistemic modes of complexity. Any type of object (non-human or human), including its composition and structure, its operations, and means of understanding and describing it, is intricate and complex.[110] Furthermore, in stark contrast with linear reductionism, Rescher contends that reality is inexhaustibly complex and therefore human knowledge of reality is imperfectible, including its causalities and laws of operation.[111] He concludes that the recognition of emergent complexities is a way between modern reductionist simplicity and postmodern anarchy.[112] He writes,

> Throughout the sciences—physics (stochastic phenomena), biology (evolutionary self-development), sociology (collective self-organization)—

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109. Nicholas Rescher, *Complexity: A Philosophical Overview* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 1.

110. Rescher, *Complexity*, 8-16.

111. Rescher, *Complexity*, 25-54. On 43-44: "For a particular system can always exhibit new patterns of phenomenal order in its operations over time, and so there is always more to be learned about it. There is no end to the new levels of functional complexity of operation that can be investigated with such a system. Coordination phenomenon have a life of their own. In principle, it will always be possible to discern yet further levels of lawfully structured relationship. When we change the purview of our conceptual horizons, there is always in principle more to be learned—novelties of order that could not have been predicted from earlier, lower-level information … Even though nature might be of finite physical and nomic complexity as regards its physical structure and its basic procedural laws, nevertheless it could be infinitely diverse in the unfolding operational complexity of its phenomenal products over time. To understand the world about us we need departments of biology and economics as well as departments of physics."

112. "Noting the inherent limitations of the 'modern' categories of understanding and explanation, the postmoderns forsook the courage of rational conviction and viewed themselves as living in a world that is fundamentally unintelligible and inaccessible to reason. By contrast, the post-postmodern sensibility is in fact increasingly rehabilitating this rational conviction because it sees on all sides the development of intellectual tools by whose means those supposedly intractable forces of chance, contingency, and fluctuating variability permit of rational comprehension and explanation. Where the postmoderns saw incomprehensibility, their post-postmodern successors have come to see a mere complexity that is substantially tractable by new cognitive instrumentalities more powerful than those available before." Nicholas Rescher, *Complexity: A Philosophical Overview* (New Brunswick, NJ & London, UK: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 207. Further philosophical development of the relationship between postmodernism and complexity is Paul Cilliers, *Complexity and Postmodernism: Understanding Complex Systems* (London : Routledge, 1998).

there is emerging a common recognition that a universe of chance and chaos is not unruly (anarchic) but merely complex, exhibiting through its natural operation the emergence of higher-order lawfulness …What is perhaps the principal theme of late twentieth century science—and one which distinguishes it from all that has gone before—is nature's tendency to self-organization, the natural dynamic in highly complex systems of an emergence of order from disorder, lawfulness from chance, structure from chaos. And in its own gradual way this recognition of self-organization and the natural emergence of complex order from chance and chaos has come to pervade the landscape of science. It nowadays occupies the middle ground between the modernistically oversimplification of a universe frozen into deterministic order and the postmodern vacuity of a universe viewed as anarchic, irrational, and totally unruly beyond the grasp of rational comprehensibility.[113]

The important point to note here is that the now-recognized ontological and functional complexity of higher-level, emergent realities has burst the reductionist wineskin of fundamental parts and linear causality.[114] This has consequences for presenting an epistemology in the postmodern era.

In order to move beyond a modern reductionist account of theological epistemology, a more holistic conception of knowledge of God is needed, something analogous to a complex system.[115] Therefore, the conceptual framework this thesis will use to discuss knowledge of God will neither be reductionist nor linear, but more

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113. Rescher, *Complexity*, 206.

114. From the philosophy of science, Nancy Cartwright contends against the idea that nature contains singular lines of causation within a simple system and instead argues for a "patchwork of laws" in *The Dappled World: A Study of the Boundaries of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See the discussion, William Seager, "Beyond Theories: Cartwright and Hacking," in *Philosophy of Science: The Key Thinkers*, ed. James Robert Brown (London: Continuum, 2012), 213-35.

115. Rescher notes that philosophers of science have had to deal with complexity, yet "the fact remains that the idea of complexity is effectively absent from most metaphysical systems" with a few exceptions. Rescher, *Complexity*, 7. It is therefore not surprising that not much has been written on the relation of complex systems and Christian theology. Nevertheless, there are a few noteworthy studies. The second volume of the "Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action" sponsored by the Vatican Observatory is R. J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur Peacocke, eds., *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995). An interdisciplinary engagement is Kees Van Kooten Niekerk and Hans Buhl, eds., *The Significance of Complexity: Approaching a Complex World through Science, Theology and the Humanities* (Hants, UK & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), esp. 135-216 on theological reflections. Also noteworthy is the reflection on divine action which critiques scientism (distinguished from science) through an evaluation of the work of John Polkinghorne and Arthur Peacocke in relation to chaos and complexity theory, T. A. Smedes, *Chaos, Complexity and God: Divine Action and Scientism* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2004); Also, the resources mentioned above in footnote 104 which concern both complexity and emergence by H. Morowitz and N. H. Gregersen.

like a complex model.[116] A complex model of theological epistemology aims to include a fuller portrayal of the multi-causal components which together constitute knowledge of God as a dynamic, inter-dependent whole.[117] While analysis and contingent conversations will require one to accentuate particular dynamics of theological epistemology, none of the currently recognized dynamics can ultimately be ignored without diminishing the fullness of the knowledge of God. Thus, to help heal the wounds of modernity's reductionist accounts of God-knowledge, this thesis intends to portray knowledge of God as multi-dimensional and dynamic as the ontological realities that inform it.

To avoid a methodological reductionism, this thesis does not intend to provide an account of the most basic causal components of the knowledge of God. A more ontologically-suitable approach is required. Yet, neither does this thesis presumptuously aim to offer a theological epistemology that logically and linguistically fully circumscribes what knowledge of God is.[118] Instead, this thesis

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116**.** A recent review of the use of models in the philosophy of science distinguishes between theories which use models and those which do not. Michael Weisberg, "Who is a Modeler?" *The British Journal of the Philosophy of Science* 58 (2007): 207-33. On p. 209, Weisberg contends that modeling is the "*indirect* theoretical investigation of a real world phenomenon using a model" in contrast with "abstract *direct* representation (ADR)" which other theories use. On the use of models in science-and-religion discussions, the seminal work is Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1974). Also, see the discussion in Christopher Southgate, ed., *God, Humanity and the Cosmos* (London & New York: T&T Clark International, 1999; 2nd ed., 2005), 20-23.

117. Günter Thomas observes the complex structure of theology with its many interacting elements in his chapter, "Complexity in Systematic Theology: The Case for the Christian Concept of 'New Creation' in the Dialogue with Science," in Niekerk and Buhl, eds., *The Significance of Complexity*, 167-93, esp. 171-74. While I agree with T. A. Smedes, *Chaos, Complexity and God,* 175-84, that it would be a category mistake to attempt to construct theology using scientific language and concepts, I will use complex systems as an analogy for an appropriate model for conceiving knowledge in the postmodern, scientific era. This is not an attempt to simply adjust our mode of reasoning to the latest scientific mode, but instead, recognizing the limitations of the paradigm of reductionism that the postmodern age has highlighted, to recover a sense of the irreducibly complex, multi-dimensional nature of the knowledge of God which has been recognized at times throughout the Christian theological tradition. For instance, similar to what Baron von Hügel argued on the nature of religion, we can say that knowledge of God is constituted by *personal* dynamics such as the intuitional, emotional, and volitional; by *cognitive* dynamics such as the speculative and the rational; as well as by *traditional* dynamics such as the institutional and historical. While other dynamics are included (i.e., revelation), none can be excluded in a non-reductionistic, more holistic approach. Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends* (London: J. M. Dent, 1909), 50-82. A helpful discussion of the interrelated dynamics is that of Nicholas Lash on the "triangles" of von Hügel and John Henry Newman in their attempts to correct "one-sidedness in religion." Lash, *Easter in Ordinary*, 131-77.

118. While it may seem like that anytime humans speak or write, we are being reductionist in our attempts to articulate reality, we are not. As we will see in chapter two, there is a fundamental difference between human speech and reality that cannot be overcome. Hence, all human descriptions omit certain aspects of reality in order to communicate something significant about the reality under consideration. In the postmodern era, there is a greater respect for the complexity of reality that transcends human language.

aims to present a (historically, culturally, psychologically, etc.) contingent, fallible, though more holistic, complex vision of what participation in knowledge of God entails within the postmodern, scientific context in which it is now set. To make such a presentation, this thesis will critically interact with a more recent, scientifically-engaged theological interlocutor who has helped theology to move beyond some of the inappropriate epistemological restrictions of modernity.

1.3   T. F. Torrance and participation in the knowledge of God

An important part of remedying the problem of epistemological reductionism is a robust, holistic conception of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in order to move beyond modernity's epistemological restrictions, this thesis aims to offer a more complex vision of participation in the knowledge of God. Towards that refurbishment, this thesis will critically engage the theological epistemology of the preeminent, twentieth-century British theologian, Thomas F. Torrance (1913-2007).

In the first half of the twentieth century, Karl Barth decisively located the importance of the issue of the knowledge of God for contemporary theology in his massive *Church Dogmatics* and other theological writings. In the second half of the twentieth century, his pupil and key English translator of *Church Dogmatics*, T. F. Torrance, did not write a comprehensive systematic theology, yet many of his writings focused on the issue of the knowledge of God, taking his cues from his mentor, Karl Barth. Both Barth and Torrance attempted to overcome the epistemological problems incurred during the Enlightenment and its deleterious effects upon theology. However, some criticized Barth for not addressing issues posed within and outside the church by the pressures of secularist humanism and modern science.[119] After Barth, Torrance intended to remain within Barth's theological frame of reference and yet to extend and advance the discussion of theological epistemology with an eye toward the twentieth-century developments in epistemology within the natural sciences. The new theories of relativity by Albert Einstein and the emerging quantum mechanics of Max Planck, Niels Bohr, and Louis de Brogile eclipsed the classical science of Newtonian mechanics. These new theories reshaped the fundamental structure and nature of matter, energy, space, and time, effecting a shift from the Newtonian worldview. Accordingly, such drastic changes in science resulted

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119. Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 73-106; cited in Mueller, 154, note 14.

in far-reaching changes in concepts about knowledge.[120] T. F. Torrance gave particular attention to these twentieth-century scientific and epistemological changes particularly concerning relativity but less concerning quantum theory. John Polkinghorne critiques Torrance for not engaging quantum theory. He notes that Torrance's chosen influences—Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, and Albert Einstein—"represent the final flowering of classical physics. The advent of modern quantum theory has meant that today we see them as the last of the Ancients rather than as the first of the Moderns." Polkinghorne affirms Torrance's critique of a closed, deterministic universe, but contends that the way to affirm openness and realism is not by field theory or an Einsteinian approach to physics which is based upon a clear and determinate universe, but is rather by quantum theory.[121] Consequently, he helped to move the discussion of the knowledge of God beyond the trap of modernity's reductive positivism. While the philosophy of science and its epistemological implications have continued to evolve, Torrance's epistemology developed in the mid-to-late twentieth century which resonated with the epistemological developments in the philosophy of science at that time.

In his "intellectual biography" of T. F. Torrance, Alister McGrath touts Torrance to be "widely regarded, particularly outside Great Britain, as the most significant British academic theologian of the twentieth century, and is especially noted for his ground-breaking contribution to the study of the relationship of Christian theology and the natural sciences."[122] John Webster described Torrance as one of the "most able dogmaticians" and "energetic intellects" of English-language theology.[123] Daniel W. Hardy claimed that Torrance "is virtually unique amongst theologians in

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120. As we will see in chapter two, those historians and philosophers of science who have discussed 'scientific revolutions' called into question the way that rationality and knowledge function. The classic and controversial twentieth-century exposition is Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962, 1970, 1996).

121. John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 81; *Theology in the Context of Science* (London: SPCK, 2008), 11-12. Also, with detailed exposition, Wing-Hong Wong clearly demonstrates, "In wrongly claiming that RT [relativity theory] has contributed to the downfall of strict determinism in physics, Torrance has not really come to grips with the unique role of QT [quantum theory] in overthrowing strict determinism in modern physics." Wing-Hong Wong, *An Appraisal of the Interpretation of Einsteinian Physics in T. F. Torrance's Scientific Theology* (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1994), 345.

122. Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (London: T&T Clark, 1999), xi.

123. John Webster, "Editorial," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10, no. 4 (October 2008): 369-71.

the depth of his knowledge of the philosophy of the natural sciences."[124] In 1969, Torrance's book *Theological Science* received the Collins Award and in 1978 he received the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion. His primary academic career was spent as Professor of Christian Dogmatics at Edinburgh University from 1952-1979.[125] He belonged to a number of academic societies pertaining to theology as well as the philosophy of science and was also widely engaged in ecumenical activities.[126] He published over thirty books and hundreds of articles as well as superintended the translation of the major works of John Calvin and Karl Barth. He founded and edited the *Scottish Journal of Theology*. In 2004, the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship formed as a distinctively Christian scholarly society "devoted to the exploration, development, and dissemination of the theology of Thomas F. Torrance" with its own online journal, *Participatio*.[127] With such accomplishments and influence it is not difficult to agree with Paul D. Molnar when he wrote, "There is little doubt that Thomas Forsyth Torrance … is one of the most significant English-speaking theologians of the twentieth century."[128] As a historical and dogmatic theologian who gave considerable attention to the epistemology of theology in conversation with the epistemological developments occurring within the natural sciences, T. F. Torrance is a valuable interlocutor for articulating a vision of participation in the knowledge of God in the scientific, postmodern age.

This thesis will contain a presentation of Torrance's Trinitarian epistemological vision. However, this work will not merely archive a description of what knowledge of God is in the writings of Torrance, such as its nature, scope, and limits as in an encyclopedic philosophical account. Instead, this thesis will provide a charitable, yet critical and constructive engagement with Torrance's vision of participation in the knowledge of God. Through this engagement, this thesis aims to articulate a vision of participation in the knowledge of God that overcomes the

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124. Daniel W. Hardy, "Thomas F. Torrance," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Ford (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 71.

125. T. F. Torrance was previously Professor of Church History at Edinburgh from 1950-2 and before that, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York from 1938-9. See McGrath, *T. F. Torrance, op. cit.*, 47-58, 87-107.

126. Ibid., 244, 246.

127. The mission statement can be found at http://www.tftorrance.org/about.php and the online journal *Participatio* at http://www.tftorrance.org/journal.php.

128. Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Surrey, UK & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 1.

problems of modern reductionist accounts of knowledge and that is suitable for the postmodern, scientific era. Developing this vision can make important contributions to three distinct though inter-related contextual levels: historical and global discussions, Charismatic-Evangelical and Reformed theology discussions, and discussions among scholars of T. F. Torrance. However, the focus of this thesis is upon the global, historical context.

1.3.1 Contributions to historical, global discussions of knowledge of God

T. F. Torrance is a good interlocutor for a theological discussion of the knowledge of God on the historical, global level. Derivative from and centered in the Triune God, Torrance's notion of the knowledge of God is a thoroughly *theological* epistemology inspired by Karl Barth and yet is concerned with epistemological parallels among the natural sciences. As expanded above, Torrance finds his place among the historical discussions of theological epistemology within Barth's theologically -grounded, Trinitarian framework, yet extended outward to engage the twentieth-century developments in epistemology within the natural sciences. Torrance is one of two major systematic theologians in the twentieth century to offer extensive engagements with the sciences.[129] In the early twenty-first century, the engagement between science and religion or science and theology continues to burgeon internationally.[130] While Torrance's theological epistemology will not satisfy all of the concerns raised by contemporary theologians, there are resources within Torrance's theology which make a unique contribution to a few challenges of the

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129. The other major twentieth-century systematic theologian is Wolfhart Pannenberg. His primary works on the subject include Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976); *Towards a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993). His other essays and articles on the relationship between science and theology have been collected in the volume, *The Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology* (Templeton Press, 2007). Discussions about Pannenberg on theology and science include Philip Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's Theological Thinking," in Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton, eds., *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 266-286; Carol Rausch Albright and Joel Haugen, eds., *Beginning with the End: God, Science and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1997); Jacqui A. Stewart, *Reconstructing Science and Theology in Postmodernity: Pannenberg, Ethics and the Human Sciences* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000); Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenbereg*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990, 2005), 108-9, 114-17, 134-37.

130. The continued growth is evidenced by the growing number of academic centers, posts, journals, and books dedicated to the dialogue. Nancey Murphy has written that "although it cannot be said (yet) that the postmodern era will be one in which religion and science are reunited, it can certainly be said that the sharp dichotomy between them is a modern phenomenon." In *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion and Ethics* (Boulder, CO and Oxford, UK: Westview Press, 1997), 5.

postmodern, scientific age. In order to transcend modern reductionist views of knowledge, this thesis engages and develops those resources within Torrance's epistemology to offer a more holistic, complex vision of the knowledge of God. As this vision is developed, this study will note significant contributions for the historical, global discussion of the knowledge of God. For this contextual level, primary interlocutors will be seminal writers on the knowledge of God throughout the Christian tradition, such as Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE), Maximus the Confessor (580-662 CE), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE), Gregory Palamas (1296-1359AD), John Calvin (1509-1564 AD), and Karl Barth (1886-1968 AD), as well as contemporary theologians who have written in the area of theological epistemology, a few of whom are involved in the contemporary science-and-theology dialogue.[131] This thesis gives sustained attention to this contextual level.

1.3.2 Contributions to Charismatic-Evangelical and Reformed theology

Theology is done *from* and *for* particular theological traditions. Regarding my own historical and ecclesial context, I currently live and work within a stream of neo-

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131. Somewhat surprisingly, Torrance's works have not received wide discussion among the "science and religion" or "science and theology" books and journals. For example, Torrance is not listed as one of the "important figures" in the development of the field of science and religion and is mentioned only once in the science and religion textbook, Christopher Southgate, ed., *God, Humanity and the Cosmos* (London & New York: T&T Clark International, 1999; 2nd. ed., 2005), 4-7. Furthermore, Torrance is not discussed by Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke, or J. Wetzel van Huyssteen. Nancey Murphy accepts Ronald Thiemann's charge of "foundationalism" concerning Torrance's epistemology without any direct or further engagement of his work in *Anglo-American Postmodernity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 116-17. While Ted Peters lists Torrance as a "key partner" in the science and theology conversation in his *Science, Theology and Ethics* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 16, he spends a few pages summarizing Torrance's approach to theology as a science, 26-28; An earlier version, "Science and Theology: Toward Consonance," in Ted Peters, ed., *Science and Theology: The New Consonance* (Boulder, CO; Oxford, UK: Westview Press, 1998), 25-28. John Polkinghorne engages Torrance in a few places throughout his writings: *Science and Creation: The Search for Understanding* (London: SPCK, 1988), 13-15, 30, 41, 66-67, 84-6; *Reason and Reality: The Relationship Between Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1991), 1, 5, 16, 93; *Theology in the Context of Science* (London: SPCK, 2008), 11-12, 15; and his fullest discussion is *Faith, Science and Understanding* (London: SPCK, 2000), 173-85. However, the primary exception is the work of Alister E. McGrath. Besides his "intellectual biography" of Torrance, McGrath aims to continue Torrance's agenda of exploring "the fundamental relationship between Christian theology and natural science at the level of method" in *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion* (Malden, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1998), 34. Furthermore, his "scientific theology" trilogy explores in greater detail the interface between the methods and working assumptions of Christian theology and the natural sciences and is explicitly intended to be "an exposition of a scientific theology representing a sympathetic yet critical response to the imposing and stimulating contribution to the dialogue between theology and the natural sciences by Torrance." Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 77; *A Scientific Theology: Reality,* vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); *A Scientific Theology: Theory*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

Charismatic Evangelicalism.[132] Therefore, in line with the approach of "receptive ecumenism," this thesis will have implications for the question, "How might reading T. F. Torrance be helpful to Pentecostal-Charismatic and Evangelical theology and, in particular, to their concepts of the knowledge of God?"[133]

When engaging in theological dialogue, hopefully all conversation partners are enriched. By providing a complex vision of participation in the knowledge of God through an engagement with Torrance, there will be contributions made that those from within the Reformed tradition can critically consider. My hope is that this reading of T. F. Torrance and the vision offered will contribute to the Reformed tradition's rich heritage of discussions concerning knowledge of God. The embodied, affective and practical dimensions of participation in the knowledge of God may have received less emphasis within the Reformed tradition. Because this thesis locates and expounds the practical dimensions of participation in the knowledge of God within Torrance's theology, it presents an opportunity that could lead to the repair of possible wounds of epistemological reductionism within the Reformed tradition. Given this tradition's emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the doctrine of justification by grace alone, how can the descendants of John Calvin discuss human participation? Furthermore, how can this tradition discuss the embodied, affective, and practice-oriented dimensions that are a part of human participation in the knowledge of God? While this contextual level is not the focus of this thesis, the notion of participation in the knowledge of God defended in this thesis has implications for these two theological traditions. A few will be noted along the way and in the conclusion.

1.3.3 Contributions to scholarship on T. F. Torrance

This work aims to repair the wound of reductionism with a more holistic model of the knowledge of God which has consequences for a third contextual level,

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132. Since 2003, I have been a part of the Vineyard Church, which has conceived itself to be a convergence of the Charismatic and Evangelical traditions. On the theme of convergence, yet distinguishing the Vineyard from Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, see Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals* (Boise, ID: Ampelon Publishing, 1995); Bill Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle* (Cape Town: Vineyard International Publishing, 1999). A helpful "outsider" perspective comparing Vineyard churches, Calvary Chapel churches, and Hope Chapel churches is Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

133. Paul D. Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). On the approach of receptive ecumenism, see Paul D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning—Establishing the Agenda," 5-25.

namely, scholarship focused on the theology of T. F. Torrance. In developing this conceptual model, this thesis will address neglected areas among Torrancian scholarship, a specialized but nonetheless important context of theological research.

Over the last twenty years, there have been several major publications concerning the life and thought of T. F. Torrance. The primary publications that give an overview are by Elmer M. Colyer,[134] Gerrit Scott Dawson,[135] Alister E. McGrath,[136] and Paul Molnar.[137] There have been other publications that have addressed various aspects of Torrance's thought, but publications which address, in particular, his epistemology in helpful ways include a number of doctoral dissertations or theses,[138] journal articles[139] and chapters in edited volumes.[140] While this work

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134. Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); *The Nature of Doctrine in T. F. Torrance's Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001). Also his edited volume, Elmer M. Colyer, ed., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance* (Lanham, MD & Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

135. Gerrit Scott Dawson, ed., *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Savior* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2007).

136. Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 1999).

137. Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

138. Dennis Lee Sansom, *Scientific Theology: An Examination of the Methodology of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (PhD dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981); R. J. Newell, *Participatory Knowledge: Theology as Art and Science in C. S. Lewis and T. F. Torrnace* (PhD thesis, Aberdeen University, 1983); C. B. Kruger, *Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God: The Nature and Means of Our Knowledge of God in the Theology of T. F. Torrance* (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1990); E. M. Coyler, *The Nature of Doctrine in the Theology of T. F. Torrance* (PhD dissertation, Boston College, 1992); H-K. Yeung, *Being and Knowing: An Examination of T. F. Torrance's Christological Science* (PhD thesis, University of London, 1993; Hong Kong: China Alliance Press, 1996); John Douglas Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997); Robert K. Martin, *The Incarnate Ground of Christian Faith: Toward a Christian Theological Epistemology for the Educational Ministry of the Church* (Lanham, MD; Oxford, UK: University Press of America, 1998); Timothy Charles Gill, *The Doctrine of Revelation in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2007). Other theses and dissertations which do not primarily focus upon Torrance's theological epistemology, but contain substantive epistemological discussions include Colin Weightman, *Theology in a Polanyian Universe: The Theology of Thomas Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 129-280; Wing-Hong Wong, *An Appraisal of the Interpretation of Einsteinian Physics in T. F. Torrance's Scientific Theology* (PhD thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1994), esp. 122-215; R. Spjuth, *Creation, Contingency and Divine Presence: In the Theologies of Thomas F. Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1995); Jason Tapio Luoma, *Incarnation and Physics: Natural Science in the Theology of T. F. Torrance* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Andrew Maurice Bevan, *The Person of Christ and the Nature of Human Participation in the Theology of T. F. Torrance: A Post-Modern Realist Approach to Personhood* (PhD thesis, University of London, 2002), esp. 9-54, 123-78.; Kye Won Lee, *Living in Union with Christ: The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), especially 11-98; Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 93-97, 151-62.

139. T. A. Langford, "T. F. Torrance's *Theological Science*: A Reaction," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 25 (1972): 155-70; D. S. Klinefelter, "God and Rationality: A Critique of the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Journal of Religion* 53 (1973): 117-35; M. Shuster, "What is Truth: An Exploration of Thomas F. Torrance's Epistemology," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 3 (1973): 50-56;

will contribute to the discussion of Torrance's theological epistemology, it aims to provide three unique contributions. There has not been a study which has used T. F. Torrance as its primary interlocutor to present a vision of participation in the knowledge of God that engages both the broader historical discussion of theological epistemology and the contemporary science-theology dialogue. While no one work can provide an exhaustive response to Torrance's epistemological vision, the intent of this work is to develop a particular vision through a critique and expansion of his Trinitarian epistemology. Second, this thesis engages Torrance's earliest materials available, including the Auburn Lectures (1938-39) and a few of his sermons from his time as pastor in Alyth, Scotland (1940-41), to demonstrate the development of his

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Frank D. Schubert, "Thomas F. Torrance: The Case for a Theological Science" *Encounter* 45, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 123-37; John V. Apczynski, "Torrance on Polanyi and Polanyi on God: Comments on Weightman's Criticisms—A Review Essay," *Tradition & Discovery* 24, no. 1 (1997-1998): 32-34; W. J. Neidhardt, "Thomas F. Torrance's Integration of Judeo-Christian Theology and Natural Science: Some Key Themes," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 41 (1989): 87-98; C. Baxter Kruger, 'The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 366-89; R. A. Muller, "The Barth Legacy: New Athanasius or Origen Redivivus? A Response to T. F. Torrance," *Thomist* 54 (1990): 673-704; David F. Siemens, "Two Problems with Torrance," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 43, no. 2 (June 1991): 112-13; Phee Seng Kang, "The Epistemological Significance of ὸμοουσον [sic] in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45 (1992) 341-66; Stephen D. Wigley, "Barth, Karl on St. Anselm—The Influence of Anselm's 'Theological Scheme' on T. F. Torrance and Eberhard Jungel" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46 (1993): 79-97; Mark P. Achtemeier, "The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T. F. Torrance" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47 (1994): 355-74; J. D. Morrison, "Heidegger, Correspondence Truth and the Realist Theology of Thomas Forsyth Torrance," *Evangelical Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (1997): 139-55; Susan Murtha-Smith, "The Advancement of New Theology Using New Science: The Three Key Concepts of Thomas Torrance," *Journal of Faith and Science Exchange* 1 (1997): 65-71; Paul D. Molnar, "God's Self-Communication in Christ: A Comparison of Thomas F. Torrance and Karl Rahner," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50 (1997): 288-320; Jon D. Morrison, "Thomas Torrance's Reformulation of Karl Barth's Christological Rejection of Natural Theology" *Evangelical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (January 2001): 59-75; Tom McCall, 'Ronald Thiemann, Thomas Torrance and Epistemological Doctrines of Revelation,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6, no. 2 (2004): 148-68; M. F. Hanna, "The Use of Science in Theology: Case Studies of Landon B. Gilkey and Thomas F. Torrance," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42, no. 1 (2004): 217; Paul D. Molnar, "Natural Theology Revisited: A Comparison of T. F. Torrance and Karl Barth," *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 20 (2005): 53-83; Benjamin Ayers, 'The Stratification of Knowledge in the Thought of T. F. Torrance,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61 (2008): 1-15; Rodney D. Holder, "Thomas Torrance: 'Retreat to Commitment' or a New Place for Natural Theology?" *Science and Theology* 7, no. 3 (2009): 275-96; W. Travis McMaken, "The Impossibility of Natural Knowledge of God in T. F. Torrance's Reformulated Natural Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (July 2010): 319-40; David Munchin, "'Is Theology a Science?' Paul Feyerabend's Anarchic Epistemology as Challenge Test to T. F. Torrance's Scientific Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64, no. 4 (2011): 439-55.

140. Kurt Anders Richardson, "Revelation, Scripture and Mystical Knowledge: Apprehension of Divine Knowledge" in Elmer M. Colyer, ed., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance* (Lanham, MD & Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 185-204; Thomas John Hastings, "George Lindbeck and Thomas F. Torrance on Christian Language and the Knowledge of God," in *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 252-78; Douglas F. Kelley, "The Realist Epistemology of Thomas F. Torrance" in Gerrit Scott Dawson, ed., *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Savior* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 75-102.

thought. Thus far, only one other work has engaged his earliest materials.[141] Third, scholarship concerning T. F. Torrance has barely broached the topics of ethics or spirituality within Torrance's theology.[142] It is true that Torrance himself wrote very little on either subject. Nevertheless, this thesis aims to locate the ethical and spiritual dimensions that are latent within Torrance's theological vision of participation in the knowledge of God but that he did not develop. Toward the healing of reductionist deformities, a more holistic, complex epistemological vision requires the inclusion of these dimensions, and perhaps other dimensions of which I am currently unaware.

1.4 The goal and moves of this work

Modern reductionist accounts of knowledge as critiqued by theologians and philosophers in the first part of this chapter suggest that a more holistic, complex vision of knowledge of God is needed. The goal of this work is to provide such a complex vision and, moreover, a vision of participation in the knowledge of God suitable for the postmodern, scientific milieu through a critical engagement and expansion of the theological epistemology of T. F. Torrance. To reach that goal, this study will advance with four main moves.

The first move delineates and defines seven of the primary themes or dynamics that Torrance used to discuss the knowledge of God throughout his epistemological writings (Chapter Two). Torrance did not provide a systematic presentation of these themes, nor did he give equal weight to all of the dynamics in any one discussion. Instead, contingent upon the context and argument made, he focused upon a particular theme, but not without the other themes close at hand. Thus, with one dynamic in view, he oftentimes would not resist bringing in a word or a short phrase that referred to other epistemological dynamics. In an attempt to hold together the dynamics of his epistemology, he fluidly, and sometimes tersely, moved between the dynamics.

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141. Alister E. McGrath made use of Torrance's Auburn Lectures and other earlier materials for his book, *Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*. These materials are now available at The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, Princeton, New Jersey. Special thanks to Iain Torrance, the younger son of T. F. Torrance and President of Princeton Theological Seminary, who allowed me to research those materials.

142. The exception is Paul D. Molnar who occasionally mentions Torrance's ethics throughout, *Thomas F. Torrance*, esp. ,102, 151, 168, 348-9. His more sustained discussion is in *Incarnation and Resurrection: Toward a Contemporary Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 100-4, 144-51.

To begin to apprehend Torrance's theological epistemology, chapter two outlines seven basic dynamics of the knowledge of God. Readers will discover how the knowledge of God is *scientific, ontologically-determined, Trinitarian, creation-situated, essentially rational and conceptual, transcendent*, and *realist* for Torrance. In order to go beyond apprehending Torrance's epistemology, this chapter will not only document and define these seven dynamics, but will evaluate aspects of each of them in light of the Christian tradition's discussion of the knowledge of God. Furthermore, to move toward a vision of knowledge of God for the postmodern, scientific era, the evaluation will also be informed by contemporary theologians, including those who have written in the science-theology dialogue.

With these seven dynamics in mind, the second move leads us to discern how the heart of Torrance's theological epistemology, the doctrine of the Trinity, regulates the whole (Chapter Three). The general dynamics lead us to the central dynamic which is the Triune God. Because knowledge of God is determined by the nature of the object known (ontologically-determined) who is beyond human comprehension (transcendent) yet has revealed himself in the space-time world through the incarnation and the Spirit (Trinitarian, creation-situated), God's Triune nature is determinative for the knowledge of God. Torrance gave preference to the immanent Trinity and what he called the "onto-relations" within the immanent Trinity. Within a three-tiered framework of theoretical knowledge, knowledge of the immanent Trinity comprised the highest theoretical strata of the knowledge of God for Torrance. His unique concept of "onto-relations" holds together his notion of the "One Being and Three Persons" which constitute the Triune God. God is personal and relational, understood not anthropocentrically, but in the unique way that God has revealed himself through the Economic Trinity.

Torrance's discussion of "onto-relations" is unique among Trinitarian theology, and yet his distinctive doctrine of the Trinity helped to secure a statement of theological agreement between Reformed and Orthodox Churches. This chapter will note some lines of agreement and disagreement from the theological tradition and among contemporary Trinitarian theology, particularly concerning the notions of person and relationship within God. Following Torrance's ontologically-determined epistemological dynamic, because God is somehow personal and relational, then this would determine the nature of the knowledge of God.

The third move considers the consequences of the personal and relational nature of the Triune God for theological epistemology (Chapter Four). This chapter will explore how the knowledge of God is personal and relational for Torrance. In contrast to impersonal notions of knowledge stemming from the Enlightenment, this chapter demonstrates how knowledge of God is personal knowledge for Torrance because it originates from the being and activity of the tri-personal God and because it has consonance with Michael Polanyi's account of personal knowledge. Furthermore, this chapter will consider how knowledge of God is relational knowledge for Torrance because it likewise originates from the being and activity of the Trinity whose being is relational and because it is shared among humans within a community of persons.

The fourth move expands Torrance's view of participation in the knowledge of God, demonstrating how it is person-involving and life-implicating (Chapter Five). Knowledge cannot be reduced to one "part" of the human, whether intellect, emotion, or the body as with practices. Neither can knowledge of God be reduced to one aspect of life, whether thinking, speaking, or any "religious" activity. Rather, in line with the biblical notions and in resonance with the better moments of the tradition's theological epistemology as well as a few contemporary philosophers, this thesis concludes that participation in the knowledge of God involves the whole person and a way of life.

To begin the engagement with the theological epistemology of T. F. Torrance, this study turns to delineate and evaluate seven general dynamics at work throughout his many writings on the knowledge of God.

CHAPTER 2

THE DYNAMICS OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE THEOLOGY OF T. F. TORRANCE

2.1 Introduction

The first chapter introduced the agenda of the thesis as assessing the viability of a particular understanding of participation in the knowledge of God for the postmodern, scientific age. It also presented the modern problem of reductionist accounts of theological epistemology and proposed a non-reductionist, complex vision of the knowledge of God through an engagement with the epistemology of T. F. Torrance as a remedy. The aim of this chapter is to survey the epistemological whole of T. F. Torrance's theology, delineating the basic theological and philosophical dynamics at work in his conception of the knowledge of God.[1] This overview comes from the major epistemological writings of Torrance that directly engaged the topic of the knowledge of God.

Following this survey, the next chapter will probe into the center of his theological epistemology, namely his doctrine of the Triune God (Chapter 3). The

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[1] I have chosen the word "dynamics" because it is often used in contemporary English to refer to the "forces or properties which stimulate growth, development or change within a system." "Dynamics," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., rev. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). The realities which facilitate knowledge of God for Torrance, as we will discuss, are *a posteriori* and kinetic. He thus advocated a "kinetic way of thinking." T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 72-5; *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture* (1980; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 98-9. Torrance recognized a switch in science "from static to dynamic categories" and thus for a "dynamic way of understanding the universe" in *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980), 152. Also, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 12-16, 54-6; *Space, Time and Resurrection* (1976; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 184-6. "There now opens up a dynamic, open-structured universe" that is "more congenial to the Christian understanding of God in his dynamic and providential relation to the world." Therefore, "the concept of science is shedding its older hard, mechanistic, instrumentalist character, and taking on a more subtle, elastic form appropriate to fields of dynamic and organic relations," wrote Torrance in *Reality and Scientific Theology* (1985; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), ix, xiv, 72. See also 89-93, 148. Furthermore, Torrance held to a "dynamic view of revelation," a "dynamic ontological structure" of human knowledge of God, and consequently to "dynamic theology" which is "objectively oriented in the living God" and is thus open to progressive revision in *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (1982; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 16-17, 44-45, 49-51; *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelations of Scientific and Theological Enterprise* (1984; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 4. Thus the term "dynamics" seems to be the best word to describe the various factors involved in the knowledge of God for Torrance. Furthermore, "dynamics" is also used more specifically to refer to the energy and forces within mechanics. This is consistent with Torrance's engagement with physics as an analogous discipline with which he frequently discussed theological epistemology. See also the theological use of the word in Robert Haight, S.J., *Dynamics of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 215-35.

immanent Trinity and the "onto-relations" within were supremely important for Torrance's doctrine of God and provided a governing influence upon his epistemology. This study goes beyond Torrance while remaining within his Trinitarian framework to argue that these supremely important aspects of the nature of the Triune God centralize three epistemological dynamics as supremely important, namely that knowledge of God is personal, relational, (Chapter 4) and participatory (Chapter 5). Consequently, participation in the knowledge of God is not reducible to one dimension of the human person or one aspect of their experience, but instead involves the whole person and their way of life. This leads to the conclusion that knowledge of God is a multi-dimensional, complex reality with dynamics which are particularly suitable for the postmodern, scientific context (Chapter 6).

The knowledge of God is a central topic in the large corpus of theological writings of Thomas F. Torrance. Whether directly discussed or immediately below the surface of the particular issue in focus, the knowledge of God is a predominant concern permeating his five hundred-plus publications.[2] The knowledge of God is not only broached as an isolated topic and with theological topics closely related such as revelation, but also surrounds major doctrinal discussions such as the Trinity, the incarnation, and soteriology. Therefore, examining the knowledge of God provides a way for readers to grasp the overall topography of Torrance's theological and philosophical landscape. It is a unifying theme enveloping the whole of his theology.

Within Torrance's theology, there is an integration of many varied epistemological dynamics. He cites examples from a variety of disciplines, especially the natural sciences and physics in particular, to provide analogies for his theological epistemology. He moves almost seamlessly at times from one dynamic to the next and from one field of inquiry to another. Many epistemological dynamics are presented together in relation to one another. One epistemological dynamic is often used to explain another, grounding one in the other. Torrance aimed to offer a broad, coherent theological epistemology, thus the dynamics are tightly interwoven and inter-defined. This can make particular dynamics difficult to distinguish and apprehend.[3] Therefore,

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[2] The most thorough bibliography to date is Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 249-96. See also Iain R. Torrance, "A Bibliography of the Writings of Thomas F. Torrance, 1941-1989" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 225-262.

[3] Daniel Hardy has criticized Torrance for writing too tersely in his chapter, "Thomas F. Torrance" in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford with Rachel Muers, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 173; Torrance himself acknowledges the

for the sake of grasping his broad theological epistemology, this chapter shall delineate the distinct yet mutually supportive dynamics of the knowledge of God in Torrance's theology, noting their inter-relationship and inter-dependency. I have demarcated seven dynamics, arranging them in a logical order consistent with Torrance's thought and aiming to demonstrate their interconnections. Even though a particular dynamic may be mentioned within several of his epistemological works—at times with more development than others—the meaning and function of the dynamics remain basically consistent throughout his epistemological writings. Beyond the important work of delineation, this survey will provide a brief evaluation of each of these dynamics along the way, noting in particular their relationship to the Christian theological tradition and their potential for the postmodern, scientific context.

Before proceeding to this chapter's survey of the dynamics of knowledge of God in Torrance's theology, it is important to note that Torrance neither systematized his epistemological dynamics that he discussed throughout his many works, nor arranged them in a particular order on the whole. Certainly there are priorities among his epistemological dynamics which we will discover. Subsequent discussions about the knowledge of God in the writings of Torrance have appeared, yet few have aimed to present a systematic presentation of the various dynamics of his theological epistemology.[4] None have sought to compare or prioritize the dynamics with one another, developing and extending the more weighty dynamics. But before we move

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complexity of the form of his writing in Michael Bauman, *Roundtable: Conversations with European Theologians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 117-8.

[4] Discussions include E. M. Colyer, *How To Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (2001; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), esp. 322-74; Chapter 8, "Revelation, Scripture, and Mystical Apprehension of Divine Knowledge," and chapter 9, "A Scientific Theological Method" in Elmer M. Colyer, ed., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 185-203, 205-37; *The Nature of Doctrine in T. F. Torrance's Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001); John Douglas Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997); C.B. Kruger, *Participation in the Self-Knowledge of God: the nature and means of our knowledge of God in the theology of T. F. Torrance* (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1990); Dennis Lee Sansom, *Scientific Theology: An Examination of the Methodology of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (PhD dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981); The introduction in the newly released collection of Torrance lectures, Robert T. Walker, ed., *Incarnation: The Person and Work of Christ* (Bucks, UK: Paternoster; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2008), xxvi-xlvii; Mark P. Achtemeier, "The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T. F. Torrance" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47 (1994): 355-74; Benjamin Ayers, "The Stratification of Knowledge in the Thought of T. F. Torrance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61 (2008): 1-15; Douglas F. Kelley, "The Realist Epistemology of Thomas F. Torrance" in Gerrit Scott Dawson, ed., *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Savior,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007), 75-102; C. Baxter Kruger, "The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 366-89; Tom McCall, "Ronald Thiemann, Thomas Torrance and Epistemological Doctrines of Revelation," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6, no. 2 (2004): 148-68.

to consider the most central dynamics (Chapters 3 through 5), this chapter introduces and critiques seven basic dynamics at work throughout his epistemology.

For Torrance, the knowledge of God is *scientific* by which he means, in part, a credible and disciplined form of knowledge (2.2). Knowledge of God is *ontologically-determined* since all types of knowledge are determined by the nature of the object known (2.3). Thus, knowledge of God is most centrally *Trinitarian* because God who has been revealed in Christ and by the Spirit is the "proper object" of theology (2.4).[5] Knowledge of God is *creation-situated*, for like all forms of human knowledge it occurs within the contingencies of the space-time universe (2.5). Knowledge of God is *essentially rational and conceptual* because knowledge always includes human thought (2.6). Knowledge of God is *transcendent* because even though God has truly made himself known, God remains beyond human comprehension (2.7). Finally, knowledge of God is *"truly realist"* because knowledge is a cognitive result, though limited, of meaningful engagement with mind-independent reality (2.8). This introductory, critical survey begins with a fundamental tenet of Torrance's theological epistemology which also serves as a primary metaphor throughout, namely that the knowledge of God is "scientific."

2.2 Scientific

One of the most important dynamics of theological epistemology for T. F. Torrance was that the knowledge of God is *scientific*. It was and continues to be one of the most characteristic and critiqued aspects of Torrance's epistemology. Therefore, it requires more of an introduction and critique than the other six dynamics surveyed in this chapter.

In his earliest lectures, Torrance differentiated two uses of the word "science." One broad use connotes exactness, including the careful, clear, and systematic pursuit of all types of knowledge. The other, more narrow use is the investigation of empirical reality by well-defined methods.[6] In subsequent writings when Torrance discussed knowledge of God and, consequently, theology as scientific, he intended the

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[5] The Trinitarian theological dynamic uniquely governed his epistemology and will be explored in greater detail in chapter 3. Nevertheless, to provide a coherent survey, this chapter introduces this dynamic.

[6] Thomas F. Torrance, "Theology and Science," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 1.

former, meaning a disciplined form of knowledge. Nevertheless, the analogous disciplines that Torrance most frequently used to discuss the knowledge of God are the natural sciences and likewise "scientific" was the primary metaphor for the nature of theology which he advocated. While we will further introduce what Torrance meant by science here, other dynamics will further develop his definition and criteria for what constitutes a discipline as scientific.

To begin, it is important to note that Torrance had great respect for science because it asks important questions about reality and the cosmos. Science is "progressive," revising its questions and advancing in knowledge.[7] Science has the "most powerful and wide-spread impact in modern times. It is indeed a *culture* of the greatest significance: not to be influenced by it is really to be something of a barbarian!"[8] Consequently, he contended that science sets the standards for all fields of inquiry.[9] With almost eschatological overtones, Torrance proclaimed nothing will escape the judgment of scientific inquiry. "There cannot be any question about the fact that the whole of future life and thought will be dominated more and more by pure and applied science."[10] Torrance believed that the sciences will set the epistemological benchmark for all disciplines, thus he intended for theology to meet such standards in its own way. For the knowledge of God to have its place among other types of knowledge and for theology to have its place among other academic disciplines, both need to be conceived of as a science and operate scientifically with their own ontologically-determined methods.[11] With evangelical intent, Torrance's theological epistemology was concerned to secure a place for theology in a scientific

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[7] Torrance neither expounded upon the theme of science as "progressive," nor did he use the term frequently. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that he anticipates the "steady progress of scientific theology." See *GR*, 51. Also 33-34; *TS*, viii.

[8] *CTSC*, 14.

[9] "Today it is no longer philosophy but the physical and natural sciences which set the pace in human culture through their astonishing revelation of the rational structures that pervade and underly all created reality." *RST*, ix. Also, *STR*, 23-4.

[10] *TIR*, 13. Similarly, Torrance wrote, "No form of knowledge can survive or maintain its impact on mankind that tries to keep alive by taking cover from the searching light of scientific inquiry." Furthermore, "whether we like it or not the whole of the future will be dominated by empirical science and anything that fails to stand up to it rigorous discipline will fall away." *GR*, 5, 51 respectively. "I am wholly convinced that the more scientifically we can pursue our theology the more we shall be able to march forward as one, and the more relevant our message will be to a world that will always be dominated by empirical and theoretical science." *STI*, ix. Also, *TCFK*, 263.

[11] The "ontologically-determined" dynamic developed next is closely tied to Torrance's notion of science.

world.[12] Now we turn to delineate four themes which Torrance used to help define science and, likewise, theological science.

First, science for Torrance is constituted by rigorous and disciplined thought.[13] One paragraph clearly demonstrates how he used the term "science" and values its regulatory demands:

> There are not two ways of knowing, a scientific way and a theological way. Neither science nor theology is an esoteric way of knowledge. Indeed because there is only one basic way of knowing we cannot contrast science and theology, but only natural science and theological science, or social science and theological science. In each we have to do with a fundamental act of knowing, not essentially different from real knowing in any field of human experience. Science is the rigorous and disciplined extension of that basic way of knowing and as such applies to every area of human life and thought. It should be clear, then, that I am not using 'science' in the vulgar sense to mean only natural science, and certainly not within natural science as limited to physics. I am using 'science' to denote the critical and controlled extension of our basic modes of rational activity with a view to positive knowledge.[14]

Torrance conceived of science as the extension of disciplined rationality, hence the term "science" can be widened to include any discipline for him, as long as it is characterized by order and rigor. Consequently, he insisted that theology be scientific in terms of its demands and exacting standards.

Second, what makes an inquiry scientific for Torrance is its concern for objectivity.[15] Throughout, Torrance contended that every science is concerned with its

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[12] "This is also an evangelical task, for we will never be able to urge knowledge of God in Jesus Christ upon a world increasingly dominated by science unless we can commend it upon its own adequate scientific basis." *GR*, viii. "Through the scientific community of theologians the Church indwells the world…in the hope that the general scientific world will in its way partake of its theological orientation toward the transcendent source of all the rational order of the universe." *RST*, 122. "What is ultimately envisaged is a reconstruction of the very foundations of modern thought and culture." *RST*, x; Also, *DCO*, viii; *GR*, 6; *TS*, 25; *STI*, ix; *GGT*, 38-9.

[13] Torrance repeatedly stated that "by science I mean any real field of knowledge pursued in a rigorous and organized way." *GR*, vii, 6, 51, 91-92, 114; *TS*, xii, 55, 85, 116; *STI*, viii; *TCFK*, 322.

[14] *GR*, 91-92. Also 114; *GGT*, 8-9.

[15] *TS*, xi-xiii, 13, 55-56, 75-85, 93, 116, 288, 295-297; *GR*, 8-10, 92-93; *TCFK*, 73-6. The motif of objectivity also permeated Barth's discussion of theology and dogma as a science in *CD* I.1, 3-11, 275-287. See Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 35-39; Busch, *The Great Passion*, 72-6. For Torrance's interpretation and recognition of his indebtedness to Barth concerning objectivity, Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 61-63, 75-77, 145-47, henceforth, *KBBET*.

"proper object."[16] Though the subjective pole deserves its due weight, in order to be scientific the authority must remain with the given object which is entitled to control the subjective modes of reason and inquiry.[17] Following the inductive methods pioneered by Francis Bacon,[18] science is to be an *a posteriori* discipline.[19] Science produces knowledge about objects in any field "under the compulsion of their independent reality."[20] This is not an individualist notion of objectivity, for "the really objective is that which is shareable, what we can experience together or in common, and which is transcendent to each of us."[21] Thus, in determining a physical law, while there may be various formulations possible, the one chosen "we choose under the compulsion of empirical evidence, for it is finally nature itself alone that can disclose to us its hidden pattern and thus be the judge of the truth or falsity of the many possible theories we bring to it."[22] As Torrance straightforwardly put it, "Utter respect for objectivity is the *sine qua non* of scientific activity."[23] Even more candidly, he declared that "scientific knowledge and objective knowledge are one and the same thing."[24] Therefore, Torrance considered knowledge of God scientific through an objectively-weighted engagement with God "in obedience to the demands of His reality and self-giving."[25] Torrance's notion of objectivity overlaps with his form of realism which we will introduce and critique below (2.8).

Third, science, according to Torrance, does not commence its investigations with epistemological questions, but instead begins with its given object and presupposes its existence and rationality. Theories and models are constructed in response to the ontic structures of reality. Epistemological questions are thus in an auxiliary position and can be legitimately raised during the course of examination and

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[16] *TS*, 4, 23, 25, 55, 85, 204, 211, 286, 289, 346; *GR*, 3, 6, 10, 93, 114; *STI*, viii, 87.

[17] *TS*, viii; *GGT,* 33.

[18] *TIR*, 15, 66; *TS*, 69-85, 88, 120 n. 1, 320 n. 2; *GR,* 41-44, 93-95; *CTSC,* 41-44; *GGT,* 5, 51-52; *RST,* 7, 15; *TCFK,* 5, 41.

[19] *TS*, 1, 174, 265; *GR,* 89, 100-1.

[20] *GGT*, 16.

[21] *RST*, 112. "Hence in all objective knowledge we try to eliminate those features which we cannot share together or cannot have in common with others, and which are relative only to this or that person in this or that particular situation."

[22] *DCO*, 39. Similarly, Torrance wrote, "It is reality itself that must be allowed to be the judge of the truth or falsity of our thoughts and statements about it. Hence science is ultimately cast upon the grace of reality for justification or verification of its theories and results." *TCFK*, 211.

[23] *TS*, 85.

[24] *TS*, 295.

[25] *TS*, ix. Thus, on page 138, he defined "scientific theology" as "the systematic presentation of its knowledge through consistent faithfulness to the divine, creaturely objectivity of God in Christ." On the theme of the objectivity of theological knowledge, see 34-43, 56, 131-33, 337-38; *STI,* viii; *GR,* 6.

theoretic construction. Likewise, a scientific theology begins with actual knowledge of God: "How God can be known must be determined from first to last by the way in which He is actually known."[26] Only as it proceeds can theology look back to verify its knowledge. In other words, a scientific aspect of knowledge of God for Torrance was that it is particularist.[27] Torrance contended for what epistemologists now call "epistemological particularism" instead of "epistemological methodism" in the sciences, and likewise in his theological science. Epistemological methodism holds that knowledge cannot be justified unless the right method is articulated and utilized whereas epistemological particularism holds that particular claims to knowledge are the beginning-place from which one constructs proposals about epistemological method.[28]

Fourth, Torrance maintained that science is limited in its ability to penetrate and comprehend reality. When boundaries at the frontiers of knowledge are crossed, often the scientist is confronted with contradiction and indeterminancy. That which is beyond the range of exact science elicits respectful silence. Though no direct comparison can be made, the knowledge of God also has its limits which evoke reverential silence before the profundity and mystery of God.[29]

However, Torrance distinguished "theological science" from "other sciences."[30] Torrance first noted the differences with regard to *objectivity*.[31] The

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[26] *TS*, 9.

[27] *TS*, 1-6, 9-10, 286-88. *GR*, 165.

[28] A seminal discussion in philosophy is Roderick Chisholm, "The Problem of the Criterion," in *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 61-75. On particularism in theological epistemology is William J. Abrham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 30-35. The epistemological approach of Karl Barth is thoroughly particularist, deriving from the self-revelation of God in Christ by the Spirit, which directly influenced Torrance. *KBBET,* 17-19, 57-8. See also, Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 32-5.Similarly, Thomas Aquinas in question one, article eight of his *Summa Theologiae* discussed whether sacred doctrine is a matter of argument. Thomas asserted, "As other sciences do not argue in order to prove their premises, but work from them to bring out other things in their field of inquiry, so this teaching does not argue to establish its premises which are the articles of faith, but advances from them to make something known." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Volume 1: Christian Theology (Ia. I),* trans. Thomas Gilby O.P., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Ia. q. 1, a. 8, p. 28. Hereafter, *ST*. ["*Dicendum quod sicut aliae scientiae non argumentantur ad sua principia probanda, sed ex principiis argumentantur ad ostendendum alia in ipis scientiis, ita haec doctrina non argumentatur ad ostendendum alia in ipis scientiis, ita haec doctrina non argumentantur ad sua principia probanda, quae sunt articuli fidei, sed ex eis procedit ad aliquid ostendendum.*"]

[29] *TS*, 290-92. The themes related to mystery and those features of Torrance's epistemology which are "more than science" will be developed in the "transcendent" dynamic below (2.7). As we will note, an apophatic dimension of the knowledge of God has a long history in Christian theology, first developed theologically by Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 395).

[30] Discussions of the differences between "theological science" from the "other sciences" can be found in *TS*, 295-312; *GR*, 95-99.

[31] Differences with respect to objectivity are found in *TS*, 295-303.

knowledge of God is "profoundly relative" because it is qualified by the Absolute and "profoundly objective" because the Object is God who alone grounds knowledge of himself in himself. Knowledge of God is distinct from other knowledge because it is objectified by God and ultimately incomparable with other categories within creation. Furthermore, it is given out of pure grace. This grace-given knowledge is obtained in response to God's self-giving, not as we respond to an object upon which we experiment and control, but as the Lord whom we know through submission and love. The results of particular experiments verify the general principles of science for all to investigate, making their truth-claims universal. With Christian theology, the universal truth comes in the concrete particularity of Jesus Christ, making an ultimate claim that he is the Truth of God for all humanity and the Lord of the universe.

Torrance also discussed the differences between theological science and other sciences with respect to *subjectivity*.[32] There is a personal coefficient in all knowledge including the use of the scientific method which involves personal judgments in selecting data, constructing hypotheses and experiments, and inducing conclusions. Unlike other sciences, the personal coefficients in theology are brought into a direct, intuitive dialogue with the Object, namely with God's self-communication through his Word and Spirit. With such a reciprocal relation between subject and divine Object, the subject is invited to responsiveness and "opened up to the Object in his innermost being and made capable of apprehending Him."[33] This is a "trans-subjective relation" to God where the human subject is made capable of objectivity. This secures the possibility for the ongoing correction of the subjects' knowledge of God. With the empirical sciences, human subjects engage with a mute object to discover its rationality. Different from the natural sciences, Torrance suggests that a fuller objectivity is possible in dealing with a speaking, relational God more than impersonal objects which cannot oppose or persuade the subject to amend her or his thoughts and words.[34] This dialogical dimension will be further explored in the discussion on how the knowledge of God is relational in chapter four.

Beyond these basic differences in objectivity and subjectivity, Torrance further distinguished theology from the sciences by a number of other unique

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[32] Differences with respect to subjectivity are found in *TS*, 303-12.

[33] *TS*, 308.

[34] Beyond the discussion on differences in subjectivity on 303-12, see also *TS*, 98; *CTSC*, 118-19.

characteristics.[35] First, the "utter lordship of the Object" puts the human subject not as the primary examiner and inquirer, but places the subject before the divine Object to be questioned. In an "epistemological inversion," the knowledge of God originates with the Object who reveals himself while remaining Lord over the knowing subject, enabling the subject to know Him.[36] Second, the knowledge of God diverges from the sciences in that the Object is personal.[37] Chapter four will expand the personal dimension of the knowledge of God. Third, taking his cues from Barth, theological knowledge has a "two-fold objectivity," a "primary objectivity which is God's giving of Himself the Lord, a secondary objectivity in which He gives Himself to us in human form within our space and time." Through the secondary, creaturely objectivity, human subjects encounter God's primary, divine objectivity.[38] Fourth, the centrality of Jesus Christ as the revelation and "self-objectification" of God marks off knowledge of God from other types of knowledge. As all scientific knowledge has ordering principles that can be found within the Object, so God in Christ is the unique ordering principle by which scientific theology offers a systematic arrangement of the knowledge of God.[39] Fifth, epistemological demonstration and verification are determined by the nature of the object. Hence with the knowledge of God a demonstration of the Spirit is required. Nonetheless, due to the incarnation, earthly and historical demonstrations are also appropriate for God has provided His own demonstration for all humanity in the particularity of Jesus Christ.[40]

Even though Torrance distinguished theological science from other sciences, all of Torrance's epistemological dynamics are in accord with his conviction that knowledge of God and, consequently, theology is "scientific" as he defined it.[41] As one of Torrance's basic and uniquely emphasized dynamics, we will give a bit more space to expound a critique of this dynamic than with the other six dynamics in this introductory chapter. To begin, questions have arisen concerning Torrance's use of

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[35] The "distinctive characteristics" of theology from "other sciences" can be found in *TS*, 131-40.

[36] *TS*, 131-33.

[37] *TS*, 133-35.

[38] *TS*, 135-37. "Double objectivity" is further expounded on 298-299 in the discussion on differences between theology and science. For Barth's discussion, *CD* II.1., 3-31, 204-54. For Torrance's interpretation of Barth, *KBBET*, 69-71.

[39] *TS*, 137-39.

[40] *TS*, 139-40.

[41] This does not contradict the fact that I have named one dynamic "transcendent," describing the various elements in Torrance's theological epistemology which go beyond scientific description. Despite the fact that there are dynamics which go beyond his scientific paradigm, the exceptions he discussed demonstrate that science, nonetheless, is still yet the controlling metaphor for Torrance.

the word "science" and the analogies which he consistently makes from the natural sciences to theology and theological method. For instance, Donald S. Klinefelter questioned why Torrance repeatedly used scientific analogies for his theology but then also regularly discounted the natural sciences as belonging to a different order than that of theology.[42] Ronald Thiemann maintained that Torrance was inconsistent, holding theology as an "objective science" yet denying the reciprocal relationship between investigating subject and object of inquiry which "is a general characteristic of rational scientific activity." Furthermore, he characterized Torrance as a foundationalist.[43] James Barr harshly criticized Torrance for using the scientific label to assert theological superiority.[44] Moreover, Andrew Louth has provided the most

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[42] The differences between theology and the natural sciences are too substantial to make a real comparison according to Donald S. Klinefelter, "God and Rationality: A Critique of the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *The Journal of Religion* 53 (January 1973): 117-35, esp. 120-25, 127. For a response, see the discussion below in 2.5.

[43] Ronald Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1985), 32-43, quotation on 38. Thiemann's critique is inaccurate on two counts. First, Torrance's epistemology has a relational dynamic which involves the knowing subject which will be discussed in chapter four. Second, Thiemann contends that Torrance attempted to rescue this "inconsistency" through the use of intuition, thus labeling him a theological foundationalist. Torrance himself strongly responded to Thiemann to correct his use of the term "intuition" and to the accusation that he was a foundationalist. Thomas F. Torrance, "Thomas Torrance Responsds," in Elmer M. Colyer, ed., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), esp. 330-31. Furthermore, Elmer M. Colyer accurately critiques Thiemann's understanding of Torrance on foundationalism and intuition, contending that Thiemann remains within a dichotomy of chance and necessity and frames the discussion within the foundationalist/anti-foundationalist debate instead of the Greek father's concept of *prolepsis* which informed Torrance's thought. Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 343-44, note 97; Also, *The Nature of Doctrine in T. F. Torrance's Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 50-51, note 9. Tom McCall demonstrates the problems with Thiemann's conception of foundationalism. Arguing from a Reformed epistemology perspective, he demonstrates problems with coherentist doctrines of revelation and instead argues in favor of Torrance's "modest foundationalism." Tom McCall, "Ronald Thiemann, Thomas Torrance and Epistemological Doctrines of Revelation," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6 (April 2004): 148-68. Paul D. Molnar demonstrates how Thiemann mistakenly equates revelation and intuition in Torrance's writings and misses the reciprocal relationship between God and knower within the framework of justification by grace that Torrance maintained. Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 326-28.

[44] James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford Lectures for 1991* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 181-82: "I do not think that theology has or should have much of the character of science, or of a science. Theologians who argue for its scientific character are usually not arguing for the scientific character of *theology*, but for the scientific character of *their own theology*; in other words, it is an asserting of their own superiority, a typical phenomenon of the intratheological power struggle." [Here, in footnote 6, Barr directs the reader to Ronald Thiemann's discussion of Torrance in *Revelation and Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1985), 32ff. Notice that Barr neither engages Torrance's thought on science nor the history of the use of *scientia*. He continues with brief, dismissive comments.] "To me theology seems to have more the character of an art than of a science. It belongs with the human disciplines, not those of natural science. It belongs with literary appreciations, with the history of ideas, with history in general, with philosophy, and with language and linguistic studies. It has to handle human speech and human texts. Where it has claimed affinity with 'science', it seems to me too often to have achieved affinity rather with politics and propagandist

nuanced and substantive critique of Torrance's use of the word science and the
methodological analogies with the sciences which we will now briefly consider.

Louth has written on the nature of theology, challenging the character and
direction of theology that accommodates itself to the dominating influence of the
sciences that emerged in the Enlightenment.[45] Louth began his critique by discussing
a cultural split in the wake of the Enlightenment that has resulted in a one-sided way
that humans seek and recognize truth. He contended that the progress of the sciences
and the scientific method has monopolized notions of truth and how to apprehend
truth. With the growth of the sciences, there came "the idea that there is a method by
which we can reach the truth, 'a general method through which, it was held, any kind
of subject-matter must be approached, if knowledge of that subject was to be
attained.'"[46] As a result, it has been held that the sciences and those disciplines which
can adapt to scientific methods are the disciplines able to address concerns of truth.
Since the seventeenth century the natural sciences have progressed quite successfully
and the scientific method has proven itself as a way of attaining knowledge. However,
"the 'method' which will lead us to truth has been more difficult to come by in the
humanities than in the sciences, and if come by at all, it has certainly not been nearly
as successful."[47] Yet, in desiring the rigor and respectability of the sciences, the
humanities have often times sought for scientific methods.[48] As with other critics of
Torrance's use of science, Louth argued that "theology has more in common with the

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rhetoric. Lectures on 'scientific rigrour', supposedly based on the analogy of physics, come badly from
those who have published some of the worst and most ludicrous misuses of biblical language in this
century." [Here, in footnote 7, Barr notes: "As indicated in the writer's *The Semantics of Biblical
Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961)." [This too is a reference to Torrance.]

[45] Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: Essays on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1983, 2003), esp. 45-72. Interestingly, T. F. Torrance was one of Louth's former
theology professors. Louth, along with Iain Torrance, both at Edinburgh University at the time, "read
the proofs [of *Theological Science*] and helped to purge them of not a few errors." T. F. Torrance,
Theological Science (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), xviii. Louth's discussion of the nature
of theology is the most nuanced and substantive critique of using the word "science" for the nature of
theology. However, the only book which Louth engages in his critique of Torrance is *Theological
Science*.

[46] Quotation from A. Schouls, *The Imposition of Method* (Oxford: 1980), 5, in Louth,
Discerning the Mystery, 7.

[47] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, 11.

[48] Louth clarifies the use of the word "scientific," noting that while it "can simply mean
having to do with knowledge (*scientia*), it has in English a more restricted denotation, as 'science' and
'the sciences' now refer paradigmatically to the natural sciences, the 'exact' sciences, and to call
something scientific is to evoke this paradigm. (This is less so in German and French where
Wissenschaft and *science* are not as restricted in their significance.) To call a branch of study
'scientific' is to claim that it has found a way of applying the methodology of the sciences." Ibid., 13.

humanities than it has with the sciences."[49] Polemically, Louth wrote, "Theologians conduct their work in libraries, not in laboratories; they read books, they do not conduct experiments."[50] Louth maintained that theology directs us not to "solve problems" as within the sciences, but to "engage with mysteries." Turning specifically to Torrance and how he drew analogies between the methodologies of the sciences for theology, Louth observed,

> What we find [with Torrance] is not *simply* an attempt to assimilate theology to the exact sciences; rather what we find is an attempt to derive some illumination for the theological task from the way in which modern science (and in particular modern physics) has had to grapple with the problem of epistemology, that is, the problem of understanding how knowledge is arrived at and what that knowledge is. And there is light to be found here: in particular, in Torrance's emphasis on the way science has been able to hold on to the idea that it is concerned with objective knowledge and yet has escaped from the naivety of a crude empiricism. But in so far as this is true, it seems to me only to mean that knowing in the sciences, because it is a *human* activity, is much less unlike understanding in the humane disciplines than the early protagonists of the scientific method seem to have thought. The illumination that Torrance brings to the theological task is mainly oblique: for the simple reason, so it seems to me, that the procedures of theology *are* the procedures of the humanities, not those of the sciences ('libraries, not laboratories').[51]

Thus, Louth argued that theology belongs with the humanities and therefore Torrance "is mistaken in the fundamental thrust of his enterprise. But it does not mean that there is not much to be learnt from the kind of considerations he raises in the course of his books."[52] Other bodies of knowledge, wrote St. Thomas Aquinas, could often provide "extraneous and probable arguments" which is what Torrance provided. But Louth emphasized that if the theologian is "to look over his shoulder at other academic disciplines at all, it is rather to the humanities that he should look, and in doing so should not be looking there for any analogy to the scientific method, but

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[49] Ibid., 45.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 52.
[52] Ibid., 53.

rather for a different way of knowing that does not rely on method and technique."[53] Louth's critiques raise questions concerning whether Torrance's notion of the scientific character of the knowledge of God is appropriate given the Christian tradition and helpful in the contemporary post-Enlightenment, scientific context. We will first mention three important figures who have shaped the tradition of theology as a *scientia* before turning to the question of Torrance's helpfulness in the contemporary era.

Torrance's insistence on disciplined, objective (and thus "scientific") thinking was in line with that of his mentor Karl Barth.[54] While Barth conceived of theology, and more specifically dogma, as a science, he emphasized its methodological uniqueness more than Torrance, resisting accommodation.[55] Nevertheless, Barth maintained that theology should be described as a science, emphasizing its objectivity.[56] Similarly, but from within a different framework, Thomas Aquinas also contended that knowledge of God was a *scientia* in question one of the *Summa Theologia* on the nature and extent of *sacra doctrina*. The concept of *sacra dotrina* was a key concept for Thomas which has consequently received wide, diverse interpretations. [57] To discuss *sacra doctrina*, Thomas used the Aristotelian scientific

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[53] Ibid., 54. However, Torrance was not looking so much to imitate the scientific method, but find analogies with the methods of the sciences in their attempts to adapt their methods to "the nature of the object" under consideration.

[54] See note 16 above.

[55] Barth did not find methodological analogies among the sciences as did Torrance. Cf. Barth, *CD* I.1, 8, 10: "If it [theology] is ranked as a science, and lays claim to such a ranking, this does not mean that it must allow itself to be disturbed or hampered in its own task by regard for what is described as science elsewhere. On the contrary, to the discharge of its own task it must absolutely subordinate and if necessary sacrifice all concern for what is called science elsewhere. The existence of other sciences, and the praiseworthy fidelity with which many of them at least pursue their own axioms and methods, can and must remind it that it must pursue their own axioms and methods, can and must remind it that it must pursue its own task in due order and with the same fidelity. But it cannot allow itself to be told by them what this means concretely in its own case. As regards methods, it has nothing to learn from them… If theology allows itself to be called, or calls itself, a science, it cannot in so doing accept the obligation of submission to standards valid for other sciences."

[56] Barth, *CD* I.1, 10-11.

[57] "With the exception of his *quaestio* on the existence of God, Thomas Aquinas' treatment of the nature and extent of sacred doctrine may be the most recognized and pondered theological text in his entire corpus…No other writing of this theologian offers such extensive and developed reflection on the issues related to the content of Christian belief and theological science considered as such," writes Christopher T. Baglow, "Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine in Saint Thomas Aquinas" in Thomas G. Weinandy, OFM, Cap, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum, eds., *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 1. A seminal twentieth-century study argued that Thomas was the first medieval theologian to apply rigorously the Aristotelian notion of *scientia* to *sacra doctrina,* though he renders articles nine and ten of question one as disconnected. M.-D. Chenu, "La The'ologie comme science au xiii sie'cle" *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Litteraire du Moyen'age* 2 (1927): 31-71, as cited by Weisheipl and O'Brien below. Subsequent scholarship has continued to engage Chenu, but not without challenge. For instance, after noting the interpretation of

method described in *Posterior Analytics* and began with its most generic aspect and focused it down to its specific type and distinction.[58] With question one, Thomas first defined the necessity (article 1) and then defended the nature (articles 2-8) of *sacra doctrina* in his context of the medieval academy. Beginning with article two, Aquinas discussed the *quod quid est* (nature) of *sacra doctrina* in comparison with the philosophical disciplines of the day.[59] Here Thomas asked whether *sacra doctrina* is a *scientia* as defined by Aristotle as knowledge demonstrated by causes.[60] After considering two objections, Aquinas concluded that *sacra doctrina* can legitimately be called a *scientia* in an Aristotelian, derived sense. Therefore, for Aquinas *sacra doctrina* is a *scientia*, derived from God's self-knowledge and given by God's self-revelation which is distinct from philosophical speculation alone.[61] Before Aquinas

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eight major commentators on Thomas, James A. Weisheipl looks to the content, division and order of question one for clues to interpret *sacra doctrina*. He concludes that Thomas, following the "strictly logical and scientific order" of Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics*, makes three declarations: (1) the *an sit* (necessity) of the subject (article 1), (2) the *quod quid est* (nature) of the subject (articles 2-7), and (3) the *de modo* (modality) of the subject (articles 8-10). Thus, he contends that the meaning of *sacra doctrina* is consistent throughout all ten articles of the first question. James A. Weisheipl, "The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina* in *Summa Theologiae* I.q.1" *The Thomist* Vol. 38 No. 1 (Jan. 1974): 49-80. Another example includes T.C. O'Brien who contends that question one should be read more directly in its scholastic, academic setting. He presents the background of Thomas's specific use of the term *philosophicae disciplinae* as a definable entity of human education in pursuit of wisdom which was considered key to human restoration against which s*acra doctrina* needed vindication. Thus, Thomas sets up a contrast with the sufficiency of the philosophic disciplines (articles 2-8) with *sacra doctrina* and the God-inspired knowledge of Scripture (articles 9-10). T.C. O'Brien, "'Sacra Doctrina' Revisited: The Context of Medieval Education" *The Thomist* Vol. 41 No. 3 (Oct. 1977): 475-509. More recently, in agreement with the Aristotelian form of question one maintained by Weisheipl, an argument has been made that Thomas' model of *sacra doctrina* is that of *sapientia* (wisdom) rather than *scientia*. Mark F. Johnson, "God's Knowledge in our Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology" *Angelicum* Vol. 76 (1999): 25-45; Mark F. Johnson, "The Sapiential Character of The First Article of the Summa theologiae" in *Philosophy and the God of Abraham: Essays in Memory of James A.Weisheipl, O.P.,* ed. R. James Long (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991), 85-98.

[58] James A. Weisheipl, "The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina* in *Summa Theologiae* I.q.1," 64-7; Mark F. Johnson, "God's Knowledge in our Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology," 33-8; Scott MacDonald, "Theory of knowledge" in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas,* edited by Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 160-95.

[59] "The status and study of the highest forms of human learning set the issues and criteria confronting *sacra doctrina*." T.C. O'Brien, "'Sacra Doctrina' Revisited," 489. See also Weisheipl, "The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina*," 64-67.

[60] "One index to the evolution of theology in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the progressive clarification of the status of *sacra doctrina* as *scientia,* as an intellectual discipline. It would be both odd and uncharacteristic if St. Thomas did not address this epistemological issue." T.C. O'Brien, "'Sacra Doctrina' Revisited," 477.

[61] In *ST* Ia. q.1, a.2., Thomas considered two objections. First, *sacra doctrina* is not a *scientia* for "every *scientia* proceeds from self-evident principles" and *sacra doctrina* "proceeds from articles of faith which are not self-evident" and "their truth is not admitted by all." Second, *sacra doctrina* is not a *scientia* because "no *scientia* deals with individual facts." *Sacra doctrina* deals with the history of individual human relationships with God and thus cannot be a *scientia*. "On the contrary," Aquinas noted that Augustine calls the faith a *scientia*. He then goes on to distinguish between two kinds of *scientia*. One proceeds from principles "known by the natural light of intelligence" such as arithmetic, while the other proceeds from "principles known by the light of a higher *scientia*" such as music,

and the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, the influence of Augustine of Hippo on this matter held sway. Distinct from Aquinas, the Platonic framework of Augustine is evident in his discussion of the nature of knowledge of God.[62] From Book XII onward in *De Trinitate*, Augustine contended that Christian teaching was *sapientia* (wisdom) which dealt with eternal things in contrast to *scientia* which dealt with knowledge of temporal things.[63] Due to the Fall, the soul only knows a sin-distorted *scientia* instead of *sapientia*. Yet, *scientia* is not to be abandoned, for through the incarnation, Christian teaching included temporal phenomena and thus *scientia* was to be used to guide human action in the world. It is through Christ in whom "are hid both the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" that science and wisdom are reunited. Through his reconciling work and the love mediated by the Holy Spirit, the soul ascends

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emerging from mathematical principles. Sacred doctrine is thus a *scientia* "because it proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science, namely the *scientia* of God and the blessed." This is an important aspect of human knowledge of God for Thomas. God's self-knowledge, like the knowledge which the blessed in heaven have of God, is the ontological source of human knowledge of God. See Eleonore Stump, chapter 5, "God's knowledge" and chapter 7, "The foundations of knowledge" in her book, *Aquinas* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 159-187, 217-243; Mark F. Johnson, "God's Knowledge in our Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology," 25-45. Based on Aristotle's notion of a subalternated science, just as music accepts and uses the principles of mathematics, "so Christian theology takes on faith its principles revealed by God." *ST* Ia. q. 1, a. 2, p. 10. "*ita sacra doctrina credit principia revelata a Deo.*" In this way, Thomas ontologically secured the certitude of knowledge of God. In response to the second objection concerning individual facts, Thomas noted that individuals within salvation-history are offered as universal examples for everyone and promoted as authorities through whom revelation came. With these two general functions, the individuals of the biblical narratives are used for universal purposes, thus legitimating *sacra doctrina* as an Aristotelian *scientia.* See also M.F. Sparrow, "Natural Knowledge of God and the Principles of '*Sacra Doctrina*'" *Angelicum* 69 (1992): 471-491; John Jenkins, CSC, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 78-101; Geoffrey Turner, "St Thomas Aquinas on the 'Scientific' Nature of Theology" *New Blackfriars* 78 (1997): 464-476; Rudi Te Velde, *Aquinas on God: The Divine Science of the Summa Theologiae* (Aldergate, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 23-8; Woflhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science,* trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 228-31. The parallels with Barth's perspective have been explored by Eugene Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), esp. 15-70, 183-202.

[62] Nevertheless, on the dependence of Aquinas upon Augustine's epistemology, see Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 154-180.

[63] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, trans. Edmund Hill (417; repr., Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1991), Book XII, 322ff. On 12.4.22, p. 337: *Scientia* is "the action by which we make right use of things temporal" and *sapientia* is "the contemplation of eternal things." For discussions of the contrast, see Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's* De Trinitate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 221-227; Mary T. Clark, "De Trinitate," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, edited by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 91-102, esp. 98-9; Robert Meagher, *Augustine: On the Inner Life of the Mind* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 194-5; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science,* trans. by Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 8-11.

through *scientia* to *sapientia*.[64] Nevertheless, Augustine held onto a more Platonic goal of *sapientia* over *scientia* as the aim of the soul, that is, the contemplation of the Triune God.[65] Augustine, Aquinas and Barth each defined theology as a *scientia* in response to the notions of knowledge held within their cultural contexts. It is noteworthy that before Barth, Aquinas and Augustine spoke of the knowledge of God within their respective contexts, the Old and New Testaments also spoke of knowledge of God within their Hebraic and Graeco-Roman contexts, but of course knew nothing of the later contexts of these three theologians, much less the scientific categories and connotations of the word science since the seventeenth-century scientific revolution and its implications for epistemology.[66] It was to this scientific culture which Torrance aimed to develop his scientific dynamic concerning the knowledge of God. Like the three other theologians before him, Torrance aimed to address his cultural context, but was his scientific epistemological dynamic a faithful or compromising accommodation?[67]

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[64] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book XIII, esp. 366-70, emphasized that the proper relationship between *scientia* and *sapientia* is established by the work of Christ and the Spirit. Quotation from Colossians 2:3.

[65] This is made particularly clear by Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 146-58.

[66] Basic introductions to the notion of knowledge of God within the fields of Old and New Testament studies include Terrence E. Fretheim, *"yāda`"* in *New International Dictionary of OT Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 409-14; O.A. Piper, "Knowledge," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, ed. Vol. 3 (New York & Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 42-8; Bergman & Botterweck, *"yāda`"* in *TDOT*, G.J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds. Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 448-481; T. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Massachusetts: Charles T. Branford Co., 1960), 128-147; R. Bultmann, *"γινώσκω"* in Gerhard Kittel, ed. *TDNT* Vol. 1, trans. By Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 689-719; E. Schütz & E.D. Schmitz, "Knowledge" in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology,* ed. Colin Brown, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 390-409; A.G. Patzia, "Knowledge," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments,* eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 638-640; Heinrich Zimmermann, "Knowledge of God in the New Testament," in J.B. Bauer , ed., *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology* Vol. 2 (London & Sydney: Sheed & Ward, 1970), 472-8. Book-length discussions include Robert C. Dentan, *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968); Ian W. Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing: Story, Experience and the Spirit* (2006; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); Also, a well-rounded discussion of the knowledge of God within Old and New Testament studies is Mary Healy and Robin Parry, eds., *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007).

[67] David Munchin recently critiqued Torrance for giving in to a compromising alliance of theology to contemporary developments in science. He concluded on 455, "The absence of any sense of tension between natural and theological science implies that theological science *has* conformed to natural science once again, and there is no real attempt to show how theology might inform or transform the current paradigms of natural science. This 'all good news' appraisal of contemporary developments in natural science may lead us to suspect with Feyerabend that Torrance is simply and unwittingly collaborating with Western science's imperialistic habit." David Munchin, "Is theology a science? Paul Feyerabend's Anarchic Epistemology as Challenge Test to T. F. Torrance's Scientific Theology" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64 (2011): 439-55.

From his earliest lectures, Torrance conceived of knowledge of God and theology as a science. At that time, he used the notion of science to mean primarily a disciplined, objective form of knowledge.[68] But with and after the publication of *Theological Science*, Torrance expanded his use of the term, making extensive use of the natural sciences and in particular their epistemological methods as analogies for theological epistemology in order to demonstrate that theology is a comparable science and likewise that knowledge of God is in some ways comparable to scientific knowledge of the natural world.[69] Accordingly, Torrance's expanded use of the word science is distinct from Augustine's, Aquinas's and even Barth's use of the word *scientia*.[70] It also extended beyond his earlier use of the word by which he meant a disciplined, objective way of thinking.[71] It seems apparent that in his attempts to "evangelize the foundations of… scientific culture"[72] through a theological science, Torrance aimed to place theological knowledge on an equally respectable playing field as knowledge found in the natural sciences.[73] Such a move is not only subject to

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[68] For instance, from his earliest lectures at Auburn, Torrance noted, "In the basic sense, then, science refers to the kind of knowledge which is forced upon us when we are true to the facts we are up against. Here we do not think in the way we want to think, but in the way we have to think, if we are to do justice to the 'object' we are investigating." T. F. Torrance, "Scientific Dogmatics," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 1.

[69] A few recent theologians who engage the philosophy of science call theology a science. For instance, Nancey Murphy's contention that theology is a science is also methodological, in that theology creates theories from the data of experience similar to science. Nancey Murphy, *Reconciling Theology and Science: A Radical Reformation Perspective* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 1997), 19-32. In contrast, Wolfhart Pannenberg describes theology as the "science of God" not because of methodological similarity, but, like Barth, because God is the unifying object of theology. *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 297-345, esp. 297-300.

[70] Alister E. McGrath agrees that Torrance has expanded the use of the term. "The term 'scientific theology' thus comes to possess, in Torrance's hands, rather different nuances than that found in the German phrase *die wissenschaftliche Theologie*. The German term implies only an intellectual coherence; the English-language associations of the word 'scientific' implies at least a degree of affinity with the natural sciences." Alister E. McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 1999), 234. Consequently, McGrath later follows Torrance with his "scientific theology" which is more than simply rigorous analysis or "objective" theology in the Barthian sense, but includes using the natural sciences as an *ancilla theologiae* and gaining insight from its epistemological methods from a realist perspective. In this way, McGrath's work is "an attempt to develop and extend Torrance's vision of theological science." Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 3-78, quotation on 76.

[71] The other dimension which Torrance emphasized in his early conception of science is that methodology is determined by the ontology of the object under consideration, which is the next dynamic we will explore.

[72] This is a quotation of Torrance from I. John Hesselink, "A Pilgrimage in the School of Christ—An Interview with T. F. Torrance," *Reformed Review* 38 (Autumn, 1984): 59. On Torrance's evangelical intent, see note 13 above.

[73] Wolfhart Pannenberg notes, "The same concern, to defend the truth of Christianity by generally accepted criteria [as in philosophy], has been present since the thirteenth century in the

the above-mentioned criticisms of Louth, but alters the notion of knowledge of God as a *scientia* beyond its historic usage, accommodating it to modern scientific connotations.[74]

Consequently, calling theology a science in the contemporary milieu may contribute to a number of distinctive but related problems. For theologians engaged in the science-religion discussion and for those who are not, there is an apparent concern for the loss of integrity of their respective primary discipline. For those engaged in the science-religion dialogue whose primary first discipline is science (i.e. Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke, and John Polkinghorne), they speak of concern of whether Torrance has crossed into Barbour's category of "integration", accommodating science to theology.[75] For those theologians not engaged in the theology-science dialogue, there is a concern about the loss of integrity of theology. Like Barth (and Louth), they are concerned that theology not be compromised by science, questioning whether theology needs to look to the sciences.[76] In fact, from the perspective of this thesis,

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argument about the scientific status of theology and its right to be included among the sciences taught in a university." *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 13.

[74] On the history of theology as a science, see Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 7-14, 225-96.

[75] I owe this insight to David Wilkinson who commented that this concern has been voiced more in conversation than put into print. For Barbour's well-known four ways of relating science and religion, conflict, independence, dialogue and integration, see Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues,* rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1998), 77-105. Mikael Stenmark's more philosophically precise multidimensional model of the relationship between science and religion begins by considering three basic views: (1) the independence views (no overlap), (2) the contact views (overlap), and (3) the monist views (union). The monist views can be subdivided into a (4) complete scientific expansionist view and (5) complete religious expansionist view. Moreover, Stenmark discusses four levels or dimensions of science and religion: the social (practices), the teleological, the epistemological or methodological, and the theoretical. Mikael Stenmark, *How To Relate Science and Religion: A Multidimensional Model* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), esp. 250-269. It will be obvious, particularly with the ontologically-determined dynamic discussed next, that Torrance neither advocated an "integration" nor a "complete religious expansionist view" that collapses any of the four dimensions of sciences into theology.

[76] See Barth's comment in note 43 above. William J. Abraham notes the irony in *Canon and Criterion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 386-87: "Moreover, the choice of epistemic partner is both unsurprising and paradoxical. It is unsurprising, in that the whole modern period has been wedded to the idea of natural science as the paradigm of rationality and knowledge. It is paradoxical because the Barthian project was supposed to deliver us from bondage to the epistemic tools of modern culture; yet here again, in the very heartland of the Barthian tradition, one of them, the appeal to science as the paradigm of knowledge, suddenly reappears." See also his *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2006), 3. This desire to maintain theology's distinctiveness was seemingly behind what George Hunsinger wrote concerning Torrance's interpretation of Barth. "Barth's theology, Torrance urges, bears close comparison with 'an *exact science* such as physics'... Like physics, theology is said to restrict its activities 'to the limits laid down by the nature of its concrete object' and to develop 'a method in accordance with the nature of its object'… Torrance is not wrong to say these things of Barth, yet perhaps entirely too much of the atmosphere of the physics lab hangs subtly over the account … The continuities which interest Torrance between theology and physics are illuminating, but the discontinuities – the sense of rupture

calling theology a science in the contemporary milieu may sound like a reductionist strategy which attempts to describe theology using scientific language and categories instead of allowing theology its own integrity on its own level. We recall from chapter one that it was the positivists' aim to unify knowledge based upon a universal, scientific (empiricist) method, challenging all who would attempt truth-claims to utilize their method. While Torrance distinguished theological science from other types of sciences, the question remains: why aim to unify all forms of disciplined thought as "sciences" and thereby categorize theology as a science? Or why try to place the knowledge of God onto a procrustean bed of a science which in contemporary English usage is still largely defined by the natural sciences?[77] These questions become acute particularly in the postmodern context. A postmodern theme is "incredulity toward metanarratives," particularly the Enlightenment's scientific metanarrative which held out more promises of progress than it has been able to deliver.[78] Therefore, to conceive of knowledge of God as *scientia* but not as a science would not only be in keeping with the theological tradition, but also could be more productive in two ways. First, the knowledge of God as *scientia* but not a science preserves the distinctiveness and integrity of the knowledge of God, and second, protects it from the postmodern critiques of the Enlightenment's triumphalist and reductionist scientific metanarratives. While the parallels which Torrance drew between knowledge of God and scientific knowledge remain viable for the postmodern, scientific age, categorizing theology as a science is not the most suitable linguistic framework.

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which was always so important to Barth – ought not to be suppressed in the process.' *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 11-12.

[77] Louth clarifies the use of the word scientific, noting that while it "can simply mean having to do with knowledge (*scientia*), it has in English a more restricted denotation, as 'science" and "the sciences" now refer paradigmatically to the natural sciences, the "exact" sciences, and to call something scientific is to evoke this paradigm. (This is less so in German and French where *Wissenschaft* and *science* are not as restricted in their significance.)" *Discerning the Mystery*, 13.

[78] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xxiv; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity: A Report on Knowledge (of God)" in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 10: "The mark of the postmodern condition of knowledge, then, is a move away from the authority of universal science toward narratives of local knowledge." See also Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 39-56; J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity, 1995), 9-27; Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 4-5.

To further understand how the knowledge of God is scientific for Torrance, one must grasp his other epistemological dynamics. In a supplementary way, these other dynamics expand what it means for knowledge of God to be scientific, especially the next dynamic which Torrance repeatedly emphasized.

2.3 Ontologically-determined

Closely related and informing the scientific epistemological dynamic, the knowledge of God for Torrance is *ontologically-determined.* A basic epistemological principle in "theological science" and the "other sciences" was for Torrance that epistemology follows ontology. More precisely, there is a correlation between the nature of the object or subject matter we seek to know and how we know it. This epistemological dynamic was inspired by Aristotle,[79] used by the Christian theologians and scientists of Alexandria during the first six centuries of the Christian era,[80] and more immediately by Karl Barth's theological approach which was committed to God's Triune nature and self-revelation as the means for the knowledge of God.[81] In many ways and with various implications, Torrance repeats this theme throughout his major writings on theological epistemology. It is widely recognized as a "fundamental axiom" which permeates his writings.[82] The following paragraphs

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[79] *TS*, 108: "In the teaching of Aristotle, which dominated the conceptions of science for nearly two millennia, science is characterized by both unity and plurality. There is one world of nature which lies behind and requires a corresponding unity in our knowledge of it, but within this world there are different classes of thing with their peculiarities providing different subject-matter and therefore requiring different branches of science appropriate to them, each with its own scope and with its distinctive characteristics in method." Also inspired by Aristotle, Torrance's ontologically-determined epistemological dynamic is similar to the "principle of appropriate epistemic fit" discussed by William J. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 11, 14, 29-30, 35, 41, 43, 45.

[80] *TNS*, 83-84.

[81] Barth, *CD* I.1, 3-24, 295-404 on "The Task of Dogmatics" and "The Place of the Doctrine of the Trinity in Dogmatics" respectively. Torrance comments on Barth's approach, "Theological activity does not proceed in the light of the theologian's faith, but in the light of what comes from the side of that in which he has faith, the self-authenticating and self-revealing reality of God which according to its very nature can be known and understood and substantiated only out of itself." *KBBET*, 66-69, q. on 69. More generally, Torrance's thorough discussion of the Barthian shift in theological method is found in his *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology 1910-1931* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 1962, 2000).

[82] Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 322-25; Alister E. McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 142, 1601-1, 209-11, 234-35. This is the epistemological dynamic for which John Polkinghorne repeatedly credits Torrance within the science and theology dialogue. *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 80-81; *Faith, Science and Understanding* (London: SPCK, 2000), 181-82; *Reason and Reality: The Relationship Between Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1991), 1.

outline how Torrance understood this dynamic as well as the implications for epistemology in general and for the knowledge of God in particular.

Within a knowing relationship, epistemic agents rationally respond to the intelligible structures within nature. For Torrance, intelligibility and order is within the nature of things.[83] God confers upon finite being "a created rationality different from, yet dependent on, His own transcendent rationality, and thus gives it an inner law of its own."[84] Torrance contended, along with Einstein, that scientific thinking begins with respect for the basic nature of things "in their own intelligibility."[85] Consequently, human rationality derives from created rationality in the order of things. Contrasted with Kantian idealism in which "the understanding does not derive its laws (*a priori*) from, but writes them into, nature,"[86] Torrance maintained that "our basic statements are formed by way of conceptual assent to what is there or by way of recognition of an intelligibility inherent in the nature of things." Thus, for Torrance, the scientist is to "bring to light and express" the rationality embedded in nature.[87] He called basic statements of knowledge in the sciences and theology "recognition-statements"[88] because "order is in the Object before it is in our minds."[89] Reality has "ontological primacy" and control over human concepts.[90] Scientific knowledge brings the inherent rationality of things to some form of cognition and articulation.[91]

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[83] *TS*, xi, 57, 107, 138, 258, 287, 318, 338; *GR*, 10, 17-18, 42, 96, 139-41, 182, 196; *STI*, 9-10, 13, 23-24, 60-1; *BSCL*, xiv-xvii, 9-13, 19; *RET*, 10-12, 26, 132-35, 151-53; *CTSC*, 7-9, 31-2, 39, 57-58, 76, 81, 120-29; *DCO, passim*; *GGT*, 1, 4, 6, 52-57, 131-32; *RST*, 3-9, 20, 24, 33, 52-53, 73, 134, 138; *STR*, 1, 23, 180; *TCFK*, 45-46, 98-99, 196, 202; *CFM*, 16-27. For Torrance's discussion of disorder, *DCO*, 85-142.

[84] *GR*, 139.

[85] *GR*, 10; *TS*, xi.

[86] Quoted in *RST,* 16-17. Torrance maintained "It is to be granted that nothing can be apprehended apart from the synthesising and conceptualising activity of the human reason, which seems to have been the root idea behind Kant's 'synthetic judgments *a priori.*" However, it is quite another thing with Kant to define what is possible cognitive experience in terms of our ability to construct it, as though any proper object of human knowledge were a construction which we made out of space and time, which sooner or later would become a construction out of our consciousness." *RST*, 102-3; "Western thought has suffered here considerably from the Kantian idea that space and time are *a priori* forms of intuition, and that substance and causality are *a priori* categories of the understanding, which together constitute the frame which gives our knowledge of any possible empirical experience a universal and necessary form. That is to say, by transferring absolute space and time from the mind of God to the mind of the human knower, Kant generalized classical determinism to make it affect all that man can know." *DCO*, 16. For a longer, more mature engagement with Kant, see *TCFK*, 36-46. On 73, Torrance positively writes: "Whatever the demerits of Kant's notion of the synthetic *a priori* it at least had the merit of recognising that empirical and theoretic factors operate together in all our knowledge of the phenomenal world." Also, *TIR*, 71.

[87] *GR*, 42. See also 96, 182.

[88] *TIR*, 95; *GR,* 182; *BSCL*, 11-13, 16; *GGT*, 31.

[89] *TS*, 138.

[90] *RET*, 60; *GGT*, 33.

[91] *TS*, 107; *GR*, 196; *RET*, 26.

This is the priestly function of humans in creation, to articulate the intelligible order of creation.[92] In order for thought and description to be real, epistemic agents learn to respond to "the nature of the reality into which they inquire."[93] They recognize or discover the inherent rationality in what is given in nature. Torrance elaborated,

> The passion of the scientist or the scholar is aroused by the intuitive apprehension of a reality that is not constructed or controlled by man but waits to be discovered…As Michael Polanyi has put it, he is caught up in the pursuit of a reality that is only partially disclosed but that has an indeterminate range of rationality still revealed…His scientific conscience is the counterpart or echo in himself of that transcendent element, a logic beyond his own mind…That is why Polanyi has so often insisted, there can be no pure science pursued freely for its own sake without dedicated service to a transcendent rationality.[94]

This means that the basic act of knowledge is neither constructive nor inventive for Torrance. Rather, the "basic act of knowledge" occurs when reason "acts in accordance with the nature of the given object, that is, acknowledges and recognizes it, so that it attains its essential conceptuality as it lets its thinking follow the inherent rationality of the given."[95] Human knowledge acquires the intelligibility and coherence of the Object known "as we allow the Object to impose itself upon our minds."[96] When we can "bring to view the inner rationality of a field of knowledge," then we can be confident that we are "in touch with reality" and "thinking as we are compelled to think by the essential nature of the realities themselves."[97]

Hence, to begin to define the relationship between ontology and epistemology for Torrance, one must recognize that the essential nature and structure of the object sought is basic and primary to the knowledge relationship. As Torrance succinctly put it, "Not for one moment can we separate knowledge from the nature of what is

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[92] *GGT*, chapter 1, "Man, the Priest of Creation," 1-14; *CFM*, chapter 3, "Man, Mediator of Order," 29-48; *CTSC*, 111; *RST*, 68-69.
[93] *TS*, xii-xiii.
[94] *GR*, 96.
[95] *GR*, 182.
[96] *TS*, 138.
[97] *GR*, 94. "In natural science we are concerned ultimately, not with convenient arguments of observational data which can be generalized into universal explanatory form, but with movements of thought, at once theoretical and empirical, which penetrate into the intrinsic structures of the universe in such a way that there becomes disclosed to us its basic design and we find ourselves at grips with reality." *DCO*, 1.

known."[98] In short, scientific thought recognizes and appropriately responds to the rationality within nature. Along with his concern for objectivity and disciplined thought (2.2), his concern that ontology inform epistemology constituted science for Torrance, even from his earliest lectures.[99] In reacting against Kantian idealism, Torrance's type of realism is less sensitive to the postmodern theme of the constructive role humans play in interpreting the world. This will be further developed and critiqued below within the "truly realist" dynamic (2.8). Presently, we will note two implications of this epistemological dynamic and then turn to begin to consider how this dynamic may be viable for the postmodern, scientific era.

First, for Torrance, when one seeks to know something or someone, the nature of what one seeks to know should have a *decisive* influence on how one knows it. "You know something only in accordance with its nature, and you develop your knowledge of it as you allow its nature to prescribe for you the mode of rationality appropriate to it."[100] Torrance repeatedly maintained that, when permitted, nature can *prescribe* the "mode of rationality" to the potential knower and *determine* the content and form of knowledge.[101] In other words, "our knowing is determined by the nature of what we know."[102] This epistemic principle is definitive for the nature of the knowledge of God and Christian theology for Torrance. In his words, "Christian dogmatics is the pure science of theology in which, as in every pure science, we seek to discover the fundamental structure and order in the nature of things and to develop basic forms of thought about them as our understanding is allowed to be controlled by them from beyond our individualism."[103] More simply, "Theology is the positive science in which we think only in accordance with the nature of the given."[104] In short, the nature of God determines how we know God.

Second, not only is ontology to be epistemically prescriptive for the knower, but reciprocally the knower's epistemic tools are to be appropriately fitted for the

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[98] *TS*, 185.

[99] T. F. Torrance, "Scientific Dogmatics," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), *passim*; Thomas F. Torrance, "Theology and Science," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), *passim*.

[100] *GR*, 52; Also, *TCFK*, 4.

[101] *TS*, xii, 138-39, 165, 198; *GR,* 33-35, 52, 92-93, 113, 165, 199-200; *CTSC*, 27-29; *GGT*, 8-10; *RST*, 1-2, 76.

[102] *RST*, 1.

[103] *TS*, 338.

[104] *TIR*, 9.

nature of what one is seeking to know. Epistemic tools for Torrance may include things such as basic concepts, language, questions asked, ordering principles in systematic explanation, and verification and demonstration. These tools are to be in some way agreeable with the object one seeks to know. For example, the "essential forms of thought" should be under the "determination of its given subject-matter."[105] Reason and modes of rationality are to act in a way "congruent with" the nature of given reality.[106] Language is to be modified to "behave in terms of the nature of its own proper object" with a "distinctive vocabulary apposite to the nature of the realities in the field."[107] Concepts are to be "appropriate to" their proper objects.[108] Questions asked and modes of inquiry are to be "in accordance with" the nature of the object.[109] The ordering principles for systematizing knowledge must "be the servant of knowledge."[110] Verification and demonstration are to be "determined by" and "appropriate to" the nature of its object.[111] "Scientific procedures" are "controlled by material content" and thus each field of science is dedicated "to its proper object and method."[112] The result is that "what we know and how we know, subject-matter and method, cannot be finally separated from one another."[113] In various ways, Torrance persistently asserted that the various epistemic tools should be made suitable for the nature of its subject matter.[114]

The ontologically-determined dynamic was a universal epistemological principle for Torrance. This dynamic can help to situate knowledge of God in the postmodern era, despite its perhaps overconfident realism which will be discussed

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[105] *TS*, 281, also 278; *GR*, 5.

[106] *TS*, 75; *GR*, 112, 182; *CTSC*, 34-36; *GGT*, 8-10.

[107] *TS*, 25, 266-67, 278, 284, 292-95; *GR*, 93; *CTSC*, 32-34; *DCO*, 17-18.

[108] *TS*, 23, 25; *STI*, 56; *GGT*, 98.

[109] *TS*, 124; *STI*, 55; *GR*, 98.

[110] *TS*, 138.

[111] Torrance illustrates this principle for verification colorfully when he writes, "You cannot demonstrate something in the realm of the mind by chemical analysis, or appreciate the weight of an argument by a machine that weighs things, any more than you can smell with your ear or determine the sound of something by your eyes. Thus the only kind of evidence for God that will satisfy us is one appropriate to divine nature, appropriate to one who is the ground of His own Being and the Source of all other being, to one whose Being is Spirit and whose nature is love." *GR*, quote on 52-53. For similar illustrations, see 93, 113, 199-200; *TS*, 139-40, 198; *GGT*, 9.

[112] *TS*, 284. See also 70-73, 289.

[113] *RST*, 1.

[114] Here, it is worth noting that the various epistemic tools need not be cast only within the framework of the natural sciences. Also following Barth with a concern that ontology inform methodology was Hans Urs von Balthasar who contended that perceiving the form of God (and thus God's glory) calls for one to see beauty. For Balthasar, seeing beauty is an appropriate, analogous epistemic tool. See chapter 1.2.2, esp. pgs. 15-16. Though Torrance emphasized scientific analogies, he was not wholly unaware of the epistemological relevance of art. *RST*, 98-102, 126-27.

below (2.8) and in subsequent chapters. Following Aristotle, Torrance maintained that there is "one pervasive rational order throughout the universe," yet "the universe is manifold in character."[115] Along with Michael Polanyi who argued for a "hierarchical universe,"[116] Torrance argued that there is a "stratified structure" to reality.[117] "The universe is not flat, but is a stratified structure, so that our science takes the form of an ascending hierarchy of relations of thought that are open upward… but that cannot be flattened downward by being reduced to connections all on the same level."[118] Torrance recognized that this ontological notion directly challenged the modern problem of reductionism.[119] Positivism sought to define a basic level of reality in terms of what may be observed. A common motivation was ontological, epistemological and methodological unity and simplicity. Yet, as discussed in chapter one, if reality is stratified and multi-dimensional, then there is a greater amount of complexity than reductionism allows. This is precisely the problem of ontological reductionism, a hegemony of the various levels of reality by one layer of reality. One ontological level assumes priority and dominance. Consequently, the way of knowing appropriate to that one level is prescribed for the rest of reality. However, reality and knowledge of it are not reducible to one strata and its epistemological methods for Torrance. Instead, the many layers of reality invite many, distinct epistemological methods.[120] If reductionism is quintessentially modern, then Torrance's conception of a hierarchical or stratified universe moves beyond that modern notion.

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[115] *DCO*, 17. See note 67.

[116] Michael Polanyi's discussion is found in his *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958, 1962), 328-31, 382; *The Study of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1959), 47-53; *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966), 29-52.

[117] To a lesser extent, Torrance indicated his indebtedness for this concept to Albert Einstein. Torrance's discussions of the stratification of reality are found in *GGT*, 13-14; *STR*, 188-91; *CTSC*, 37-39; *TCFK*, 159-60. For discussion of Torrance's use of Polanyi, see Colin Weightman, *Theology in a Polanyian Universe: The Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 235-62; For corrections of Weightman concerning Torrance's use of Polanyi as an *ancilla theologiae* instead of as a source or foundation, see Alister E. McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*, 228-32.

[118] *GGT*, 13.

[119] "The universe that is steadily being disclosed to our various sciences is found to be characterised throughout time and space by an ascending gradient of meaning in richer and higher forms of order. Instead of levels of existence and reality being explained reductionistically from below in materialistic and mechanistic terms, the lower levels are found to be explained in terms of higher, invisible, intangible levels of reality. In this perspective the divisive splits become healed, constructive syntheses emerge, being and doing become conjoined, an integration of form takes place in the sciences and the arts, the natural and the spiritual dimensions overlap, while knowledge of God and of creation go hand in hand and bear constructively on one another." *RST*, ix. See also, *BSCL*, 144-45.

[120] Incorporating Roy Bhaskar's philosophy of critical realism against reductionism, Alister E. McGrath notes that his philosophy "demands that the different levels of reality be fully acknowledged. It is impossible to reduce reality to one ontological level, or to insist that what is "real" is determined

To faithfully respond to the multiple levels of reality, the principle of correlating epistemic tools with ontological realities becomes necessary, applicable to any reality and in any field of human experience. This is not to say that there is one universal epistemological method. On the contrary, because the methods of one field of knowledge cannot give the epistemic tools or criteria for another field of inquiry, the distinctive nature of the object creates distinctive epistemological criteria. This universal epistemological principle means that particular forms of knowledge within a field of inquiry are unique to that specific field, determined by the unique nature of the subject under consideration. For instance, not all sciences can be reduced to physics. But in an exemplary way, physics has developed methods appropriate to the nature of its own subject-matter. Likewise for every field of knowledge, if there is proper respect for the object, if "the method and the matter are purely matched," then real discovery and knowledge can occur.[121] This has profound implications for the knowledge of God and the nature of theology for Torrance within a postmodern, scientific era.

"Theological science and natural science both…have to let their thinking serve the realities into which they inquire. Each has its own concern to take up, its own special modes of rationality and verification determined for it by the nature of its object…conforming knowing to the nature of reality."[122] Torrance defined theology in the light of this epistemological dynamic. "Theology is the unique science [or, as this thesis prefers, discipline] devoted to knowledge of God, differing from other sciences [disciplines] by the uniqueness of its object which can be apprehended only on its own terms and from within the actual situation it has created in our existence in making itself known."[123] Within the field of Christian theology, inquirers are concerned with a mode of knowing appropriate to the nature of God in Jesus Christ

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by whether it can be "known"—often by the improper use of only one methodology, corresponding to the one level of reality that such a reductionism recognizes. Theology and the natural sciences recognize a plurality of levels of reality, and refuse to reduce everything to one level." Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 209-26, quotation on 225.

[121] *TS*, 107.

[122] *GR*, 113; *TCFK*, 276; *RET*, 30: "Each science—theological science and natural science—operates in accordance with the nature of the realities it is investigating and the field structures that characterize it, and in accordance with its own distinctive objective, so that while the two sciences inevitably overlap within the space-time of this world, they move in different directions."

[123] *TS*, 281.

who has sent the Holy Spirit.[124] It is a "scientific requirement" that theology "conform to the nature of the object."[125] Furthermore, "to consider that we can know Him in any way except out of Himself and in a way appropriate to His transcendent nature would be a form of irrationality."[126] This makes the knowledge of God and the field of theology unique, particularly within a nonreductionist, stratified universe. Theology operates on its "own ground," with distinct "modes of inquiry," "forms of thought," "axioms," "cannons," and "with its own distinctive ends" determined by and apposite to its unique subject.[127]

Consequently, Torrance's ontologically-determined principle leads to a type of epistemological pluralism which is quite congenial with the postmodern era's embrace of a plurality of epistemologies over a strong foundationalism.[128] For Torrance, there is not an infallible, universal mode of rationality, but instead there are potentially as many epistemological modes as there are ontological natures.[129] Nevertheless, there is a unitary, contingent order permeating the cosmos for Torrance, rooted in the Creator of all things.[130] Thus, there are basic unified aspects of

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[124] *TS*, 112-13, 337-38. We will further explore the Trinity as the third dynamic of Torrance's theological epistemology.

[125] *TS*, 244.

[126] *TS*, 54.

[127] *TS*, 25, 244, 281, 285, 337-38; *GR*, 6, 98, 114; *STI*, viii; *BSCL*, 4.

[128] With the passing of modernity came the collapse of foundationalism, that is, the justification of beliefs by self-evident or infallible beliefs or universal standards of rationality. A few salient discussions include William C. Placher, *Unaplogetic Theology: A Christian Voice In Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville, KY: Westmisnter John Knox Press, 1989), 11-54; Stanley Haeurwas, Nancey Murphy, and Mark Nation, *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 9-19; Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion and Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 7-35; J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 1-102; *The Shaping of Rationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), *passim*; John Thiel, *Nonfoundationalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Paul D. Murray, *Reason, Truth and Theology in Pragmatist Perspective* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2004), esp. 3-8, 93-161; Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Lousiville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 3-54. Torrance's ontologically-determined epistemological principle mitigates against foundationalism, for the ways of knowing are contingent upon the ontology of the known, not an indubitable, infallible or universal foundation. For more on Torrance and foundationalism, see note 43 above.

[129] At one point, Torrance noted that "there are at least four basic modes of rational order with which we have to do, and to which we may refer in terms of *number, logos, organic* or *organismic form*, and *aesthetic form*. They are all distinctive forms of rational order which demand distinctive expression, but far from conflicting with one another they all appear to involve each other, although in different ways." *DCO*, 17. Elsewhere, he contends that there is an indefinite range of rational modes, "as wide in fact as human experience itself." *TCFK*, 87.

[130] "So far as theological science is concerned, the created universe must be regarded as having been given and as sustained in its rational order, only in so far as it is open upward toward God the Maker of all things visible and invisible. That is to say, as a unitary intelligible whole the universe must be thought of as ultimately integrated from above through the creative bearing upon it of the Trinitarian relations in God himself." *CTSC*, 39.

knowledge which prohibit a strict isolationism among academic disciplines.[131] Alister E. McGrath correctly notes, "Torrance's approach thus allows for the affirmation of a universal scientific method [by which he means the ontologically-determined dynamic] on the one hand, and the particularity of theology on the other, avoiding the potential weakness of Barth's approach while maintaining the uniqueness of theology as an intellectual discipline."[132] Therefore, Torrance's ontologically-determined epistemological pluralism, which includes his notion of a multi-levelled structure of reality, simultaneously overcomes the problems of reductionism and foundationalism, strategically locating the knowledge of God in the postmodern, scientific age. We will further explore the place of knowledge of God within the emergent, stratified cosmos in chapter five.

If one accepts Torrance's axiom that the nature of God determines how we know God, then this raises two questions. What aspects of God's nature are epistemically-formative? And then, specifically how do these aspects of God's nature determine how we know God? We will explore aspects of God's nature which are especially epistemologically-determinative in chapter three. For now, it suffices to note that the knowledge of God for Torrance is, like all other types of knowledge, *ontologically-determined*. We initially conclude that this is a viable notion for the postmodern, scientific era, yet we will return and develop its viability further in relation to other dynamics in subsequent chapters. Like the previous dynamic, this epistemological dynamic provides support for all other dynamics of the knowledge of God for Torrance, especially for the next dynamic: the knowledge of God is Trinitarian.

2.4 Trinitarian

Most centrally for Torrance, the knowledge of God is Trinitarian. Because scientific (or disciplined) knowledge is ontologically-determined for Torrance, the focus of theology is not to be religious phenomenology or the subjective experience of the theologian. Rather, theology is to concentrate on God and how God has

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[131] *TS*, 108: "If there were no basic unity in natural science, then the more profound and specialized our knowledge in the particular fields became, the greater would be our bewilderment and confusion. But, if there were no special sciences, we would have an extremely monotonous world with one uniform method, eliminating, or at least failing woefully to do justice to, the manifold riches of nature and experience." See also, *STR*, 189.

[132] McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*, 235.

revealed Himself, namely "through Jesus Christ" and "in the Holy Spirit."[133]
Following Karl Barth, Torrance maintained that the Trinitarian object of revelation
gives revelation its distinctive form and order.[134] Thus, as science aims to expose the
rationality of its proper object, so theological science aims to disclose the rationality
of the Triune God.[135] As Torrance put it, "There must be a 'Trinitarian' character in
our knowing of God, corresponding to the trinity of relations in God himself."[136] As
theology's "proper object," the Triune God determines all epistemological dynamics
for the knowledge of God. Torrance held that the Trinity is "the *ultimate ground* of
theological knowledge of God, the *basic grammar* of theology, for it is there that we
find our knowledge of God reposing upon the final Reality of God himself, grounded
in the ultimate relations intrinsic to God's own Being, which govern and control all
true knowledge of him from beginning to end."[137] Hence, the Trinity is the most
important dynamic in the knowledge of God for Torrance, governing all of its
elements. We will further explore the centrality of the immanent Trinity and the
importance of the "ultimate relations intrinsic to God's own Being" for Torrance in
chapter three and its implications for his epistemology in the remainder of the thesis.

As mentioned (2.2), a unique dimension to the knowledge of God is that its
"Object" has given Himself to be known.[138] Unlike other sciences where one seeks
after the intelligibility of the object, God discloses Himself.[139] We come to know God
not from an *a priori* epistemology that pre-determines how knowledge of God ought

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[133] Note the Trinitarian structure of *TIR*: "The Knowledge of God," "Through Jesus Christ," "In the Holy Spirit." However, his most important epistemological discussions of the Trinity and the implications for knowledge of God are Chapter 6, "The Basic Grammar of Theology" in *GGT*, 146-78 and "The Trinitarian Structure of Theology" in *RST,* 160-206. A primary contribution of Karl Barth that Torrance continued is the close connection between revelation and the Trinity for "revelation is God revealing Himself." Barth, *CD* I.1, 295-304. For discussion of this theme in Barth, see Mueller, *Karl Barth*, 61-85; Webster, *Karl Barth*, 57-64. For Torrance on Barth, *KBBET*, 83-120, 193-97; *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology*, 113-18.

[134] *KBBET*, 118-20. On 119, Torrance notes that Barth "did not build the doctrine [of the Trinity] through adducing explicit biblical statements, so much as through an analysis of the basic structure of divine revelation."

[135] *GR*, vii, 6, 45-46, 97-98; *TS*, ix, 205-6; *RST*, 160-62.

[136] *GGT*, 148; Also, *RST*, 167, 178-200.

[137] *GGT*, 158-9; Also, *TCFK*, 95-96.

[138] Like Karl Barth, God's self-revelation is the basis of Torrance's theology and provides a "twofold objectivity." For Barth and Torrance, this was in direct opposition to Feuerbach's critique that all theological language is ultimately anthropological. For Barth, *CD* I.2, 1-25; II.1, 292-7; See also Busch, *The Great Passion*, 72-76; Hunsinger, *Karl Barth*, 35-39. For Torrance, *TS*, 32, 135-40. For Torrance on Barth, *KBBET*, 69-71, 77-78, 83-99.

[139] *TS*, 37-8, 46-54.

to be found, but rather we come to know God from engaging the ways that He gives Himself to be known.[140] As Torrance succinctly put it,

> We have to remind ourselves unceasingly that in our knowing of God, God always comes first, that in a genuine theology we do not think out of a centre in ourselves but out of a centre in God and his activity in grace toward us. Hence when we are engaged in dialogue with modern thought in its science and philosophy we must not try to bring knowledge of God down to the level of man's natural understanding, for we may not formulate our understanding of God on any ground lower than that which he has provided in revealing himself to us.[141]

Therefore, knowledge of God comes from God and out of God and is thus "*theo-logical.*"[142] Scientific theology, in turn, responds obediently to God's self-giving and self-presenting.[143] Knowledge of God is made possible by God's will and is a product of sheer grace.[144] In other words, knowledge of God and consequently theology is established by its givenness.[145] In the remainder of this chapter, we will discover how Torrance conceived that God has given himself to be known, namely through the Son and the Spirit.

God has given Himself to be known through the incarnation of Jesus Christ in a definitive way.[146] "The incarnation involves a hypostatic union not only between the Word of God and the word of man, the Rationality of God and the rationality of man, but between the uncreated Truth of God and the created truth of this world which God has made and to which we belong."[147] Since space, time and the other rational contingencies of creation were made through the Christ as the divine agent of

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[140] *TS*, 9-10, 26-27. See page 9, note 28 on particularism.

[141] *TIR*, 9.

[142] *TS*, 29, 182, 213; *RET*, 21-23; *GR*, 67-68, 182. On 81, Torrance quipped that theological knowledge takes the "road from God to man before the road of man to God."

[143] *TS*, ix, 192.

[144] *TIR*, 110-11; *TS*, 37-38, 46-47, 157, 299-300; *RST*, 25: "If our theological concepts do terminate upon God, they do so only in virtue of his grace, and cannot therefore import any kind of necessary or logical relation to him even though they arise in our understanding under the pressure of God's self disclosure"; *RET*, 123-24, 148-49. In n. 1, Torrance approvingly quotes H.R. Mackintosh, *The Christian Apprehension of God*: "All religious knowledge of God, wherever existing comes by revelation; otherwise we should be committed to the incredible position that man can know God without His willing to be known." *TS*, 47. Torrance follows Barth by holding to the epistemological implications of the doctrine of justification by grace alone. *TIR*, 26, 162-64; *GGT*, 90; *TCFK*, 211-12, 291-92.

[145] *TS*, 27-29, 40, 196.

[146] Throughout his epistemological writings, Torrance gave much attention to the incarnation and its relationship to epistemology. *TIR*, 30-45, 51-52, 128-49; *STI*, 52-90; *TS*, 46-54; *GR*, 45, 137-64, 166; *RET*, 84-101, 125-27, 137-45; *CTSC*, 95-9; *GGT*, 39-41, 47-49, 107-9, 114-19, 132-36; *DCO*, 23-25, 33, 134-42; *RST*, 86-91, 156-57, 183-92; *STR*, 1-26; *TCFK*, vii, 100-1; *CFM*, 10, 17-18, 26, 30-33.

[147] *RET*, 125.

creation, the incarnation is not an intrusion. Rather, it is the bringing of "his own creative being redemptively to bear upon our existence from within it."[148] The incarnation is the concrete place and time within the physical and tensed cosmos which gives knowledge of God who is beyond space and time. God "assumes created truth and rationality and makes them His own although He is distinct from them."[149] The incarnation has provided "a real and rational relation" suited to human rationality within creation and history with a rationality that transcends both creation and history.[150] For Torrance, we cannot know God except in accordance with His self-revelation in the creaturely and historical event of the incarnation.[151] From his earliest lectures forward, Torrance maintained the Christian tradition that "the incarnation of God in human form, Jesus of Nazareth, means the possibility of speech and thought about God" by humans.[152] Yet, we note a distinctive emphasis within Torrance's thought on the incarnation.

The incarnation includes a two-fold movement of God within humanity for Torrance. God has adapted Himself to be known by humans and likewise, God adapts humanity so that humans might know Him.[153] By bringing us into relationship with Him, we are "made capable of knowing Him."[154] The incarnation provides not only revelation, but moreover reconciliation which facilitates knowledge of God. In other words, through the incarnation, theological epistemology is bound up within soteriology.[155] Therefore, revelation and reconciliation are inseparable.[156] Before the incarnation, God formed Israel as a womb to conceptually prepare the world to receive the revealing and reconciling work of Christ.[157] Jesus Christ came within Israel as the Word of God perfectly spoken as well as the Word of God perfectly received.[158] Through the incarnation, God has broken into the closed circle of human ignorance and inability to know God and established knowledge of God.[159]

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[148] *DCO*, 24.
[149] *STI*, 65.
[150] *STI*, 13. See also 17, 23-24, 52-53.
[151] *STI*, 74.
[152] "The Christian Doctrine of Revelation," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 34; Also, "The Knowledge of God," 5-6: "Revelation is the ground and possibility of knowledge of God."
[153] *TS*, 45-54.
[154] *GR*, 165.
[155] *TS*, 41.
[156] *TIR*, 132.
[157] *GR*, 149; *RET*, 87.
[158] *TS*, 50-51; *RET*, 86.
[159] *TS*, 51.

God has also given Himself to be known through the Holy Spirit in a definitive way for Torrance. The Holy Spirit is essential for the knowledge of God for "we do not have any knowledge of God apart from the Spirit."[160] The Spirit is the personal presence of God who acts out of His own divine Being, bringing knowledge from the side of God and working within us to obtain that knowledge.[161] In the beginning of *Theological Science,* Torrance offered a personal testimony to his experience of God's presence.

> If I may be allowed to speak personally for a moment, I find the presence and being of God bearing upon my experience and thought so powerfully that I cannot but be convinced of His overwhelming reality and rationality. To doubt the existence of God would be an act of sheer irrationality, for it would be that my reason had become unhinged from its bond with real being. Yet in knowing God I am deeply aware that my relation to Him has been damaged, that disorder has resulted in my mind, and that it is I who obstruct knowledge of God by getting in between Him and myself, as it were. But I am also aware that His presence presses unrelentingly upon me through the disorder of my mind, for He will not let Himself be thwarted by it, challenging and repairing it, and requiring of me on my part to yield my thoughts to His healing and controlling revelation.[162]

The Spirit brings the being and nature of God upon humans, compelling us to think in response to the weight of His reality.[163] In line with John Calvin, Torrance maintained that the Spirit bridges the gap between God and human thought and language.[164]

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[160] *GR*, 165. His chapter called "The Epistemological Relevance of the Spirit" is the critical discussion, 165-192.

[161] *GR*, 171-74.

[162] *TS*, ix.

[163] *GR*, 167, 175-76.

[164] Concerning Torrance's interpretation of Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit in relation to knowledge and speech about God, *TIR*, 93: "Now the relation of language to being takes on a different form in accordance with the nature of being we are concerned with, creaturely being or the Creator source of all being. In this regard the Spirit of God is to be understood as the living action of the Creator upon which we rely for the effective actualization of the relation between language and the divine Being. That is the epistemological relevance of the doctrine of the Spirit for Calvin's theology. No work of ours can establish a bridge between our understanding and the Truth of God. Knowledge of God is in accordance with his nature as Spirit, and takes its rise from his living personal action upon us. The relation between our statements about God and God himself in his own Truth is not one that we can create or describe in statements, but one that we can only allow to happen to us and which we accept in yielding our minds and speech obediently and gratefully to his revealing and saving acts. Christian theology is therefore ultimately a *scientia practica*. Full place for that divine *action* must be given in any true account of theological knowledge … It is the Spirit who provides *transparence* in our knowledge and language of God." Distinct from Calvin's discussion of the testimony of the Spirit is his

The Spirit is not independent within the Being of God. Nor does the Spirit operate independently of the rest of the persons of the Trinity. Rather, the Spirit brings the revealing and reconciling work of the Father accomplished through the Son to bear upon humanity.[165] He effaces Himself to show us "the Face of the Father in the Face of the Son." Though the Spirit is of one substance with the Father and of one substance with the Son, He directs us to the Father through the Son.[166] The Spirit is distinct but inseparably related to the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit creates in humans the capacity to know God. Within the grace-formed creation, God has given humans a "sense of the presence of God" unless it is suppressed.[167] God's Spirit works within creation and from within humans to "open us up subjectively toward Himself."[168] The Spirit facilitates and readies our epistemic capabilities for the knowledge of God, creating in us the "capacity to hear, recognize and apprehend Him." Instead of suppressing rational capabilities, the Holy Spirit uses the creaturely realities of concepts, language, and speech as the media of revelation.[169] He then helps us to relate theological language to ordinary language.[170] Furthermore, the Spirit rehabilitates our relationship with fellow humans, creating a community of people who have been opened to know God. Theological knowledge is obtained within this community.[171] Additionally, because "scientific" knowledge is ontologically-determined, knowledge must be in accordance with the nature of its Object, including its own demonstration. Hence a "divine Object requires a divine demonstration." The Spirit of God provides demonstration for the knowledge of God. Demonstration is controlled by the Object as the Spirit provides His own demonstration.[172] Concisely put, the Spirit is the presence of God who creates and sharpens the epistemic tools that produce the knowledge of God within humanity.

Torrance demonstrated the biblical roots of the doctrine of the Trinity[173] and traced its development to the Nicene creed.[174] He maintained the tradition of

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concept of the "illumination" of the Spirit throughout his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. See Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 172-91.

[165] *GR*, 179-83.

[166] *GR*, 166-8.

[167] *TS*, 103. On God's creation made from grace and not necessity, *DCO,* 34-5.

[168] *TS*, 52.

[169] *GR*, 21, 168, 183-88.

[170] *TS*, 292-95.

[171] *GR*, 188-89.

[172] *TS*, 139; See also *GR*, 21-22; *BSCL*, 2-3.

[173] *CDG*, 32-72.

Trinitarian theology with a distinctively Barthian influence.[175] His primary works on the Trinity were not written to develop an epistemology but for the doctrine of God.[176] He then accented the two-fold movement of the incarnation and the Spirit. While his doctrinal works are not primarily epistemological, there are significant epistemological implications of his doctrine of the Trinity which we will explore in the remainder of this thesis.[177] Chapter three will probe more deeply into aspects of Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity that are epistemologically-formative, taking us to the heart of his epistemology. Chapters four and five will expand the implications of the Trinity for epistemology beyond what Torrance emphasized, but still within his Trinitarian framework. Chapter four will explore how a Trinitarian-shaped epistemology means that knowledge of God is personal and relational. Chapter five will discuss how a Trinitarian knowledge of God is participatory, involving the whole person and a way of life. In continuity with the previous dynamic, we close with a preliminary comment about the Trinity as an epistemological dynamic for the postmodern, scientific age before its fuller development in the remainder of the thesis.

The previous dynamic demonstrated that knowledge of God is ontologically-determined for Torrance. We have here introduced the content of this particular ontology, the Triune God. So, in this way, Torrance's Trinitarian epistemological dynamic is particularist and challenges modernist reductionism. Knowledge of God cannot be reducible to the epistemological rules and standards which are at work in physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, or sociology in order to be considered knowledge. Each of these disciplines deal with unique complexities which cannot be reduced to lower levels and their epistemological criteria. Likewise, knowledge of God requires God-level or theological explanations which give shape to its distinctive form. In this way, working within a stratified and complex framework, Torrance, like Barth before him, may be considered a proto-typical postmodern, or at least as helpful to move us beyond modern reductionism.[178]

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[174] *CDG*, 73-111. *TF* is his book-length exposition of the Nicene creed.

[175] Torrance acknowledges "the influence of Greek patristic and Reformed theology, with particular acknowledgements of debt to Athanasius the Great, Hugh Ross Mackintosh and Karl Barth" on his thought on the Trinity in *CDG*, ix.

[176] See especially *CDG*, *TF*, and *TP*.

[177] For Torrance, the Trinity and salvation are not collapsed into an epistemology, particularly his doctrinal works. Reciprocally, his doctrine of God has ontological priority. His epistemological works, through written prior to his books on the doctrine of God, cohere and reflect a Trinitarian priority.

[178] See 1.2.1 and especially pg. 7, note 19 on Barth and postmodernity.

To further assess the viability of the knowledge of God in the postmodern, scientific age through a critique of Torrance does not mean merely making theological epistemology fit within the contours of another discipline or what is currently epistemologically fashionable in a given cultural context. Rather, a viable theological epistemology will have an incarnational and missional function. Therefore, there are aspects of the knowledge of God which will set well within the current philosophical milieu, while other aspects may prove to be a challenge to it. To have a Trinitarian epistemology, the cosmos-wide mission of God governs the knowledge of God, entering into the various historic and global cultures and their ways of knowing and, in some way, re-ordering and transforming them. In this way, knowledge of God is Trinitarian not only in form, but also in function.[179] Chapters three through five will explore the viability of the Trinitarian dynamic—which is at the very heart of Torrance's epistemology—and develop its epistemological implications beyond Torrance's discussions.

The Trinitarian epistemological dynamic is not ethereal or unearthy for Torrance for it is actualized through the work of the Son and Spirit in creation. This theme is developed and concretized in unique ways with the next epistemological dynamic which is that the knowledge of God is creation-situated.

2.5 Creation-Situated

Another unique emphasis of Torrance's theology and theological epistemology was his contention that all knowledge of God occurs within the context of the space-time universe. This is closely connected with his scientific epistemological dynamic. To introduce what he called the "bounds of Christian theology," Torrance wrote,

> It is distinctive of Christian theology that it treats of
> God in his relation to the world and of God in his
> relation to himself, not one without the other. If it did
> not include the former, we who belong to the world
> could have no part in it, and if it did not include the

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[179] On the relationship of mission and epistemology, see the excellent collection of essays in J. Andrew Kirk and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999). Furthermore, Paul G. Hiebert discusses his move from a positivist epistemology to a critical realism in *Missiological Implication of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 1999). On the Trinitarian form and function of mission, Leslie Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2001).

latter, it could be concerned only with a 'knowledge of God' dragged down and trapped within the world and our relations in it. Knowledge of God by *us* in our creaturely status within the world must indeed be knowledge of God in his interaction with us and the world he has made, but if it is to be knowledge of *God*, it must be grounded ultimately in the reality of God, in the inviolable otherness and intelligibility of God as he is in himself beyond our world altogether.[180]

Without leaving the Trinitarian dynamic behind, Torrance repeatedly reminded his readers that knowledge of God occurs within the contingencies of the space-time universe.[181] "It is in and through the universe of space and time that God has revealed himself to us in modes of rationality that he has conferred upon creation and upon us in the creation, and it is in and through the same universe of space and time that theology makes its disciplined response to God's self-revelation."[182] Furthermore, Torrance held that space and time have a formative or regulative role not only in the structure of the universe, but in the way humans know.[183] Knowledge of God is given and participated in within space-time, and thus its epistemically-regulative dimensions require attention. For Torrance, the task of the theologian is not to explore the physical universe, but as a creature of space and time to consider "the way in which we make use of the framework of thought in space-time" for theology.[184] Arguing for the relationship between the rationality within creation and within humans, Torrance wrote,

[T]he doctrine of creation also involves the idea that man himself, in mind as well as body, has been created out of nothing along with the universe, so that he is a constituent element in the created order of things as an essential ingredient in the complex of rational order intrinsic to the universe. The rationality of man and the rationality of the created universe belong inseparably together. Thus in creating the universe out of nothing God has conferred on it a created or contingent rationality of its own, as distinct from his divine rationality as creaturely being is from his divine being, yet as dependent on his uncreated rationality as creaturely being is upon his own being. Thus God has given contingent rationality within the universe a place and an authority which we are obliged to respect, not only if we are to have rational knowledge of God through the medium of space and time

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[180] *RET*, 21.
[181] *TS*, 56-57; *GR*, 112-13; *STI*, *passim*; *STR*, *passim*; *RET*, 30-39; *TNS*, 35-60; *BSCL*, xvi-xvii; *GGT*, 1-10; *CFM*, 22; *CDG*, 138; *DCO*, 1-4.
[182] *GGT*, 1.
[183] *STR*, 187.
[184] *GR*, 99.

> where he communicates himself to us, but even if we are to investigate
> the contingent process of nature and discover their laws as far as they
> may be disclosed to us.[185]

Therefore, Torrance gave special attention to the shift from Newtonian physics to
Einstein's theory of general relativity and its consequences for the concepts of space-
time.[186] Through two historical-theological studies, he contended for a relational view
over a container view of space and time and its consequences for theology.[187] No
other major theologian in twentieth-century accented these themes in the way
Torrance did.

As introduced in the Trinitarian dynamic, the incarnation has a determinative
role in Christian theology for Torrance. The incarnation established Jesus Christ as
"*the place* in all space and time where God meets man in the actualities of his human
existence, and man meets with God and knows Him in His own divine Being."[188] Its
concrete occurrence within space and time provides knowledge of God its
actuality.[189]Adapting a Barthian theme, Torrance wrote, "What He is toward us He is
eternally and antecedently in Himself, but what He is in Himself He is toward us
within our life in space and time."[190] Through the incarnation and resurrection, God
has anchored knowledge of himself within the space-time structures of creation.[191]
While knowledge of God is unbounded in that God is unlimited, transcending space
and time, the knowledge of God is also bounded by the way which God has chosen to
relate to us in the world through the incarnation.[192]

Deriving from the creation-situated dynamic, there are implications for the
relationship between theology and science, or as Torrance put it, between the natural
sciences and "theological science." Torrance maintained that theologies of creation

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[185] *DCO,* 3-4.

[186] *GR*, 99-103; *DCO*, 62-84; *TCFK*, 263-83; *RET*, 32-33.

[187] On page v, Torrance states that the second of the threefold purpose of *STI* is "to examine
the place of spatial and temporal ingredients in basic theological concepts and statements and to clarify
the epistemological questions they involve." In this short book, he examines the concept especially of
space in Nicene theology, modern theology and the implications for the doctrine of incarnation in
particular. He gives more attention to the concept of time in *STR*.

[188] *STI*, 75; Also *RET*, 36-37, 89; *CFM*, 32.

[189] *TS*, 26-27.

[190] *TS*, 208.

[191] *STR*, 177-79. On 178: "Hence nothing that Jesus Christ was, taught and did is to be
understood and interpreted through any kind of abstraction form the spatio-temporal structures and
conditions of concrete human existence."

[192] *RET*, 24-25. The transcendent dynamic of the knowledge of God will be explored further
below (2.7).

give impetus for the development of science and some of its basic concepts.[193] Consequently, because both knowledge of God and knowledge of the natural world occur within the same creation, Torrance contended "we are obliged to bring our belief and knowledge of God to expression in the patterns of thought and speech which we gain under the impact of God's creation upon us." He continued, "Theology and science arise and take shape within the one world which God has made and upon which he has conferred the rational order that makes it accessible to our scientific inquiries."[194] Both occur in the medium of the space-time universe with its contingent intelligibilities, yet "one to investigate creaturely relations out of themselves, apart from God, and the other to inquire of God who transcends all creaturely relations and makes Himself known through his Word as the Lord of all space and time."[195] To be sure, theology and the natural sciences had different ends and means for Torrance.[196] Yet, there was a contextual overlap between them within the creation.[197] This led him primarily to make epistemological or methodological analogies. However, it also led to his concern for theoretical correlation which he defined as follows:

> *Empirical correlates* have an essential place in any theology that seeks to be faithful both to the creation and to the incarnation…If we cannot cut off knowledge of God either from the world of which he is the Creator of from ourselves who are creatures of this world, then theological concepts and statements can have meaning for us only when they are coordinated with empirical reality…This is not to argue that every theological concept or statement must have a specific empirical correlate, but that theological concepts and statements have a proper place in a coherent system which at certain points is correlated with the empirical world.[198]

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[193] *GGT*, 44-74. Here, Torrance describes how three foundational Christian theological ideas about creation have enabled science: (1) the rational unity of the universe; (2) the contingent rationality or intelligibility of the universe; (3) the contingent freedom of the universe. For his expanded discussion of contingence and a contingent order, see *DCO*.

[194] *BSCL*, xvi-xvii. This is also the basic argument of John C. Polkinghorne in his *One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology* (1986; repr. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007), esp. 115-16.

[195] *RET*, 30.

[196] See the ontologically-determined dynamic above (2.3). BSCL, xvi-xvii: "This does not imply that belief in God and knowledge of him are built upon the foundations of natural science, for they have their own proper ground in the self-revelation of God, but since that takes place within this world of space and time into which natural science inquires, we are obliged to bring our belief and knowledge of God to expression in the patterns of thought and speech which we gain under the impact of God's creation upon us."

[197] *RET*, 30-39.

[198] *RET*, 34-35.

Torrance sought correlation between knowledge of God and knowledge of the world. He placed the theologian alongside the scientist asserting that both are dedicated to the exploration and understanding of the universe.[199] He maintained that theology "cannot pursue its activity in a sealed-off enclave of its own, but it must take up the relevant problems and questions posed by the other sciences in clarifying knowledge of its own subject matter."[200] Torrance's correlative intention is noteworthy. In defining the discipline of systematic theology, John Webster recently wrote that it attempts to offer a "conceptual articulation of Christian claims about God and everything else in relation to God," which often includes coordinating Christian thinking with other forms of intellectual activity outside theology.[201] The concern for external coherence resonates with that of Thomas Aquinas when he wrote, "Now all things are dealt with in *sacra doctrina* in terms of God, either because they are God himself or because they are relative to him as their origin and end."[202] Torrance's concern to engage the sciences fits within this traditional concern for theoretical or theological correlation. Torrance also sought epistemological correlation with the sciences and used scientific, methodological analogies because, for him, knowledge of God was creation-situated. Torrance's concern for various levels of correlation between theology and the natural sciences distinguished his approach from that of Karl Barth.[203] Furthermore, these correlations led Torrance to contend for a revision of natural theology.[204]

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[199] *RST*, 122-23.

[200] *ST*, viii.

[201] John Webster, "Introduction: Systematic Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1-3, 6-9. In agreement with Webster, Paul S. Fiddes described systematic theology as a "connectional theology, aiming to make links within the Christian faith, with the world and other disciplines in our culture." Paul S. Fiddes, "Concept, Image and Story in Systematic Theology" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 1 (January, 2009): 3-23 (quotation on 4). Likewise, A. N. Williams held that the comprehensiveness and order of systematic theology reveal that it is concerned with the relationality and rationality of God and of all things created by God. A. N. Williams, "What is Systematic Theology?" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 1 (January 2009): 40-55.

[202] Aquinas, *ST*, I.1.7.

[203] *TCFK*, x: "However, what Karl Barth did not seem to appreciate adequately, was the fact that since God makes himself known to us in the created universe where he has placed us and therefore in and through the spatio-temporal structures and intelligibilities of the universe which, under God, are more and more disclosed to our scientific inquiries, there are basic interconnections between theological concepts and natural scientific concepts which have to be brought to light, if we are to do full justice both to our knowledge of God and to knowledge of the created order."

[204] *RST*, 69: "[T]here is a necessary and inescapable connection between theological concepts and physical concepts, spiritual and natural concepts, positive and natural theology, or rather between theological science and natural science, for it is in that connection that the changed status of natural theology has its place." Such correlation is one of five functions of natural theology delineated by

By emphasizing the context of the space-time universe, Torrance extended beyond the Barthian emphasis but continued with the same epistemological framework centered in God's grace and Triune self-revelation. This is clearly demonstrated by Torrance's revised notion of natural theology.[205] Barth's repudiation of natural theology is well-known. Before Barth, a dominant strand of Catholic interpretation of Thomas Aquinas defended the possibility of the knowledge of God by the light of human reason, philosophy and what came to be regarded as natural theology.[206] Barth outright rejected the possibility of a natural knowledge of God. [207] With Barth, Torrance held that the actual knowledge of God mediated through God's self-revelation in Jesus undermined idolatrous attempts to obtain knowledge of God beyond that self-revelation.[208] He held this view from his earliest lectures.[209] Yet, with Torrance's attempts to correlate theology with the natural sciences, he articulated a revised natural theology which he claimed was anchored in a proper reading of Barth. He argued that "what Barth objects to in natural theology is not its rational structure but its *independent* character, i.e. the autonomous rational structure which it develops on the ground of 'nature alone' in abstraction from the active self-disclosure of the living God."[210] Thus, Torrance argued for a natural theology which, he believed

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David Fergusson which he considers commensurate with the Barthian paradigm. David Fergusson, "Types of Natural Theology," in *The Evolution of Rationality: Interdisciplinary Essays in Honor of J. Wentzel van Huysteen*, ed. F. Leron Shults (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 380-93.

[205] Thomas F. Torrance, "The Problem of Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth," *Religious Studies* 6 (1970): 121-35; reprinted in *TCFK*, chapter 9, "Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth," 285-301; also reprinted in *KBBET*, chapter 5, "Natural Theology in the Thought of Karl Barth," 136-159. Further discussions include *GGT*, chapter 4, "The Transformation of Natural Theology," 75-109; *RET*, 30-34; *RST*, chapter 2, "The Status of Natural Theology," 32-63.

[206] Henri Bouillard, *The Knowledge of God,* trans. Samuel D. Femiano (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 20-62. Although, more nuanced readings of Thomas delineate some of the incompatible interpretations between Thomists and Barthians to find more common ground between Barth and Thomas on the priority of grace and revelation. Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 20-62; Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), esp. 17-70, 183-202.

[207] Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 65-128; Barth, *CD* II.1, 63-254. However, more positively, cf. Barth, *CD* IV.3.1, 139.

[208] *TF*, 51; *CDG*, 24-25; *KBBET*, 141-43, 147-48.

[209] See especially his "The Christian Doctrine of Revelation," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 11-12; "The Knowledge of God," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 12-16.

[210] *TCFK*, 293-94; *KBBET*, 147. Or, as he put in *GGT*, 89: "Barth's real objection to traditional natural theology rested on theological and scientific grounds. It is the actual content of our knowledge of God, together with the scientific method that inheres in it that excludes any movement of

Barth maintained, is included within revealed theology.[211] Torrance used the analogy of the relation of geometry to physics to illustrate, claiming Barth's verbal approval.[212] Eucledian geometry is a distorting abstraction unless it is understood within the framework of physics and the space-time universe. Likewise, natural theology as an independent scheme is barren unless it is embedded within revealed or positive theology. Instead of allowing creation to interpret revelation, Torrance reversed the order, saying that in light of revelation, we can appropriately interpret creation. While creation can reflect the beauty and rationality of God and even raise questions at the boundaries of the sciences,[213] no logical bridge exists between the world and God for Torrance.[214] Torrance's notion of natural theology allows knowledge of God to occur only *within* and *as a consequence of* God's self-revelation. This view of natural theology enabled him to retain the Barthian priority of the necessity and sufficiency of God's Triune self-revelation and yet uniquely engage in dialogue between theology and the natural sciences. Yet, Torrance has been criticized for violating the Barthian paradigm. James Barr criticized,

> [P]eople who were very much in the Barthian line of thought began to talk as if some kind of natural theology…might after all be acceptable and even necessary – but all this without dismantling the earlier basic structures of Barthian theology which had, beyond all doubt, taken the absolute denial of natural theology as a central and non-negotiable position. [215]

More recently, Paul Molnar who is quite sympathetic to Torrance on most counts, critiques Torrance's extension into natural theology as a departure from the Barthian paradigm.[216] However, W. Travis McMaken adequately defends Torrance's "reformulated natural theology," contending that Molnar has conflated Torrance's

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thought that arises on some other, independent ground as ultimately irrelevant and as an inevitable source of confusion when it is adduced as a second or coordinate basis for positive theology."

[211] While appreciating Torrance's engagement with the sciences, Rodney Holder criticizes Torrance's Barthian prioritizing of revelation and faith, arguing for a more traditional natural theology which is free-standing. Rodney D. Holder, "Thomas Torrance: 'Retreat to Commitment or a New Place for Natural Theology?'" *Theology and Science* 7, no. 3 (November 2009): 275-96.

[212] *TCFK*, 294-95/*KB: B&ET*, 148-49. *GGT*, 91-2; *STR*, ix-xi.

[213] *RET*, 10-11: "Now since God has endowed his creation with a rationality and beauty of its own in created correspondence to his transcendent rationality and beauty, the more the created universe unfolds its marvelous symmetries and harmonies to our scientific inquiries, the more it is bound to fulfill its role as a theater which reflects the glory of the Creator and resounds to his praise."

[214] *RET*, 32.

[215] For instance, James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, 13. He then cites Torrance in note 18.

[216] Paul D. Molnar, "Natural Theology Revisited: A Comparison of T. F. Torrance and Karl Barth" in *Zeitschrift für dialektische theologie* 20, no. 1 (December 2005): 53-83; Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 93-99.

view with the traditional notion of natural theology and that Torrance admits no natural knowledge of God as a condition, but as a consequence of revealed knowledge.[217] Similarly, Alister E. McGrath contends, "One of Torrance's most significant theological achievements concerns his careful relocation of the place of natural theology within the Reformed tradition in general, and the Barthian heritage in particular."[218] While Molnar critiques McGrath for going beyond Torrance,[219] it does not seem that Torrance has betrayed but extended the Barthian paradigm. David Fergusson has helpfully categorized five functions or types of natural theology in their respective contexts and described Barth's relation to these five types. The last two types are *a posteriori* approaches, not proceeding independently of revelation but from faith convictions. Specifically, type five involves the correlation of the Christian faith with other fields of knowledge which Fergusson suggests is not unnecessary and dangerous, but a "necessary element of the church's pastoral and educational work."[220] Fergusson identifies T. F. Torrance's type of natural theology with this coordinating function.[221] Consequently, Torrance's revised notion of natural theology guards against reducing theology to a lower level of explanation yet remains engaged with the natural sciences. As with Barth's rejection of natural theology, knowledge of God for Torrance was not based upon a lower anthropological or cosmological level (see 1.2.1), yet found analogies with the epistemological methods of the natural sciences. These two simultaneous moves, avoiding reductionism and engaging with the sciences, uniquely situate his notion of the knowledge for the postmodern, scientific age.

Torrance's creation-situated dynamic is also suitable for the postmodern, scientific age in another important way. A postmodern epistemological theme emphasizes the contextualization or rootedness of all knowledge. As Paul Murray has summarized, "For such [postfoundationalist] thinkers all human knowing is embedded

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[217] W. Travis McMaken, "The Impossibility of Natural Knowledge of God in T. F. Torrance's Reformulated Natural Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12, no. 3 (July: 2010): 319-340.

[218] Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 176. McGrath aims to extend the same approach of Torrance in his development of his own "Trinitarian natural theology." *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 9-108; *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Malden, MA; Oxford, UK; Victoria, Australia: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

[219] Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance,* 95, note 106.

[220] David Fergusson, "Types of Natural Theology," in *The Evolution of Rationality: Interdisciplinary Essays in Honor of J. Wentzel van Huysteen*, ed. F. Leron Shults (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 380-93, quote on 391.

[221] Ibid., 393, note 27.

in and variously influenced by historical location (Hegel, Dewey), socio-political context (Marx), psychological factors (Freud) and shared patterns of behavior and linguistic practice (Pierce, Wittgenstein, Sellars *et al*)."[222] In other words, there is no "view from nowhere."[223] Torrance has given focused attention to a broader context that has received less attention in discussions of postmodernity, namely the space-time universe. While emphasizing this context, he has not fallen prey to a reductionist account, but has held to the notion of a stratified, complex universe in which knowledge of God occurs. For example, using the scientific analogy of "dual control," Torrance noted, "Both in engineering and biology we operate with operational principles over and above the laws of physics and chemistry which obtain at a lower level, but which are open to control from beyond themselves at their boundary conditions."[224] Torrance continued that while engineering and biology are dependent upon the lower levels of chemistry and physics, they are not explainable by reference only to those levels, but also must include the distinctive higher-level aspects of organization which are not reducible. Similarly, Torrance observed that the resurrection of Jesus contains "spatiotemporal coordinates and connections" as well as divine activity. To deal faithfully with the resurrection of Jesus in a complex, stratified reality, Torrance advocated that his readers "think conjunctively" on multiple levels at the same time.[225] Likewise, knowledge of God has taken on the forms of thought within space and time, but it cannot be reduced to these contingencies for it transcends them. As he clearly put it,

> Because its proper Object is personal, human, historical, etc., theological knowledge overlaps with other kinds of knowledge which involve the personal, human, historical, etc., but because it is knowledge of *divine* Truth in personal, human, historical forms, theological knowledge cannot be reduced or resolved into these other kinds of knowledge. It has a fundamental mode of rational activity that transcends them all and yet never leaves them behind.[226]

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[222] Murray, *Reason, Truth and Theology*, 5.

[223] The title comes from Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). This is a principle argument of postfoundationalist epistemologies. On postfoundationalism, see above note 116.

[224] *RET*, 38.

[225] *RET*, 37-39.

[226] *TS*, 204. This perspective explains why knowledge of God is both like and unlike other types of knowledge, including the sciences, adequately overcoming the critique of Klinefelter referenced in note 31.

The knowledge of God, because it is creation-situated, can find comparison with other types of knowledge, but because God is transcendent and radically other than creation, it cannot be reduced to anything within creation. Working within a nonreductionist and complex ontological framework, Torrance capitalized on how our notion of the space-time universe has implications for knowledge of God in an age which is particularly sensitive to context and complexity. Thus, his creation-situated dynamic is well-suited for the postmodern, scientific age.

2.6 Essentially rational and conceptual

Because the knowledge of God is situated within an orderly and rational creation for Torrance, it is also *essentially rational and conceptual*. From his earliest lectures, Torrance held that knowledge of God is neither sub-rational, irrational, nor even supra-rational, but rational.[227] Torrance did not use the term "reason" simply to refer to the internal faculties of the mind, but frequently as the human capacity for objectivity. In other words, reason is the capability of thought to recognize and respond appropriately to the nature of reality presented. Therefore, knowledge occurs when the rationality inherent in the nature of things is apprehended by human rationality. As Torrance clearly put it, "The basic act of knowledge is not creative or inventive…The basic act of knowledge is one in which the reason acts in accordance with the nature of the given object, that is, acknowledges and recognizes it, so that it attains its essential conceptuality as it lets its thinking follow the inherent rationality of the given."[228] Accordingly, the rationality of God leads to the rational recognition of God by humans. Consequently, the attempt of apophaticism for wordless or non-conceptual mystical experience is a mistaken direction according to Torrance, because rationality, word and speech are in the very Being of God.[229] Nevertheless, Torrance allowed for a "non-conceptual element" in the knowledge of God that aims to

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[227] From his earliest lectures, Torrance contended against anti-intellectualism, arguing that "the Holy Spirit does not work with men in sub-rational or non-intelligible ways in the hearts of men." "What is Christian Education?" *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 8.

[228] *GR,* 182-23. See also *TS,* xii-xii, 13.

[229] *TIR*, 94-6; *TS*, 11-12; *CTSC*, 103-7; *GGT*, 150, 152-53, 167; *TCFK*, 304; *GR*, 170: "Even though God transcends all that we can think and say of Him, it still holds good that we cannot have experience of Him or believe in Him without conceptual forms of understanding—as Anselm used to say: *fides esse nequit sine conceptione.*" Instead, Torrance later argued for apophatic knowledge that is grounded and controlled by the *homoousion*. From the incarnation we must "learn what is proper to read back into the eternal Being of God and what is not proper to read back." *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 85-88.

"safeguard an empirical relation to the divine Being, in the recognition that you cannot convert true relation to being simply into a statement."[230] Hence, he reserved a place for mystical theology providing an "extra-logical relation to God," nevertheless even that remained closely connected to rationality for Torrance. He self-admittedly rarely used the term "mystical."[231] But on the occasion that he used the term mystical theology, he used it to refer to holding the mind "ontologically upon God himself" to sustain the "nonformalisable, intuitive relation to God" and to keep the mind "ever open toward the inexhaustible Mystery of God's Love."[232] Rationality is an important tether for Torrance's epistemological discussions. Given this emphasis, faith for Torrance is not beyond reason, but rather the "proper behaviour of the reason in accordance with the nature of the divine Object."[233] Thus, a consistent dynamic for Torrance is that the knowledge of God is a fully rational event.[234]

Consequently, the knowledge of God is essentially conceptual in its cognitive apprehension and articulation for Torrance. The incarnation within the intelligible structures of space and time make a real conception of God possible. A "non-cognitive" revelation or faith reflects a "fatal deistic disjunction between God and the world which does not allow for any real Word of God to cross the gulf between God and the creature or therefore to permit man in space and time any real knowledge of God as he is in himself."[235] Torrance admitted that what is "conceived" is determined by the conceiver as well as by the nature of what is conceived. Yet, the nature of the object conceptually conceived governs the type of concepts that are born.[236] Hence, Torrance contended for a bi-polar structure of concepts with their respective subjective and objective poles. On the subjective end, concepts are rooted in social and linguistic structures. Yet, for concepts not to be distorted by the ordinary language of a given society, they require constant revision by keeping our concepts as close as possible to the objective source that stimulated the concepts. If the bi-polar

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[230] *TCFK*, 318.

[231] T. F. Torrance, "Thomas Torrance Responds," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 324.

[232] *RST*, 123-25; On Torrance's self-interpretation of this passage, see "Thomas Torrance Responds," 324-29.

[233] *GR*, 116; *TS*, 33; Therefore, "it is irrational to contrast faith and reason, for faith is the very mode of rationality adopted by the reason in its fidelity to what it seeks to understand, and as such faith constitutes the most basic form of knowledge upon which all subsequent rational inquiry proceeds." *TCFK*, 194. Faith is where "we allow our minds to yield to the intrinsic claims of God's cognitive self-revelation in Jesus Christ." *STR*, 19.

[234] *TS*, 11-14.

[235] *STR*, 2-3.

[236] *TS*, 13-14.

structure is bifurcated, a false dichotomy arises and concepts can become subjectively defined. True concepts arise through direct and intuitive apprehension of reality and then are brought to conceptual comprehension as we allow reality to take shape within human rational forms of thought and speech. For the knowledge of God, this means that conception arises under the influence of God's Word and Spirit, generating the capability to conceive God. "Knowledge of God is thus conceptual in its essential root." This conceptuality "derives from God's self-revelation in his Word, but which we have to bring to articulate expression in our understanding, with a conceptuality that finds shape in our human forms of thought and speech, yet under the control of God's own intelligible reality."[237]

While the knowledge of God is always conceptual for Torrance, there is a diversity of types of concepts determined by the nature of the object conceived. Torrance distinguished between "closed" and "open" concepts. Closed concepts are those which can be more fully grasped while open concepts are those which transcend full apprehension. The former can be reduced to propositions and are more rigid, but the latter are elastic and cannot be exhausted, continually going beyond what is understood or verbalized about them. From art, Torrance used the example of the Byzantine portrayal of Christ. There are fixed lines which give definition to the picture of Christ, but there are also divergent lines, opening toward a golden background, pointing to the inexhaustible eternity which cannot be circumscribed. From physics, the concepts of classical mechanics are limited to what is perceptible, while those of quantum mechanics open beyond the criterion of perceptibility. Therefore, while theological concepts are different than physics or art, Torrance used these examples to demonstrate the possibility and reality of open concepts, particularly when investigating that which cannot be conceived in terms of what is already known. "Theological statements operate, then, with essentially *open concepts* – concepts that are relatively closed on our side of their reference through their connection with the space-time structures of our world, but which on God's side are wide open to the infinite objectivity and inexhaustible intelligibility of the divine

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[237] *GR*, 15-22; also 168-71.

Being."[238] The knowledge of God is conceptual, yet because of its ineffable Object, theological concepts are "open toward God."[239]

Suitable with his notion of open concepts, Torrance also discussed the patristic distinction between apprehending and comprehending. Comprehension is appropriate for closed concepts, potentially bringing the totality of something under intellectual command. Likewise, apprehension is appropriate for open concepts, a "grasping of God which does not exhaust His transcendent reality and mystery; but it is no less conceptual for that reason."[240] Knowledge of God remains always conceptual for Torrance, yet it is a type of conception that is appropriate to the limitless Being of God.

Furthermore, Torrance held to an exacting notion about the relation between concept and image. Patristic theology held concept and image together in a way that Cartesian dualism split apart. Disagreeing with Austin Farrer at particular points, Torrance held that images are "tools" rather than "pictures," merely pointing to a reality they cannot fully portray and thereby "making themselves in a real sense dispensable as they do their work and we apprehend the reality through them." Quoting Hilary, images are "to be regarded *as helpful to man rather than as fitted to God,* since they suggest or indicate and do not exhaust Him."[241] To maintain how images remain conceptual yet "do not actually image while pointing to and signifying a reality," Torrance noted that in the biblical tradition, image and words work together. It is with words that "the images are made to signify or indicate that to which they point." Thus, words are preferable to images because they help us to "look through" the images and "hear past them" so that we do not conceptually hang on to an idolatrous picture of God. In short, words are preferable to images in human conception of God for Torrance.[242]

Additionally, due to the nature of the divine *Logos,* Torrance maintained that an auditory interpretation of concepts should find its place alongside the dominating optical interpretation. The Greeks gave primacy to vision, leading Western philosophy to make vision the primary mode of sense-experience and knowledge. In particular, positivism has restricted knowledge to what is observable, myopically limiting

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[238] *STI*, 21.
[239] *TS*, 15-16, 240. For more on "open concepts," *TIR*, 50; *GR,* 186-88; *STI*, 20-21. On the implications for mystical theology and religious art, *RST*, 123-27.
[240] *GR*, 22-23.
[241] *TS*, 19-20; also *STI*, 20-21.
[242] *TS*, 17-21.

epistemology to vision. While there is a place for knowledge to be held as visionary, it is misleading to interpret all knowledge in terms of sight. For instance, in biblical revelation it is through word that images are "made to signify or indicate that to which they point." Theology operates with "a direct act of cognition in *hearing* God and engages in the act of conception through *audition*" which Torrance called "audits." Concepts of Christ are open concepts because in Christ we *hear* the eternal Word of God. Distinguishing visual and aural concepts further clarifies the ways which the knowledge of God manifests itself conceptually.[243]

With this dynamic, it is clear how anthropology influences epistemology. While it is true that knowledge of God involves the human reasoning faculty, it certainly involves other dimensions of the human person involved in knowing. While Torrance mentions mystical theology, by which he primarily meant humility in thought, the emphasis is still on its effects upon a person's reasoning faculties. The other faculties which contribute to human knowing are given less attention by Torrance. These other dimensions may be generally included within Torrance's discussions of personal knowledge, including the intuition and the tacit dimension that he incorporated from Michael Polanyi. We will discuss Torrance's notion of personal knowledge in chapter four. Nevertheless, an early critique by Thomas Langford concerning *Theological Science* still seems to apply to this epistemological dynamic in general. He faulted Torrance for having "an extremely rationalistic or intellectualistic understanding of faith." Faith, knowledge of God and even mystical apprehension are defined in terms of human reasoning. Langford wrote, "There is not enough provision for the affective, volitional, or active dimensions of the response of the total [person] to God in Christ."[244] Torrance's *essentially rational and conceptual* epistemological dynamic minimizes attention to other dimensions of the human person involved in knowing which receive attention at different points throughout the Christian tradition. The Eastern Orthodox tradition, various mystical traditions within Roman Catholicism as well as contemporary Pentecostal movements among Protestantism give special consideration to the importance and integrity of the pre-cognitive or trans-rational epistemological dimensions. To name a few examples, as an early influence upon a strand of Christian mysticism, Augustine provided seminal

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[243] *TIR*, 21, 58; *TS*, 17-25; *RET*, 74-78; *GGT*, 29-32.
[244] Thomas A. Langford, "T. F. Torrance's *Theological Science*: A Reaction," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 25 (1973): 157-58.

thought for the interrelationship between love and knowledge rooted in a more integrated, complex anthropology being restored to the image of God.[245] Similarly, for the Eastern Orthodox tradition, Vladimir Lossky has written, "Unlike gnosticism, in which knowledge for its own sake constitutes the aim of the gnostic, Chrisitan theology is always in the last resort a means: a unity of knowledge subserving an end which transcends all knowledge. This ultimate end is union with God or deification, the θέωςις of the Greek Fathers."[246] Soteriology contains epistemology for Lossky which includes the whole person. Whether or not or in what way one holds to a doctrine of *theosis*, it can be argued that the knowledge of God ultimately involves the eschatological transformation of the whole person and temporally engages the whole person towards that end.[247] Likewise, for the Orthodox writer Dumitru Staniloae, temporal knowledge of God contains both rational or cataphatic knowledge of God along with an apophatic, experiential knowledge which goes beyond human reasoning.[248] The latter type of knowledge is quite similar to what philosopher James K.A. Smith refers to as the affective, embodied epistemology of Pentecostalism. Because anthropology and epistemology are interrelated, Smith aims to correct the intellectualist model of human persons. Such a model conceives of humans as primarily "thinking things" or autonomous rational agents and disembodied centers of cognitive activity. In line with Augustine, he offers an anthropological critique presenting the human person as more basically a lover.[249] According to Smith, this anthropological and thus epistemological critique is in line with the postmodern critique of modern rationalism.[250]

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[245] Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's* De Trinitate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 170-89; Robert Meagher, *Augustine: On the Inner Life of the Mind* (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 70-111 ; Lydia Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Malden, MA & Oxford, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 1-65; Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 132-158.

[246] Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1973), 9. See also the chapter, "Lossky, the *via negative* and the foundations of theology" in Rowan Williams, *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 1-24.

[247] Ibid., 7-43; See also Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1978), 13-25.

[248] Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 1 of *Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*, trans. and ed. by Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), esp. 95-124.

[249] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 39-73.

[250] James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 59-80.

Torrance may be right to say that knowledge of God can be more than rational, but is never less than rational. Still, this framework of "more" or "less" misses the mark. Torrance's portrayal of the necessity of the involvement of human reason is not mistaken, but insufficiently complex and improperly weighted. The Christian tradition, as emphasized by the postmodern, scientific age, gives more attention than Torrance did to those other dimensions of the human person which influence human reasoning. Chapter five will expand upon how knowledge of God involves the whole person. For here it is sufficient to note that subjective dimensions other than rationality are diminished by the emphasis of this dynamic within Torrance's epistemology. Therefore, this assessment concludes that the knowledge of God involves human reason and concepts, but cannot be defined as essentially rational and conceptual without a diminishment of the other subjective dimensions which contribute to knowledge.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the essentially rational and conceptual epistemological dynamic is in tension with the next dynamic we will explore, the transcendence of God. As David S. Cunningham described the doctrine of the Trinity in the modern era,

> This paradoxical God, who existed above and beyond all human categories of knowing, seemed to be quite thoroughly at odds with the spirit of the [modern] age – and particularly at odds with its penchant for rationalization and classification. Classical Trinitarian theology seemed to obscure the otherwise clear and distinct categories of human and divine, transcendnent and immanent, and even oneness and threeness.[251]

While the Christian tradition supports Torrance's contention that there is reason and order within God, there is incalculably more of the Triune God which transcends human reasoning capabilities. Therefore, the next epistemological dynamic will assist with expanding his Trinitarian epistemology.

2.7 Transcendent

While Torrance maintained that the knowledge of God is rational and scientific, he also acknowledged aspects of the knowledge of God which go beyond human comprehension. He noted this sense of beyond in many ways with several

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[251] David S. Cunningham, "The Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 188.

terms. For instance, Torrance held that there is a "trans-logical" relation between concepts and experience.[252] Also, he urged that epistemological authority should go beyond the subjective individual or institution and be located in the self-given object, calling such authority "trans-subjective.'"[253] However, the most all-embracing word and concept which Torrance used which captures this epistemological dynamic is *transcendence*. Torrance defined transcendence as follows:

> *Transcendence* – extension beyond the bounds of the world, of human experience or comprehension. Traditionally, transcendence *over* the world is applied to God who is independent of the universe he has made and who while everywhere present in it cannot be regarded as contained within its space-time dimensions or as controlled within the limits of finite knowledge… Transcendence *in* the world is applied to realities that are independent of our knowledge of them, that can be known only out of themselves but which cannot be confined within the limits of our descriptions.

We will explore how Torrance distinguishes between transcendence *over* the world verses *in* the world and its implications for knowledge of God. We begin with his notion of transcendence in the world.

Torrance noted the difference between the "truth of being" and "cognitive truth" as having real significance for the knowledge of God.[254] Being always transcends how humans think about it. In other words, reality outruns human experience and description. Also, the rationality of nature goes beyond human rationality. Being, reality and nature have ontological priority and transcend human conception and articulation, and thus there is a transcendent element in every science.[255] The rationality embedded within the universe is not fully comprehensible by human rationality. The contingence of the universe makes its rationality mysterious "not because it is deficient in rationality but rather because the extent and nature of its rationality exceed our capacity to achieve complete mastery over it and therefore to reach any formalization of it."[256] In other words, the "intelligibility generated in the scientific enterprise points to a dimension of intelligibility

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[252] *TCFK*, 77-78.

[253] *TS*, viii.

[254] *TS*, 141-44; 272-73; *GR*, 35-40; *RET*, 126-35, 140-56; *RST*, 9-12, 48, 141-44; *TCFK*, 304, 310-16.

[255] This is why Torrance finds the idea of "open concepts" as fitting and useful. For more on "open concepts" see the "essentially rational and conceptual" dynamic above (2.6).

[256] *DCO*, 40. Also 61; *TCFK*, 77-78.

transcending it."[257] Thus, in order to be scientific, there must be a "dedicated service to a transcendent rationality." [258] To be objective, the rationality within reality must be allowed to speak for itself.[259] In response to reality and being, humans are to use logic and language as transparent media through which to apprehend and describe them.[260] Torrance did not hold that there can be strict correspondence between theory and reality as in classical physics where "scientific theories have a one-to-one correspondence with the realities they describe" as "theoretical transcripts of reality."[261] Rather, because reality and the truth of being always transcend cognitive truth, all human knowledge inevitably falls short of representing reality. All human knowledge is, as Torrance put it, inescapably a "compromise between thought and being."[262] This will be explored further in the next dynamic, knowledge of God is "truly realist" (2.8). For now, we note that Torrance's notion of transcendence *in* the world points to the order of reality which is ontologically distinct from human cognition and articulation. We turn now to how Torrance used the word transcendence with reference to God's transcendence *over* the world.

Torrance maintained that as the Creator of the space-time universe, God is transcendent over all that exists.[263] This is in keeping with the Christian tradition. William C. Placher contends that before the seventeenth century, transcendence governed the predominant modes of thought and speech about God.[264] In line with this tradition, Torrance maintained that God "transcends all that we can think and say of Him."[265] He explained,

> We are up against a reality that towers above our intelligence, which we cannot know or reflect about by trying to occupy some epistemic stance "above" it. This is the kind of reality which we may know by inquiring

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[257] *DCO*, 58; *RST*, 135-38.

[258] *GR*, 96. For the full quotation of Michael Polanyi, see the indented quote above on page 7.

[259] *TS*, 30.

[260] *TS*, 28; *GR,* 120.

[261] *TS*, xv-xvi.

[262] *TS*, xi, 258; *GR*, 196.

[263] *STI*, 1-3, 6, 12-13, 23, 59-61.

[264] William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thing about God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 6: "What I want to convey—and *transcendence*—a relatively neutral way of doing it—is this: before the seventeenth century, most Christian theologians were struck by the mystery, the wholly otherness of God, and the inadequacy of any human categories as applied to God. That earlier view never completely disappeared, but in the seventeenth century philosophers and theologians increasingly thought they could talk clearly about God." In particular, he contrasts the thought of Aquinas, Luther and Calvin with seventeenth-century thinkers who grew more confident in their ability to understand God and God's role in the world.

[265] *GR*, 170.

> into it from "below," as it were, by submitting our minds to the authority of what it actually is and seeking to apprehend it by allowing our understanding to fall under the power of its intrinsic but *transcendent intelligibility.*[266]

The transcendence of God does not diminish God's rationality for Torrance. Instead, "the inherent difficulty we finite creatures have in knowing God lies in the excess of his divine rationality over our ability to comprehend it."[267] Even as early as his time in Auburn, Torrance lectured that with the knowledge of God "we must simply realize the truth that there are things quite out of reach of the finite mind."[268] In short, because God is transcendent over the world, knowledge of God has a transcendent quality.

Even though Torrance championed theology as scientific, he recognized that God was not like any other object of scientific investigation. To conduct an investigation in the natural sciences, one observes natural objects, forms questions and hypotheses, plans and conducts experiments to obtain data or answers, and then draws conclusions based on the observations. However, God is utterly distinct from natural objects. God cannot be coerced to prove or disprove any hypothesis through empirical observation or forced by experiment to answer questions as routinely occurs in the application of the scientific method to nature. God neither submits to human manipulation nor surrenders to controlled analysis.[269] Torrance elaborated,

> The experimental investigation through man-made controls, and the corresponding demonstration offered by making things work as we stipulate, are scientifically inappropriate to the living God, for it would not be the Lord God but an idol that could come under our power like that, and it would not be theology but magic that could conjure up and manipulate "the divine" like that.[270]

God is distinct from nature and not subject to this kind of application of the scientific method. Rather, with an epistemic reversal, when humans submit and surrender to the

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[266] *STR*, 192. Italics mine.
[267] *DCO*, 61.
[268] "The Character of Theological Thought," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 8.
[269] *TS*, 38, 96-97.
[270] *TS*, 299.

transcendent God, then they are enabled to know God.[271] For Torrance, the uniqueness of this "Object" demarcates the distinctiveness of the knowledge of God as going beyond the natural sciences.[272] Knowledge of God is distinct from other types of knowledge because it is knowledge of a transcendent God who is ultimately incomparable with reduced categories suited for creaturely realities.

Even though through the incarnation God has entered into the rationalities and contingencies of the space-time creation, God remains transcendent over all.[273] "In making himself known to us God discloses at once both that he has made himself open to us and accessible to our knowing of him and that even in revealing himself to us he remains ineffably transcendent over our knowing of him."[274] As noted in the creation-situated dynamic, the knowledge of God assumes the various forms of other types of knowledge within creation while at the same time surpassing them. Through the incarnation, the knowledge of God takes on human, personal, and historical dimensions, and thus has similarities with other types of knowledge. Hence, because it is creation-situated, knowledge of God has likeness to other types of knowledge, but because it is transcendent, it "has a fundamental mode of rational activity that transcends them all and yet never leaves them behind."[275] In other words, as Jesus Christ is the incarnated transcendence of God, so knowledge of God is creation-situated, transcendent knowledge.[276]

This epistemological dynamic contains both the notions of transcendence *in* the world, because reality transcends human concepts and language, as well as God's transcendence *over* the world. These are most clearly held together in the mystery of

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[271] *STR*, 192-93: "If God really is God we cannot know him except in recognition of his absolute priority and actuality, and therefore not by stealing knowledge of him behind his back, as it were, nor by climbing up to some vantage point above him, but only through reverent submission of our minds to his uncreated Light and Majesty."

[272] See 2.2, esp. pages 9-11.

[273] On the relationship between the transcendent rationality of God and the rationality within the space-time universe, see *STI*, 61-65; *TS*, 298-99; *DCO*, 3-4, 39-40; *RST*, 139-40; *RET*, 140-41: "While God reveals and communicates himself to us in the historical reality and particularity of Jesus Christ, the Truth that he is in Jesus Christ his incarnate Son, and eternally in himself the Father, remains infinitely transcendent. It is the revelation of Truth so unlimited and inexhaustible that the more we know of him the more we realize the ineffable and infinite fullness of his Reality which defies complete disclosure within the limits of our contingent being and experience."

[274] *RST*, 106.

[275] *TS*, 204.

[276] Catherine Mowry Lacugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 217: "Can we affirm that God as God is altogether present in the economy of salvation history, and at the same time that God also exceeds and outstrips the human capacity to receive or explain this self-communication?" From the lens provided by the incarnation, Torrance answers "yes."

the incarnation for Torrance. He wrote that "it is because mystery belongs to the nature of Christ as God and Man in one Person that it would be unfaithful of us not to respect that mystery in our knowing of Him…It is upon this fact that every attempt to reduce knowledge of God to a logical system of ideas must always suffer shipwreck."[277] Theology must respect mystery as part of the knowledge of God. A transcendent quality does not mean that knowledge of God contains no describable content. Rather, it has a sacramental character, because the incarnation holds together "visible and invisible, audible and inaudible, earthly and heavenly, the human and the divine" dimensions in a form of mystery, particular in its expression but infinitely transcendent and boundless in Being and content. There is an "infinite depth of reality calling for our recognition and reverence" in the incarnation of the Son who is the Sacrament of Truth.[278] Human apprehension does not fully comprehend the ineffable mystery of God's Being, but it is a form of conception appropriate to God's transcendence.[279] Human logic with its cognitive and linguistic tools must continue to evolve to arise to the challenge of serving the divine mystery.[280] God's transcendence *over* the world which has entered *in* the world through the incarnation shapes the transcendent nature of the knowledge of God. Hence, the mystery of God revealed faithfully but not exhaustively in the incarnation preserves the knowledge of God as both creation-situated and transcendent for Torrance.

Torrance's transcendent epistemological dynamic is in line with the Christian tradition concerning the transcendence of God and the limits of human understanding prior to the eschaton. Thomas Aquinas would remind us that the shortcoming in knowledge due to the transcendence of God would not apply to God's self-knowledge. God's self-knowledge is the ultimate epistemological standard for Aquinas. The blessed, that is the deceased saints, also share in God's self-knowledge. However, the transcendence of God clearly limits the knowledge of God of created minds in this life. Nevertheless, the beatific vision in eternity overcomes the barrier to knowledge of God for Aquinas.[281] Yet, for Gregory Palamas and the Eastern

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[277] *TS*, 139. See also *RET,* 140-45.
[278] *TS*, 149-50.
[279] *GR*, 22-23.
[280] *TS*, 263-80.
[281] Thomas Aquinas, *ST* Ia. q.1, a.1-2; Also Ia.q. 12-13. Particularly helpful discussions include William C. Placher, "Aquinas on the Unknowable God," in *The Domestication of Transcendence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 21-36; Mark F. Johnson, 'God's Knowledge in our Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology' *Angelicum* 76 (1999): 25-45. Patrick Quinn demonstrates the need for Thomas to switch from an Aristotelian to a Platonic epistemology to

Orthodox tradition, there is a distinction between the created energies and essence of God which will not be overcome even in eternity. Thus, transcendence remains an epistemological dynamic even into eternity.[282] While the nature of the knowledge of God in eternity has been debated within church history, God's transcendence and the consequent partial or fallibilist nature of human knowledge of God prior to the eschaton has been consistent from the beginnings of the Hebrew and Christian traditions.

Transcendence and mystery guard against reductionism. Torrance was aware of this. "Only as man's mind is constantly lifted up in wonder and worship toward God the Creator of the space-time universe so that his thought is ultimately anchored in factors that transcend the universe altogether, will he be able to think in detachment from… reductionist observationalism and materialism."[283] Knowledge of God cannot be exhaustively defined by lower levels of reality and their epistemological rules because of its transcendence. Hence, this epistemological dynamic invites knowers upward instead of downward. Transcendence *in* the world among the various levels of reality point to a transcendence *over* the whole world. As Torrance put it,

> In Polanyi's conception of the nature of the universe as an expanding horizon of hierarchical levels with their boundary conditions, each level is transcended by one more intangible and more meaningful than it, so that the most intangible things are the most real and the most transcendent. The range of reality everywhere exceeds our most complete grasp, but it beckons us forward in the promise of revealing ever new truths. That is transcendence *in* the world, which is not to be confused with the transcendence of God *over* the world, to whom the world as a whole is left open or indeterminate at is boundary conditions: thus transcendence in the world opens out toward and points to the transcendence of God over the world.[284]

The upward move of explanation here is in the opposite direction of a materialist reductionism. Higher levels of complexity invite exploration at their boundaries and, in turn, can help explain lower levels without losing their dependence upon them.

accommodate his conception of the knowledge of God who transcends all. Patrick Quinn, *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God* (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1996), 36-51.

[282] Gregory Palamas, *The Triads* (repr., London: SPCK, 1983), 93-111; John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 202-27; Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 67-90; Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, 125-40. Torrance's perspectives on knowledge of the ontological Trinity are reserved for the discussion of the Trinity in chapter three.

[283] *TCFK*, 99.

[284] *BSCL*, 146-47.

Torrance's transcendent epistemological dynamic resonates with the postmodern, scientific age which, in response to modernity's reductionism, recognizes emergent complexities and has greater room for transcendence, mystery and the questions raised at the boundaries.[285] On the other hand, knowledge of God is not insulated, transcendent knowledge which has no point of comparison with other types of knowledge. Because it is also creation-situated through the incarnation, it has points of comparison with various forms of knowledge. Both of these dynamics together— theological epistemology's transcendent, ontological distinctiveness and yet its similarity to other epistemic forms—make knowledge of God particularly suitable within the postmodern, scientific age. Holding together the creation-situated and transcendent dynamics together leads to the next dynamic which is Torrance's own version of critical realism which he at first called "truly realist."

2.8 "Truly realist"

For Torrance, the knowledge of God is "truly realist." This last dynamic is an amalgamation of previous dynamics and, like the other interrelated dynamics, can be used as an apposite description of the entirety of Torrance's theological epistemology. The term realism has been broadly used across a number of disciplines including the history and philosophy of science as well as Christian theology to describe a particular epistemological stance. Nevertheless, to understand Torrance's brand of realism one cannot simply look to its definition among the other disciplines or even its uses in theology or science, but one must look to how he defines it and how his various epistemological dynamics work together to form his "truly realist" perspective.[286]

The overall mode of Torrance's epistemology is a type of realism, taking seriously the independence and authority of reality beyond the human mind. Daniel W. Hardy commented that Torrance's position is "one of the strongest version of

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[285] Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philsophical Perspectives on Science, Religion and Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 7-35; Philip Clayton, "Conceptual Foundations of Emergence Theory," in Philip Clatyon and Paul Davies, eds., *The Re-Emergence of Emergence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-31; Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. Chapter 5, "Emergence and Transcendence," 156-213.

[286] Torrance uses the phrase "truly realist" in his essay "Theological Realism" in *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology: Essays Presented to D. M. MacKinnon,* ed. Brian Hebblethwaite and Stewart Sutherland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 169-96. For a shorter discussion on realism and its implications for biblical scholarship, *RET*, 58-83.

realism… which is available in (and perhaps outside) theology today."[287] Besides the scientific epistemological dynamic, more challenge has come to this objectively-weighted dynamic of his theological epistemology particularly from the postmodern context which has given much attention to the epistemic role of language and tradition.[288] The objective dynamics of Torrance's theological epistemology that have been discussed are that the knowledge of God is scientific, ontologically-determined, Trinitarian, creation-situated and transcendent. The objective dynamics are the most potent dynamics for the knowledge of God for Torrance, though they contain implications for the subjective aspects of human knowing. The most directly subjective dynamic discussed is that the knowledge of God for Torrance is essentially rational. Clearly, the focus for Torrance remains on the proper object giving it ontological priority over human thought and speech. This does not mean that Torrance failed to acknowledge the subjective dynamics or understand them in distinction from the objective. As Torrance wrote,

> Theological knowledge is after all a *human* activity, human knowledge of God, but of God in accordance with his revelation of man to himself to man. If the human factor is eliminated, then the whole is reduced to nonsense, but unless the divine element is dominant, then man is in the last resort thrown back upon his own resources and an impossible burden is laid upon him.[289]

Torrance contended against the varieties of dualisms which have arisen attempting to split apart subject and object. For Torrance the epistemic poles are not ultimately separated, but neither are they connected with an easy naiveté. To grasp Torrance's

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[287] Daniel W. Hardy, "T. F. Torrance," in David F. Ford with Rachel Muers, eds., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 172.

[288] It is not that Torrance ignored the role of language and tradition, but did not engage, for example, George Lindbeck or Alasdair MacIntyre. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988). However, for comparisons, see Mark P. Achtemeier, 'The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T. F. Torrance' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47 (1994): 355-74; Thomas John Hastings, "George Lindbeck and Thomas F. Torrance on Christian Language and the Knowledge of God," in *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 252-78.

[289] *TIR*, 27. Torrance is aware that "all knowledge on man's part is socially, culturally and historically conditioned," but this is not a dynamic that is well-developed. His chapter on "The Social Coefficient of Knowledge" is about "the capacity of a society or a community to be affected and modified through its advance in knowledge of what is independently real" and not the influence of a community or tradition on knowledge. The social coefficient of knowledge "does not generate in us concepts of reality, nor does it provide our knowledge with informational content but it does predispose us toward explicit apprehension of the rational order intrinsic to the nature of things through the informal, inarticulate way in which it reflects it." *RST*, 98-130. Quotations on 105, 103, 114.

theological realism, we need to step back and bring together the objective and subjective dynamics to see more fully how they relate to one another. Doing so will clarify his particular form of realism.

The relationship between sign and reality is representative of the relationship between subjective and objective elements and thus quite important for defining Torrance's realism. In an important essay that is worth quoting at length, Torrance clearly described the nature of a sign and how it serves reality:

> Hence if a sign is to do its job properly it must have some measure of detachment or incompleteness or even discrepancy to allow it to point away from itself to the reality intended, in the light of which the truth or falsity of the sign will be judged. On the other hand, if the sign is merely an artificial convention or is so completely detached that it has no natural bearing on the reality for which it is said to stand, then it is empty of import or semantically useless, and all grounds for raising questions of truth and falsity are removed. In view of this argument we may make an initial generalization. An ultra-realist position, in which sign and thing signified perfectly coincide or a statement is absolutely adequate to its object (e.g. in the identification of a statement about the truth with the truth itself, or the identification of the truth of a statement with the truth of being), tumbles over into its opposite extreme, some form of nominalism or conventionalism. A truly realist position will be one in which the sign differentiates itself as sign from the reality on which it actually bears, and therein reveals a measure of disparateness or discrepancy which is an essential ingredient in its successful functioning as a sign. For true statements to serve the truth of being, they must fall short of it and not be mistaken for it, for they do not possess their truth in themselves but in the reality they serve: a dash of inadequacy therefore is necessary to their precision.[290]

What Torrance wrote about signs is consistent with his thought about other intellectual tools such as language, numbers, concepts, symbols, and theories.[291] Moreover, what he says about the relationship between signs and reality is indicative

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[290] "Theological Realism," 170-71; Also *TIR*, 51; *TCFK*, 320; *RET*, 50-51, 65-66. In the similar paragraph on 65-66, Torrance calls this a "genuinely realist" position.

[291] For a discussion of symbols, see *RET*, 27-30. On the relation between language and reality, *TIR*, 18-21; *RET*, 61-83. On the relationship between art and reality, *RST*, 98, 100-2. On the relationship between mathematics and reality, *DCO*, 48-54; On the relationship between theory and empirical correlates, *DCO*, 98-99.

of the relationship between the subjective and objective poles of the knowledge encounter. As we have seen with the transcendent dynamic (2.7), the truth of being outruns the grasp of cognitive truth and the truth of statements and thus knowledge is always a "compromise between thought and being." Nevertheless, there is a true correlation, a truth-bearing relationship, which obtains between knowing subject and object which enables truth to be conceived and articulated, albeit an inherently compromised representation. The relationship between sign and reality, language and being, exemplify the broader relationship between knowing subject and object which are fundamental to his truly realist dynamic.

Torrance maintained that the human mind naturally differentiates between its ideas and the independent reality it perceives. We reflexively discriminate between our images, signs, and concepts and the reality to which they refer. Signs do not image reality so closely that they are indistinguishable from reality. He repeatedly declares that to be rational we distinguish "what we know from our knowing of it."[292] But neither does the mind effortlessly sever all relationship between sign and reality. This would be unnatural. Rather, the knower perceives the reality through the concept or symbol as a transparent media. The attention of the knowing subject is directed to that which the sign points or intends to describe instead of settling upon the sign. Only when there are problems with the intended signification do we raise questions about the ideas, the reality, or the relationship between them. "The natural orientation of the human mind is, in this sense at least, quite 'realist.'"[293]

Problems arise when there is a naïve identification of sign and reality, ultimately leading to a type of fundamentalism. Torrance noted how one "cannot state in statements how statements are related to being, otherwise you convert the relation of statements to being into mere statements."[294] The distinction between the nature of concepts and the nature of reality does not allow for a strict correspondence. Yet, problems also arise when there is a rupture between sign and reality as a result of a dualist framework of thought. The sign becomes detached from the "objective control of reality" and has the potential to project the fears and fantasies of the subject onto

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[292] *TS*, 13, 258; *GR*, 44, 92, 168-69; "Theological Realism," 169; *GGT*, 163; *RET*, 58; *RST*, 109, 111; *TCFK*, 132.

[293] "Theological Realism," 169; *RET*, 58.

[294] *GR*, 36. Also 175-76; *TIR*, 56; *RET*, 73; *RST*, 143. This is similar to Wittgenstein's notion of reference which dismisses any attempt to describe the link between language and world, using language within a particular language game. Sue Patterson, *Realist Christian Theology in a Postmodern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79-82.

the object. Separation from a real reference to reality can lead to forms of conventionalism or essentially turn the sign into a myth. Sign and reality continue to be indicative of the relationship of subject and object. An inappropriate detachment between subject and object skews the nature and function of both.[295]

The nuanced relationship between the subjective and objective dynamics of knowledge defines Torrance's realism.[296] Concepts, rationality, language, and the social coefficients which carry them can truly represent the rationality inherent in the nature of things. However, because reality transcends human conception and being transcends human articulation, there is a necessary detachment or approximation in human thought and statement. Indeed, "their inadequacy…is an essential part of their truth, in pointing away from themselves to the truth they serve."[297] In other words, Torrance's realism maintains a fallibilism. This leads to the ongoing need for the subjective pole to be amended, re-conceptualized and re-articulated under the weight and guidance of reality. Revisability is thus an essential component of Torrance's realism. We will further explore revisability as part of the relational dynamic of the knowledge of God (4.4). Here it is important to note that the necessity of revisability is a result of the inherent discrepancy between symbols and reality, the truth of statement and the truth of being, subjective conception and objective reality. Symbols, statements, and concepts need progressive revision in relationship with the intelligible structures of the proper object using a heuristic mode of discovery or "disclosure models."[298] Such revision does not discredit the validity of subjective representation, but rather demonstrates the transcendence of objective reality and that the subject is actually connecting with it and coming under its influence.[299] Torrance maintained that this type of realism came to light theologically with the church's struggle leading to the Nicene Creed and scientifically with Einstein's theory of general relativity.[300]

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[295] "Theological Realism," 171-72.

[296] Note the realist relationship between subject and object. *TS*, vii-xvi, 35-36, 55, 92-99, 216-22, 252-59, 286-88, 295-97; *GR*, 15-25, 35-40, 169, 175-76, 185-88; *RET*, 121-56.

[297] *RET*, 50-51. Also, 65-66; *RST*, 28, 162; *GGT*, 167.

[298] *RST*, 54-55, 162.

[299] Torrance quips that "in the last resort scientific theories are justified by the grace of reality alone." "Theological Realism," 183. "Without doubt the rehabilitation of a realist approach to knowledge which gives priority to the truth of being over truths of signification and statement opens the way for considerable clarification and simplification by making them point beyond themselves to a unifying ontological ground." *RST*, 153.

[300] Torrance writes, "As such the *homoousion* both clarifies and expresses the fact that in the Nicene theology the worshipping and enquiring Church was enabled to grasp God, in some real measure, in the depth of his own reality in such a way as to affect the whole structure of the Church's understanding of him, and yet in such a way that there is no suggestion that the transcendent mystery of

Revisability is thus an inevitable force in the realist dynamic of the knowledge of God for Torrance.[301]

The epistemological humility that comes from a fallibilist recognition of the limited role of human concepts and language is in line with the Christian epistemological tradition. Notably, Thomas Aquinas discussed the nature of theological language and left an influential notion of the *analogia entis* ("analogy of being"). While Aquinas' comments about analogy have been variously interpreted, they at least raised the limited role of how creaturely words imperfectly and yet somehow truthfully signify God.[302] Torrance followed Karl Barth who proposed the *analogia fidei* ("analogy of faith") in response to Aquinas to contend that our knowledge of the empirical world is subservient to a God-given meaning of the world which comes by revelation.[303] In short, humans cannot depict divinity analogously, but God depicts Himself and humanity with chosen analogies. Barth and Torrance held that to begin with creaturely reality through an analogy of being was to participate in natural theology, beginning with human philosophy, which we have already discussed in the creation-situated dynamic (2.5). Instead, according to the *analogia fidei*, God is transcendent, outside of space and time, and thus utterly distinct from creation, but God has condescended, objectifying Himself and willing that He should be known among the contingencies of space and time.

Torrance maintained that the link which enables the *analogia fidei* and a realist knowledge of God is the *homoousion* of the Son and the Spirit. "It is because God has incarnated his own eternal Word and Rationality within the realities and intelligibilities of our creaturely existence in Jesus Christ that we, creatures though we are, may grasp God conceptually his own divine reality."[304] God has made His own rationality to be rationally apprehensible in the incarnation of the Word. Taking its

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God can be captured and comprehended within the bounds of our creaturely conceptualities, for God in the beauty and majesty and light of his being infinitely exceeds all the Church's theological or dogmatic formulations." "Theological Realism," 186.

[301] "Theological Realism," 182-86. For more discussion on the revisability within his realist framework, see *TS*, xii, 98, 119-26, 277-79; *GR*, 53-55, 113, 197-99; *RET*, 12, 66; *RST*, 26-27, 85-86, 137; *TCFK*, 134-35, 154-55.

[302] *ST* Ia.3.13, including appendices 3 and 4, "Signifying Imperfectly" and "Analogy," 104-5, 106-7. See also Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 35-37; Mark D. Jordan, "Theology and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 232-51; Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*, 64-67.

[303] Barth famously quipped, "I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of the antichrist." Barth, *CD* I.1, xiii. For Torrance's interpretation and endorsement of Barth's rejection of the analogy of being, *KBBET*, 30-31, 168-70, 183-86; *KB*, 133-98.

[304] "Theological Realism," 187.

cues from Athanasius, the church acknowledged that the Son was one and the same being with God. Furthermore, so was the Spirit. Torrance noted the implications of the *homoousion* of the Spirit for the knowledge of God when he wrote, "If the Holy Spirit is of one and the same being with God, then in giving us his Spirit God makes himself immediately present to us in his own divine being and reality which constitute the evidential ground for our knowledge of him."[305] The Holy Spirit is God as He is in Himself and God as he makes Himself known to us as a present reality in an evidential way. God who is both Word and Spirit eternally in Himself mediates Himself to humanity as Word and Spirit. Therefore, for Torrance the ontology of God mediated through the *homoousion* of the Son and Spirit enables a realist knowledge from its source in the Triune God communicated both rationally and evidentially.[306]

The mediation of God through the *homoousion* of Word and Spirit enables the church to apprehend real knowledge of God, but the church is not enabled to comprehend the full mystery of God's being "for God in the beauty and majesty and light of his being infinitely exceeds all the Church's theological or dogmatic formulations."[307] The transcendence and mediation of God are both realities that come with the knowledge of God in the *homoousion* of Son and Spirit. Yet, as we have seen in the transcendent dynamic (2.7), the transcendence of reality in creation over human conception generates an ongoing need for revision of human concepts and statements. Likewise with the knowledge of God, the transcendence and mediation of God in Word and Spirit retains a necessary revisability. As Torrance put it,

> It is as our communion with God the Father through Christ and in his Spirit is grounded in and shares in the inner Trinitarian consubstantial or *homoousial* communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that the subjectively-given pole of conceptuality is constantly purified and refined under the searching light and quickening power of the objectively-given pole in divine revelation.[308]

Torrance maintained the importance for theology to be rooted in God's own being (*theologia in se*) as well as mediated through the conditions and contingencies of

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[305] Ibid., 186.
[306] Ibid., 186-91; Also, *TIR*, 33-37; *GGT,* 160-67.
[307] "Theological Realism," 186.
[308] Ibid., 193.

human life in our creaturely existence (*theologia nostra*).[309] In summary, for Torrance, the Trinitarian, creation-situated, and transcendent dynamics of the Triune God facilitated a "truly realist" knowledge of God.

In 1985 with the publication of *Reality and Scientific Theology*, Torrance came to align his truly realist perspective with the term critical realism which had a growing influence within various sciences as well as in the science and theology dialogue.[310] It is noteworthy that Roy Wood Sellars' early twentieth-century development of the notion of critical realism in the United States came in response to the reductionism of the logical positivists. He developed a hierarchical view of nature as well as the sciences which he called "emergent realism," "emergent naturalism," and "evolutionary naturalism." Therefore, critical realism was conceived as a way of interacting with emergent, complex wholes over the ontological and epistemological reductionism of the positivists.[311] Torrance continued in the tradition of Sellars by maintaining the distinctiveness of human concepts and language in relation to various levels of reality with his own type of critical realism.[312] This dynamic helped to move Torrance's epistemology beyond the restrictions of modern reductionism. However, Torrance articulated his version of critical realism only as discussions of the realism of Christian theology in a *postmodern* age began.[313]

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[309] *RET*, 21-30.

[310] I have found that Torrance only once in his epistemological books used the term "critical realism." In approval of Einstein's conception of science, Torrance wrote "I have found particularly enlightening the critical and realist epistemology that he had to develop in the course of his scientific work … I have found myself forced to accept this epistemology of *critical realism*." *RST*, 131-32. On critical realism within Torrance's theology, P. Mark Achtemeier, "The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair Macintyre and T. F. Torrance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47 (1994): 355-74; Alister E. McGrath extends Torrance's engagement with critical realism in *A Scientific Theology: Reality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 195-244. We will further discuss critical realism in theology and science in the assessment of relational knowledge in 4.2.2.

[311] Roy Wood Sellars, *Critical Realism: A Study of the Nature and Conditions of Knowledge* (1916; repr. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966). I was alerted to the context of Sellars' development of critical realism by Nancey Murphy, *Reconciling Theology and Science*: *A Radical Reformation Perspective* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 1997), 14-15. Also on the roots of critical realism and complexity, Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 203-4.

[312] Torrance's approach to critical realism has been extended and developed by Alister E. McGrath in his chapter, "Critical Realism: Engagement with a Stratified Reality," in his, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: T&T Clark, 2002), 195-244.

[313] To what extent critical realism is better suited to the modern or postmodern world is contested. Nancey Murphy critiques the use of "critical realism," contending that it only fits within a modern, and not a postmodern, worldview. Nancey Murphy, "Bridging Theology and Science in a Postmodern Age," in *Bridging Science and Religion*, ed. Ted Peters and Gaymon Bennett (London: SCM Press, 2002), 35-46; Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity*, 39-48. On the other hand, Garry Potter and José López contend that critical realism moves us beyond some of the pitfalls of postmodernism in "After Postmodernism: The Millennium," in José López and Garry Potter, eds., *After Postmodernism: An Introduction to Critical Realism* (London & New York: Athlone Press, 2001), 3-

"It has been suggested that if modern theological realism has not been linguistic enough, postliberal theology has not been realist enough."[314] In attempting to incorporate the insights from postliberal and liberal-revisionist theology for an expanded form of critical realism, Sue Patterson sympathetically engages Torrance's realism. She takes seriously the "language-riddenness" of reality and the constructive element in human knowing. Patterson acknowledges that Torrance discussed how context and language circumscribe the situations in which knowledge and linguistic symbols occur. However, Patterson critiqued, that there remained the hope for Torrance that somehow through numerous rigorous revisions, we can "eliminate the preconceptions, illusions and linguistic habits that obscure our knowledge of reality and thereby 'grasp' things as they are in themselves."[315] She questions how we are to "know things in themselves" or "let reality be the judge" of language and concepts apart from our own language and concepts within our given context. Perhaps either Patterson did not give due attention to Torrance's distinction between "the truth of being" and the "truth of statement" or Torrance did not give this notion its due weight. Nevertheless, Patterson's critique of Torrance's realism for its "relegation of the human role to passivity and consequent insistence on a dichotomy between construction and discovery" is accurate.[316] She maintains a form of critical realism but emphasizes how humans participate in not only the discovery but the creation of conceptual and linguistic description:

> As Paul Ricoeur has said of metaphor, what it creates it discovers and what it discovers it invents. If we are to 'penetrate into the inner connections and reasons of things in virtue of which they are what they are', this 'penetrating into' will necessarily involve describing and conceiving, as Torrance would agree. However, it may also involve not only 'minds falling under the power of these structures and necessities to signify what they are in themselves' but also minds supplying the noetic component to 'things in virtue of which they are what they are'. For why is it necessary to state that the rationality of the universe is a function of '"natural" patterns and structures in the universe which are what they are independent of us but with which our mental operations are steadily coordinated? Can it not be that is as human knowledge participates in that knowledge that it is completed and fulfilled?[317]

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16. Following López and Potter, Alister E. McGrath agrees in his, *A Scientific Theology: Reality*, Vol. 2, 191-93.

[314] Patterson, *Realist Christian Theology in a Postmodern Age*, 162.

[315] Ibid., 16.

[316] Ibid., 17.

[317] Ibid., 18-19.

We agree with Patterson that "we do more than reach through our images and concepts to grasp worldly reality."[318] In our engagement with reality, our perceptions and language influence our interaction. Furthermore, our descriptions are limited and the complexity of reality transcends complete comprehension. "For who but God is able to comprehend the whole?"[319] Thus, human knowledge is both partial and linguistically-constructed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer aptly summarized the issue:

> For moderns, language was a transparent medium that enabled consciousness to grasp reality. Postmoderns find this picture of the mind-world relation incredible. Not only do we not have nonlinguistic access to the way things are, but the way we speak and think is conditioned by the particular language in which we dwell. It is simply not the case that reality informs thought and that thought informs language.[320]

For something akin to Torrance's version of critical realism to survive the linguistic turn of the postmodern world, further attention is needed concerning the language-riddenness of reality and how we humans participate in the construction of concepts and language in response to reality, without letting go of his realist orientation. Therefore, in light of these critiques, this thesis contends for a subjectively-tempered realism.

2.9 Review

The present chapter has introduced and assessed the basic dynamics of the knowledge of God for T. F. Torrance which he discussed throughout his epistemological writings. Torrance himself did not attempt to systematize these dynamics or organize them into one coherent picture, but this does not mean they were not integrated as a coherent whole within his thought. As mentioned in chapter one, he often moved among a cluster of these dynamics almost seamlessly, giving certain ones attention while mentioning the others with a word or phrase. To illustrate, in the foreword to the 2002 edition of *Reality and Scientific Theology,* Torrance held

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[318] Ibid., 32.

[319] Ibid.

[320] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity: a Report on Knowledge (of God)," 12, 3-25.

together many of the epistemological dynamics discussed in this chapter in one terse definition of scientific theology. He wrote,

> [S]cientific theology is a disciplined form of intellectual communion with God within the relationship between God's self-revelation and the community of Christian faith pursued in the light of the dynamic open-textured understanding of the universe progressively disclosed under God through the natural sciences. Theology is a human enterprise operating with revisable formulations in a manner similar in significant respect to that of a science operating with fluid axioms, but always under the constraint of the objective realities being explored.[321]

Torrance's conception of the knowledge of God was coherent, but without a sense of the whole and its distinctive dynamics, not easily grasped.

In this chapter, we have sought to delineate and evaluate seven basic epistemological dynamics which Torrance maintained. Through our engagement with Torrance, this chapter concludes that the knowledge of God can be a *disciplined* form of knowledge, but it is not best called "scientific" in the current milieu (2.2). Knowledge of God is *ontologically-determined* (2.3) and most centrally *Trinitarian* (2.4), for who God is constitutes our way of knowing him. Through the Son and Spirit, knowledge of God is *creation-situated* (2.5). Though knowledge of God *involves human reason and concepts*, it is not merely rational and conceptual (2.6). Knowledge of God is *transcendent* (2.7) and *realist*, but with the recognition of the limited, contributive role of human language (2.8). With these preliminary conclusions in mind, we now move beyond engaging the basic dynamics of the knowledge of God in Torrance's epistemological writings to the controlling center of his theological epistemology, the Triune God (chapter 3). From there, we will discover some of the more central, governing dynamics and their implications for theological epistemology in order to assess their viability for the postmodern, scientific age (chapters 4-6).

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[321] *RST,* vii-viii.

CHAPTER 3

A SUPREME DYNAMIC FOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD:
THE ONTOLOGICAL TRINITY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we delineated and assessed seven, inter-related epistemological dynamics within T. F. Torrance's theology of the knowledge of God. These dynamics point us towards an inner, governing dynamic in the center of Torrance's theology for his conception of knowledge of God. Each of the seven dynamics discussed either lead to or flow out of his doctrine of the Triune God. God's being and activity largely determines the nature of the knowledge of God for Torrance. It would not be an overstatement to say that the Trinity is at the heart of his theology. As Torrance put it,

> The doctrine of the Holy Trinity has been called the inner-most heart of the Christian Faith, the central dogma of classical theology, the fundamental grammar of our knowledge of God. Why is that? Because the doctrine of the Trinity gives expression to the fact that through his self-revelation in the incarnation God has opened himself to us in such a way that we may know him in the inner relations of his divine Being and have communion with him in his divine Life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[1]

Notice how God's triune nature has not only ontological supremacy, but also is explicitly determinative for knowledge of God for Torrance:

> [T]o know God we must know him in accordance with the form or structure of his own Being – that is, in terms of God's inner divine relations. And that means we must know him as the Triune God who within himself has relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; so that for us to know that God, we must know him in a mode of understanding on our part appropriate to the Trinity of Persons in God.

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[1] Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1. This chapter will demonstrate the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity for Torrance's theology and epistemology. See also, Paul Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 31-72; Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding his Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 285-321; John Douglas Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 205-222; C. Baxter Kruger, "The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God in the Theology of T. F. Torrance: Sharing in the Son's Communion with the Father in the Spirit," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 366-89.

> There must be a "Trinitarian" character in our knowing of God corresponding to the trinity of relations in God himself.[2]

This chapter will penetrate into the heart of Torrance's theological epistemology by expounding key aspects of his doctrine of the Trinity which are epistemologically formative.[3] In particular, this chapter will demonstrate how the onto-relations within the immanent or ontological Trinity are supremely important for Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity.[4] Consequently, the rest of the thesis aims to expand the epistemological implications of his Trinitarian doctrine with developments that Torrance himself did not accentuate. Before turning to the implications of his Trinitarian epistemology in subsequent chapters, this chapter now moves into Torrance's theological center which is at the heart of his epistemology. Here, we will find the resources to extend Torrance's epistemology. We begin by considering Torrance's conception of the stratified structure of knowledge and the supremacy of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity.

3.2 The stratified structure of knowledge and the supremacy of the ontological Trinity

For Torrance, there is a multi-leveled or stratified structure of knowledge.[5] As we will see, this is distinct from the notion of ontological stratification or a hierarchical universe discussed in chapter two. The stratified structure of knowledge concerns levels of conception and can be found in "a rigorous scientific account of knowledge in any field of investigation."[6] Likewise in theology, there are multiple levels of theological articulation. With Einstein and Polanyi, Torrance noted that this

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[2] *GGT*, 148.

[3] The primary resources on T. F. Torrance's mature doctrine of the Trinity include *The Trinitarian Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 1997). Hereafter, *TF*; *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994). Hereafter, *TP*; *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (London: T&T Clark, 1996). Hereafter, *CDG*.

[4] A personal conversation with Gary Deddo at the T. F. Torrance Theological Fellowship at the 2009 American Academy of Religion highlighted the importance of the onto-relations within the Immanent Trinity within Torrance's theology. Gary Deddo, "T. F. Torrance: The Onto-Relational Frame of his Theology," *The Princeton Theological Review* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 35-47. He has written more extensively on the theology of relations within Karl Barth's theology. Rev. Dr. Gary Deddo, "The Grammar of Barth's Theology of Personal Relations," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47, no. 2 (1994): 183-222; Gary W. Deddo, *Karl Barth's Theology of Relations: Trinitarian, Christological and Human: Towards an Ethic of the Family* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

[5] On the stratified structure of knowledge, see *GGT*, 155-59; *RET*, 34-37.

[6] *CDG*, 84.

stratified structure of scientific knowledge typically comprises three levels of thought coordinated with one another:

> The primary or basic level, which is the level of our ordinary day-to-day experience and the loosely organized natural cognitions it involves; the secondary level of scientific theory with its search for a rigorous logical unity of empirical and conceptual factors; and the tertiary level where we develop a more refined and higher logical unity with a minimum of refined concepts and relations.[7]

While theoretically the process of ascending to higher levels of conceptual unity and simplicity could continue indefinitely, Torrance held that only three levels are typically needed to obtain a "unified conceptual grasp of the reality."[8] Terminology is refined as one ascends to these higher levels. Consequently, concepts in the higher levels become more simplified, cohesive, and, as we will see, determinative for the whole corpus of knowledge within that field. We now turn to a brief account of Torrance's description of the three levels of knowledge within his doctrine of God.[9]

The first level of knowledge is the basic or "primary level of daily life" where "our experiences and cognitions are naturally and inseparably combined together."[10] Basic concepts and first principles are intuitively obtained naturally and tacitly through our multifaceted experience. Torrance understands this level of the stratified structure in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity as the "evangelical and doxological level."[11] It is the basic level of religious experience and worship in the life of the church and especially the encounter with Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Gospel, the interpretation of the Scriptures and the fellowship of the church. It is here that "our faith and worship take on the imprint of the three-fold self-revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit" and we intuitively apprehend the economic or evangelical Trinity. This is "incipient theology" when Triune truth is not yet analyzed, but "becomes built into the structure of our souls and minds, and we know much more than we can ever tell."[12] Torrance elaborated, "Our minds become inwardly and

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Torrance's most thorough discussion on the stratified structure of the doctrine of God is *CDG*, 82-107, summarized on 113. Summaries and discussion include Benjamin Myers, "The Stratification of Knowledge in the Thought of T. F. Torrance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61 (2008): 1-15. Also, Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2002), 234-38.

[10] *CDG*, 84.

[11] Ibid., 88-91; Also *GGT,* 156-57.

[12] *CDG*, 89.

intuitively adapted to know the living God. We become spiritually and intellectually implicated in patterns of divine order that are beyond our powers fully to articulate in explicit terms, but we are aware of being apprehended by divine Truth as it is in Jesus which steadily presses for increasing realization in our understanding, articulation and confession of faith."[13] The Trinitarian order of revelation is not yet apprehended by rational speculation or analysis at this level; nevertheless, in communion with God, the reason is intuitively adapted to the Trinitarian structure of God's self-revelation.[14] In the church we become "inwardly so adapted to God's triune interaction with us that we learn to think in a godly and worthy way of him appropriate to his divine Nature."[15] This primary level of experience involves the basic disclosure of the gospel from which Trinitarian theology arises and develops. It is here in Torrance's framework that space is reserved for the epistemological importance of the experience of God and the work of the Spirit.

The secondary or scientific level seeks after cogent, explanatory theories "to penetrate into the intelligible connections latent in reality that ground and control our basic experiences and cognitions."[16] Concepts and theories at this level help us to noetically grasp our experience of the inherent intelligible connections within reality, but perhaps not directly experienced. The concepts are to be commensurate with the basic experiences and thoughts which, under the influence of reality, are to be brought to a revisable theory. If such conceptions and theories prove to be consistent, then they are open to providing more profound truth, leading to an even higher level of conceptual organization. Using this framework to speak about the doctrine of God, Torrance calls this secondary level the "theological level."[17] As we seek to formulate concepts and theories about God within the first level of the experience of God, we

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Reason is adapted "in ways that are appropriate to the distinctive nature and intelligibility of its object, in this case, the distinctive kind of order immanent in the incarnate economy of God's revealing and saving acts in Jesus Christ made known to us in the Gospel. Disclosure of that divine order takes place only as we live in personal union and communion with Christ and find our minds under the impact of his Spirit becoming at home, as it were, in the field of God's self-revelation and self-communication. It is as we tune in to God's eternal purpose of love and grace embodied in the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ that under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit we are given the anticipatory insights or basic clues we need in developing formal cognition of that divine order, and so apprehend something of the trinitarian structure of God's self-revelation and self-communication to mankind." Ibid., 90.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 84-85.

[17] Ibid., 91-98; Also *GGT*, 157.

move from the "experiential apprehension and worship of God" to discovering the patterns and structures revealed through Jesus Christ. Through Christ, we discover that God reveals God's one Being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[18] We learn of three basic modes of activity and, moreover, the three persons within the one Being of God. That is, we learn to speak of the economic Trinity in order to speak of the way that God communicates God's self to us in a three-fold movement of revelation and redemption.[19] In other words, within the second level, we move from the primary experience of God to apprehending the Trinitarian structure and shape which facilitates the primary experience of God. Such realization is not merely a projection of our subjectivity. Rather, what the economic Trinity is toward us in Jesus Christ and the Spirit, God is ontically within God's self, "otherwise the economic Trinity would not be a faithful and true revelation of the transcendent Communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit which the eternal Being of God is in himself."[20] In other words, the economic Trinity connects us to the immanent Trinity. Yet, to speak of the immanent Trinity leads us to the third, and highest, level of knowledge of God for Torrance.

The third level is the "meta-scientific (or second scientific) level" which aims to "deepen and simplify the organization of basic concepts and relations" which were developed within the previous, scientific level.[21] Concepts and theories are revised and clarified into a "more rigorously ordered theory" which can also be refined. Note the supremacy and governing function of concepts at this third level for Torrance. "Thus we reach the *ultimate* theoretic structures characterized by logical economy and simplicity (i.e. with a minimum of conceptual relations), through which we grasp reality in its depth as faithfully as we can, and which we use as the unitary basis *for simplifying and unifying the whole body of our knowledge in the field in question*."[22] The relativity theory of Einstein is Torrance's prime example of a theory which has

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[18] "It is through the common tradition of shared spiritual experience and insight in the Church that theologians make cognitive contact with the truths of divine revelation into which they inquire, and then through following up the clues thus mediated to them they seek to evoke depths of knowledge not discerned hitherto." Ibid., 91.

[19] "This, then, is the first definitely *theological* level in which we are concerned with expressing doctrinal knowledge of the Holy Trinity in which our thought moves on from the intuitive incipient from of an understanding of the Trinity to conceptions of what is called the economic Trinity, the level in which the dynamic reality of God's triune Being is being brought into clearer and more explicit formulation in terms of his differentiated yet unitary personal self-presentations and acts as Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Ibid., 92.

[20] Ibid., 92.

[21] Ibid., 85.

[22] Ibid. Italics mine.

attained to the third level containing "logical simplicity and comprehensiveness."[23] Advancing to this third level or "higher theological level" within the doctrine of God, we move beyond the economic Trinity in God's revealing and reconciling activity toward us and move to consider the relations within the immanent Trinity or ontological Trinity. [24] It is noteworthy that this is a theological development which reversed Torrance's earlier position that he preached in 1940.[25] At that time, he held that we cannot know the ontological Trinity, that is, God in himself. At some point before he began writing on the doctrine of the Trinity, Torrance came to believe that humans can participate in the self-knowledge of the ontological Trinity.

Two concepts were strategic for Torrance to move trinitarian knowledge from the second level dealing with the economic Trinity to the third level of the ontological Trinity. These were the notions of *homoousion* and *perichoresis.* Beginning with *homoousion,* Torrance viewed the application of this term by the Council of Nicaea to Jesus Christ to have extremely important theological significance, definitively describing the relation between the Son and the Father against Sabellianism and Arianism, Unitarianism and polytheism.[26] The *homoousion* is the "ontological and epistemological linchpin of Christian theology."[27] It secures that what God is towards us in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God is antecedently and inherently in the internal relations of God's self. This theme is repeated throughout his works, especially within his writings on the doctrine of God. [28] God's self-communication in the incarnation is the "controlling center" of all Christian doctrine.[29] For Torrance, the *homoousion* of the Son is *the* link between the economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity, overcoming the dualism between the activity and being of God. In his words, "The

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 98-107; Also, *GGT,* 157-67.

[25] T. F. Torrance, "Sermon: 2 Corinthians 13:14," The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library (November 1940), 3: "The first thing I want to impress upon you is the fact that WE DO NOT KNOW GOD AS HE IS IN HIMSELF—we only know God through His WORKs on us and for us. Now there are many people who think they ought to know God as He is in Himself, but they only come up against a blank empty space. We can only know God as He is manifested in His work of revelation or redemption."

[26] *TF*, chap. 4, "God of God, Light of Light," pp. 110-45. On Gregory Nazianzen and John Calvin on the *homoousion*, *TP*, 24-25.

[27] *CDG*, 95. A good summary is Phee Seng Kang, "The Epistemological Significance of ὁμοούσον in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45 (1992): 341-66.

[28] A few references include *CDG*, 8, 92, 95, 99, 114, 136, 142, 158, 237; *TF*, 71, 130, 135; *TP*, 2, 80-81, 117, 135; *TIR*, 38; *RET*, 14-15; *CTSC*, 30-31; *GGT*, 39-41, 67, 89-91, 151-52, 156-68; *DCO*, 7, 108-9; *RST,* 156-57; *TCFK*, vii, 287-89, 303.

[29] *RST*, 156-57.

homoousion crystallizes the conviction that while the incarnation falls within the structures of our spatio-temporal humanity in this world, it also falls within the Life and Being of God."[30] Through the *homoousion* of the Son, we are allowed to pierce through Kantian appearances and grasp God's "reality in its ontological depth."[31] The *homoousion* of the incarnation provides an epistemological bridge to an ontological center within God. "This is why the incarnation of the Son or Word constitutes the epistemological centre, as well as the ontological centre, in all our knowledge of God, with a centre in our world of space and time and a centre in God himself."[32] The *homoousion* makes a "categorical assertion that Jesus Christ is *God*, and that as God he shares equally with the Father in the one being of the Godhead."[33] Furthermore, the *homoousion* was not restricted to the Son, but with Athanasius and the Council of Nicaea, and most fully later in the Council of Constantinople, the *homoousion* was applied to the Holy Spirit as equally divine as the "Lord and Giver of Life."[34] The upshot of this for knowledge of God is that human experience of Christ and the Spirit is connected to the being of God. As Torrance put it, "our evangelical experience of God in Christ is not somehow truncated so that it finally falls short of God, but is grounded in the very Being of God himself… even although in the mystery of his self-revelation God set boundaries to our knowing of him." [35] Thus it is through the *homoousion* of the Son and Spirit that we come to know the inner relations within the ontological Trinity.

Central to Barth's theology was the relationship between God-in-revelation and God-in-eternity or God's being in his acts and his acts in his being which significantly influenced Torrance.[36] After Barth, came Karl Rahner whose work on the Trinity has also been quite influential in the twentieth century and particularly noteworthy is his methodological insight often called "Rahner's Rule." "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the

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[30] *CDG*, 95.

[31] *GGT*, 162.

[32] *CDG*, 101; Also, *GGT*, 161-64.

[33] *TF*, 133. Torrance contends that Jesus Christ is not only truly God but is also truly man, bringing salvation into the human condition in *TF*, chap. 5, "The Incarnate Savior," 146-90.

[34] For Athanasius and the Council of Nicaea on the *homoousion* of the Spirit, *TF*, 195-99, 305-13; *TP*, 10-11, 39-40. For the Council of Constantinople on the *homoousion* of the Spirit, *CDG*, 96-98.

[35] *CDG*, 99.

[36] Barth, *CD* I.1, 295-489; *CD* II.1, 257-321. For Torrance's interpretation, *KBBET*, 193-97; *KB*, 113-18.

'economic' Trinity."[37] Before Torrance, these two theologians revitalized Trinitarian theology in the twentieth century and raised the discussion about the relationship between God-in-eternity and God-in-revelation.[38] After Barth, it may seem that Torrance followed Rahner as well. However, though Torrance assisted with a theological meeting to engage the Trinitarian theology of Rahner, he found places of sharp disagreement with him. With Torrance's axiomatic focus on the *homoousion* as the bridge from the economic to the immanent Trinity, Torrance held together the economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity yet without introducing any logical necessities or abstractions from the former into the latter, as Torrance thinks that Rahner had done.[39] While for Torrance the economic Trinity leads us to knowledge of the ontological Trinity over the bridge of the *homoousion*, the immanent Trinity cannot be collapsed into the economic Trinity. For instance, beyond Karl Rahner who made a rule of the identity of economic and immanent Trinity, Catherine Mowry LaCugna and Jürgen Moltmann held that knowledge of God should be limited by the history of the economic Trinity.[40] Yet, while Torrance maintained that through the *homoousion* real knowledge of the ontological Trinity had been revealed, the immanent Trinity is ontologically prior. Not maintaining this distinction would compromise God's freedom beyond his salvific work in human history and

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[37] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 22.

[38] Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 33-71; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 67-87, 390-93.

[39] For Torrance on Rahner, *TP*, 77-101; *CDG*, 9, 10, 112, 143, 200. Paul D. Molnar notes basic methodological differences between Torrance and Rahner. He writes, "While Rahner apparently wished to ground his theology in God's economic Trinitarian self-revelation, his transcendental method, which begins with our experiences of self-transcendence and posits the existence of God as the nameless, silent whole or horizon surrounding us, effectively allows God's oneness to be defined and understood without specific reference to God's self-communication in Christ and the Spirit. The result is that God's self-communication becomes for Rahner a universal element of human experience in the form of the 'supernatural existential'… and Rahner ends up allowing his rather abstract idea of God's oneness to determine his thinking about God in ways that Torrance would most certainly reject … Rahner's axiom, with its vice versa, unfortunately allows for the possibility of thinking about our relations with God as mutually conditioned and mutually conditioning." Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 69. A fuller development of the methodological differences is found in Paul D. Molnar "God's Self-Communication in Christ: A Comparison of Thomas F. Torrance and Karl Rahner," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50 (1997): 288-320; Paul D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity* (London & New York: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2002/2005), 83-114, 167-96.

[40] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), esp. 151-78. For good discussions, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 178-92, 100-22, 390-93; Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 72-88, 147-62.

experience.[41] This is in line with Torrance's transcendent epistemological dynamic, preserving the hiddenness and mystery of God-in-Himself (2.7).

Besides the concept of the *homoousion*, the concept of *perichoresis* moved Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity to this "third" or "meta-scientific" level. Torrance held that a refined form of thought developed to help interpret the biblical teaching of the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Greek work *perichoresis,* coming either from the Greek word *chora* meaning "space" and "room" or *chorein* meaning "to make room" and "to contain," "indicates a sort of mutual containing or enveloping of realities, which we also speak of as *coinherence* or *coindwelling*."[42] Used first by Gregory Nazianzen to speak about how the divine and human natures coinhere in the person of Christ, this term was adapted and applied to the way in which the three Persons of God mutually indwell one another, yet remaining as distinct Persons. "In this way the concept of *perichoresis* serves to hold powerfully together in the doctrine of the Trinity the identity of the divine Being and the intrinsic unity of the three divine Persons."[43] The distinctiveness-in-unity and the mutual indwelling has significant epistemological implications for knowledge of the ontological Trinity.

At the end of the twentieth century, a number of theologians used the doctrine of the Trinity including the concept of *periochoresis* to offer sociopolitical critiques. In distinct ways, they used the idea of the nature of the divine community among the three divine persons to give guidance for human communities. To name a few examples, elevating the concept of history, Jürgen Moltmann used *perichoresis* to establish unity among the three divine persons of the "open Trinity" in God's historical involvement and invitation to freedom for all creation.[44] Leonardo Boff used *perichoresis* to describe the divine communion as a prototype of a just,

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[41] From a Barthian perspective, this is the argument of Paul D. Molnar in conversation with several contemporary theologians including T. F. Torrance in his book *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002).

[42] *CDG*, 102. Torrance distinguishes this translation of perichoresis from those who confuse χορεύω (to dance) with χορέω (to make room for or to contain). *CDG*, 170, n. 8.

[43] Ibid. Also, *TP*, 32-33, 120-21, 139-42; *GGT*, 172-73. A fuller discussion of the implications of *perichoresis* for the doctrine of the Trinity is found in *CDG*, 168-202.

[44] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, esp. 171-8, 191-222.

egalitarian human community.[45] Colin Gunton found resources in the Trinity to heal
the political alternatives of individualism and collectivism with its ensuing
fragmentation in modern, Western culture.[46] However, critiques of these practical
uses of Trinitarian theology for a social trinitarianism have emphasized the qualitative
differences between the divine community and human communities, particularly with
the inability of human communities to embody *perichoresis*.[47] In distinction from
Moltmann, Boff, and Gunton, Torrance, like Barth before him, discussed the
immanent Trinity not from the vantage point of a particular vision of social life, but
through the economic, self-revelation of the Trinity.[48] The nature of the immanent
relations according to Torrance will be further explored in the next section (3.3).

Torrance's distinctive discussion of the immanent Trinity is part of what
Stanley J. Grenz called a "return of the immanent trinity" in late twentieth century
Trinitarian theology.[49] Grenz also included in the "return of the immanent trinity" the
discussions of Elizabeth A. Johnson and Hans Urs von Balthasar, demonstrating that
they, distinct from Torrance's Barthian approach, used a methodological approach
consciously informed by the *analogia entis.* But for Torrance, it was the concepts of
homoousion and *perichoresis* together that elevated Trinitarian theology from second-
level speech about the economic Trinity to third-level speech about the ontological or
immanent Trinity. Torrance explained,

> With the aid of the *homoousion* and the *perichoresis* our understanding of
> God's self-revelation to us is lifted up from the economic Trinity to the
> ontological Trinity, yet paradoxically, without leaving the economic Trinity
> behind. In the course of the movement of our thought from level to level we
> acquire the refined theological concepts and relations by which we seek to

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[45] Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 5-6,
116ff; *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, trans. by Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 14-
16, 47-67.

[46] Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1993), esp. 163-79.

[47] Miroslav Volf, "'The Trinity is Our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and the
Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (1998): 403-23; John L. Gresham Jr., "The
Social Model of the Trinity and its Critics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46, no. 3 (1993): 325-43;
Bernhard Nausner, "The Failure of a Laudable Project: Gunton, the Trinity and Human Self-
Understanding," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 4 (2009): 403-20; from a Lindbeckian
perspective, Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity,"
New Blackfriars 81 (October 2000): 432-45.

[48] See the discussion in Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity*, 1-
25, 273-310.

[49] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 163-215.

express, as far as we may, the *ultimate constitutive relations* in God, in virtue of which he is who he is as the Triune God.[50]

These two concepts allow human thought about God to move from the economy of salvation to "the eternal relations immanent in the one Being of God."[51] This is precisely how knowledge of God is refined to the highest level within Torrance's stratified structure of knowledge. Knowledge of God moves from the "evangelical and doxological level" which is where the level of basic experience of God through the gospel in the life of the church occurs, to the "theological level" where we recognize God's redemptive activity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the economic Trinity), and ultimately to who God is antecedently and eternally within God's being (the immanent Trinity). Torrance maintained that this structure is an *a posteriori* reflection about not only how the doctrine of the Trinity arises in individual apprehension of God, but also how the doctrine arose in the life of the church, leading to its highest conceptual level.[52] Moreover, this movement of knowledge is "grounded in the movement of God himself" from the ontological Trinity through the economic Trinity, "rais[ing] us up to share in his own divine Life and Love which he eternally is in himself. This is the inner core of the Christian faith."[53] Hence, these three levels of theological reflection are mutually interconnected, with the immanent Trinity as the highest, correlating factor.[54]

Therefore, for Torrance the ontological Trinity and the inner relations are ontologically supreme because they comprise God's own Trinitarian life, a relational life that is eternal and transcendent.[55] The immanent Trinity and the relations within are epistemologically most significant, because they comprise the ontological ground for the movement of the economic Trinity and thus for human knowledge of God.[56]

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[50] *CDG*, 110. Italics for emphasis are mine. Also, *GGT*, 173.

[51] *CDG*, 172.

[52] Ibid., 82-84.

[53] Ibid., 99.

[54] Ibid., 109.

[55] Ibid., 108-9.

[56] "In our theoretic constructions we rise through level after level of organized concepts and statements to their ultimate ontological ground, for our concepts and statements are true only as they rest in the last resort upon being itself." *RST*, 136. "For Nicene theology, then, the mutual relation of knowing and being between the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ constitutes the ontological ground for our knowing of God, for in and through it our knowledge of God the Father is objectively rooted in the eternal being of God himself." *TF*, 58-59. Torrance contends that Athanasius' approach to the doctrine of the Trinity likewise moved from the incarnation, through the *homoousion* to its "ultimate ground in the eternal relations and distinctions within the one Being of the Godhead." *TP*, 9. For Torrance, like

"Just as we take our knowledge of the Father from our knowledge of the Son, so we must take our knowledge of the Spirit from our knowledge of the Son, and in him from our knowledge of the Father: that is, from the inner relations which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have with another in the one indivisible being of the Holy Trinity."[57] For Torrance, such knowledge goes beyond knowledge of the "energies" of God in revelation, a distinction made by Basil and maintained by the Eastern Orthodox tradition, and into the "intrinsic relations of his eternal triune being."[58] Torrance contended that "the economic condescension of God in revelation and salvation through Christ and in the Spirit mediates to us knowledge of God in his own internal relations, for through the Son and in the Spirit God does not remain ultimately closed to us but has opened up for us knowledge of *God in himself.*"[59] For Torrance, this is something unique to Christianity. "For Judaism or for Greek Philosophy, and indeed for every religion apart from Christianity, God remains ultimately unknowable, the nameless, the incomprehensible One, who cannot be known in himself or conceived in his inner life."[60] Therefore, this third level of Trinitarian knowledge is uniquely the highest form of knowledge of God. Notice Torrance's frequent use of superlatives concerning knowledge of the immanent Trinity and the relations within. "[O]ur thought is lifted up from the level of the economic Trinity to the level of the ontological Trinity… and we reach the *supreme point* in the knowledge of God in his internal, intelligible personal relations."[61] Such supremacy is consonant with other third-level speech within his stratified structure of knowledge. The relations within the immanent Trinity constitute a "higher order theory" in theology and provide an "ultimate theoretic structure characterized by logical economy and simplicity."[62] They provide an "ultimate set of fundamental

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Barth, the economic Trinity through the incarnation is the epistemological starting point, but the immanent Trinity holds ontological priority.

[57] *TF*, 306.

[58] Ibid., 336; Torrance notes that Gregory Nazianzen and John Calvin do not make Basil's distinction between God's being and God's energies. *TP*, 38-40.

[59] *TP*, 86.

[60] Ibid., 1.

[61] Ibid. The italics for emphasis are mine. Torrance refers to the Immanent Trinity as the "supreme point in our knowing of God in the inner perichoretic relations of his triune Being" on a few occasions. *CDG*, 103; *GGT*, 168.

[62] *GGT*, 171. Engaging Einstein on the aim of scientific theory, Torrance maintains that "what the scientist tries to do is to find the simplest possible set of concepts and their inter-connections through which he can achieve as far as possible a complete and unitary penetration into things in such a way as to grasp them as they are in themselves in their own natural coherent structures." *RST*, 134. Later, on the doctrine of the Trinity, he writes, "Hence in the doctrine of the Trinity we have a refined

concepts and relations."[63] Thus, the doctrine of God is "wholly governed" by the coinherent relations among the three divine persons.[64] Or, as Torrance poignantly wrote it in his book *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*,

> I myself like to think of the doctrine of the Trinity as the *ultimate ground* of theological knowledge of God, the *basic grammar* of theology, for it is there that we find our knowledge of God reposing upon the final Reality of God himself, grounded in the ultimate relations intrinsic to God's own Being, which govern and control all true knowledge of him from beginning to end.[65]

For Torrance, like Barth before him, the Trinity controls the entire shape and structure of theology. Hence, the phrase "from beginning to end" contrasts with Friedrich Schleiermacher, whose undeveloped doctrine of the Trinity famously comes at the conclusion of his primary theological discussion.[66] Yet for Torrance, the ontological Trinity is the most central or highest level of theological reflection. With his own form of realism, these cogent, high-order, dynamic theories are to serve the reality of the ontological Trinity and the relations within. Thus Torrance wrote,

> What we are concerned with here is not any conceptual system as such, but the immanent relations in God himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the communion of love and knowledge which he sets up between us, and it is with that end in view that we proceed to develop a doctrinal system of the *greatest conceivable unity* and the *greatest paucity of fundamental concepts*, through which we can provide a revisable conceptual representation of the *ultimate intelligible basis* of our knowledge of God.[67]

We conclude that with Torrance's stratified epistemological framework, the relations within the immanent Trinity are most determinative for the knowledge of God. The "real, intelligible relations immanent in God" are "*ultimate constitutive relations in God*, which by their internal perfection are the ground upon which the intelligibility and objectivity of all our knowledge of God finally repose, and as such they play a

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model comprising a minimum of basic concepts immediately derived form divine revelation and our intuitive apprehension of God in his saving activity in history, together with a minimum of secondary concepts or relations of thought." *RST*, 161.

[63] *CDG*, 109.

[64] *TP*, 140.

[65] *GGT*, 158-59.

[66] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (1830; repr., London: T&T Clark, 2005), 738-51.

[67] *RST*, 161. Italics are mine.

role of unifying simplicity in all theological doctrines."[68] The Trinitarian relations constitute "the *ultimate* theological basis for the unifying and simplifying of *all* theology."[69] In other words, the immanent Trinity and the relations within are the highest ontological level and consequently provide the highest epistemological influence, controlling all lower levels of knowledge of God for Torrance.[70]

There are two potential pitfalls with Torrance's stratified structure of knowledge. According to this structure, ascending levels of knowledge can attain to more simplified, controlling formulas. If Torrance's commitment to God's self-revelation is compromised, this could lead to finding principles in God which are then in turn applied to other theological and philosophical topics.[71] We will discuss this pitfall more in chapter four as we begin to draw out the epistemological implications of this chapter's ontological discussion of the immanent Trinity. For now, we may surmise that Torrance would respond that as long as these uppermost descriptions remain a servant to the reality which they serve, then they can be useful and truthful.

Concerning the second potential pitfall, we ask to what level of simplicity, clarity and conceptual apprehension can knowledge of God attain? In stark contrast to this model, the apophatic tradition stemming from Gregory of Nyssa and Denys (or Dionysius) contends that as knowledge of God matures, it leads to less conceptual clarity, even "unsaying" and "unknowing," as when Moses entered the dark cloud on top of Mount Sinai.[72] The hierarchical and top-down mastery implied by Torrance's stratified structure of knowledge may be most suitable with scientific forms of knowledge and thus susceptible to Andrew Louth's critiques of categorizing theology as a science already discussed (2.2). Nevertheless, it seems feasible that what God has

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[68] *GGT*, 167-68. Italics are mine.

[69] Ibid., 177. Italics are mine. On occasion, Torrance will speak of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed as "the theological foundations laid by the Greek Fathers upon which the whole Church in the West as well as the East, Catholic and Evangelical alike, continues to rest." *TP*, 103.

[70] *GGT*, 158-59.

[71] See chapter five, "Can a Metaphysical Principle of Relationality Be Substituted for the Relations of the Immanent Trinity? Karl Barth and the Current Discussion," in Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity,* 125-66; See also the excellent revision by Lewis Ayres, "(Mis)Adventures in Trinitarian Ontology," in *The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology,* ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 130-45.

[72] Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 80-97, 159-78; Also, Edward Howells, "Apophatic Spirituality," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 117-19.

revealed of himself within creation can find conceptual development and brevity similar to how other forms of knowledge develop, yet tempered by an apophatic commitment to the transcendence and mystery of God which outruns all creaturely conceptualization. Therefore, this framework needs to be held in tension with the transcendent epistemological dynamic upon which Torrance repeatedly calls in discussing the immanent Trinity (2.7). For instance, Torrance cautioned,

> The God whom we have come to know through his infinite condescension in Jesus Christ, we know to be infinitely greater than we can ever conceive, so that it would be sheer presumption and theological sin on our part to identify the trinitarian structures in *our* thinking and speaking of God with the *real* constitutive relations in the triune Being-in-Communion of the Godhead. All true theological concepts and statements inevitably fall short of God to whom they refer, so that, as we have already noted, their fragility and inadequacy, as concepts and humans statements about God must be regarded as part of the correctness and truthfulness of their reference to God.[73]

Elsewhere, Torrance wrote,

> While knowledge of God is essentially trinitarian, the eternal relations in God infinitely transcend our ability properly to grasp and speak of them. God has astonishingly condescended to make himself known to us in himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but the mystery of God's internal relations as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is quite ineffable and far beyond our understanding, and may be spoken of only with the utmost reverence and reserve.[74]

Thus, Torrance maintained that we are to formulate our thoughts with "fear and trembling, with adoration and awe, and in recognition of the poverty and inadequacy of the language we use" when we speak of the ineffable Trinity and the "inter-hypostatic onto-relations in the transcendent Life of God."[75] In short, he called for "apophatic reserve and reverence" when speaking of the relations of the immanent Trinity.[76] Without such reserve that comes from the transcendent dynamic, the stratified structure left on its own would be presumptuous and potentially idolatrous.

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[73] *CDG*, 110-11. Italics his.

[74] *TP*, 134.

[75] *CDG*, 172-73.

[76] Ibid., 194. This is the rare occasion where Torrance uses the term "apophatic" in a positive sense. Similarly, Torrance affirms the "cataphatic content" balanced by "apophatic reserve" in Niolas Nissiotis, *TP*, 107-8.

Nevertheless, as we will see more clearly in the next section, the relations between the Trinitarian persons are real relations and part of the ontology of the three persons and one being of God for Torrance. He contended that the inner life of God is a "dynamic ontological structure."[77] Furthermore, this supremely important ontological structure has epistemological implications which we will explore in the next chapters. But first, we now turn to Torrance's ontological discussion of the relations within the immanent Trinity.

3.3 Onto-Relations within the immanent Trinity

As demonstrated by the previous section, the ontological Trinity and the relations within are ontologically and consequently epistemologically supremely important for Torrance's theology. The unique way which Torrance described the relations between the three persons within the one being of God is with the term *onto-relations*. This section will demonstrate how Torrance understood and used the term onto-relations and its implications for his Trinitarian theology. For Torrance, an onto-relation is defined as "the kind of relation subsisting between things which is an essential constituent of their being, and without which they would not be what they are. It is a being-constituting relation."[78] Torrance used the example of particle theory which had moved beyond the "analytical concept of separated particles" and had discovered that particles "interpenetrate and contain one another in such a way that the relations between particles are just as ontologically significant as the particles themselves."[79] The basic notion of an ontologically-constituting relationship was derived from Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity and consequently, as we will see in the next chapter, has implications for the knowledge of God. To further the discussion of Torrance's concept of onto-relations, we note that his primary use for this concept is for the idea of a person.

It was significant for Torrance that the doctrine of *person* emerged from Trinitarian reflection as opposed to emerging from philosophical speculation on individuals or on rational nature.[80] He contended that an onto-relational concept of a

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[77] *RET*, 44; *RST*, 171-73.
[78] *RET*, 42-43.
[79] Ibid., 43. Also, *GGT*, 175.
[80] *GGT*, 173-74; *RET*, 43; *RST*, 171-72.

person developed as the Church Fathers worked out the doctrines of Christ and the Trinity.[81] "It was in connection with this refined conception of *perichoresis* in its employment to speak of the intra-trinitarian relations in God, that Christian theology developed what I have long called its *onto-relational* concept of the divine Persons, or an understanding of the three divine Persons in the one God in which the ontic relations between them belong to what they essentially are in themselves in their distinctive *hypostases*."[82] In describing the being and persons of the Trinity, a new notion of person arose in which the relations connecting the divine persons belong to what the divine persons are. Torrance explained,

> These relations subsisting between them are just as substantial as what they are unchangeably in themselves and by themselves. Thus the Father *is* Father precisely in his indivisible ontic relation to the Son and the Spirit, and the Son and the Spirit *are* what they are as Son and Spirit precisely in their indivisible ontic relations to the Father and to One Another. That is to say, the relations between the divine Persons belong to what they are as Persons – they are constitutive onto-relations.[83]

This idea coheres with the Athanasian rule for defining person upon which Torrance drew.[84] This distinguished Torrance from Karl Barth who was reluctant to use the word "person" of the Trinity. Instead, Barth used the phrase "*tropos hyparxeos*" ("modes of being") to refer to the Trinitarian members.[85] Yet, Torrance aligned himself with Gregory Nazianzen in defining persons as substantive relations over "modes of being" as developed by the other Cappadocians.[86] More recently, this is also in agreement with Karl Rahner who affirmed the use of the word "person" for God despite its pitfalls, because of its fifteen-hundred year sustained use.[87] Torrance

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[81] *CDG*, 102-3, 156-57, 159; *TP*, 98-99, 124-25; *RET*, 43; *RST*, 177; *CFM*, 30-31. For resources on the development of the use of "person" for God, see Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 30.

[82] *CDG*, 102. Also, *TP*, 98; *GGT*, 173; *RST*, 174-78.

[83] *CDG*, 157. Also, *TF*, 320-21.

[84] "The abiding contribution of the Athanasian rule is the implication of relationality as the way to defining the distinction as well as the unity." Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 26.

[85] Barth, *CD* I/1, 355-60. Barth's use of this phrase led, among others, Catherine Mowry LaCugna to detect a form of modalism within Barth's doctrine of God. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 252. For a response, see Alan Torrance, "Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth,* ed. John Webster (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 73-74; Alan Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 101-3. See also Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 74-75.

[86] *CDG*, 157.

[87] Rahner, *The Trinity*, 42-45, 104-6; cited in Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 81.

was aware of the anthropomorphic problems of using the analogy of a human person for God. Yet, in keeping with the priority of revelation, Torrance maintained,

> It would be a serious mistake, however, to interpret what is meant by "Person" in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity by reference to any general, and subsequent, notion of person, and not by reference to its aboriginal theological sense. Applied to God "Person" must be understood in an utterly unique way appropriate to his eternal uncreated and creative Nature, but it may also be applied to human 'persons' made in the image of God in a very different creaturely way. Just as we may not understand what the Fatherhood of God means by analogical projection even *via eminentiae* out of human fatherhood, for human fatherhood is to be understood properly by reference to the Fatherhood of God beyond itself altogether, so we may not understand what it means to speak of God as Person or as personal in terms of what human beings are in themselves and in their relations to one another, for human personhood is to be understood properly by relation to the creative Personhood of God.[88]

From this perspective, we proceed in agreement with Torrance in using the term person to speak of God, but with analogical and apophatic reserve. Through his use of the notion of onto-relations, we will further discover his understanding of God as personal. He used the concept of onto-relations to define and defend what he meant by divine personhood. "The problem is that after the concept of person was launched into the stream of developing human ideas it inevitably tended to have a history of its own, in which its original onto-relational character became overlaid and distorted through transient cultural interests."[89] We turn now to explore how Torrance used the concept of onto-relations to discuss the Triune being and persons.

With the onto-relational concept of a person, Torrance was able to maintain the distinctiveness of the three divine persons *and* the oneness of the Trinity.[90] Looking back to Athanasius, Torrance clarified the use of the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis.* In order to avoid tri-theism or modalism, Torrance argued that Athanasius held that *ousia* in the strict sense should be used of the one Being of God, while *hypostasis* should properly be used to refer to each of the three divine Persons in their

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[88] *CDG*, 160.
[89] *TP*, 99.
[90] Torrance discusses the three persons of God, although not entirely separate from his consideration of the one Being of God, in chap. 6, "Three Persons, One Being" *CDG*, pp. 136-67.

onto-relations with one another.[91] However, as we will see, this does not mean for Torrance that the *ousia* or being of God is impersonal, but quite to the contrary. Yet, before we take up the discussion of the being of God for Torrance, we begin with the three *hypostasis* or three divine persons.

Torrance's concept of onto-relations meant that the persons of the Trinity are distinct, yet constituted and known by their relationship with one another. He maintained that the term "Father" is used in a two-fold way in the New Testament and in the theology of the Early Church. First, "Father" is used in reference to the Creator as the "heavenly Father" and secondly, it is used in reference to the relationship which the Father has with the Son, the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."[92] It is the second use that Torrance emphasized. Torrance recalled Gregory Nazianzen's reference to "the three divine Persons as relations or *scheseis* eternally and hypostatically subsisting in God."[93] The Son is one with the Father for "everything that God the Father is, the Son is, except his being 'Father.'"[94] The person of the Son is distinct from Father and Spirit, and yet distinctively embodies and communicates the fullness of God in the incarnation for the work of reconciliation and revelation.[95] The Spirit is known in relation to the Father and particularly the Son who is the "informational content of God's self-revelation," yet the distinctive work of the Spirit is to mediate and actualize knowledge of God within us, enabling us to participate in the life and knowledge of God.[96] Torrance summarized,

> Each divine Person retains his unique characteristics as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, in a union without confusion, for the individual characteristics of each of the three Persons do not separate them, but constitute the deep mutual belonging together. There is no Son apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit, and no Father, apart from the Son and the Holy Spirit, and no Holy Spirit apart from the Father and the Son. Homoousially and hypostatically they interpenetrate each other in

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[91] *CDG*, 129; *TF*, 333-34; *TP*, 15-16, 130-31.

[92] *CDG*, 137-141. He further notes how "Father" is used to refer to the one Being of God or the Godhead on 140. Torrance reminds us that Gregory Nazianzen pointed out that the term "Father" does not refer to being, but to the relation between Father and Son. *TP*, 27-28.

[93] *TP*, 27.

[94] *CDG*, 145.

[95] Ibid., 141-47. His extensive discussion on this theme is chap. 4, "God of God, Light of Light," *TF*, 110-45.

[96] Ibid., 147-55. Also *TF*, 215-31.

such a way that each Person is distinctively who he is in relation to the other two.[97]

In other words, the Trinity consists of three distinct Persons who are in relationship with one another and those relationships define their distinct personhood. Furthermore, as we will see next, their relations with one another constitute the one Being of God. In the words of the Council of Alexandria of AD 362, God is "one being, three persons."[98] We proceed further to see how Torrance used the concept of onto-relations to not only discuss the distinctiveness of the persons and the person-constituting relations within the Trinity, but also discuss the *oneness* of the Trinity in the being of God.[99]

Torrance's use of the concept of onto-relations also enabled him to maintain the unity of the Trinity. Through God's self-revelation to Israel as "I am who I am/I will be who I will be," the being of God is revealed as personal and self-determined for fellowship.[100] The being of God is further revealed as personal and relational by Jesus Christ who takes up the "I am" of God.[101] Together, the "I am" of *Yahweh* and the "I am" of Jesus "tell us that the Being of God is not undifferentiated in his oneness, but comprises a Triunity of relations internal to the Godhead."[102] Torrance reminded us that Athanasius first called God's oneness and unity the "Triunity of God."[103] Holding together the triunity and oneness among the three divine persons, Torrance reflected,

> Through sharing equally in the one living Being of God, in an essentially *spiritual and onto-relational way*, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit form and constitute together in their distinctive properties in relation to one another the natural Communion and indivisible Unity of the Holy Trinity. And so St Basil emphatically

[97] Ibid., 145.

[98] Ibid., 104. Torrance clarifies that the three divine persons referred to in the Council of Alexandria's phrase, "one being, three persons" does not refer to "three Persons in God's being as if the three Persons were other than and not identical with the one Being of God, but precisely as the one being of God."

[99] Torrance concentrates on the one Being of God, although not separated from his consideration of the three persons, in chap. 5, "One Being, Three Persons," *CDG*, pp. 112-35. On the unity of the Trinity in Gregory Nazianzen and John Calvin, *TP*, 25-27.

[100] *CDG*, 116-24; *TP*, 18-19.

[101] *CDG*, 118-24; *TP*, 142.

[102] *CDG*, 124-25.

[103] *TF*, 302-40. Also, *TP*, 7-8; *CDG*, chap. 7, "Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity," pp. 168-202.

declared, 'Their oneness consists in the Communion of the Godhead.'[104]

In short, for Torrance the one being of the Trinity is a communion.[105] "With God, Being and Communion are one and the same."[106] The nature of this communion is further explicated by the important concept of *perichoresis* discussed above in that each of the persons of the Trinity makes room for or mutually contains one another. Consequently, the being of God is not isolated, lonely, or non-relational, but is a being for others. As Torrance put it, the onto-relations of the three divine Persons includes their "*being for one another*, in which they dwell in one another, love one another, give themselves to one another and receive from one another in the Communion of the Holy Trinity." [107] In other words, the Trinity is essentially relational.[108] "For God to *be*, is to be for himself in himself, that is for the three Divine Persons which God is to be *for one another* in the onto-personal relations of the Holy Trinity. As such God's Being is, so to speak, inherently altruistic, *Being for others, Being who loves.*"[109] Drawing upon Johannine and Augustinian roots, Torrance maintained that as an onto-relational being, God is love. The shared relations between Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are relations of love. Therefore, God's inner Trinitarian Being is an "eternal movement of Love" and a "plentitude of eternal relations of Love."[110] God's being contains a "mutual movement of personal Communion in the Love that God is."[111] Thus, God's one being is not less personal or less relational than any one of the divine persons. Instead, because the dynamic relations between the Trinitarian persons are onto-relations of love, they are an essential aspect of the unity within the one

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[104] *CDG*, 126-27. Italics are his.

[105] Ibid., 124-28, 131, 133.

[106] Ibid., 104.

[107] Ibid., 163.

[108] Stanley J. Grenz observed that by the end of the twentieth century in trinitarian theology through the works of Leonardo Boff, John Zizioulas, and Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "the concept of relationality had indeed moved to center stage." *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 117. Grenz's discussion is found in chapter 4, "The Triumph of Relationality," pp. 117-62. To this list of three theologians, I would add Colin Gunton and F. Leron Schultz. To speak of God as relational is to speak analogically. What each of these theologians means by relational and how they develop and use their "relational ontology" varies, of course, and is contingent upon their larger theological proposal. However, the majority of interlocutors Torrance engaged in his writings on the doctrine of God are primarily patristic instead of contemporary trinitarian theologians.

[109] *CDG*, 131.

[110] *RST*, 183.

[111] *TP*, 105.

being of the Trinity. [112] As we will see in the next chapter, this loving, relational aspect of the nature of the ontological Trinity has a governing influence on the knowledge of God for Torrance.

Above, we considered and endorsed Torrance's notion that the Trinity has self-revealed as personal, noting the necessary analogical reserve. We now consider Torrance's notion that the Trinity is relational. In his historical survey of Trinitarian theology, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen writes, "If there is one crucial development concerning the Trinity on which all Christian theologians are currently in agreement, it is the rise to prominence of the understanding of God as communion."[113] While many twentieth-century theologians developed this theme, a seminal study at the fountainhead of these developments, following Barth and Rahner, was by the Orthodox theologian John D. Zizioulas.[114] The primary interlocutors of both Zizioulas and Torrance were the Cappadocian theologians. Both agreed that "the concept of the person is indissolubly bound up with theology."[115] Both agreed that communion is part of divine and consequently human being. Yet, they differed on how they described the divine persons in communion. Zizioulas began his discussion with the emergence and evolution of the concept of person. "In the ancient Greek world for someone to be a person means that he has something added to his being; the 'person' is not his true 'hypostasis.' 'Hypostasis' still means basically 'nature' or 'substance.'"[116] However, through the Cappadocians' efforts to give ontological expression to notions of the Triune God, "the person is no longer an adjunct to a being, a category which we *add* to a concrete entity once we have first verified its ontological hypostasis. *It is itself the hypostasis of the being*."[117] The person supplants being as "the *constitutive element* (the 'principle' or 'cause') of beings" and thus became a primary ontological category.[118] In light of God's self-revelation as person, Torrance would agree. Yet, Zizioulas and Torrance part company here in an important way. Following Basil and Gregory Nyssen, Zizioulas held that the person of the

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[112] *CDG*, 133, 139-40, 164-6; *RST*, 181-83.
[113] Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 387.
[114] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).
[115] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 27. For Torrance, see note 76 above.
[116] Ibid., 33.
[117] Ibid., 39.
[118] Ibid.

Father functioned as the source and cause of the Trinity for the Cappadocians.[119] The communion within the Triune God "is a product of freedom as a result not of the substance of God but of a person, the Father… who is Trinity not because the divine *nature* is ecstatic but because the Father as a *person* freely wills this communion."[120] However, Torrance maintained, looking to Athanasius, Epiphanius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Gregory Nazianzen, that the unity and authority of the Trinity lay in the being or *ousia* of the Godhead rather than the person or *hypostasis* of the Father.[121] As we have seen, the being of God is the persons-in-relationship or onto-relations for Torrance. Through the concept of *perichoresis*, Torrance held together the distinctive persons and unified being of God, a "trinity in unity and unity in trinity."[122] Consequently, it is simultaneously the persons-in-relation and the *ousia* of God which is the source of the unity and authority of the Trinity. Perhaps surprisingly, it was not from Zizioulas' perspective but from Torrance's that an agreed statement on the doctrine of the Trinity was reached between the Reformed and Orthodox churches, contending that the procession of the Spirit comes from the Triune being rather than the person of the Father, involving the whole Godhead.[123] To summarize, for Zizioulas communion occurred because of the free choice of the Father while for Torrance communion is constituted by divine persons-in-relation or onto-relations which is the one being of God.[124] Despite their differences, both Torrance and Zizioulas held that the being of God is relational, yet Torrance's onto-relational approach maintained traditional orthodoxy and obtained ecumenical advance. We proceed on solid ground in maintaining with Torrance and virtually all contemporary Trinitarian theology that the being of God is relational.

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[119] Ibid., 40-41.

[120] Ibid., 44.

[121] *CDG*, 177-85. See also John G.F. Wilks, "The Trinitarian Ontology of John Zizioulas," *Vox Evangelica* 25 (1995): 77. Similar to Torrance, Wilks maintained that the *ousia* of the Father was the basis of unity for the Cappadocians instead of the *hypostasis.* Cited in Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 97, n. 58.

[122] *CDG*, 175-80. The quotation is the title of the chapter.

[123] *TP,* 112, 120, 125-26, 137-39. Torrance's full account of these discussions and the agreement obtained is found in two volumes which he edited. Thomas F. Torrance, ed., *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985, 1992).

[124] Torrance's nephew, Alan Torrance, furthered his uncle's perspective in arguing for the intra-divine communion of God as an ultimate ontological reality, providing a corrective to Zizioulas's proposal in Alan Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996). Ralph Del Colle added a Thomist perspective in "'Person' and 'Being' in John Zizioulas' Trinitarian Theology: Conversations with Thomas Torrance and Thomas Aquinas," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001): 70-86.

To bring this discussion of onto-relations within the immanent Trinity to a close, notice that two necessary themes concerning the nature of God are constant for Torrance: God is both personal and relational. By holding together these two concepts he comprised his conjunctive concept of onto-relations which he used to conceptually and verbally apprehend the Triune God as simultaneously one being, three persons. Torrance's onto-relational concept helped him to think "holistically" or "conjunctively," that is, to hold together in an act of integrative knowing the one being and three persons of the Trinity.[125] We will have more to say about this way of thought below in the assessment below (3.4). For here, it is noteworthy that Torrance's holding together the divine oneness and threeness is in contrast with an Augustinian-Thomist approach which begins with the one divine essence and subsequently discusses the three divine persons.[126] This also distinguishes him from social Trinitarians who begin with the three divine persons, allowing Torrance to avoid the critique of tri-theism.[127] Looking to Gregory Nazianzen, Torrance quoted, "No sooner do I consider the One than I am enlightened by the radiance of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the One."[128] His concept of onto-relations not only held together the one and the three, but simultaneously held together the Being and Persons of God. As Torrance put it, "If the one Being of God is identical with the Communion of the three Divine Persons and the Communion of the three divine Persons is identical with the one Being of God, then we must think of the one God as a fullness of personal Being in himself… As the one God he is a Communion of personal Being in himself, a Trinity in Unity and a Unity in Trinity."[129] In other words, "the divine Being and the divine Communion are to be understood wholly in terms of one another."[130] Therefore, Torrance's concept and use of the term onto-relations not only held together the three-ness and one-ness of the

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[125] *CDG*, 114-16, 127-28.

[126] *CDG*, 112-14; *TP*, 77-78.

[127] John L. Gresham Jr., "The Social Model of the Trinity and its Critics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46, no. 3 (1993): 325-43.

[128] *CDG*, 112.

[129] *CDG*, 161. Also, *TP*, 111-12.

[130] *CDG*, 104. This coheres with the view of the twentieth-century Eastern Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky, who held onto the simultaneous existence of one nature and three persons, yet not based upon the notion of onto-relations, but upon the mystery of God. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge & London: James Clarke & Co, 1957), 88: "These real distinctions introduce no 'composition' into divine being; they signify the mystery of God, who is absolutely one according to His nature, absolutely three according to His persons."

Trinity but also the persons and the being of God. Moreover, these distinctions are held together and cohere with the notion that God is simultaneously personal and relational. In short, the being of the Triune God for Torrance is an "essentially *personal, dynamic and relational Being*."[131]

Thus far we have moved from some of the basic dynamics which comprised Torrance's theological epistemology discussed in chapter two to the heart or controlling center of his epistemology. We have established that the immanent Trinity and the relations within are at the highest level of a stratified structure of knowledge for Torrance. Next, we discovered that both the three persons and the unified being of the Trinity are constituted by what Torrance called their onto-relations. He used the concept of onto-relations to describe the being of God as simultaneously and essentially personal and relational. Therefore, the personal and relational dimensions of the immanent Trinity are supremely important for Torrance, ontologically and therefore epistemologically. We turn now to assess the viability of Torrance's use of the concept onto-relations within a stratified epistemological framework to discuss the immanent Trinity in a postmodern, scientific context.

3.4 Assessment

There are ways of thinking that have arisen in the postmodern era that allow for and enable fresh perspectives on the tradition of Trinitarian thought that were eclipsed in the modern era. Reciprocally, there are themes from within Trinitarian theology which can contribute to postmodern thought. David S. Cunningham has named important contributions in both directions which will help us to asses Torrance's Trinitarian theology for the postmodern era.[132] We will name two of these contributions, one which the postmodern era has allowed to renew among Trinitarian theology and one which Trinitarian thought offers as a corrective to postmodern thought. We will then note a frame of thinking which Torrance discussed within his Trinitarian reflections that is particularly suitable for moving beyond the habits of modern reductionism. First concerns the idea of relationality latent within classical Trinitarian thought that modernity hid from view. Cunningham writes, "One of the distinctive features of modernity has been its enthusiasm for classifying everything

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[131] *CDG*, 124.

[132] David S. Cunningham, "The Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 186-202.

into discrete categories."[133] Particularly with the natural sciences, this seemed to offer a framework in which neutral observers could organize the world, conduct experiments and discover objective theories. However, these classification systems were not neutral, making assumptions and epistemic decisions about the world from the beginning in the construction of the classification. "In contrast to the modernist penchant for division, isolation, and classification, postmodernism posits a much more interdependent approach. Individual instances are not so much sorted into discrete categories as they [are] *set in relation* to other instances."[134] As maintained in chapter one, the modern era sought for reductionist, linear causalities while the postmodern era sees multi-dimensional and interrelated complexities. This more relational perspective has allowed for a reclaiming of the Christian tradition's understanding of the Triune persons as relations, mutually interdependent upon one another for their meaning and non-hierarchical in their relations. Cunningham summarizes,

> [P]ostmodernism's emphasis on complex relationality (in contrast to the hierarchical classificatory schemes of modernity) has made it easier for theologians to think through the fundamentally relational nature of God that is inscribed in the doctrine of the Trinity. In the process, ancient claims about the Trinity's co-equality, co-eternity, and mutual reciprocity are being recovered and reendowed with a fullness of meaning and significance that had been largely obscured in the modern era.[135]

Along with others, Torrance has helped to retrieve aspects of Trinitarian thought that were obscured by the modern era.

Second, Cunningham also contends that Trinitarian theology provides a needed corrective to much postmodern thought, particularly with its continued individualist notion of personhood. Modernist thought understood a person as the following:

> [A] free and autonomous entity, an independent seat of consciousness, which has no necessary relations or dependencies on anyone or anything else. Needless to say, this is not the vision that St. Augustine had in mind when he advocated the use of the word *persona* to speak

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[133] Ibid., 188.
[134] Ibid., 189.
[135] Ibid., 190.

of the divine Three. But the modern emphases on infinite freedom (understood as lack of constraint) and on autonomy (defined as throwing off one's tutelage by others) have led to a highly individualistic and privatized sense of human personhood.[136]

Cunningham observes that the postmodern era has maintained the notion of person as an autonomous individual. This led Cunningham and Nicholas Lash to argue against the use of the word "person" for Trinitarian theology.[137] On the other hand, Cunningham concedes that "by strongly asserting the relational and interdependent model of personhood that is specified by the Christian doctrine of God, theology can help postmodernity extend and deepen its overcoming of Enlightenment presuppositions."[138] He concludes,

> Thus, if we are to continue to speak of "God in three persons," we must simultaneously define the word *person* in a highly interdependent, relational way: to be a person is to be a relation, or perhaps a multiplicity of relations… In this way, the longstanding Trinitarian claim that 'God is three persons' can become a powerful critique of the (post)modern tendency to understand personhood in individualistic and privatized terms.[139]

This is precisely what Torrance has done with his onto-relational definition of person. Torrance's onto-relational notion makes a contribution not only to the essentially relational notion of personhood, but also demonstrates a way of thinking that is particularly helpful in the postmodern era.

Finally, we turn to a framework of thought which emerged from Torrance's Trinitarian theology which is particularly helpful for moving beyond reductionist frameworks. We have demonstrated that Torrance used the concept of onto-relations to maintain that the ontological Trinity is both three persons and one being. This concept is a demonstration of what Torrance elsewhere called "integrative knowing." "Integrative knowing is a unifying mode of thought in which we seek to grasp something by penetrating into its inner intelligible relations and wholeness without distorting fragmentation of it."[140] It is directly related to Torrance's notions of

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[136] Ibid., 197.
[137] Ibid., 198, n. 23, citing David Cunningham, *These Three are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 26-29; Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1992), 30-33.
[138] Ibid., 198.
[139] Ibid., 199.
[140] *BSCL*, 139.

"thinking conjunctively" or "thinking holistically." Torrance discussed "thinking conjunctively" with respect to the two natures of Christ as well as with the economic and ontological Trinity.[141] He also discussed apprehending the economic and ontological Trinity "holistically."[142] Torrance did not use the term "thinking conjunctively" or "holistically" directly concerning the one being, three persons or the personal and relational aspects of God, yet this is precisely what he did. His concept of onto-relations demonstrates integrative knowing and conjunctive or holistic thinking. It is important to note that it is precisely these ways of knowing which can resist and overcome reductionist modes of thought. Integrative knowing and holistic thinking are modes of thought which are responsive to the multi-layered and interrelated complexities of reality. With respect to knowledge of God, this is an *a posteriori* way of thinking in response to the revelation of God in Christ. This mode of thought kept Torrance from defining the Triune God as something less complex or more static than God is**.** Torrance wrote,

> Hence our knowing of God engages in a perichoretic circular movement from Unity to Trinity and form Trinity to Unity, for God is God only as he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and cannot be conceived by us truly otherwise. This means that we understand the Monarchy of God not in a partitive way moving linearly, as it were, from one divine Person to Another, but in the same holistic way as we know the Trinity.[143]

By developing and applying the esemplastic concept of onto-relations, Torrance was able to hold together the one and the many, the being and the persons, as well as the persons and relations within God. Such an *a posteriori*, holistic way of knowing overcomes the reductionist mindset and is particularly useful for the postmodern, scientific age, be it knowledge of God or of any complexity or mysterious reality.

Nevertheless, there is an aspect of Torrance's stratified structure of the knowledge of God that needs further attention. The first-tier or bottom-level of the knowledge of God is the experience of God. Certainly he understood the work of the economic Trinity was involved in the development of theological understanding at an intuitive level. Yet, Torrance did not develop how the experience of God continues to function at the second and third epistemological levels. How are we to think about the

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[141] *CDG*, 114-16.
[142] Ibid., 127-28.
[143] Ibid., 181.

role of experience in the development of higher levels of knowledge? More specifically, how can we speak about the experience of human participation in God's self-knowledge? We will attempt to extend Torrance's theology to answer this question in chapter five.

3.5 Review

In this chapter we have seen how the immanent Trinity and in particular the onto-relations within the immanent Trinity are quite important for Torrance's theology. They are important not only in that they are part of the highest strata of knowledge of God, but they ontologically hold together and define the one being and three persons of the Trinity. Furthermore, they hold together and define God as essentially personal and relational.

It is helpful to remember that how Torrance wrote about the onto-relations among the persons of the Trinity is commensurate with the seven epistemological dynamics for knowledge of God discussed in the previous chapter. Such knowledge is a disciplined form of thought and speech, indeed, similar to the highest strata of scientific theory. More obviously, such knowledge is ontologically-determined and Trinitarian precisely because discussion of the Triune onto-relations concerns the inner-life of the ontological Trinity, revealed by the economic Trinity. Knowledge of the onto-relations within God is also creation-situated because God's inter-relations are known through a point of access from a center in God and from within our "creaturely existence," that is, "within the space and time of our earthly existence."[144] Furthermore, such knowledge is rational and conceptual, but not essentially so, for the "ultimate Rationality" and intrinsic order of the divine onto-relations invite a response of "committed rational worship and praise through godly ways of thought and speech that are worthy of God."[145] Yet, recognizing the distinctiveness and limitations of human cognition and language, these onto-relations are "ineffable relations," transcending human thought and speech.[146] Thus, knowledge of the onto-relations within the Trinity is transcendent. Nevertheless, intra-trinitarian relations are real relations which have been revealed in personal, human forms of thought and speech in the incarnation. Even though the terms used to speak of the persons and relations of

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[144] Ibid., 136.
[145] Ibid., 111.
[146] Ibid., 193.

the immanent Trinity are to be used "with apophatic reserve and reverence,"[147] the realism of the incarnation is held together with the limitations and responsive creativity of human cognition and language. Hence, this aspect of knowledge of God is in a qualified sense realist. Thus, Torrance invited his readers to think through theological concepts to reality, and not remain fixed on particular words or concepts, especially with this highest-level concept of the onto-relations within the ontological Trinity.[148]

However, not all of these general dynamics function as equally central or determinative. If we are to follow Torrance's epistemological principle that the nature of what one knows determines how one knows it, then the onto-relations within the immanent Trinity prove to be a supremely important dynamic for the knowledge of God at the center of his theological epistemology. We recall from the quotation at the beginning of this chapter that to know God we must, as Torrance put it,

> [K]now him in accordance with the form or structure of his own Being – that is, in terms of God's inner divine relations… so that for us to know that God, we must know him in a mode of understanding on our part appropriate to the Trinity of Persons in God. There must be a "Trinitarian" character in our knowing of God corresponding to the trinity of relations in God himself.[149]

Concerning the form or structure of the Triune Being, Torrance argued that the onto-relations are part of the highest level of knowledge about the ontological Trinity that we may have. Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated that he considered the immanent Trinity and the onto-relations within to be the ultimate governing influence for all knowledge of God. While Torrance did not weigh the different dynamics against each other, this chapter concludes that the supremely important ontological Trinity centralizes important epistemological dynamics for the knowledge of God. This leads us to consider the implications of the onto-relations of the ontological Trinity for knowledge of God in chapter four.

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[147] Ibid., 194.

[148] "Theological concepts are used aright when we do not think the concepts themselves, thereby identifying them with the truth, but think through them of the realities or truths which they are meant to intend beyond themselves. This applies not least to the concept of *perichoresis* in which we are concerned with the real objective onto-relations in the eternal movement of Love in the Communion of the Holy Trinity as they have been disclosed to us in the incarnate economy of God's revealing and saving acts in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit." *CDG*, 194.

[149] *GGT*, 148.

CHAPTER 4

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS PERSONAL AND RELATIONAL

4.1 Introduction

Chapter two discussed seven of the basic, inter-related dynamics of T. F. Torrance's theological epistemology. Chapter three demonstrated how the immanent Trinity and the Trinity's onto-relations are a supremely important reality and hence a governing dynamic for the knowledge of God. This leads us to consider the implications from the ontological Trinity and the divine onto-relations for the knowledge of God. Thus, this chapter will provide an exposition of the Trinitarian, onto-relational character of the knowledge of God resulting from the onto-relations within God. As we will see, the onto-relations within God entail that knowledge of God is personal and relational. In chapter five, we will demonstrate how the ontological Trinity contributes to the participatory character of the knowledge of God. Through this engagement with Torrance's epistemology, we will consider a vision of participation in the knowledge of God that moves beyond reductionism for the postmodern, scientific age. We now turn our attention to the implications of the onto-relations within the ontological Trinity for the knowledge of God.

4.2 An onto-relational order

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes that many theologians in the twentieth century have found implications from the doctrine of the Trinity, particularly communion theology, and have applied them to a wide range of topics including anthropology, Christology, prayer, and theology of other religions.[1] Torrance has uniquely applied his distinctive Trinitarian theology to the area of epistemology. Torrance's ontologically-determined epistemological dynamic holds that the nature of the object determines how one knows it. As we have seen, for Torrance, this is a scientific, or rather as this thesis has argued, a disciplined approach, namely to "know things only under the constraint of their distinctive nature."[2] Thus, he consistently maintains that

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[1] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 387-8.

[2] *TF*, 52. "This scientific approach, in which we know things only under the constraint of their distinctive nature, applies even more forcefully to the knowledge of God, for since there is no likeness between the eternal being of God and the being of created reality, God may be known only out of himself. Thus if we are to have any true and precise scientific knowledge of God we must allow his

"genuine knowledge in any field involves knowledge of that field in accordance with the nature of the realities with which we have to do in it, and knowledge of those realities in terms of their internal relations or intrinsic structures."[3] Consequently, in light of the onto-relations of the immanent Trinity, there is a "distinctive kind of order,"[4] specifically, an "onto-relational order" for the knowledge of God for Torrance. As he clearly put it,

> If God is triune in his nature, then really to know God means that we must know him in accordance with his triune nature from the start. It is certainly scientifically objectionable to develop a doctrine of the Trinity on grounds other than that on which we develop our actual knowledge of God, the One God. But further, if we operate, not with some kind of epistemological dualism between form and being or structure and substance, but with the unity of form and being or of structure and substance, then to know God we must know him in accordance with the form or structure of his own Being – that is, in terms of God's inner divine relations. And that means we must know him as the Triune God who within himself has relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; so that for us to know that God, we must know him in a mode of understanding on our part appropriate to the Trinity of Persons in God. There must be a "Trinitarian" character in our knowing of God corresponding to the trinity of relations in God himself.[5]

The Trinitarian onto-relations of God are therefore determinative for the nature of the knowledge of God for Torrance. This distinctive kind of order can "be allowed to exert [its] creative power upon the whole range of human life and thought" to transform the very foundations of culture.[6] He argued that we must therefore adopt "onto-relational ways of thinking" which undermine older dualist and atomistic modes of thought.[7] For instance, Torrance observed onto-relational thinking at work in modern particle theory and quantum theory.[8] He did not develop an onto-relational mode of thought from quantum theory, but mentioned it as an epistemological analogy. Onto-relational ways of thinking about God did not arise independent of God in another field of inquiry which he subsequently applied to God, but rather this way

own nature, as he becomes revealed to us, to determine how we are to know him, how we are to think of him, and what we are to say of him."
 [3] *GGT*, 146.
 [4] *RET*, 44.
 [5] *GGT*, 148.
 [6] *RET*, 47.
 [7] *GGT*, 172-178; *RET*, 44.
 [8] *RET*, 42-51; *GGT*, 11-12, 173-6, 178; *RST*, 168.

of thought arose for Torrance from the "empirico-theoretical ground of the incarnational activity of God within the spatio-temporal structures of our world, and it remains, indirectly through the level of the economic trinitarian relations, empirically correlated with that ground."[9] In other words, he did not first construct a principle of onto-relations and then analogously apply it to God, but rather allowed the self-revelation of the immanent Trinity through the economic Trinity to define his notion of onto-relations. Torrance intended for the immanent Trinity to remain ontologically supreme, maintaining God's freedom to be who He is which through the self-revelation of the economic Trinity led Torrance to give articulation to the onto-relations within God.[10]

Before turning to discuss the epistemological implications of the onto-relations within the Triune God, we first note that the triune onto-relations have two broader, knowledge-encompassing consequences for humanity for Torrance. First, Torrance held that the divine onto-relations among the persons of the Trinity constitute human personhood. God is not only a "fullness of personal Being in himself, but is also a person-constituting Being."[11]

> We must think of God…as *personalizing Person',* and of ourselves as *'personalized persons'*, people who are personal primarily through onto-relations to him as the creative Source of our personal being, and secondarily through onto-relations to one another within the subject-subject structures of our creaturely being as they have come from him.[12]

The personal God establishes human personhood through God's onto-relations extended in the redemptive activity of the economic Trinity. In short, the persons-in-relationship within God constitute human persons-in-relationship.[13] Second, just as the persons of the Triune God are person-constituting, likewise Torrance contended that the being of God is communion-constituting within God and among humans.[14]

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[9] *GGT*, 176.

[10] Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity*, 125-46, 317-19. But we will see in chapter five that Torrance's vision of participation did not assume an objectivism that can purely think from a "center in God" without the creaturely and cultural constraints which limit knowledge as Molnar seems to suggest, showing less appreciations for the subjective dimensions than did Torrance.

[11] *RET*, 43.

[12] *CDG,* 160.

[13] *RET*, 42-7; *RST*, 173-200; *TP*, 99-100.

[14] *RET*, 46; *RST*, 178-83.

"The eternal ground in God from which there flows his communion-seeking love and grace toward us, is the Communion which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have among themselves, and, let it be repeated, really are."[15] The onto-relations among the persons of the Trinity are relationship-constituting not only within God, but among humans. Hence, the onto-relations within the immanent Trinity constitute both human persons and relationships, or human onto-relations. Reciprocally, human interrelations of love "reflect the fact that God is love" and image the onto-relations of the Trinity, albeit imperfectly.[16] It is from within the divine-human onto-relations which the possibility of knowledge of God arises, giving knowledge of God its particular, onto-relational form.

From the Triune God at the heart of Torrance's theological epistemology, onto-relational ways of thinking entail three, central epistemological dynamics: knowledge of God is personal, relational, and participatory. In this chapter we will examine how knowledge of God is personal and relational for Torrance. We will expound how it is participatory in the next chapter. There are other ontological aspects of God which are epistemically-formative for Torrance which we will not discuss, such as that God is spirit and thus known spiritually.[17] In this chapter we discuss how knowledge of God is personal and relational because of the ontological priority of the persons-in-relationship or onto-relations within the immanent Trinity. Torrance himself did not uphold these dynamics as more weighty than others. However, from a Trinitarian framework, these two dynamics are a priority and particularly helpful for epistemology in the postmodern, scientific age. We now turn to discuss how knowledge of God is personal knowledge.

4.3 Knowledge of God as Personal Knowledge
4.3.1. The Trinity and Personal Knowledge

As we move to discuss how the Triune God and the onto-relations within determine the personal form of knowledge of God, it may be helpful if we remind ourselves of a basic epistemological dynamic discussed in chapter two. A proper, disciplined way to know things is under the constraint of their distinctive nature. Torrance held that this is especially true for knowledge of God because there is a

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[15] *CDG*, 132. Also 133.
[16] *RST*, 178.
[17] *CDG*, 158.

fundamental distinction between the being of God and the being of created reality. Hence, "God may be known only out of himself. Thus if we are to have any true and precise scientific knowledge of God we must allow his own nature, as he becomes revealed to us, to determine how we are to know him, how we are to think of him, and what we are to say of him."[18] In chapter three we agreed with Torrance that the revelation of God in Christ, the economic Trinity, gives us access to knowledge of the ontological or immanent Trinity. Consequently, we are allowed to apprehend that God is a unity of persons-in-relationship, or in Torrance's words, the being of God consists of onto-relations. This is an ultimate theoretical structure for Torrance, belonging to the highest strata of theology and thereby has a governing influence on all knowledge of God. Thus, knowledge of God is personal knowledge for Torrance, because, simply put, the object of this knowledge is personal. Torrance has consistently maintained the personal nature of the knowledge of God from his early lectures through his developed epistemological writings. For his Auburn lectures, Torrance wrote, "Christian Truth is identical with a personal being, indeed with a particular historical Person. It can be known only personally and cannot be universalized without losing its particular, historical, and personal character." [19] Later, he put, "Since [Christ] is Person and Word the forms of knowledge that arise in us are correspondingly personal and verbal."[20] Ontologically, Torrance maintained that God is "*the* Person, the one source of all personal existence."[21] Consequently, "the Triune God is not only a fullness of personal Being in himself, but is also person-constituting Being."[22] Hence, all personhood finds its origin and orientation in divine personhood. For Torrance, divine personhood is the fount of all personal existence and as a result personal knowledge is a fundamental type of knowledge, and quite clearly characterizes an essential facet of knowledge of God.

Not only does the personal nature of God's being undergird all existence and determine the personal form of knowledge of God, but God's activity further establishes that personal form. God has acted to reveal himself through personal self-communication in Jesus Christ. The person of God necessitates active self-revealing.

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[18] *TF*, 52.

[19] "Theology and Church" *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 3.

[20] *TS*, 207.

[21] *GR*, 80; Also, *RST,* 173-4. Italics mine.

[22] *RET*, 43.

This was as an early theme for Torrance. For instance, he wrote in his notes for his Auburn lecture "Philosophy and Theology,"

> For God is other than the world, and not the impersonal or immanental ground of the world; he is therefore other than the content of the soul. He is the other One, the Mysterious One and the Unknowable One, Whom we do not know because He is a Person, Who therefore can only be known by a personal communication. Personality is a secret; a mystery is hidden in it. Knowledge of a person is only possible through revelation, and the person reveals himself through his word. Through the word the mystery of the person is communicated, through the word that which we did not know is revealed. [23]

Unlike an impersonal notion of general revelation, God's self-revelation is personal. The personal form of the knowledge of God which comes from God's personal self-revelation continued as a theme through his later writings.[24] As discussed in chapter three, Torrance maintained that who God is in Himself, God is towards us in revelation.[25] Because God is in Himself who he has revealed Himself to be as a personal being in Jesus Christ, truth is a personal being.[26] Thus, divine personhood is revealed personally in Jesus Christ. Although Torrance at times will refer to God as the "object" of theology which could connote something other than personhood, he is quite clear that God gives Himself to be known as personal subject. "God is *Person*, and when He objectifies Himself for our knowledge He does not cease to be *Subject*, to be Himself."[27]

Furthermore, God reveals himself in a person-constituting way. "Knowledge of God takes place not only within the rational structures but also within the person and social structures of human life, where the Spirit is at work as *personalizing Spirit*."[28] As the divine source of personhood, God's self-revelation is a personal and

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[23] "Philosophy and Theology," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 36. See also 16-17, 34-36; "Theology and Science" *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39*(The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 56-59.

[24] Some examples include *TS*, 38-40, 146-48, 207-8; *TF*, 65-8; *CDG*, 102-3, 155-61.

[25] *CDG*, 8, 92, 95, 99, 114, 136, 142, 158, 237; *TF*, 71, 130, 135; *TP*, 2, 80-1, 117, 135; *TIR*, 38; *RET,* 14-15; *CTSC,* 30-31; *GGT,* 39-41, 67, 89-91, 151-2, 156-168; *DCO*, 7, 108-9; *RST,* 156-7; *TCFK*, vii, 287-9, 303.

[26] *TS*, 141.

[27] This theme of God as Subject is consistently upheld by Torrance from the Auburn Lectures (1938-9) to the publication of *Theological Science* in 1969. "Philosophy and Theology" (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 36; *TS*, 38.

[28] *GR*, 188.

personalizing activity.[29] Thus, in agreement with Calvin, Torrance maintained that knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves are interrelated and correlative.[30]

As a communion of persons, God communicates himself through Christ and by the Spirit within a community of persons, that is, the church. The person-constituting interaction of God creates the church as the "spatiotemporal correlate" of his self-revelation. The church provides the "social coefficient" to our knowledge of God for "we are unable to know God in any onto-relational way without knowing him in the togetherness of our personal relations with one another."[31] God's self-revelation and the structures of human reception of that revelation are both personal. "This means that an intensely personal element characterizes both the object pole and subject pole of the onto-relational order in our knowledge of God."[32] Hence, from one end of the knowledge relation to the other, the end and means of human knowledge of God is personal knowledge, rooted in and shaped by the Triune God.

Torrance also pointed out on several occasions that there is a distinctive form of inquiry for personal subjects verses determinate objects.[33] Torrance noted how Calvin reversed the medieval order of scientific questions (back to Aristotle's order) inquiring first after the nature of the thing we know, *quale sit*, allowing nature to determine how we know it. In Christian theology, we are directed to a personal reality and therefore ask *quails sit,* "who?" The question is first "who God is" in the actual knowledge of Him.[34] One does not interact with persons in the same way one

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[29] *RST*, 138-39; *RET*, 46; *CFM*, 30-31.

[30] *TS*, xiv, 87, 306-8; *GR*, 31-3; *RST*, 58-9, 149. The first section and words of Calvin's *Institutes* are on "The Knowledge of God and That of Ourselves are Connected. How They are Interrelated." He opened this section with "Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God." Calvin began by explaining, "Nearly all the wisdom we possess… consists of two parts, the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by man bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, John T. McNeil, ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 35. On this theme in Calvin, see Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 18-24.

[31] *RET*, 46.

[32] *RET*, 46.

[33] On the personal form of knowledge of God, Nicholas Lash commented "It may be that, in order to get to know other human persons, we have to attend, rather than control; that human beings are mysteries to be respected, not problems energetically to be licked. Nevertheless, the way of knowledge of other persons is, in practice, always a way of demanding and costly engagement, a way of suffering, of compassion. There is an irreducible variety in the modes of human action, as there is the modes of human knowledge. In personal relationships, knowledge is the fruit, and not merely the precondition, of engagement, of suffering, of love. What I am suggesting is that perhaps one of the reasons that we characterize the transcendent mystery of God as 'personal' is because we have discovered that the process of 'coming to know' God, and of discerning his action in the world, has a similar structure." Nicholas Lash, *Theology on Dover Beach* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), 162-63.

[34] *GR*, 33.

interacts with microscopic particles, chemical properties, geological strata, or non-human animal life.[35] There is a distinctive kind of order that produces knowledge among personal relations.[36] With persons a mode "in which personal reciprocity in speaking and listening, asking and answering, is the appropriate mode of rationality."[37] Personal forms of speech are apposite with personal reality.[38] For Torrance, Jesus Christ is "at once Person and Word…who communicates His Word to us in the form of His own personal Being."[39] Therefore, to know God is to know a person and hence personal modes of thought are appropriate.[40] Conversely, abstract and impersonal modes of thought are thereby inappropriate with God.[41] "If personal relations belong to the structure of reality itself, then it is surely the model of personal agent that must be primary in our attempt to think intelligibly of God, and not the impersonal model of the detached observer over against the object, with its unbridgeable gulf between subject and object."[42] He named the Cartesian subject-object relation as an "impersonal model of thought" in which we become "trapped in detached, objectivist relations to what is other than ourselves" and thereby exclude the "place of personal agency."[43]

Thus far in this chapter we have seen that for Torrance the nature of the Triune God including God's onto-relations determines human personhood and the personal nature of the knowledge of God. The ontological Trinity and thus the economic Trinity, God's being and God's self-revelation, are personal and consequently knowledge of God is personal knowledge. Humans receive God's personal self-

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[35] "The Knowledge of God," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 2-3: "Is our knowledge of God like our knowledge of geological strata or is it rather like our knowledge of a person with whom we are on terms of love? Obviously, of these two broad alternatives, our knowledge of God must be said to resemble the latter. It can be fairly argued that a large part of the difficulty we experience to-day in our apprehension of God is due to the 'carry-over' of the methods of obtaining knowledge in the one sphere to operation in the other where they are neither appropriate nor pertinent." This argument is echoed in many later writings in line with his ontologically-determined epistemological dynamic discussed in chapter 2.3.

[36] *RST*, 173-78.

[37] *GR*, 93.

[38] *TS*, 207-8.

[39] *TS*, 133. Also, *TIR*, 42: "Because the Word is in the form of personal Being, relationship to the Word cannot be in word and understanding only but must itself be intensely personal…Knowledge of Christ and union with Christ went hand in hand together, so that relation to Christ was grounded and mediated through personal and living communion."

[40] Torrance argued that the patristic doctrine of the Trinity gave us personal modes of thought in contrast to the impersonal classical Greek conceptions. *TS*, 305.

[41] *CTSC*, 70-71; *RET*, 45; *CFM*, 34-35.

[42] *RST*, 173.

[43] *RST*, 133.

revelation through a community of persons. Modes of thought and speech to conceptualize and articulate the knowledge of God are therefore appropriately personal. We will further explore the potential of this vision of personal knowledge by briefly assessing its viability for the postmodern, scientific age.

4.3.2. Personal knowledge and the postmodern, scientific age

On the way toward an assessment of participation in the knowledge of God in the postmodern, scientific world, we will offer an assessment of the dynamic of personal knowledge. This is not a full assessment of the whole complex of participation, but an important assessment of one of the central dynamics. Before we discuss the notion of personal knowledge for the postmodern, scientific context, it is important to remember that for Torrance it was the patristic doctrine of the Trinity that gave us personal modes of thought in contrast to the classical Greek conceptions.[44] As Andrew Louth has reminded us, "For the Platonists God is an impersonal (or supra-personal) ultimate principle; for the Fathers God is a Person."[45] Beyond patristic writers, various twentieth-century theologians and philosophers helped Torrance to develop his notion of personal knowledge. The personal nature of God and thus the personal form of communication are themes that are found in Emil Brunner, Torrance's co-teacher early in his career at Auburn.[46] Torrance on occasion also referred to the work of the philosopher John Macmurray who developed the conception of the uniqueness of knowing persons.[47] While these two maintained that knowledge of persons had distinctive modes, Torrance more frequently cited the works of Martin Buber, and in particular *The Eclipse of God* and *Ich und Du*, to develop the form of communication and knowledge appropriate to persons. The influence of Buber on Torrance on this matter is evident from his early lectures down through his epistemological writings. [48] However, it was the chemist and philosopher

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[44] *TS*, 305; *CDG*, 103ff.

[45] Andrew Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 195.

[46] *TS*, 133, n. 1.

[47] *TS,* 3, 11-12, 22, 30-1, 208 n.1; *GR*, 81; *RST*, 63, n. 30. Although Torrance did not reference this work in particular, in arguing for personal forms of knowledge, Macmurray argued against material (biological) and theoretical (sociology) reductionism. John Macmurray, *The Form of the Personal* (1957; repr. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Books, 1991).

[48] "The object of faith is God speaking in person and we cannot transmute that Word into an entity which we can manipulate along with other entities in our thinking. It is essentially a <u>Thou</u> over against Whom we stand addressed, from Whose presence and Word we may not withdraw in order to

of science Michael Polanyi who influenced Torrance's notion of how personal
knowledge functions in ways which are particularly important for the postmodern,
scientific age.

"When we turn to the distinctive kind of onto-relational order with which we
have to reckon in Christian theology, however, we have something else to remember,
its profoundly *personal* character…What is required here is some form of personal
knowledge similar to that which Michael Polanyi has championed even in the realm
of natural science."[49] Torrance maintained that no one had done more to advance the
personal character of knowledge than Michael Polanyi.[50] In his book *Personal
Knowledge,* Michael Polanyi attacked objectivism, the modern notion of detached,
impersonal knowledge and replaced it with the idea of personal knowledge which
includes the "passionate participation" of the human knower.[51] He argued that
"complete objectivity as usually attributed to the exact sciences is a delusion and is in
fact a false ideal."[52] In its stead, Polanyi emphasized that knowing is a personal
activity that is multi-dimensional, involving many activities. For instance, even in the
most exact of sciences, the art of knowing involves personal judgment in observation
and verification, in making weighty or routine epistemic decisions, in the selection of
good questions for investigation and hypothesis, in applying the maxims or rules of
the particular science or art, in the appraisal of order and meaning amidst randomness,
and other particular skills of which a person may not be aware except in the overall
performance of the knowledge.[53] The activity and responsibility of the knower is a
key component of Polanyi's notion of personal knowledge. Following Polanyi,
Torrance recognized the active dimensions of personal knowing which Polanyi
emphasized. Torrance defined personal knowledge as,

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take up a detached attitude, and so try to pass a verdict on it, or try to express it in impersonal fashion.
It is essentially a <u>Thou</u> Who will not be turned into an <u>It</u>, and Who obstructs and judges as a sinful
betrayal any attempt to make the Word subjective to ourselves or an object within our consciousness
over which we have control." "Christian Faith," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F.
Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 16.
See also *TS*, 5-6, 14, 22n.2, 42n.2, 309, 330n.3; *GR*, 29-55, 106; *RST*, 179-206.

[49] *RET*, 45.

[50] *RST*, 13.

[51] Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (1958; repr.,
Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962), 17.

[52] Ibid., 18.

[53] Ibid., 18, 19-20, 27, 30-1, 33-40, 49-65.

the responsible participation of the person as an active rational centre of consciousness in all acts of understanding and knowing. It is only a person who can think, mean, interpret, understand; only a person who can appraise the validity of an argument or exercise a judgment in relating evidence to an external reality which he seeks to apprehend; only a person who can discern a coherent pattern in nature and use it as a clue in active pursuit of his inquiry; only a person who can submit his mind to the compelling demands of reality upon him; only a person who can think and decide as he must under obligations to the truth; and only a person who can act responsibly with universal intent in his knowing.[54]

Torrance found in Polanyi an articulation of the active, personal dynamics inevitably a part of human knowing, scientific or otherwise. Before Torrance's engagement with Michael Polanyi, he recognized personal elements at work in scientific ways of knowing. This is evidenced by his awareness of personal value and interest in the abstractions of scientific reasoning in his early, unpublished lectures.[55] Yet, he further developed the personal and subjective dimensions of knowing through his engagement with Polanyi. Notice in Torrance's above definition of personal knowledge the many times that Torrance wrote "only a person" followed by an assortment of activities which are part of the overall activity of knowing. The person's engagement with reality is multi-faceted and the many personal aspects of knowing are recognized in his definition of personal knowledge. Within Torrance's notion of personal knowledge, the focus is on the knower as an active rational agent engaged in a complex of knowing activities.

Therefore, for Torrance, knowledge cannot be reduced to impersonal, formal relations between objects as in an abstract objectivism or discussions of artificial intelligence.[56] Torrance demonstrated clear conviction beyond objectivism when he wrote that "it is therefore unscientific to pretend that the subjective element is eliminated when it cannot be."[57] Instead, genuine objectivity for Torrance includes human, personal engagement because, as he clearly put it, "personal being is, I submit, the prime bearer of objectivity."[58] Through his use of Polanyi's emphasis on the personal dimensions of knowledge, Torrance has helped to move theological

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[54] *BSCL*, 141-42; Also, *RET*, 45-6; *CTSC*, 66-7.
[55] "Theology and Philosophy," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 8-9.
[56] *CTSC,* 66-7.
[57] *TS*, 93.
[58] *RST*, 110. Also, 109, 134.

epistemology beyond the modern notion of objectivity which attempted to eliminate all personal factors in the knowing of reality. Moreover, his notion of personal knowledge overcomes reductionist attempts to fully explain human knowledge on levels less than the human person. This is backed by his anthropology. The idea that human personhood is derived from divine personhood immediately confronts reductionist attempts to explain human personhood on lower levels.

Subjective dimensions of knowledge have become particularly important in the postmodern era and require theological attention. Also, the activity of the knower is important for considering a vision of participation in the knowledge of God. Thus, we will continue to develop important aspects of the subjective, active dimensions of knowing in the ensuing discussion of participation in the knowledge of God in chapter five. The next chapter will not only provide a fuller development of key dynamics of the subjective dimensions involved in participation in the knowledge of God, but also a continued assessment of this vision for the postmodern, scientific era. Nevertheless, here, in an assessment of this Trinitarian-shaped dynamic of Torrance's theological epistemology, we must consider another challenge besides objectivism. In embracing the personal dimensions of knowledge, how did Polanyi and Torrance avoid reducing knowledge to subjectivity, which could lead to a cacophony of innumerable personal perspectives in a pluralistic environment? The challenge in the postmodern era is less the problem of objectivism (though it still survives in late modernity), but rather subjectivism, and close to it, relativism.

In contending against objectivism, the way which Polanyi attempted to rescue his concept of personal knowledge from subjectivism is through the notion of commitment. Maintaining the passionate participation of the knower in all acts of knowing, Polanyi held that it is only through personal commitment to reality that knowledge can be obtained. Polanyi wrote,

> I can speak of facts, knowledge, proof, reality, etc. within my commitment situation, for it is constituted by my search for facts, knowledge, proof, reality, etc., as binding on me. These are proper designations for commitment targets which apply so long as I am committed to them; but they cannot be referred to non-committally. You cannot speak without self-contradiction of knowledge you do not believe, or of a reality which does not exist. I may deny validity to some particular knowledge, or some particular facts, but then to me these are only allegations of knowledge or of facts, and should be

denoted as 'knowledge' and as 'facts', to which I am not committed. Commitment is in this sense the only path for approaching the universally valid.[59]

Active personal commitment to reality is commensurate with what Polanyi called universal intent, the aim of articulating reality which is beyond one's own perception or interpretation. Thus the personal (subjective) and impersonal (objective) are brought together by personal acts of commitment. As Polanyi put it, "By trying to say something that is true about a reality believed to be existing independently of our knowing it, all assertions of fact necessarily carry *universal intent. Our claim to speak of reality serves thus as the external anchoring of our commitment in making a factual statement.*"[60] Without commitment to reality and universal intent, knowledge is reduced to subjectivity. But through personal commitment to reality, knowledge maintains its personal character and submits to the demands of reality. Thus, there are two poles of commitment, the personal and the universal, which arise simultaneously in a knowing relationship.[61] But this knowing relationship does not mean a loss of the sense of self, but emerges, as with children with their developmental awareness, with the distinction between what is my self and not myself. Only with distinct personhood can a person commit themselves to beliefs about the world around them.[62] Commitment to reality does not eradicate the possibility of mistaken beliefs which can be amended. However, commitment to reality avoids a subjectivist epistemological reductionism, reducing knowledge of reality to the subjective dimensions of knowing. Polanyi also used commitment to address notions of cultural relativism which would reduce knowledge to "products of a particular location and interest." "Believing as I do in the justification of deliberate intellectual commitments, I accept these accidents of personal existence as the concrete opportunities for exercising our personal responsibility."[63] Instead of "a view from nowhere," Polanyi's notion of personal knowledge maintained a parallel between the particularity of a given culture and the particularity of the human body. He argued,

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[59] Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 303.
[60] Ibid., 310.
[61] Ibid., 313.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 322.

> I accept these limits [of place and time], for it is impossible to hold myself responsible beyond such limits. To ask how I would think if I were brought up outside any particular society, is as meaningless as to ask how I would think if I were born in no particular body, relying on no particular sensory and nervous organs. I believe, therefore, that as I am called upon to live and die in this body, struggling to satisfy its desires, recording my impressions by aid of such sense organs as it is equipped with, and acting through the puny machinery of my brain, my nerves and my muscles, so I am called upon also to acquire the instruments of intelligence from my early surroundings and to use these particular instruments to fulfill the universal obligations to which I am subject.[64]

For Polanyi, our particular culture and the frameworks of belief we inhabit are like our bodies in that they are not obstacles to knowledge but tools which we use to know the world.[65] Through commitment, he upheld a vision of personal knowledge which is particularist, fallibilist and critically realist.

Torrance used Polanyi's notion of commitment to reality to overcome the potential critique of subjectivism. Notice the second half of Torrance's definition of personal knowledge:

> All this does not mean that personal knowledge is subjective, for the personal participation of the knower is controlled by impersonal requirements and submission to universal standards which transcend his subjectivity. It is only a person who is capable of distinguishing what he knows from his knowing of it, or objective states of affairs from his own subjective fantasies, and only a person, therefore who can engage in authentically objective operations. Personal knowledge is a way of knowing through responsible commitment to the claims of reality in which the personal and subjective are fused together in the act of establishing contact with reality and its intrinsic rationality. In personal knowledge responsibility and truth are two complementary aspects of commitment to reality: the act of judgment is the personal pole and the independent reality on which it bears is its external pole.[66]

Torrance interpreted Polanyi's notion of commitment as "the personal and responsible submission of the mind to the requirements of a reality independent of it…Commitment is objectively, not subjectively, oriented."[67] Torrance used Polanyi's

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 58-62.
[66] *BSCL*, 141-2; Also, *RET*, 45-46; *CTSC*, 66-67.
[67] *BSCL*, 134.

notion of commitment embedded within his concept of personal knowledge to expand his own version of realism discussed earlier (2.8).

Torrance's notion of commitment embedded within his idea of personal knowledge can also help address the problem of relativism. In reaction to objectivism and its resultant foundationalism, relativism contends there are no universal standards outside of the competing conceptual frameworks, language games, social practices or historical epochs in which knowledge occurs. In this way, relativism is a cultural or subjective reductionism. Knowledge is reduced to the variously-described contextual factors in which knowledge occurs, ignoring the objective dimensions which gave rise to that knowledge within those context. Both Polanyi's and Torrance's notions of personal knowledge ignored neither the cultural contingency nor the fallibility of human knowledge. In fact, these contingencies and limitations are what made commitment necessary in a stratified, complex world. Particularity is part of their understanding of personal knowledge. Moreover, the attempt to transcend one's personal particularity is precisely the problem with both objectivism and relativism. With objectivism, as we have seen, the attempt is to be above and beyond all personal dimensions of knowledge, obtaining to ahistorical, impersonal truth. Against objectivism, relativism responds that there is no overarching rationality, paradigm, metalanguage, or Archimidean point from which to judge between competing paradigms. Yet, as with objectivism, the illusion remains with relativism that one can transcend one's personal culture, paradigm, or theoretical framework. In reflecting on the notion of personal knowledge and relativism, Trevor Hart points out that it is "only on the assumption that we know what the truth really is can we assert with any certainty that no human perspective coincides with it, or that it lies beyond the reach of all perspectives."[68] From an implied position that encompasses all perspectives, relativism makes conclusions about all other perspectives, oftentimes the reductionist conclusion that knowledge is determined by the historical location, culture, society, theoretical framework, paradigm or form of life. Yet, for Torrance (and Polanyi), human knowing is a personal activity which cannot transcend human personhood but through commitment and universal intent, engages reality. While God's knowing transcends human context, contingency and fallibility, human knowing does not.

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[68] Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1995), 69.

Beliefs, traditions, cultures and the complex knowing faculties of our bodies form the fallible framework of personal knowledge from which we explore the world.

More will be said in chapter five on the overall notion of participation in the knowledge of God in a postmodern, scientific age. This assessment of an important dynamic derived from the ontological Trinity has found that Torrance's notion of personal knowledge is particularist, fallibilist and realist. While it will not silence the critics of realism, it is a live option that has potential for moving beyond reductionist accounts of theological epistemology. Now we turn to another epistemological implication of the Triune God and the onto-relations within, namely that knowledge of God is relational.

4.4 Knowledge of God as Relational Knowledge
4.4.1   The Trinity and Relational Knowledge

For Torrance, knowledge of God is grounded in the nature of God which prescribes the mode of knowing Him. The onto-relations within the Triune God are central to God's nature and exercise a governing influence on the knowledge of God. As we have seen, this means that knowledge of God is personal knowledge, but now we will see how knowledge of God is relational knowledge for Torrance rooted in the being and activity of God. We begin with an informative quotation which contains various relational themes that we will delineate in this section. Torrance wrote,

> In no authentic knowledge do we begin with epistemology and then on the ground of theory independently argued go on to develop our actual knowledge. Far less can we pose in abstraction the question, 'How can we know God?' and then in the light of the answers we reach go on to examine and explicate what we known. Only on the ground of our actual knowledge of God may we develop an epistemology of it, for the form cannot be separated from the content or the method from the subject-matter of that knowledge. It is God who makes possible our knowledge of Him by giving Himself to us as the object of our knowing and by bringing us into a relationship with Him in which we are made capable of knowing Him, but within that relationship it is the nature of God as the given object of our knowledge that prescribes the mode of knowing Him. Thus while knowledge of God is grounded in His own being and activity, it takes shape within our human being and activity as human knowledge of God.[69]

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[69] *GR*, 165. Here again Torrance contends for "epistemological particularism" over "epistemological methodism." See chapter two, page 8, note 27.

This was not a short-lived idea for Torrance. From his earliest lectures to his more mature writings, Torrance held that knowledge of God neither begins nor exists apart from a knowing relationship with God.[70]

First, we recall that Torrance's central epistemological dynamics flow from the Trinity. As discussed in the previous chapter, God is relational within himself for the divine persons-in-relationship comprise the being of God. Torrance held that the persons of the Trinity are not truly known apart from one another due to their *perichoretic* relations in which they have their being in one another.[71] He maintained that in apprehending the wholeness of the Trinity that there is a subsidiary awareness of the three Persons, and equally in apprehending a particular person of the Trinity there is a subsidiary awareness of the unity and wholeness of the being of God. "This is precisely what *peri-choresis* tells us, that God is known only in a *circle of reciprocal relations.*"[72] The persons in relationship which comprise the one being of the Triune God necessitates that God is inherently relational.

Looking to Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22, Torrance reminded us that there are mutual and unique relations of love and knowledge within the circle of the divine persons of the Trinity.[73] He stated that it was important to Nicene theology that the persons of the Trinity had full knowledge of and with one another. Thus, Torrance echoed a classic theological theme: within the being of God is found the most complete knowledge of God, that is, God's self knowledge. Theological development of God's self knowledge extends back to Thomas Aquinas and continues through Karl

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[70] "The Knowledge of God," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 4, 7, 11: "To come back to our concrete instance, there is no knowableness of God unless God is known, for you cannot know God without having him to know! There is no knowledge of God apart from and independent of God. There is therefore not in man a possibility to know God which is peculiar or private to himself and operative over against God or His Word. We only first know God, and can only first know God when we do know Him … We are, as it were, in a new dimension which could not be glimpsed from elsewhere or elsehow. Such knowledge is acknowledgement; it is the receiving of news, the introduction to a new acquaintance...To know God we must start with knowledge of God, and not from the partially known to the unknown. We start from the Known, from the self-revealing God Himself."

[71] *CDG*, 173-74: "The Holy Trinity is revealed and is known only as an indivisible Whole, in Trinity and Unity, Unity and Trinity."

[72] *CDG*, 174.

[73] Quoted in *TF*, 58: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father; and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

Barth.[74] Consequently, for Torrance, the loving relation of knowing between Father, Son and Spirit "constitutes the ontological ground for our knowing of God, for in and through it our knowledge of God the Father is objectively rooted in the eternal being of God himself."[75] The ultimate source of knowledge of God is the self-knowledge of God contained within the personal relations of the Trinity. Thus, human knowledge of God is made possible only within the relationship that God establishes with humans. A conceptual relation is part of the grace-enabled personal relation.[76] God "establishes relations of intimate reciprocity between us and himself, within which our knowing of God becomes interlocked with God's knowing of us. In fact, our knowledge of God thus mediated is allowed to share in God's knowledge of himself."[77] Human knowledge of God is found in relationship with God who knows himself more than any other and, as we will discuss more fully in the next chapter, human knowledge of God is a *participation* in the self-knowledge of God. For now, it is sufficient to note that in keeping with Torrance's ontologically-determined epistemological dynamic, the inner-Trinitarian onto-relations give rise to the type of knowledge of God we have.

Thus far, we have noted that God's being is relational and that within those relations is contained the knowledge God has of himself. Though Torrance held together the being and action of God as one,[78] for the sake of organizing this discussion we turn now from the being of God to the activity of God. Just as God's being is relational, so God's activity of self-revelation is relational. We recall that Torrance held that knowledge of God is not obtained from some point outside of God, lest that reference point becomes the control of our conceptions of him.[79] Instead, through the incarnation of the Son and in the presence of the Spirit, God has given

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[74] St Thomas Aquinas, *ST* Ia. q. 1, a. 6, Latin and English, edited by Thomas Gilby, O.P. (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 20-25. More on this theme in Aquinas is Eleonore Stump, chapter 5, "God's knowledge" and chapter 7, "The foundations of knowledge" in her book, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 159-87, 217-43; Also, Mark F. Johnson, "God's Knowledge in our Frail Mind: The Thomistic Model of Theology," *Angelicum* 76 (1999): 25-45. Karl Barth, *CD* II.1, 57-62. Discussions include John Webster, *Karl Barth*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 77-83; Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 76-81; Paul D. Molnar, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Knowing the Triune God," in *Trinitarian Theology After Barth,* ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), esp. 26-33.

[75] *TF*, 59.

[76] "Theological Realism," 177-78.

[77] *RST*, 138-39.

[78] *TS*, 156.

[79] *TF*, 51.

humans access to knowledge of himself in a relationship-constituting way.[80]
Revelation and reconciliation are accomplished and held together in the mediation of
Christ. "It is God who makes possible our knowledge of Him by giving Himself to us
as the object of our knowing and by bringing us into a relationship with Him in which
we are made capable of knowing Him."[81] In other words, knowledge of God flows
from the gracious relationship-establishing activity of God.

For all types of knowledge, Torrance argued that epistemology must take into
account not only the knowing subject and the object sought, but also the knowing
relationship. To know anything, there is a relationship between the epistemic subject
and the object. The knowing relationship is not a barrier which obstructs knowledge,
but instead is the "active means of communication between subject and object."[82] The
ongoing, dynamic interaction between subject and object offers knowledge.[83] There is
not a place outside or beyond an actual knowing relationship which permits
knowledge.[84] Rather, a would-be knower must be inside the knowing relationship.[85]
The healing of the ontological breach between mind and reality restores the
integration between theoretical and empirical factors in human knowing.[86] Torrance
argued that scientific knowledge involves an "open interaction with independent
reality" in which "the personal and the objective are fused together in the activity of
establishing contact with the real world and elucidating its intrinsic rationality."[87]
Specifically concerning the knowledge of God, Torrance wrote that there is a
communion or a union in which knowledge of God exists.[88] Knowledge of God

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[80] *TP*, 99-100: God's revelatory activity "is a self-communication which includes the human
subject in a real-ontological relation with God established on the ground of the hypostatic union in
which God in Christ actively enters into our human situation and assumes it in relation to himself, and
thereby grounds and embraces the answering knowledge and love of the believer in free interpersonal
union and communion with himself."

[81] *GR*, 165.

[82] *TS*, xvi; *RST*, 14-15.

[83] *TS*, 258; *CTSC*, 28-9, 115-17; *RST*, 109-13.

[84] *TS*, 4-6; *GR*, 4, 31, 165; *STI*, 54.

[85] *TS*, 1; *GR*, 4, 165; *STI*, 54-55.

[86] *RET*, 9-11, 39-42; *CTSC,* 23-5; This is addressed throughout chapter two, "Emerging from
the Cultural Split" in *GGT*, 15-43. Also 72, 81-2. *RST*, xiii, 39-40, 60-61; *STR*, 1, 6n. 9, 169. This is
also a theme in chapter one, "The Making of the 'Modern' Mind from Descartes and Newton to Kant,"
in *TCFK*, 1-59. Also, xi-xii, 66, 68, 76-80, 88-90, 96-97, 281-82.

[87] *CFM*, 43.

[88] *TS*, 96-97. On 97, n. 1, Torrance quotes Tillich: "Knowing is a form of union. In every act
of knowledge the knower and what is known are united; the gap between subject and object is
overcome." See also 307. Theology is "a form of intense intellectual communion with God." *RST*, xii.

"cannot be extracted from the subject-object relation"[89] and thus there is a "togetherness of subject and object."[90] From early on, Torrance contended that God is not approached with disinterested and dispassionate observation, but rather God approaches us and calls us to personal relations with Himself.[91] In line with Calvin over against Aquinas and Ockham, Torrance maintained that through Christ and by the Spirit, God provides direct, intuitive knowledge of Himself in the context of relationship.[92] The intuitive contact with divine reality found in religious experience in continuity with the tradition of the church is "the creative source of our basic convictions and primary concepts and relations."[93] In his initial lectures, Torrance held that religious experience is the atmosphere which gives life to theological reflection.[94] Clearly, for Torrance knowledge of God occurs inside the relationship initiated by God's revelation and redemption.[95]

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[89] *TS*, xiii-xiv.

[90] *TS*, 311.

[91] "Theology and Science," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 57.

[92] *TIR*, 84-5: "In the Christian faith we are concerned with intuitive evident knowledge of God through his Word. We recall that intuitive knowledge was defined as direct knowledge of an actually present object, naturally caused by that object and not by another… After his conversion that was the way in which Calvin regarded knowledge of God, knowledge gained in the immediate experience of his personal presence. Intuitive knowledge of God arises, then, to use the old terminology, under the direct impact or causality of his divine Being. This involved the rejection both of Thomism and Ockhamism. If, as St Thomas taught, our knowledge of God is taken from sense-experience of created realities, it will never be able to rise above created realities and can only construe God in accordance with them. But if, as Ockham taught, abstractive knowledge abstracts from actual existence, then abstractive knowledge prevents us from knowing God in accordance with his own personal mode of Being. We know God, Calvin insisted, through his works or effects, but in his works or effects we meet God speaking to us personally through his Word. This is what Calvin called intuitive knowledge of God, but it is different than our intuitive knowledge of natural objects, for it is a knowledge in accordance with the nature and personal Being of God."

[93] *TCFK*, 93.

[94] "Theology takes its rise and stands within Christianity. It is born out of the experience of salvation, comes along with it. The pursuit of theology therefore must always be inside the sphere of religion – there it finds its justification, its life-force, its only content… There is one kind of theology and that is religious theology." "The Character of Theological Thought," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 3. He develops the place of experience on 3-5.

[95] *CDG*, 106: "While we know God only through God and not apart from him, we know him only as he enters into a reciprocal personal relation with us, in which he reveals himself to us within the range of our human knowing and at the same time empowers and sustains our knowing of him. God turns himself toward us and at the same time turns us toward himself, and therein adapts his revealing to us and adapts our knowing to him, so that our knowing of him is humanly as well as divinely conditioned. Thus there arises, as we have already noted, a significant anthropomorphic ingredient in our knowledge of God, but this is properly not one defined by what we human beings are and read back into God; it is one that derives from the reciprocal relations that God establishes between us and himself."

Consequently, a concept Torrance used to describe the relational nature of the knowledge of God is "dialogical." Since God brings us into personal relation with Himself, our relationship is "essentially and unceasingly dialogical."[96] Torrance explained,

> At no point can theological knowledge step outside this dialogical relation, without abstracting itself from the object, without falsifying itself, or without retreating into unreality. Thus theological knowledge is not reflection upon our rational experience or even upon faith; it is reflection upon the object of faith in direct dialogical relation with that object, and therefore in faith –i.e. in conversation and communion with the living God who communicates Himself to us in acts of revelation and reconciliation and who requires of us an answering relation in receiving, acknowledging, understanding, and in active personal participation in the relationship He establishes between us.[97]

Thus dialogical knowledge of God is within a reciprocal relationship or communion with God.[98] If our conversation with God ceases or we do theology as if it were "behind His back, as if He were not actually party to it," then we deform dialogical theology into dialectical theology which is more concerned with "working out a system of ideas" than "real communion with the living God."[99] Conversely, because God is not a mute Object,[100] a dialogical relation allows the Object to "break through the monologue of reason with itself, where it only asks questions and answers them itself…and force it into real dialogue."[101] Without such a dialogue, Torrance wonders "whether full objectivity is actually possible" in attempting to know impersonal objects "that cannot object to us or offer to correct us."[102] As the being and activity of God in revelation is relational, so the knowledge of God retains its relational character and is thus dialogical.

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[96] *TS*, 39, 133-35, 138, 148, 192, 207-8, 228, 306-7, 309. On worship as dialogical, see *GR*, 156-58.

[97] *TS*, 39.

[98] *RET*, 136.

[99] *TS*, 128.

[100] *TS*, 29-30, 98; *CTSC*, 118-19; *GGT*, 152-54.

[101] *TS*, 133, 134. In an earlier, incipient form, "Philosophy and Theology," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 37-38.

[102] *TS*, 311.

If knowledge of God originates within mutual Trinitarian relations and is extended relationally through God's activity, then it is commensurate with the being and activity of God that a community arises as a response to the knowledge-containing Trinitarian relations with humanity. Access to the incarnationally-established relational knowledge is not confined to the time and place of the incarnation though. Rather, such relational knowledge is carried beyond first-century Palestine through the community created by the incarnation. "Neither in God nor in man is word found in isolation but only in community" for language itself is grounded in a society. God's revelation created a community "as the appropriate medium of its continuing communication," a "community of reciprocity" between God and Israel and God and the Church.[103] Thus, the knowledge of God is "communal knowledge."[104] It is constituted by the church which provides reciprocal relations where we can experience and know God with one another.[105] Since God is "a Communion of personal Being who communicates himself to us through Christ and in his Spirit, it is a community of persons in reciprocity both with God and with one another that is set up."[106] While Torrance maintained that the Trinitarian nature of God determines a Trinitarian type of knowledge, he does not emphasize a Trinitarian psychological structure as one finds in Augustine.[107] Rather, knowledge of God begins within the community of divine persons-in-relationship within God and consequently finds it home in relationship within a community of human persons-in-relationship. In Torrance's words,

> The person-constituting interaction of God with us calls into being a church as the spatiotemporal correlate of his self-giving and self-revealing to mankind… we are unable to know God in any onto-relational way without knowing him in the togetherness of our personal relations with one another. This is why a realist evangelical theology that seeks to be rigorously faithful to the nature of God and his interaction with us in the space and time of this world cannot but be a church-conditioned and church-oriented theology.[108]

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[103] *GR*, 137-53; quotation on 146-47; *TIR*, 42; *STR*, 5.
[104] *TS*, 210.
[105] *RET*, 46-49, 89-101; *RST*, 84-85, 98-130.
[106] *RET*, 46. Also, *RST*, 178-92.
[107] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 270-321. On Torrance's engagement with Augustine's triadic structure, see *RST*, 167-69, 178-79.
[108] *RET*, 46.

Torrance maintained that "theology is essentially church activity" since his days at Auburn.[109]

Elsewhere, Torrance described God's self-communication as creating "a circle of knowing which is also a circle of loving, in both cases a circle resting on the free ground of God's own Trinitarian Being and Activity."[110] This Triune circle of loving and knowing is the ontological fount for the church, drawing in others into this divine circle to be a community of love and knowledge of God. Torrance continued,

> [T]he personal God who communicates himself to us in revelation and love, and a community of love among human beings, belong inseparably together in our knowledge of the Triune God, for it is precisely in that community where the Love of God has set up its own inner relations as its determining structure that we may grow and develop in our knowledge of him as a transcendent Fullness of Love in himself and as the constituting ground of all authentic relations of love among human beings.[111]

Knowledge of God is thus communal knowledge, originating in the active onto-relations of the Triune God which spawns a community of onto-relations among humanity. "In making himself known to his people he creatively evokes their corporate responses and harnesses them in the service of his continuing self-communication to mankind. That is to say, God includes a personal and social coefficient on our part within the structure and operation of revealed knowledge of himself."[112] In short, the human structure for the knowledge of God is social or relational.

To summarize, the knowledge of God is relational knowledge because the being of God is relational, containing divine persons-in-relationship or onto-relations. The knowledge of God is ultimately found within God's relational being, originating in God's self-knowledge. Furthermore, the knowledge of God is extended by the relational activity of God in revelation and reconciliation. Consequently, knowledge of God is found in relationship with God and is thus dialogical. The church is the relational human medium for the knowledge of God. Hence, the being, activity and means of God in which he shares his self-knowledge are all relational, determining the relational character of the knowledge of God for Torrance.

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[109] "Theology and Action" *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 10.

[110] *RST*, 182-83.

[111] Ibid.

[112] *RST*, 105.

4.4.2   Relational knowledge and the postmodern, scientific age

Toward an assessment of participation in the knowledge of God in the postmodern, scientific world, we offer here an assessment of the dynamic of relational knowledge. As with the assessment of personal knowledge, this is not the final assessment of the whole complex of participation, but an assessment of a central dynamic. As we assess the notion of relational knowledge for the postmodern, scientific context, it is important to keep in mind that for Torrance this dynamic is derived from the ontological Trinity. Relationality was not a philosophical principle projected back into God for Torrance, but an ontological reality within God that determines the character of human relationality and thus human knowledge of God. We begin this assessment by noting how the postmodern, scientific world has helped us to recapture the notion of relational knowledge that had been obscured in the modern era.

As discussed in chapter three in relation to the Trinity (3.4), the postmodern world has helped us to see more holistically and relationally. For instance, F. Leron Shults has argued persuasively for a turn to relationality in philosophy, psychology and theology in the postmodern world.[113] With reference to theology and science, John Polkinghorne noted the discoveries of Einstein's theory of special relativity, chaos theory, and the EPR effect within quantum theory and thus described the universe as relational.[114] Consequently, within the postmodern, scientific age, Polkinghorne contends that knowledge occurs within a "web of relationality."[115] It is noteworthy that Torrance held that the created structures of the universe in which God reveals himself are relational. We recall from the Trinitarian dynamic (2.4) that the incarnation which makes knowledge of God accessible to humanity occurs within the concrete contingencies of space and time.[116] Torrance argued that space and time are not "containers" or "receptacles," but alternatively are relational realities between

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[113] F. Leron Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); *Reforming the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), esp. 5-9; "Trinitarian Faith Seeking Transformative Understanding," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 488-502.

[114] John Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity: The Christian Encounter with Reality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 73-75. See also his chapter, "The Demise of Democritus," in *The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 1-14.

[115] Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity*, 75.

[116] *TIR*, 46; *TS,* 26-27; *STI*, 24, 55, 60-61; *RET*, 21-30; *GGT*, 1; *DCO*, 3-4, 23-24, 64; *TCFK*, x, xiii, 84, 264.

objects and events.[117] Though God is transcendent over space and time, God has entered into space and time through the incarnation and made himself known. The created mediums in which God has revealed himself are themselves relational realities.[118]

Within the relational universe, human knowledge occurs within webs of human relationship, or more commonly put, within traditions. In the late twentieth century, perhaps no one has argued more persuasively of how traditions function to shape human knowledge and rationality than Alisdair MacIntyre.[119] In demonstrating why the Enlightenment's project of justifying morality had to fail, he helped to relocate knowledge from modernity's "autonomous individual" to its place among intellectual traditions. Nothing is learned or known in isolation from the medium of knowing communities and the traditions of which they are a part. Without the notion of tradition, knowledge is conceived less relationally and personally, missing the concomitant virtues, practices and narrative framework that constitute a tradition's way of knowing. Though Torrance did not develop the idea of tradition as did MacIntyre, his notion of relational knowledge similarly highlights the tradition-bound or relational-rootedness of knowledge without reducing knowledge to the traditions or social contexts in which they occurred.[120] The postmodern, scientific world has continued to help us see things about the relational and social dimensions of knowledge that were obscured in the modern era.[121]

Moving in the other direction, does Torrance's notion of relational knowledge have something to contribute to the postmodern, scientific era? Many in the science and religion discussion have utilized and developed notions of critical realism which

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[117] *STI*, 4, 11-12, 24, 60-61; *GR*, 124-28, 130-31; *RST*, 5-6; *STR*, 186-88; *DCO*, 12-13.

[118] *STI*, 3, 23-24, 52, 62-64, 70, 75-76; *DCO*, 23-25.

[119] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2007); *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988; repr., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2008). For a good summary, see Brad J. Kallenberg, "The Master Argument of MacIntyre's "After Virtue," in *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics After MacIntyre*, ed. Nancey Murphy, Mark Nation, and Brad J. Kallenberg (1997; repr., Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2003), 7-29.

[120] Mark P. Achtemeier, "The Truth of Tradition: Critical Realism in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and T. F. Torrance" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47 (1994): 355-74. Alister E. McGrath effectively argues against this type of reduction of knowledge in his response to George Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic theory" of doctrine in Alister E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), esp. 81-102.

[121] For the social developments in the field of epistemology, see Frederick Schmitt, "Social Epistemology," in *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*, ed. John Greco and Ernest Sosa (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 354-82.

parallels with aspects of Torrance's notion of relational knowledge.[122] Niels
Gregersen documents, "Since the mid-1960s, critical realism (CR) has been a
majority position in the Anglo-American science-religion dialogue."[123] The adoption
of critical realism began within the science-religion dialogue with Ian G. Barbour.[124]
He was followed by Arthur Peacocke[125] and John Polkinghorne.[126] They were
followed by J. Wentzel van Huyssteen who at first emphasized critical realism, but
later developed criticisms of it.[127] Each of these descriptions of critical realism
attempt somehow to hold together the subjective and objective dimensions of
knowledge in a dialogical relationship as a way of moving between a "naïve"
representationalism and a pure constructionism. A similar discussion of critical
realism particularly noteworthy for this thesis comes from an explicitly Torrancean
framework by Alister E. McGrath. McGrath has extended Torrance's version of
realism by engaging the scientific critical realism of the philosopher Roy Bhaskar in
order to counter the problems of reductionism.[128] McGrath focuses upon three key
aspects of Bhaskar's critical realism for his scientific theology. First, McGrath
endorses Bhaskar's critical realism in the natural and social sciences which integrates

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[122] For a discussion of the history and various uses of critical realism prior to and including the science and religion discussion, see Andreas Losch, "On the Origins of Critical Realism," *Theology and Science* 7, no. 1 (2009): 85-106; Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Critical Realism and Other Realisms," in *Fifty Years in Science and Religion: Ian G. Barbour and his Legacy*, ed. Robert John Russell (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 77-95; Kees van Kooten Niekerk, "A Critical Realist Perspective on the Dialogue between Theology and Science," in *Rethinking Theology and Science: Six Models for the Current Dialogue*, ed. Kees van Kooten Niekerk and J. Wentzel van Huyssteen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 51-86, esp. 51-52.

[123] Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Critical Realism and Other Realisms," 77.

[124] See Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 156-62, 168-74, 216-18; *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1998), 106-36.

[125] See Arthur Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science: The Bampton Lectures, 1978* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 17-22; *Intimations of Reality* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984), *passim*.

[126] John Polkinghorne, *One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1987; West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007), 27-31, 53-57; *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1998, 2003), 101-24. For a comparison of Barbour, Peacocke and Polkinghorne's views of critical realism, see John Polkinghorne, *Scientists and Theologians* (London: SPCK, 1996), 11-25. Later, Polkinghorne adapted his view slightly to resemble his colleagues in *Faith, Science and Understanding* (London: SPCK, 2000), 78-84.

[127] Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), esp. 125-97; *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 40-52. Later critique includes *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology of Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), esp. 213-21. For a discussion of the development within van Huyssteen's writings, Kenneth A. Reynhout, "The Evolution of van Huyssteen's Model of Rationality," in *The Evolution of Rationality: Interdisciplinary Essays in Honor of J. Wentzel van Huyssteen*, ed. F. Leron Shults (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 1-18.

[128] Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Reality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 195-244.

the social and historical dimensions of knowledge yet maintaining its realist orientation.[129] Second, McGrath underlines Bhaskar's idea of the "epistemic fallacy" which is the view that "statements about being can be reduced to or analysed in terms of statements about knowledge."[130] This reverses the positivists' verficationist theory which put epistemology in charge of ontology even though ontology cannot be controlled by epistemology. "Existence is not dependent upon observation, or being observable."[131] The reduction of ontology to an empiricist epistemology is contested. Third, McGrath sanctions Bhaskar's development of the stratification of reality.[132] The distinct layers and stratums of reality investigated by the natural and social sciences require an ontologically-determined methodology. As we have seen with Torrance's ontologically-determined dynamic, this directly challenges ontological and epistemological reductionisms (2.3). In agreement with McGrath, each of these aspects of Bhaskar's critical realism are quite helpful for conceiving knowledge in a postmodern, scientific age, yet there are other resources within Torrance's idea of relational knowledge which go beyond this discussion of critical realism that are also relevant to a post-reductionist account of knowledge.

To appreciate the contribution of Torrance's notion of a Trinitarian-shaped, relational knowledge for the postmodern, scientific era, we begin with a critique of the use of critical realism in theology by Kees van Kooten Niekerk. He contends that critical realism overemphasizes the cognitive dimensions by providing a "theoretical understanding of the world" as within the sciences without due respect for the existential, moral and spiritual dimensions which are part of theology.[133] We also note Nancey Murphy's important critique of the use of critical realism in theology. She demonstrates that critical realism for some still operates within a modernist framework of both a representationalist view of language and a foundationalist epistemology.[134] She also notes that along with a representationalist view of language often comes a correspondence theory of truth. However, Torrance's Trinitarian notion of relational knowledge can overcome both Niekerk's and Murphy's critiques of

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[129] Ibid., 214-18.
[130] Ibid., 218.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 219-24.
[133] Niekerk, "A Critical Realist Perspective on the Dialogue between Theology and Science," 51-86, esp. 70-2.
[134] Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philsophical Perspectives on Science, Religion and Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 39-48.

critical realism. We recall from Torrance's truly realist dynamic (2.8) that Torrance's brand of realism makes a strong distinction between human knowledge and reality or the truth of statement and the truth of being. Torrance wrote that one "cannot state in statements how statements are related to being, otherwise you convert the relation of statements to being into mere statements."[135] In other words, the relationship of human knowledge (and language) with reality cannot be reduced to thoughts (or words). Along with this important distinction, Torrance did not diminish the real ontological relationship between knower and known. As we have seen above, knowledge cannot be abstracted from the "subject-object relation" or the "communion" of the personal and objective. An especially helpful contribution Torrance derived from his Trinitarian epistemology is the emphasis on the *ontological relationship* inherent within knowledge. Torrance has uniquely maintained the distinction between human knowledge and reality and yet has emphasized the ontological relationship between knower and known. This type of relational knowledge makes important contributions to the postmodern, scientific age in at least two ways. First, in response to Murphy's criticism, we note that in order to actually move beyond ontological and epistemological reductionisms, it is important for us in the postmodern age to remember that reality cannot be reduced to human thought, speech, experience, interpretation, and practices as if it can be explained solely in terms of subjective dimensions. On the other hand, knowledge cannot be reduced to an objective mirror of mind-independent (or language-independent) reality, for human knowledge involves interpreted experience, culturally-situated language and thought forms which are rooted in ways of life and all the subjective dimensions which the postmodern world has emphasized are part of human knowledge. Consequently, knowledge is neither reducible to its subjective nor objective dimensions. Instead, knowledge is more like a complex, involving the knower, the known and, particularly important here, the dynamic relationship that holds them together. Similar to the hermeneutical argument of Hans-Georg Gadamer that meaning arises in the blending of the horizons of the interpreter and text, with Torrance knowledge emerges in the dialogical relation of the personal and objective.[136] Second, in response to Niekerk's critique, the knowing relationship involves the whole person, including the cognitive

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[135] *GR*, 36. Also 175-76; *TIR*, 56; *RET*, 73; *RST*, 143.
[136] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 3rd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004).

but also including the affective, practical, ethical and spiritual dimensions of the human knower. This will be developed further in the next chapter. Here, we conclude that a Trinitarian-shaped relational knowledge can move us beyond the various reductionist accounts that attempt to explain knowledge in dissecting ways instead of the whole complex of a knowing relationship to which relational knowledge gives attention.

To summarize, personal and relational knowledge, which are divinely-rooted, guard against reductionist attempts to explain knowledge on levels less than human personhood and relationality. Though Torrance did not elevate these two epistemological dynamics, this thesis has demonstrated their importance in relationship to the ontological Trinity and their helpfulness in the postmodern, scientific age.

In the next chapter, we will discover how knowledge of God is inherently participatory. Moreover, we will discuss how participation in the knowledge of God is a sharing in the self-knowledge within God enabled by the Son and the Spirit. We will also discover how participating in the knowledge of God is person-involving and life-implicating. This will definitively move the notion of participation in the knowledge of God beyond a modern reductionist framework. We turn now to discuss knowledge of God as participatory and to assess the viability of this vision of participation for the postmodern, scientific era.

CHAPTER 5

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS PARTICIPATORY

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will discuss and expand Torrance's vision of the knowledge of God as participatory (5.2). The Triune God remains the definitive framework which defines knowledge of God as participatory (5.2.1), for this knowledge is enabled by the incarnation (5.2.1.1) and the Holy Spirit (5.2.1.2) and is thus a soteriological participation (5.2.2). Claiming that knowledge of God is participatory raises the question of what is involved in this participation. Though this was not an emphasis of Torrance, we will demonstrate how participation in the knowledge of God involves the whole person (5.3) and a way of life (5.4). In demonstrating that knowledge of God involves the whole person, this chapter will provide a theological and scientific assessment (5.3.1), address Torrance's emphasis on the reasoning mind (5.3.2), and return to the Trinitarian framework to see how the Son and Spirit secures the participation of the whole person (5.3.3). In demonstrating that the knowledge of God involves a way of life, this chapter will provide a theological and philosophical assessment (5.4.1), establish that participation in the knowledge of God involves ethics (5.4.2), and expound the important relationship between knowledge and ethics in the postmodern world (5.4.3).

5.2 Knowledge of God is participatory

Knowledge of God is determined by the immanent Trinity and the onto-relations within for Torrance. Consequently, we have argued that knowledge of God is centrally personal and relational. Derivative from the self-knowledge of the Triune persons-in-relationship, we will now explore how knowledge of God is also inherently participatory. To adopt an onto-relational frame of mind, Torrance encouraged "conjunctive thinking" as we mentioned in chapter three.[1] That is, he invited his readers not to think in partitive, dissecting ways, but instead he maintained that at times it is needed to hold together multiple perspectives or realities to understand them appropriately. This mindset helps to overcome the problem of reductionism and is suitable for discussing multi-dimensional, complex realities. To

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[1] See chapter three, pp. 133, note 125; pp. 137 notes 141-2.

develop the participatory character of knowledge of God, this mindset is needed. Also, in order to consider how knowledge of God is participatory, we return to Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity to envision his Trinitarian notion of participation in the self-knowledge of God.

5.2.1 Knowledge of God as participation in the self-knowledge of Trinity

Language concerning participation in God or participating in the knowledge of God is related to the doctrine of *theosis* or deification. Looking back to Old Testament and New Testament passages,[2] the doctrine of *theosis* developed and took root especially in the Eastern Church.[3] Yet, the doctrine of *theosis* has received renewed attention in contemporary Western theology.[4] Athanasius**,** one of Torrance's favored patristic writers, is credited as the first to mention Christian deification.[5] Classic Eastern Orthodox doctrinal definitions were not fully developed until the seventh century by Maximus the Confessor[6] and its most prominent defense in the fourteenth

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[2] Gen. 1:26-7; Gen. 3:5; Ps. 82:6; Jn. 10:34-35; Mt. 5:48; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:1-2; and esp. 2 Pet. 1:4. An Orthodox interpretation, Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on* Thesosis (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2009), esp. 55-71. On the Pauline passages, Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). On 1 Peter, James Starr, "Does 2 Peter 1:4 Speak of Deification?" in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 81-92.

[3] See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1957), esp. 196-216; Emil Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloaë* (Carlisle, Cubria: Paternoster Press, 1999); Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Andrew Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions,* ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 32-44; Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009).

[4] Paul Gavrilyuk, "The Retrieval of Deification: How a Once-Despised Archaism Became an Ecumenical Desideratum," *Modern Theology* 25:4 (2009): 647-659; Among Protestant evangelicals, Roger E. Olson, "Deification in Contemporary Theology," *Theology Today* 64:2 (2007): 186-200; Robert V. Rakestraw, "Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of *Theosis*," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 40:2 (1997): 257-69; Including Pentecostals, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004).

[5] Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 166.

[6] Ibid., 262-295; Elena Vishnevskaya, "Divinization as Pericherotic Embrace in Maximus the Confessor," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 132-45.

century by Gregory Palamas.[7] Andrew Louth writes, "For whatever reasons, the doctrine of deification ceased to have a central role in Western theology from about the twelfth century."[8] He notes that it is absent in Peter Lombard and furthermore that Thomas Aquinas "only uses the language of deification of Christ's human nature, not of human beings."[9] While Anna N. Williams argued that Thomas Aquinas incorporated themes of *theosis* throughout his theology,[10] Gösta Hallonsten contends that Aquinas used language of participation, but does not have a developed doctrine of *theosis* as did Gregory Palamas.[11] Nevertheless, soteriological themes related to *theosis* are not entirely absent in the West. Current research finds related themes of *theosis* in Martin Luther[12] and John Calvin,[13] focusing upon their soteriology of union with Christ or participation in Christ. Particularly important in considering Torrance's use of participation language is Calvin's Trinitarian framework in his discussion of *theosis*.[14] Karl Barth repeatedly emphasized that "God is known through God and through God alone."[15] Yet, Barth did not emphasize participation in the Trinity as did Torrance, but instead emphasized the Triune revelation.

Torrance's conception of *theosis* was guarded and carefully nuanced, maintaining the ontological distinction between creature and Creator. As Torrance put it in reference to the atoning exchange of the incarnation, "for as he is not less divine in becoming man, so we are not less human in being brought under the immediate

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[7] Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition,* trans. Liadain Sherrard (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984); Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 304-309.

[8] Andrew Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," 33.

[9] Ibid., 44 n. 6.

[10] Anna N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[11] Gösta Hallonsten, "*Theosis* in Recent Research: A Renewal of Interest and a Need for Clarity," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 281-293, esp. 286-7.

[12] The "Finnish School" interpretation of Luther emerged under the influence of Tuomo Mannermaa. See Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Carl E. Braaten, "The Finnish Breakthrough in Luther Research," *Pro Ecclesia* 5:2 (1996): 141-43; Tuomo Mannermaa, "Theosis as a Subject of Finnish Luther Research," *Pro Ecclesia* 4:1 (1995): 37-47.

[13] J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Carl Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55 (2002): 36-57; Jonathan Slater, "Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: A Reply to Carl Mosser," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005): 39-58.

[14] See especially Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification," 36-57.

[15] Barth, *CD* II.1, 44.

presence and power of divine being…This is a deification, however, which more than recreates our lost humanity, for it lifts us up in Christ to enjoy a new fullness of human life in a blessed communion with divine life."[16] As we will further see, Torrance maintained that there is a real union and participation in the Triune God. While Torrance wrote only one article directly discussing the doctrine of *theosis*, many of its central themes permeated his theology due likely to his interaction with patristic resources and through his ecumenical dialogues with the Eastern church.[17] The concern here is not to survey Torrance's doctrine of *theosis*, but to look specifically at and expand his understanding of participation in the knowledge of the Triune God.[18]

Having knowledge of God goes beyond mere participation in a knowing relationship. As was introduced in the Trinitarian dynamic in chapter two (2.4), for Torrance humans are lifted up and enabled to participate in the self-knowledge of God.[19] Participating in a relationship with God not only brings knowledge, but with God it becomes a partaking of His self-knowledge and a sharing in the communion of love within the onto-relations of the Trinity. As Torrance put it, "The Love with which we are loved by God is the love with which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit love one another in the Trinity, and the knowledge with which we know him is a sharing in the eternal knowing in which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit know one another coeternally."[20] This is a gift of sheer grace from the being of the ontological Trinity and mediated through the action of the economic Trinity. Torrance held that God "communicates himself to us in such a way that he lifts us up into the inner communion of his divine Being so that we are given to share in the mutual knowing of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit and thus to know God as he is in

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[16] *TF*, 188-9.

[17] Thomas F. Torrance, "Incarnation and Atonement: *Theosis* and *Henosis* in the Light of Modern Scientific Rejection of Dualism," *Society of Ordained Scientists,* Bulletin No. 7 (Edgeware, Middlesex, Spring 1992): 8-20.

[18] To more generally explore Torrance's notion of *theosis*, see Myk Habets, Theosis *in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2009). For shorter discussions, see Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 157-8, 197-201, 232; Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 78-9, 92-4, 178-9, 219-20, 252-3.

[19] *GR*, 166; *GGT*, 154-5; *RST,* 138-9; *TF*, 54-60; *CDG*, 148.

[20] *RST*, 183.

himself in the immanent relations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[21] Throughout his career, he recalled a point of Irenaeus that "only God can know himself so it is only through God that God may be known."[22] So if humans are to know God it is only by somehow sharing or participating in the knowledge which God has of himself. Such sharing is made possible because God and his inner onto-relations are no longer closed to us. God has opened himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit to share His love and self-knowledge with humanity through the incarnation. According to Torrance, "God the Father communicates himself to us in his Son and imparts himself to us in his Spirit in such a way as to enable us to receive his revelation and participate in the movement of mutual knowing and loving between the Father and the Son."[23] It is significant that human participation is not by nature but by grace, which locates epistemology within soteriology. Hence, we turn now to note how the Son and the Spirit enable participation in the knowledge of God for Torrance.

5.2.1.1 Participation in the self-knowledge of the Trinity is realized through the Incarnation

God's self-communication goes beyond a nebulous spiritual, mental or verbal form of communication, but through Christ God enters into the human situation and assumes it. God takes on an ontological relation with humanity through the hypostatic union in Christ. Such personal and participatory mediation on the part of God with humanity goes further than created intermediations between God and humanity as merely an indirect sharing of himself as Aquinas had argued.[24] Moreover, God condescends in the incarnation in order to share in humanity so that humans may share in God's self-knowing and self-loving.[25] This is consistent with his earlier thought when Torrance lectured,

> It is the doctrine of Christianity that the reconciled reason participates
> in the life and activity of God in Christ, for in revelation God gives His

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[21] *GGT*, 154.

[22] *TF*, 54. Torrance upheld this point of Irenaeus over fifty years earlier as follows: "It is through God alone that God is known and becomes knowable." "Knowledge of God," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 15.

[23] *CDG*, 146.

[24] *TP*, 99-100.

[25] *GGT*, 155.

very Self to man to be loved and known. Faith is this God-given participation of the believer in, and assimilation to, Christ the Word. Here knowing and participating are one and the same motion, inasmuch as the Truth and the Reality of God are not separated in Christ.[26]

Torrance frequently returned to how the Council of Nicea used the term *homoousios* to confess that Jesus is of one and the same Being with God, that is, "God of God and Light of Light." This term "crystallizes the conviction that while the incarnation falls within the structures of our spatio-temporal humanity in this world, it also falls within the Life and Being of God."[27] In chapter two (2.8), we noted how the *homoousion* is thus the "linchpin of Christian theology" for Torrance's "truly realist" epistemology, holding together "that what God is toward us in his saving economic activity in space and time through Christ and in the Holy Spirit, he is antecedently and eternally in himself."[28] We also introduced in chapter two (2.4) that the movement of the incarnation is a two-fold movement for Torrance which enables human participation in the self-knowledge of God. The incarnation is not only a movement from God to humans as personal Being and Act, but is also a movement from humans to God as we see in Jesus a fully human embodiment of the knowledge of God.[29] The fully human embodiment of the knowledge of God is part of the "vicarious humanity of Jesus."[30] In brief, Jesus not only vicariously died on behalf of humanity, but also lived on behalf of humanity with implications from his entire life for the lives of his followers today, including the knowledge of God.[31] Jesus possesses knowledge of God which all others do not. Therefore, the incarnation of Jesus exposits and grounds

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[26] "Christian Faith," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 11.

[27] *GGT*, 160.

[28] *GGT*, 161.

[29] *TS*, 45: "These are not two separate movements, each proceeding from its own independent ground to meet the other, but one two-fold movement, for even the movement from the side of man toward God, free and spontaneous as it is, is coordinated with the movement of God toward man, and is part of the divine movement of revelation and reconciliation."

[30] *The Mediation of Christ,* (1983; repr., Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992), *passim; GR*, 133-64; See also James B. Torrance, "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ" in T. F. Torrance, ed., *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), 127-47; Elmer Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 97-126.

[31] See Christian D. Kettler, *The God Who Believes: Faith, Doubt and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2005), 1-35, 58-90.

the knowledge of God within humanity.[32] Torrance wrote, "Into our disobedience and covenant-breaking life, into our disinherited existence, there descends God the Son in order to live out from within it a life of pure obedience, fulfilling the covenant will of God, and bringing humanity back from estrangement to communion with the Father."[33] Through the incarnation, not only does God adapt himself to humanity so that we might know him, but through the incarnation humanity is reconciled and adapted to be in a knowing relationship with God.[34] The adaptation of God to humanity and humanity to God has been actualized in Christ. As part of the dual adaptation, knowledge of God is given and received in Christ. Thus, the knowledge of God is perfectly and vicariously embodied for humanity within Jesus.[35] Others can participate in this incarnationally-grounded knowledge of God through union with Jesus. The vicarious faithfulness of Jesus has theological consequences which surround the many acts of knowing involved in personal knowing which we will discuss below (5.3). Torrance is aware that a vision of participation in the self-knowledge of God through Christ raises questions about how one may guard against the frailty, partiality, and even idolatry of human conceptions of God. This is held in check by the necessary inadequacy of theological statements which are part of his transcendent (2.7) and truly realist (2.8) dynamics. This also raises question about how humans participate in Christ who participates most fully in the knowledge of God. This Torrance answered in part with his doctrine of the Spirit.

5.2.1.2 Participation in the self-knowledge of the Trinity is enabled by the Spirit

For Torrance, God enables humans to participate in his self-knowledge by the Holy Spirit.[36] The Spirit is an equally important person in the being of God. Yet, the

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[32] *TP*, 99-100.

[33] T. F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ,* Robert T. Walker, ed. (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 114.

[34] *TS*, 48.

[35] *TS*, 50-52. Christian D. Kettler engages T. F. Torrance and develops this theme in chapter 3, "Jesus Knows God For Us and In Our Place," in *The God Who Believes: Faith, Doubt, and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2005), 58-90.

[36] Concerning Torrance's pneumatology, see *TIR*, 192-258; *GR*, 165-94; *KBBET*, 208-12; *TF*, 191-251; *CDG*, 59-67, 147-55, 180-94. See also Elmer Colyer, "Thomas F. Torrance on the Holy Spirit," *Word and World* 23 (2003): 160-167; Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance,* 211-241; Gary Deddo, "The Holy Spirit in T. F. Torrance's Theology," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance,* ed. Elmer Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 81-114; Paul D. Molnar, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in knowing the Triune God," in

Holy Spirit does not work independently or provide an independent way of knowing God apart from the Son and the Father.[37] Instead, Torrance wrote, the Spirit "proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son, and who as the Spirit of the Father and of the Son imparted to us enables us in communion with himself to participate in God's knowing of himself."[38] Torrance extended this argument by maintaining that the Spirit is the living presence of God and the very Being of God who interacts with creation. The Spirit "brings the very Being of God to bear upon us in our experience, creating the relation to the divine Being which knowledge of God requires in order to be knowledge."[39] He acts upon humans so that knowledge of God's being is rooted in God's being and action.[40] His activity is eloquent, for God is not a mute being. Thus, it is by the Spirit that God communicates His Word or Himself.[41] The Spirit is at work not only in revelation external to humans, but also at work within humans "creating and calling forth from us forms of thought and speech" through which God may disclose Himself to us.[42] The Spirit prepares and opens our minds to receive God's self-communication, creating in us the capacity to know God without suppressing or bypassing our minds. "Hence through the Spirit we are given to participate in God's own rationality, in his own self-knowledge or self-witness."[43] Nevertheless, beyond our rational structures, the Spirit also works to rehabilitate the human person and relationships because the Spirit is at work as "personalizing Spirit." From within the inner relations of the Trinity, the Spirit redeems and reveals God in the context of persons in relationship.[44] "The Holy Spirit is the eternal Communion of the Father and the Son and therefore when He is sent into our hearts by the Father in the Name of the Son we are made *partakers* with the Son in his Communion with the Father and

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Trinitarian Theology after Barth, ed. Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 3-47, esp. 33-45.

[37] *GR*, 172: "Thus it is through the Son that the Spirit comes, from the Son that He shines forth, to the Son that He bears witness, and in the Spirit that God is known and man is recreated after His Image in Jesus Christ."

[38] *CDG*, 117; Also 148. *GR*, 173-4: "The Holy Spirit is the eternal Communion of the Father and the Son and therefore when He is sent into our hearts by the Father in the Name of the Son we are made partakers with the Son in His Communion with the Father and thus of God's own self-knowledge."

[39] *GR*, 176.

[40] *GR*, 176-7. See note 72 on Torrance's agreement with Calvin's doctrine of direct, intuitive knowledge of God.

[41] *GR*, 179-83.

[42] *GR*, 183.

[43] *TIR*, 94-95.

[44] *GR*, 188-89.

thus of God's own self-knowledge."[45] Through the Spirit, God enables us to "share in the relation of mutual knowing between the Father and the Son and thus in God's knowledge of himself."[46]

5.2.1.3 Soteriological Participation

To summarize this section (5.2), knowledge of the Triune God is participatory. It is through the movements of the incarnation and of the Spirit that humans are lifted up to share in the self-love and self-knowledge of the Trinity. As Torrance put it, "The Love with which we are loved by God is the Love with which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit love one another in the Trinity, and the knowledge with which we know him is a sharing in the eternal knowing in which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit know one another coeternally."[47] Or most simply, Torrance quoted Paul, that it is "through Jesus we are given access to the Father in one Spirit."[48]

Notice that the Trinitarian source and goal for knowledge of God is communion. We recall that revelation and reconciliation belong together for Torrance. Likewise, Torrance's Trinitarian epistemology is rooted in a Trinitarian soteriology. The soteriological moorings give knowledge of God a particular *telos* which, as we will develop below (5.3 & 5.4), provides it with important ethical distinctions in the postmodern, scientific world. For now, it is noteworthy that for Torrance this is not an ontological participation where all aspects of creation, including knowledge, naturally participate in God.[49] Instead, this is a decidedly soteriological participation made possible through the economic Trinity. As Torrance put it, "To know this God, who both condescends to share all that we are and makes us share in all that he is in Jesus Christ, is to be lifted up in his Spirit to share in God's own self-knowing and self-

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[45] *GR*, 173-74. Emphasis mine.

[46] *TF*, 32.

[47] *RST*, 183. Also, *RET,* 21-24; *GGT*, 154-55.

[48] *TF*, 55, quoting Ephesians 2:18.

[49] A tenet of the early to mid-twentieth century French Catholic *nouvelle théologie* and then later of the "Radical Orthodoxy" movement of John Milbank is the ontological and thus sacramental participation of creation with the Creator. On the *nouvelle théologie*, see Hans Bouersma, "Analogy of Truth: The Sacramental Epistemology of *nouvelle théologie*," in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twewntieth-Century Catholic Theology,* ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 157-71; Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 154-169. On "radical orthodoxy," see James K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 74-77, 185-229.

loving until we are enabled to apprehend him in some real measure in himself *beyond anything that we are capable of in ourselves*."[50] With its Trinitarian moorings, theological epistemology is subsumed within and connected to soteriology for Torrance.

This thesis has maintained that Torrance's theological epistemology is thoroughly Trinitarian. It is the Triune God who is the source, determines the nature and actualizes the possibility of participation in the knowledge of God. Torrance's language of participation keeps epistemology tied to its Trinitarian source, nature and actuality. Torrance did not develop the anthropological, subjective and practical dimensions of participation as much as he wrote about the Trinity.[51] These themes, as we will see, are not entirely absent, but need expansion from his Trinitarian perspective. In order to further explore participation in the knowledge of God, we now turn to explore two wide-ranging, subjective dimensions of what that participation involves.

5.3 Participation in the knowledge of God involves the whole person

We noted in chapter four that when Torrance used the term "being," he tended to refer to reality extrinsic to the human person. Nevertheless, at times Torrance engaged the "two poles of being," that is the being of the knowing person and the being of what is known.[52] In his discussion of the social coefficient of knowledge he wrote, "We are forced to take full account of *subject-being*, the being of the human knower in his active contact with what he knows, and the being of what is known as that which has the power of being open to knowledge."[53] More attention is given to the being of the knower in his earliest lectures at Auburn than in his more mature writings, yet through his later engagement with critical realism Torrance confessed to giving renewed attention to the question of the being of the knowing person.[54] He maintained the importance for theology to be rooted in God's own being (*theologia in*

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[50] *GGT,* 155, italics mine. Also *RST*, 186.
[51] A similar critique has been made of Karl Barth. John Webster wrote, "Throughout the discussion of the knowledge of God, therefore, Barth looks to Christological doctrine to do the work which might more conventionally be undertaken by accounts of the dynamics of human subjectivity." John Webster, *Karl Barth,* 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 80.
[52] *TCFK*, 159.
[53] *RST*, 132.
[54] *RST*, 132.

se) as well as mediated through the conditions and contingencies of human life in our creaturely existence (*theologia nostra*).[55] While Torrance gave the being of the human knower some sustained attention,[56] his focus upon realism tilted the emphasis of the majority of his writings toward the being of reality.[57] Toward expanding Torrance's notion of knowledge of God as participatory, we consider the being of the knower.

5.3.1 Theological and Scientific Perspectives

With explicit reliance upon Polanyi, participation is a defining quality of personal knowledge for Torrance. Torrance repeatedly states that "it is only a person who can think, mean, understand or interpret," going on to delineate various personal actions involved in the process of knowing: believing in truth and submitting one's mind to reality, discerning coherent patterns in nature, examining and weighing evidence, appraising arguments, and relating evidence to reality.[58] Personal knowledge means that there is a "responsible participation of the person as an active rational agent in all acts of understanding and knowing."[59] Torrance concluded, "Michael Polanyi's rejection of the Laplacian impersonal mode of thought and its replacement by another in which personal participation is shown to be essential to its rational and objective character, is a major contribution to the epistemological foundations of science."[60] The participatory actions of the knower are a necessary facet of personal knowledge and thus knowledge is person-involving for Torrance.

Human knowing is a person-involving activity that has emerged within a stratified universe. As the logical positivists were theorizing a reductionist paradigm for the sciences, United States philosopher Roy Wood Sellars was developing a heirarchical view of the sciences which he called "emergent realism" or "emergent naturalism." In 1916, Sellars maintained that the mental was an emergent property in his hierarchy of complex systems. His system progressed as follows: inorganic,

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[55] *RET*, 21-30.
[56] For example, *TS*, 85-105.
[57] Torrance therefore distinguishes and prioritizes the "truth of being" over the "truth of statement." *RST*, 143-45; *TCFK*, 304, 318-20.
[58] *BSCL*, 141-42; *RET*, 45-46; *CTSC*, 66-67.
[59] *RET*, 45.
[60] *CTSC*, 67.

organic, mental or conscious, social, ethical and religious or spiritual.[61] However, after Sellars, "in the reductionist climate in the philosophy of science between the 1930s and the 1960s, emergentist proposals were sidetracked."[62] Since then, others within the philosophy of science argued in favor of emergentism.[63] In the 1960s, Michael Polanyi argued for a hierarchical view of the universe which undergirded his discussions of the irreducibility of the category of a person and thus the personal participation of scientists in their knowledge.[64] As with Sellars, Polanyi held that human consciousness and knowing were emergent properties in a stratified universe.[65] More recently, four authors who have written within the religion-and-science dialogue have argued for various forms of emergentism and their implications for human knowing. Against reductionism, Arthur Peacocke argues that God's immanent work in creation through evolutionary processes gives rise to the emergence of reliable cognitive processes for survival and thus the development of human knowledge.[66] Contending against both dualist and reductive physicalist accounts of human mind and consciousness, Philip Clayton argues that mind and thus knowledge are ontological emergent properties.[67] Similarly, Nancey Murphy has

[61] Roy Wood Sellars, *Critical Realism: A Study of the Nature and Conditions of Knowledge* (1916; repr., New York: Russell and Russell, 1966). Cited by Nancey Murphy, *Reconciling Theology and Science*: *A Radical Reformation Perspective*, 14, n. 12.

[62] Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Emergence and Complexity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science,* ed. Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 768, 767-83.

[63] On the history of emergence, see Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-37; Nancey Murphy, "Reductionism: How Did We Fall Into It and Can We Emerge From It?" in *Evolution and Emergence: Systems, Organisms, Persons*, ed. Nancey Murphy and William R. Stoeger, S.J., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19-39; Russell Manning, "Mere Summing Up? Some Considerations on the History of the Concept of Emergence and its Significance for Science and Religion," *Science and Christian Belief* 19 (2007): 37-58.

[64] See especially Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (1958; repr. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962).

[65] Ibid., 381-405.

[66] Arthure Peacocke, *God and the New Biology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), *passim; Theology for a Scientific Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 61-9, 300-303, 312-15; "A Map of Scientific Knowledge: Genetics, Evolution and Theology," in *Science and Theology: The New Consonance*, ed. Ted Peters (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 189-210; *Paths from Science Towards God: The End of All Our Exploring* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 24-26; "Emergence, Mind, and Divine Action: The Heirarchy of the Sciences in Relation to the Human Mind-Brain-Body" in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion,* ed. Philip Clayton and Paul Davies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 257-78.

[67] Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence*, esp. 107-55. Michael Silberstein grants Clayton's argument for emergence as a suitable explanation for mind and justified true beliefs, but does not see the need for God. Michael Silberstein, "Emergence, Theology and the Manifest Image," in *The Oxford*

contended for emergence, or as she puts it, a nonreductive physicalism, concerning the emergence of humanity and consequently knowledge.[68] While not targeting the defense of emergentism, J. Wentzel van Huyssteen has engaged various intra-related scientific disciplines related to the topic of evolutionary epistemology to affirm *both* human similarity to the animal world *and* human uniqueness concerning the emergence of human consciousness and knowing.[69] It is significant that before Peacocke, Clayton, Murphy and van Huyssteen, Torrance himself held that human rationality and knowledge are properties that have emerged from within a stratified universe, which he described in discussing the priestly function of humans in creation:

> From the perspective of theology man is clearly made the focal point in the interrelations between God and the universe. He is given a special place within the creation with a ruling and a priestly function to perform toward the rest of created reality. All lines of rationality and order, of purpose and fulfillment in the creation converge on him as man of God and man of science and depend on his destiny. From the perspective of natural science man must also be recognized to be a focal point of significance in the universe, both because he represents the culmination of its development to ever higher levels of reality and order and because all we know of the universe, even of the universe and its structures billions of years before ever man emerged, is correlated to the rationality of man. There is a profound harmony between the rationality of the human understanding and the rationality of the universe, and indeed a congruence between the stratified structure of science and the stratified structure of nature.[70]

For Torrance, humans are a focal point of creation because of the emergence of rationality; humans and human knowledge are emergent complexities; and human

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Handbook of Religion and Science, ed. Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 784-800.

[68] Nancey Murphy, "Emergence and Mental Causation," in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion,* ed. Philip Clayton and Paul Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 227-43; Nancey Murphy, "From Causal Reductionisms to Self-Directed Systems," in *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will*, ed. Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 42-104, esp. 78-84.

[69] See especially his chapter, "Human Uniqueness and Cognitive Evolution," in *Alone in the World?: Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 45-110. An earlier, shorter version is found in his article, "Evolution and Human Uniqueness: A Theological Perspective on the Emergence of Human Complexity," in *The Significance of Complexity: Approaching a Complex World through Science, Theology and the Humanities*, ed. Kees Van Kooten Niekerk and Hans Buhl (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 195-215. See also, *Duet or Duel: Theology and Science in a Postmodern Word* (London: SCM Press, 1998), esp. 131-66.

[70] *DCO*, 129. See also his chapter, "Man, Priest of Creation," in *GGT*, 1-14.

knowledge exemplified by the stratified structure of science has congruence with the stratified structure of nature. Without tracing the history or defending particular emregentist theories, it is important for the argument to note that emergent cosmological and anthropological views have epistemological consequences. Epistemology follows ontology and, particularly important here, an emergent, stratified anthropology.

To extend Torrance's *ontologically-determined* dynamic, epistemology is not only to be in accordance with the nature of the object, but also with the nature of the knowing *subject*, a subject who knows out of the complex matrix of their whole being. As Philip Clayton put it,

> To say that the human person is a *psycho-somatic unity* is to say that the person is a complexly patterned entity within the world, one with diverse sets of naturally occurring properties, each of which needs to be understood *by a science appropriate to its own level of complexity*. We need multiple layers of explanatory accounts *because* the human person is a physical, biological, psychological, and (I believe also) spiritual reality, and because these aspects of its reality, though interdependent, are not mutually reducible.[71]

Clayton refers to the multiple layers that constitute humans as ontological pluralism. This is commensurate with what Polanyi and Torrance referred to as the "stratification of reality" yet is focused here upon the knowing subject. As an emergent capacity, human knowing is not cut off and distinct from the rest of a person's being, somehow functioning separately from their other emergent capabilities. Therefore, to understand knowledge of God as participatory means that knowledge will involve all of the ontological dimensions which constitute a knowing person. This includes a person's thoughts as well as beliefs, commitments, desires, as well as their bodies and actions. Following Torrance's notion of onto-relations, we also maintain that relationships are part of what constitute persons which we will develop below (5.4). The ability to know has arisen with many other inter-related, multi-causal capacities embodied within humans. Using his distinction between focal and subsidiary awareness, Polanyi wrote, "All our conscious transactions with the world involve our

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[71] Clayton, *Mind and Emergence*, 148, italics his.

subsidiary use of our body."[72] Only if one accepts a particular form of Cartesian mind-body dualism can one keep knowledge as merely a cognitive activity. Rather, knowing involves the entire being of a person and not merely an autonomous mind that somehow functions in a disembodied, dispassionate, or unwillful way. Consistent with his Auburn lectures, Torrance maintained that "we do not have a special faculty apart from reason but an orientation of the whole person which uses reason."[73] Torrance's point here concerning the whole person was informed by his biblical anthropology.

To understand the human activity of knowing from the perspective of various biblical writers, one needs to understand how the biblical writers conceived of humanity. Informing each epistemology is an implicit anthropology providing basic categories for how we understand human knowledge. It is well-attested by Old Testament scholars that ancient Israel understood humans as a totality and not divided into parts which undergirded their way of knowing.[74] As Robert C. Dentan put it, "The ancient Hebrew did not, in fact, suppose that men thought with their minds, felt with their emotions, and made decisions with their wills, but that all these activities were carried on by the whole person, every function involving the others also."[75] Knowledge for the people of Israel was experiential and involved the whole person.[76]

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[72] Michael Polanyi, *Knowing and Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969), 214.

[73] "Philosophy and Theology," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 13.

[74] Bergman & Botterweck, *"yāda`" in TDOT*, ed. G.J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 469; Terrence E. Fretheim, *"yāda`" in New International Dictionary of OT Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 409-14; O. A. Piper, "Knowledge," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, ed. Vol. 3 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 43; T. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Newton Centre, MA: Charles T. Branford Co., 1960), 128; Gregory Vall, "An Epistemology of Faith: The Knowledge of God in Israel's Prophetic Literature," in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God*, ed. By Mary Healy and Robin Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 33.

[75] Robert C. Dentan, *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968), 37. Furthermore, on 40: "Like other men of the archaic world, the ancient Hebrew thought not only with the mind, but with his emotion and his will, with the conscious participation of his entire being, and, likewise, he thought of his world in terms of totalities, not of complex mechanisms to be analyzed into ever smaller and smaller components."

[76] Lexicons often render the interpretation of *yāda* and its cognates as "to know from experience" which is appropriate in the following examples: to know afflictions (1 Kings 8:38), loss of children (Isa. 47:8), disease or grief (Isa. 53:3), or God's vengeance (Ezek. 25:14). See O.A. Piper, "Knowledge," 43. Furthermore, this corresponds with the use of the phrase "to know" with reference to the more than cognitive experience of sexual intercourse: Gen 4:1, 17, 25; 19:8; 38:26; Judges 11:39; 19:25; 1 Sam 1:19; 1 Kings 1:4. See Bergman and G.J. Botterweck, *"yāda,`"* 464. Likewise, in the New Testament, according to Ian W. Scott, Paul focused in some passages not on the "belief

This holistic perspective is carried over into the New Testament perception of humanity and consequently its views of knowledge.[77] Similar to loving, for both Testaments the action of knowing involved the whole person.[78] This is why the language of the heart is important to the biblical authors.[79] While the heart is sometimes referred to as the organ of knowledge,[80] it is not understood as a separate faculty for knowing, but as the seat of personhood which includes the will, emotion, conscience as well as intellect.[81] Therefore, as D.C. Schindler puts it, "God is not merely an object for the mind alone… It is thus not merely the abstract mind that is elevated to receive God's self-communication, but the whole of one's person. In other words, it is not, in the end, the mind that knows God, but the *person* who knows God through the mind."[82]

Karl Barth expressed the biblical notion clearly in *Church Dogmatics* IV.3 where he unpacked the doctrine of reconciliation using the theme of Christ the God-Man who in his office as prophet is the mediator and guarantor of reconciliation. In

component of knowing," but on the experience of the object which goes "beyond conceptual knowledge." Phil 4:12: "I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty." Scott comments, "He is not claiming to have the right kind of beliefs here, but rather remind them that he has had both of these kinds of experiences." Also, 2 Cor. 5:11, 5:21. Ian W. Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing: Story, Experience and the Spirit* (repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 143-44.

[77] R. Bultmann, "γινώσκω," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. By Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 696-701, 703-8; E. Schütz and E. D. Schmitz, "Knowledge," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 398-401; O.A. Piper, "Knowledge," 44-48; A.G. Patzia, "Knowledge," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 638-40.

[78] For Thomas Aquinas, the "image of God" within humans included the capacity to know and to love God. Aquinas, *ST* I.93.4. A study on this aspect of God's image within humanity is D. J. Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas's Teaching*, Studies and Texts 96 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990).

[79] One could also explore the human "spirit" and "soul" in Scripture as a faculty for knowing. In his study of epistemology in Luke-Acts, Thomas D. Stegman, S.J., writes, "Concerning the human person as 'knower', it is insufficient to refer solely to traditional epistemic powers or 'faculties' such as sensation, cognition, and intuition. An adequate philosophical anthropology also has to account for the 'faculty' of the knower that is capable of enlightenment by God's Spirit. In this vein, Paul's description of human being as comprised of 'spirit (*pneuma*) and soul (*psychē*) and body (*sōma*)' in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 has relevance insofar as the 'spirit' is understood here as that aspect of humanity which is open to illuminating and empowering actions of the Holy Spirit." Thomas D. Stegman, S.J., "'The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding': Epistemology in Luke-Acts," in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God*, ed. Mary Healy and Robin Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 104.

[80] See e.g., Deut 8:5; 1 Kings 2:44; Ps. 49:3; Prov. 2:2; 10:8; Isa. 6:10.

[81] Fretheim, *"yāda`,"* 410; O.A. Piper, "Knowledge," 43.

[82] D. C. Schindler, "Mystery and Mastery: Philosophical Reflections on Biblical Epistemology," in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God*, ed. Mary Healy and Robin Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 186.

this context, Barth frequently used the phrase "the revelation of reconciliation," indicating not only the relationship between reconciliation and revelation, but that God's act of reconciliation through Jesus Christ *communicates*. "In other words, the covenant of God with man and man with God as fulfilled in Jesus Christ is not a dumb fact but one which speaks for itself. The reconciliation of the world with God accomplished and consisting in Him is revelation in its very reality."[83] Barth contends that such revelation retains its active, historical even dramatic character.[84] It is within this discussion of the active "revelation of reconciliation" that we find some of Barth's more precise critiques concerning modern reductive accounts of the knowledge of God as dispassionate cognitive activity which are worth quoting at length.

> We cannot impress upon ourselves too strongly that in the language of the Bible knowledge (*yada, γιγνώσκειν*) does not mean the acquisition of neutral information, which can be expressed in statements, principles and systems, concerning a being which confronts man, nor does it mean the entry into passive contemplation of a being which exists beyond the phenomenal world. What it really means is the process of history in which man, certainly observing and thinking, uses his senses, intelligence and imagination, but also his will, action and 'heart,' and therefore as a whole man, becomes aware of another history which in the first instance encounters him as an alien history from without, and becomes aware of it in such a compelling way that he cannot be neutral towards it, but finds himself summoned to disclose and give himself to it in return, to direct himself according to the law which he encounters in it, to be taken up into its movement, in short, to demonstrate the acquaintance which he has been given with this other history in a corresponding alteration of his own being, action and conduct.[85]

For just as God's reconciling work involves the whole person, so too does God's revelatory action. Barth continued by demonstrating how Israel did not conceive of the knowledge of God in a passive, intellectualized way. Using many varied references from the Old Testament, Barth summarized, "There is never any suggestion in all this of merely an objective seeing and understanding of the divine nature and being… And this knowledge of God in His past, present or future implies a

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[83] Barth, *CD* IV.3.1, 165.
[84] Ibid., 180-83.
[85] Ibid., 183-84.

new human action corresponding to the divine and altered in relation to it."[86] For Barth, God's active revelation of reconciliation evokes a corresponding, practical knowledge which involves the whole person. He furthered his critique by demonstrating in the New Testament that "the terms γιγνώσκειν and γνωσισ can also be applied to intellectual and contemplative apprehension. Yet nowhere can it be said that knowledge is merely of this type, having its theme and content in abstractly objective things or essences."[87] He argued that the object of knowledge frequently in the New Testament is the divine action in salvation which evokes human response. Consequently, "the terms faith and love and obedience are always near when reference is made to knowledge." [88] Barth contended that knowledge of God in the biblical sense includes the transformation of the whole person and cannot be reduced to neutral observation or intellectual speculation. "So radical is the transformation which comes on man in this knowledge, so full of content is his own history in it, and so far is this *intelligere* from a merely ratiocinative, argumentative or even contemplative process which might be described as intellectualistic and the results of which might be attacked and denounced as empty *gnosis*!"[89]

In thinking through the implications of the prophetic role of Jesus, Barth noted that in the revelation of reconciliation, reconciliation does actually occur. As part of the God-established relationship accomplished through reconciliation, knowledge most basically meant the union of the knower with God and then consequently included cognitive content and rational matter. [90] God and the reconciled, held together in an I-Thou relationship, are ontologically more basic, giving rise to knowledge. Knowledge and truth are the result of the encounter. Thus, knowledge for Barth held the cognitive elements within the personal. In other words, the personal elements of knowledge contained the cognitive elements. In this way, knowledge could not be reduced to the merely cognitive.[91] But neither could knowledge be

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[86] Ibid., 184.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 185.
[89] Ibid.
[90] George Hunsinger, *How To Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 50-51.
[91] In this way, Barth was in agreement on this point with the existential thought of Herrmann and Bultmann who contend that knowledge of God is not equated with doctrines or theological systems. Barth, *CD* IV/ 1, 761, cited in Mueller, 85.

reduced to the emotive or affective dimension. This is why, concerning theological language, Barth held neither to a literalism, whose linguistic form was essentially propositional and thus emphasized the cognitive, nor to an expressivism, whose linguistic form was basically symbolic and privileged the emotive. Instead, Barth held to a theological realism that engaged the whole person.[92] This enabled Barth to stand against any one-dimensional epistemological reductionism with regard to the human subject, either of the rational, emotive or of any other aspect of human nature.[93] Instead the whole person was involved in the knowledge of God.[94] "What we have rather brusquely to oppose in this insight is a constant and widespread devaluation of the concept of knowledge. It is not the case that Christian knowledge can be regarded and described as a mere acceptance or reflection, as mere thought, as mere conviction of perhaps a profound and even emotional nature."[95] For Barth, this would be a subjectivist devaluation of the concept of Christian knowledge. Instead, Christian knowledge "is set in motion by its living object" which provides its basis, theme and content.[96] Consequently, "the object itself sees to it that the act of contemplating and grasping it, of accepting and considering it, cannot possibly be purely intellectual."[97] For Barth, the prophetic role of Jesus in the revelation of reconciliation gives a full-orbed shape to the knowledge of God which is as multi-dimensional as God who provides it, the human personality which responds, and the reconciliation which establishes and preserves the knowledge-involving relationship. T. F. Torrance's view that knowledge of God involves the whole person continues the notion found within Scripture and held by his mentor, Karl Barth. Recapturing this epistemological perspective is particularly helpful in overcoming modern reductionist epistemologies.

The whole person is involved in knowing, and thus knowledge is better discussed from a holistic, complex framework than a reductionist one. We recall from chapter one that Nicholas Rescher defines complexity as "first and foremost a matter of the number and variety of an item's constituent elements and of the elaborateness

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[92] Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 42-49.

[93] Ibid., 44-45.

[94] Hence, even the literary form of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* reflects his departure from the nineteenth-century liberal notion of dispassionate inquiry. John Webster, *Karl Barth*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 49-50.

[95] *CD* IV.3., 218.

[96] Ibid., 219.

[97] Ibid., 219-20.

of their interrelational structure, be it organizational or operational."[98] We humans, as far as we know, are the most complex systems in the universe. Furthermore, human consciousness and the ability to know is one of the most spectacular developments among the species. The human brain as a vital part of that capacity is certainly one of the most complex organs known, made up of millions of cells, or neurons, which make millions of connections within the brain and is intricately connected with the nervous system throughout the human body.[99] As discussed above, the knowing person includes many dimensions which influence human knowledge, including emotion, intellect, will and relationships. Though countless aspects of human complexity could be mentioned, this is sufficient to note that human beings are complex and consequently, the activity of human knowing is complex. Beyond modern reductionist epistemologies, we conclude that knowledge is more adequately understood as a multi-dimensional complexity in which humans participate. This perspective can accommodate for the stratification of reality and the many levels constitutive of a human knowing agent. It can take into consideration the physical, chemical, evolutionary and biological, psychological, sociological, moral, spiritual and theological dimensions of epistemology without reducing knowledge to a particular level. The ontological complexity of the knowing subject necessitates a more complex epistemology. This has advantages over a reductionist framework which focuses upon parts and their aggregation to locate a basic cause. Thus, the sciences of complexity and complexity theory provide a more suitable analogy for knowledge of God, particularly as the restraints of reductionism are overcome in the postmodern, scientific age. To expand Torrance's notion of participation in the knowledge of God, we briefly consider how his Trinitarian framework could help to nuance his emphasis on the reasoning mind.

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[98] Nicholas Rescher, *Complexity: A Philosophical Overview* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 1.

[99] Any neuroscience textbook or introductory texts on the human brain will detail its complexity and intricacies. Accessible introductions include, Michael O'Shea, *The Brain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. 1-41; Mark F. Bear, Barry W. Connors, and Michael A. Paradiso, *Neuroscience: Exploring the Brain* (Baltimore, MD: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 2007).

5.3.2 The framework encompassing Torrance's emphasis on the reasoning mind

While each dimension of human being influences the activity of knowing, Torrance emphasized the reasoning mind. He has been critiqued for holding "too rationalistic understanding of faith" and thus diminishing the involvement of the whole person.[100]

> Throughout the book [*Theological Science*], and in spite of several attempts to qualify it, Torrance has an extremely rationalistic or intellectualistic understanding of faith. The dominant character of faith, as depicted, is its rationality and not its qualities of trust or obedience… There is not enough provision for affective, volitional, or active dimensions of the response of the total man to God in Christ.[101]

While this critique of *Theological Science* may have merit, it is important to note that Torrance recognized other dimensions involved in human knowing. For instance, in his earliest Auburn lectures, Torrance gave repeated attention to the will and the importance of decision in advancing knowledge of God. From that time, he maintained that theological thought requires personal decisions that are life and death decisions, affecting one's whole life:

> All religious thought is charged with personal decision. It is concerned with questions on which we must take our own stands; upon which we are called by God to make up our minds; matters of life and death… When I go shopping it does not matter very much whether I buy this at one dollar or that at a dollar and a half. When someone thinks of taking a wife unto himself, it matters a little more whom he chooses. The decision is more personal, and affects his whole life. It is [important]. But in Christianity we are confronted by God who challenges us to make a decision of life and death… The kind of decision we make in religion is absolutely vital. There is nothing in our life that is not affected by it. [102]

Though more regular a concern earlier in his career, Torrance's concern with decision was not without mention in his later epistemological works, including his book *Theological Science*. For instance, "From beginning to end, however, we operate in theology through response to a Word addressed to us, in obedience to an act of Grace

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[100] Thomas A. Langford, "T. F. Torrance's *Theological Science*: A Reaction," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 25 (1973): 155-70.

[101] Ibid., 157-58.

[102] "Theology and Science," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 59.

upon us, and in a life of decision that is correlative to divine election."[103] Though Torrance accented reason and the mind, he maintained that knowledge of God is thus not a spectator sport which can be engaged in a detached, impartial manner, but required decisions which involved the whole person.

Moreover, through Torrance's discussions of sin, we find that noetic influences extend beyond mere reasoned argument. He recognized that human persons can maintain a disposition that is opposed to the truth of God in Christ. Human being in all its complexity is distorted because of sin. "If Christian Truth is Personal Being, then it must be apparent that sin is also a matter of being, twisted, distorted being. Sin is in fact a <u>being</u>-in-error."[104] Torrance maintained that the sinful disposition of humans begets decisions in thought and life which run counter to the way of Jesus.[105] Consequently, what underlies and directs natural human knowledge is a deep-seated alienation from God.[106] The fallen heart or will can misdirect attempts at knowledge, distorting knowledge of all kinds. The order in the world that nature reveals to scientific investigation and the divine order revealed by the incarnation can be rationally and morally resisted due to this alienation.[107] Therefore, what is needed is a severe reorientation, a conversion, which goes deeper than a dialectical engagement of the reason. Human epistemic capacities rooted in the whole person are in need of repair. As Torrance put it, in union with Christ, we participate in the healing order opened up by Jesus.[108] While sin has distorted human being and thus knowing, through the incarnation comes reconciliation and justification, a justification that calls into question our natural goodness and natural knowledge, indicting natural human being and knowing. Torrance wrote,

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[103] *TS*, 98.

[104] "Theology and Church," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 22-23. Underline his.

[105] More recently, Alvin Plantinga provides a good discussion on the epistemic consequences of sin in chapter 7 of *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 199-240. See also, Gabriel Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation: A Narrative Interpretation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 43-60.

[106] "Theology and Action," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 21-22.

[107] *CFM*, 26.

[108] *CFM*, 47.

> Justification by the grace of Christ alone calls in question not only all natural goodness but all *natural knowledge.* Natural knowledge is as much the work of the flesh as natural goodness; it is a work of the natural man. It is at this point that Karl Barth has made such an immense contribution to the Reformation. We cannot separate knowing and being for they belong to the same man, and it is the whole man, with his knowing and his acting, with the whole of his being, who is called in question by justification.[109]

Yet, in the reconciliation between God and humans, healing begins at the deepest human levels of human being which brings a reorientation to all types of human knowing.[110] For knowledge to obtain, there is a need for harmony between the human mind and whoever or whatever is known. A redeemed mind is enabled to harmoniously engage the order within creation and within God through the incarnation. Epistemic engagement from a healed mind, enabled by the redemption of the whole person through the incarnation, facilitates proper engagement, leading to the development and maturation of knowledge. In this way, Torrance maintained that a sanctity of mind is needed in mathematics and physics as it is needed in theology. Torrance recalled a conversation with the European mathematician, Professor F. Gonseth who remarked that "one cannot be a good mathematician without a 'sanctity of mind', if only because the purity and precision of mathematical thinking are incompatible with any kind of mental dishonesty." [111] The sanctity of mind is thus not separate from but is part of the sanctity of the whole person. Thus, because his vision of participation in the knowledge of God remained securely within a soteriological framework, this included the mind but extended to the whole person. Furthermore, the supreme dynamic that controlled both his soteriology and epistemology was the Trinity. Hence, we return to see how the Trinity, and in particular the incarnation, played a key role in enabling and surrounding the participation of the whole person in the knowledge of God.

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[109] *TIR*, 162.

[110] *CFM*, 11: "In all basic scientific activity we rely upon a deep intuitive accord between the laws of our mind and the laws of nature, so that any disharmony in that relationship gives rise to 'noise' in the functioning of our minds, distorting the patterns of thought which we develop in our attempts to grasp the orderly structures inherent in the universe that God has created. Thus the deeper and more refined our scientific research becomes, the more we need the sanctifying reconciliation of the human mind with the Word of God that is mediated to us through Jesus Christ. Some intersection of symmetries between the order of redemption and the order of creation seems to be called for."

[111] *CFM*, 10-11.

5.3.3 The Son and Spirit secure participation of the whole person

At this point in expounding upon how participation in the knowledge of God involved the whole person, we return to the central epistemological dynamic for Torrance, the Trinity. We have seen that the fount of knowledge of God for Torrance is the mutual relation of knowing between Father, Son and Spirit which is, in fact, more basically a mutual relation of being between them.[112] The onto-relations and self-knowing of the Ontological Trinity is the source of all knowledge of God. Human knowledge of God is made possible "only if he brings us into communion with him in the inner relations of his own being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."[113] We described above how sharing in the self-knowledge of the ontological Trinity is enabled by the Son (5.2.3.1) and the Spirit (5.2.3.2). A key concept upon which Torrance focused was the vicarious humanity of Jesus who was the unique embodiment of the knowledge of God within humanity.

We described the "vicarious humanity of Jesus" above (5.2.3.1) which meant for Torrance that Jesus was not only the Word from God to humanity, but also the perfect embodiment of the Word within humanity toward God. Torrance maintained the hypostatic union of God with humanity in Jesus. In this union Jesus serves as the mediator in both directions, bringing revelation and reconciliation from God to humans and offering the perfect human response to God on behalf of humanity.[114] It is in keeping with his full humanity that the whole person of Jesus participated in the knowledge of God. No aspect of Christ's humanity was exempt from the knowing relationship. He often quoted Gregory of Nazianzus, "what Christ has not assumed is not healed; but that which is united with his Godhead is also saved."[115] God assumed full humanity and personhood in Christ including all of its dimensions. Through the incarnation, God brings healing to all levels of the stratified order which comprise human beings.[116] To deny some aspect of humanity is to break the hypostatic union and to fall prey to forms of Gnosticism and Docetism.[117] In Christ "we may now freely participate in the knowledge of God as an actuality already translated and made

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[112] *TF*, 58-59.

[113] *TF*, 54.

[114] T. F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ,* ed. Robert T. Walker (Milton Keynes, UK: 2008), 113-14.

[115] *Theology in Reconciliation*, 154.

[116] *DCO*, 23-25.

[117] On Torrance's perspective on the hypostatic union, *Incarnation*, 181-234.

accessible for us by His grace."[118] An important consequence for the argument here is that all aspects of human participation in the knowledge of God are surrounded and included by the faithfulness of Jesus. In other words, through the vicarious humanity of Jesus other humans in all their complexity are enabled to participate in the intra-trinitarian knowledge of God.

Therefore, it is through *union* with Christ that is *enabled* by the Spirit that we participate in the mutual relation of knowing and being between Father, Son and Spirit.[119] Human union with Christ is an "interrelation of knowing and being between us and the incarnate Son, although in our case this union is one of participation through grace and not one of nature."[120] Union with Christ is no mere cognitive union, though we have noted that Torrance would contend that it is not less than that.[121] Instead, union with Christ involves our whole being which is enlivened by the Spirit. In knowledge of God, the being of God influences the entire being of humanity. As Torrance put it, "Knowing God requires cognitive union with him in which our whole being is affected by his love and holiness."[122] More emphatically, he declared that in knowledge of God the "Object takes us under its command and directs our very being and existence in relation to it, in a measure that obtains in no other field of knowledge."[123] Consequently, human participation in the knowledge of God involves not only the mind, but the whole person. In union with the vicarious, perfected divine-human relation in Jesus and empowered by the Spirit, the being of God influences the being of persons, enabling participation in God's self-knowledge.

In summary of this section (5.3), to demonstrate that participation in the knowledge of God involves the whole person, we have argued that human knowing is an emergent capacity of human beings. Human knowing does not occur in a disembodied way, but is interconnected with the whole of a person that is more analogous with a complexity than a reductionist framework. Knowledge of God is thus not cut off from any dimension of human being. Though sin distorts human being and knowing, justification and revelation leads to sanctity of being and knowing. For

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[118] *TS*, 51.

[119] *TF*, 59: "Thus through union with Christ we are given access to knowledge of God as he is in his own being." Also, *CDG*, 146; *GGT*, 160.

[120] *TF*, 59.

[121] See the section, "Essentially Rational and Conceptual" (chapter 2.6).

[122] *MC*, 26.

[123] *TS*, 37.

Torrance, fully human participation in the knowledge of God occurs originally and fundamentally in the vicarious humanity of Jesus. Through union with Jesus, the relation with God is a being-constituting relation, involving the whole person and enabling authentic participation by the Spirit. To say that knowledge of God involves the whole person also means that it involves all aspects of their existence. Thus we now turn to see how knowledge of God involves not only the whole person, but a way of life.

5.4 Participation in the knowledge of God involves a way of life

We have concluded that, derived from the ontological Trinity, knowledge of God is personal, relational and participatory, and thus involves the whole person. Therefore, given the nature of knowledge of God, we will also demonstrate that participation in the knowledge of God inherently involves a way of life. While Torrance did not extensively develop this theme, it is inherent within his Trinitarian framework for the knowledge of God.

5.4.1 Theological and Philosophical Perspectives

A relationship is inherently participatory and Torrance described the knowledge of God as relational. From his Trinitarian notion of participation and from the relational nature of knowledge of God, there is intrinsically a participatory dimension to his conception of knowledge of God. We observed in chapter four that knowledge of God involves a dialogical relation that God establishes by grace. This knowledge is not primarily reflection on human rational experience or faith for Torrance, but is reflection upon God in a dialogical relation of faith. Knowledge arises "in conversation and communion with the living God who communicates Himself to us in acts of revelation and reconciliation and who requires of us an answering relation in receiving, acknowledging, understanding, and in active personal participation in the relationship He establishes between us."[124] Without participation in this relationship, knowledge of God becomes impossible.[125] "At no point can theological knowledge

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[124] *TS*, 39.

[125] I am reminded of the Protestant Evangelical theologian J.I. Packer's comments in a popular-level book on pursuing the inherently participatory knowledge of God: "My proposal is this. You will know how Bunyan's pilgrim, when called back by his wife and children from the journey on which he was setting out, 'put his fingers in his ears and ran on crying, Life, Life, Eternal Life.' I ask

step outside this dialogical relation, without abstracting itself from the object, without falsifying itself, or without retreating into unreality."[126] Nevertheless, knowledge of any sort involves a proper kind of detachment for Torrance, but not the kind of scientific detachment of objectivism promoted in the nineteenth century that stems from a Cartesian split between subject and object. Rather, there is an attachment to the object of inquiry in order to help the knower to detach herself from her own presuppositions. "That is why the scientist, far from being disinterested in his inquiry, is passionately involved vis-à-vis the relentless compulsion upon him of the inherent rationality of the universe, i.e. what we call the scientific conscience."[127] Proper attachment (or commitment) with the object of knowledge enables proper detachment from one's own presuppositions or the presuppositions of the surrounding community. Properly conceived attachment and detachment are a part of relational knowledge of God for Torrance. Knowledge invites proper responses to the attached reality in the knowing relationship. In this way, this section argues that knowledge is participatory and thus involves ethics or a way of life in response to ontological realities.

In chapter two, we discussed the epistemological dynamic that ontology determines epistemology, that is, the nature of what we know determines how we know it. It is also noteworthy that for Torrance ontology informs ethics as well. In an informative quote, Torrance demonstrates his conceptual tie between ontology and human behavior:

> The recognition that a proper scientific description of contingent realities and events provides an account not only of how things actually are but of how they *ought* to be, goes far toward bridging the unfortunate gap between natural science and moral science or ethics. After all, if in rigorous scientific inquiry we feel obliged to *know and understand* things strictly in accordance with their natures, in a true and faithful way, it is also the case that we feel ourselves obliged to *behave* toward them strictly in accordance with their natures, in a true and faithful way. Thus true knowledge and right behavior are both responses to the compelling claims of reality which we cannot

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you for the moment to stop your ears to those who tell you there is no road to knowledge about God, and come a little way with me and see. After all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and anyone who is actually following a recognized road will not be too worried if he has non-travellers telling each other that no such road exists." *Knowing God*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1993), 16-17.

[126] *TS*, 39.

[127] *GR*, 9.

rationally or morally resist. This is surely an essential part of what we mean by the *scientific conscience.* If science and ethics overlap at this crucial point, it seems clear that commonly accepted views of science and ethics must change in order to do justice to the double fact that there is an inescapable moral ingredient in scientific activity and an inescapable ontological ingredient in ethical behavior. There is a proper inter-relation between the 'is' and the 'ought', between being and obligation, which we need to recover today in natural, moral, and legal science alike.[128]

For Torrance, objectivity lays claim upon the life of knower. There is ontologically-appropriate behavior. This is consistent with what Ryan O'Dowd sees in the outlook of the Pentateuch and especially in the wisdom literature.[129] The created order, or the being of reality, has ethical implications for human beings. Furthermore, this is true when the being engaged is not any aspect of creation, but the ontologically-distinct Creator.

Stemming from Torrance's contention for ontological integrity in all inquiry is his concern for the integration of form and content.[130] Methods are to be apposite to the nature of the subject matter under investigation and the means to understanding are to be in accord with the substance of what is sought. As discussed, epistemology is to follow ontology. For Torrance, the ontology-epistemology discussion has primarily focused on appropriate intellectual methods, suitable approaches, and fitting means of inquiry and verification.[131] Yet, to extend his ontologically-determined principle once again, the integration of form goes beyond just the *mind* of a knower but also includes the *life* of the knower. In other words, if the nature of the reality determines how one knows it, then *how* one knows it goes beyond just the mind of the knower to include the life of the knower which gives context, shape and direction to their mind. For instance, a person's loyalties, trusts, interests, passions, basic

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[128] *CFM*, 40-1.

[129] "In one way the epistemology in Deuteronomy is grounded in the *ontology* and *ethics* of Yahweh's created world. Knowledge is a product of living in the redemptive story in accordance with the torah. This torah is a living memorial of Yahweh's Horeb theophany and thus the moral and orderly means to reproduce his powerful presence in all future generations." Ryan P. O'Dowd, "Memory in the Boundary: Epistemology in Deuteronomy," in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God*, ed. Mary Healy and Robin Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 20; Ryan O'Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 163-65.

[130] *TCFK*, "The Integration of From in Natural and Theological Science," 61-106. A good summary and discussion of this theme is Elmer M. Colyer, *The Nature of Doctrine in T. F. Torrance's Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 15-91.

[131] See chapter 2.3.

convictions as well as the community and traditions to which one belongs influences their way of reasoning.[132] However, Torrance's discussions of ontologically-informed methods focused on determining appropriate intellectual methods (2.3). He did not often extend the consequences of the ontological dynamic beyond the mind. Nevertheless, elsewhere Torrance is concerned with the integration of the life of the knower with theology. This is precisely what he advocates when he contends that *theologia* is *eusebia.*[133] A godly life and faithful speech about God belong together and mutually condition one another.[134] Derivative from a knowing relationship with the life of the Triune God comes a "distinctively Christian way of life in which the seal of the Holy Trinity was indelibly stamped upon the mind (διανοια or φρονημα) of the church."[135] The being of the ontological Trinity expressed in the evangelical action of the economic Trinity gives rise to an ontologically appropriate form of responsive life which contains and shapes knowledge of God. For Torrance, this is ultimately expressed within humanity through the Incarnation and subsequently within other humans in union with Christ.

By way of comparison, this ontological-ethical link has parallels with the Greek philosophical tradition. Pierre Hadot has demonstrated that each philosophical school, whether Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, or Epicureanism, represented a form of life defined by an ontological vision, or more specifically an ideal of wisdom.[136] Philosophy did not consist in merely teaching theories for the mind to contemplate, though it certainly involved the contemplation of nature. Rather, its aim was the art of living, encompassing the whole of existence. Consequently, each school had particular inner attitudes and practices to help its constituents to embody the ideal vision of wisdom and its vision of the good life. There was not a strict separation between theory and practice, for the philosophical theories were practical, giving shape to a way of life.[137] They sought to address all dimensions of human persons,

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[132] This is recognized more readily in the field of ethics. For example, see Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 204-25; Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 55-68.

[133] *TF*, 13-46.

[134] See chapter 5.3.2.

[135] *TF*, 17.

[136] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* trans. Arnold I. Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

[137] Hadot, *Philosophy*, 59-60.

especially the passions.[138] The end in mind encompassed a wise form of life which was in accord with the nature of humans and reality.[139] Its goal was the transformation of humanity's way of existence.[140] Hadot concludes that during the Hellenistic and Greek eras, philosophy cannot be conceived primarily as philosophical discourse,[141] but rather was first and foremost "a way of life, an art of living and a way of being."[142]

Similarly, with a serious and stirring quote from an early lecture, Torrance clearly advocates the practical, life-altering aspects of theology.

> This brings us to note one further form in which theological thought manifests itself. It is practical. It means something to us in life, and to our spiritual experience as persons. Theological thought is dynamic; it is living, charged with the power of God. As such it is no abstract form of meditation; no arm-chair theology can be of value. True theology applies to man in his real life, and is subordinated to the purposes of God for men. There can be no thinking here for thinking's sake. There is a great responsibility and a task attached to it. It has to do with the salvation of men. Thus the decisions we make in it are matters of life and death. It is the kind of thought which produces martyrs. Men feel it to be so important that they are willing to die on behalf of their convictions.[143]

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[138] Ibid., 83: "In the view of all the philosophical schools, mankind's principal cause of suffering, disorder, and unconsciousness were the passions: that is unregulated desires and exaggerated fears. People are prevented from truly living, it was taught, because they are dominated by worries. Philosophy thus appears, in the first place, as a therapeutic of the passions…Each school had its own therapeutic method, but all of them linked their therapeutics to a profound transformation of the individual's mode of seeing and being. The object of spiritual exercises is precisely to bring about this transformation."

[139] Ibid., 102: "Their goal is a kind of self-formation, or *paideia*, which is to teach us to live, not in conformity with human prejudices and social conventions – for social life is itself a product of the passions – but in conformity with the nature of man, which is none other than reason."

[140] Ibid., 265: "During this period, philosophy was a *way of life.* This is not to say that it was a specific type of moral conduct; we can easily see the role played in the passage from Philo by the contemplation of nature. Rather, it means that philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual's life. For the ancients, the mere word *philo-sophia*—the love of wisdom—was enough to express this conception of philosophy … Philosophy thus took on the form of an exercise of the thought, will, and the totality of one's being, the goal of which was to achieve a state practically inaccessible to mankind: wisdom. Philosophy was a method of spiritual progress which demanded a radical conversion and transformation of the individual's way of being."

[141] Ibid., 269: "In general, historians of philosophy pay little attention to the fact that ancient philosophy was, first and foremost, a way of life. They consider philosophy as, above all, philosophical discourse."

[142] Ibid., 268.

[143] "The Character of Theological Thought," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 21-22. The trials and suffering which accompany salvation and knowledge of God is a theme of Hebrews.

It is noteworthy that Torrance here subordinated theology to the purposes of God and links it with salvation. We have given attention to how the nature of knowledge of God is formed by the onto-relations within the ontological Trinity for Torrance. As mentioned previously, the purposes of the economic Trinity also shape the nature of knowledge of God. In other words, the knowledge of God is enveloped in the more comprehensive soteriological purposes of God.[144] As Torrance later developed this theme,

> The object of theological knowledge is engaged in *purposive* action – God fulfilling His creative and redeeming purposes. He is not known except within these purposes or in accordance with them. We cannot know God against His will, but only as He wills to reveal Himself; nor can we know Him apart from His purpose for us, apart from His claim upon the whole of our existence, or apart from His will to redeem and reconcile it to Himself. The truth with which we are concerned in theology is teleological truth, truth for us, truth laying hold upon us for a divine end, so that knowledge of it must be analogous to its teleological nature… we cannot know [God] without being drawn into [His] redeeming and reconciling activity, without being renewed and re-ordered in accordance with [God's] saving will. In other words, we cannot truly know God without being reconciled and renewed in Jesus Christ. Thus the objectivity of our theological knowledge is immutably soteriological in nature.[145]

As a result, God's soteriological aims give shape to the nature and form of God's self-revelation.[146] We have seen Torrance's development of this theme in his discussions of the incarnation and more particularly in his holding together of reconciliation and

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[144] A cogent statement on how epistemology is encompassed within soteriology is William J. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 63: "The Christian claim about revelation in Christ has to be understood, then, as part of a comprehensive vision of ourselves and our predicament that shapes the very form and character of that revelation. God did not send a library of books for our enlightenment, even though we find the books of scripture indispensable in one way or another for maturity in faith. Nor did God send his Son so that we might hold extended seminars on ontology and metaphysics, even though these may throw valuable light on what is at stake. God sent the Son to liberate the cosmos from sin and grant us eternal life. Hence the crucial first-order verbs that are deployed to describe God's action in Christ focus not so much on revelation as on salvation, redemption, healing and restoration. It is in and through these actions that God is truly revealed and made known. To develop a vision of revelation independently of them is profoundly misleading and distorting."

[145] *TS*, 41.

[146] A recent discussion of the soteriologically-shaped nature and form of revelation is discussed in Paul K. Moser "Cognitive Idolatry and Divine Hiddenness," in *Divine Hiddenness*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder and Paul K. Moser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 120-48.

revelation.[147] God's movement of revelation is bound up with His movement of redemption. Therefore, the purposes of knowledge of God are transformative for the church, the individuals within it, and indeed the entire cosmos. This makes knowledge of God transformative, not just for the private thoughts or the isolated individual, but includes the person's relationships and thus their entire existence. In short, knowledge of God involves a new way of life for the people of God.

5.4.2 Participation involves ethics

Torrance maintained that the incarnation provides the link between knowledge of God and the whole life of humans. Through his vicarious humanity, the Son lived a fully human life of faithfulness to the glory of the Father and embodied a life of redemptive obedience on behalf of humanity.[148] "We are to think of the whole life and activity of Jesus from the cradle to the grave as constituting the vicarious human response to himself which God has freely and unconditionally provided for us."[149] From early in his career, Torrance held that "the irrelevance of theology to life is one of the major problems of philosophical theology."[150] He then found in the incarnation the bridge from truth and thus knowledge of God to the whole of human life:

> If theological activity remains true to the character of Christian truth as Personal Being, as the Word made flesh, then it ought to be quite as relevant to life as the Word is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh in Jesus. The astonishing thing about Christian Truth is that it has immediate relevance to every human situation (because of the Incarnation) without losing any of its eternal significance. If we insist on universalizing this Christian Truth, thus destroying its historic-event character, then we destroy the very power of Christian Truth for relevance to the world, for we destroy its concrete embodied from – and we shall cudgel our brains in vain to restore the relevance. That we cannot allow ourselves to fall into that impasse [sic]. Christian Truth is

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[147] *The Mediation of Christ*, 1-46; *Incarnation*, 76, 108, 126, 190, 192.

[148] *Incarnation*, 114-29. Gary Deddo gives attention to how the incarnational theology including the vicarious humanity of Christ developed by James B. Torrance and T. F. Torrance grounds the Christian life. See Gary Deddo, "The Christian Life and Our Participation in Christ's Continuing Ministry," in *An Introduction to Torrance Theology: Discovering the Incarnate Saviour*, ed. Gerrit Scott Dawson (London: T& T Clark, 2007), 135-56. On 137: "The legacy of the Torrance theological vision guards against faulty and false foundations for the Christian life and the worship and witness of the Church by grounding the whole of the Christian life in its source. For the life of the Church has but one foundation … That foundation is Jesus Christ himself."

[149] *Mediation of Christ*, 80.

[150] "Theology and Church," 4.

Truth in the form of being after which we were originally created, and though it may often run counter to the form and fashion of this fallen world, it is completely relevant to our genuine existence and life and every concrete situation in which we may find ourselves. Theological Truth cannot be kept apart from life. The Word became flesh: it has something to say to all flesh: it interjects itself into all phases and forms of human activity.[151]

In another of his earliest lectures, Torrance maintained that in the incarnation, truth is "bound up intimately and inseparably to our actual existence, and therefore relevant to every aspect of the life of man. Here we have the Truth which is Eternal, and yet absolutely practical."[152] Torrance used the analogy of an axel which is at the center of the intersection of the spokes of a cart wheel. The axel provides the central orientation, holding together the whole. He concludes that this is how the Word of God and faith-knowledge operate with all systems of thought.[153] Knowledge of God has the potential to affect all forms of knowledge and thus all areas of life.[154] Through the divine-human connection within the incarnation, knowledge of God is connected to all areas of human thought and life, providing a centralizing orientation to ethics. Therefore, it is through union with Christ that we not only participate in the knowledge of God in Christ, but also share in its way of life.

This Christological link which Torrance upheld between knowledge of God and ethics theologically captures what biblical scholars see inherent in the concept of knowledge of God in Scripture. Beginning in the Old Testament, to know God includes seeking God,[155] serving God wholeheartedly,[156] keeping the law,[157] sharing peace with all creation,[158] caring for the poor,[159] demonstrating steadfast love,[160] and

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[151] "Theology and Church," 4-5.

[152] "Theology and Action," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 32.

[153] "Christian Faith," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-1939* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 13.

[154] William J. Abraham describes revelation as a "world-constituting experience" for the believer. He uses the idea of a "threshold" to illustrate how revelation functions. As in coming to the threshold at the top of a mountain, one suddenly gains a new 360-degree view of the countryside. Or crossing the threshold of a house, one can see a new vision inside the house of what could previously not be seen outside the house. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*, 84-86.

[155] Ps. 9:11[10].

[156] 1 Chr. 28:9.

[157] Jer. 31:33-34.

[158] Isa. 11:6-9.

[159] Jer. 22:15-16; Prov. 29:7; Mic. 3:1.

[160] Hos. 2:19-20; 6:6.

living in the fear of God[161] among other worshipful and ethical practices.[162] The knowledge of God according to Old Testament scholars is active, practical and includes obedience.[163] This embodied, obedience-involving notion of knowledge is continued in the New Testament.[164]

There is a close relationship between knowledge of God and obedience in both Old and New Testaments. Some Scriptures imply that knowledge of God leads to obedience[165] while others imply that obedience leads to knowledge of God.[166] Others

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[161] Prov. 2:5.

[162] Terrence E. Fretheim, "ידע," in *New International Dictionary of OT Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. VanGemeren Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 413; R. Bultmann, "γινώσκω," 698; The knowledge of God in the OT "is essentially a communion with God… It is something altogether different from intellectual knowledge: it is a knowledge of the heart and demands man's love (Deut. Vi), its vital demand is walking humbly in the ways of the Lord (Micah vi. 8); it is the recognition of God as God, total surrender to God as the Lord." T. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 128.

[163] "'To know Yahweh' refers to a practical, religo-ethical relationship," according to Bergman and G.J. Botterweck, *"yāda`,"* 469; Knowing God according to the OT is the "first demand of life" (Hos. 6:6; 2:20; 4:1; 5:4; Isa 1:3; Jer. 2:8; 4:22; 31:34), writes T. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 128.

[164] The NT continues the usage of the OT meaning "to know God" which stands for the "acknowledgement of God and of his will (Lk 19:4, 44; Rom 2:18; 1 Cor 1:21; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 4:8f; 1 Thess 4:5; Heb 3:10)." Heinrich Zimmermann, "Knowledge of God in the New Testament," in *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, ed. J.B. Bauer, Vol. 2 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1970), 475; Like the OT, Knowledge of God in the NT "expresses itself in action (e.g. Luke 19:44; Acts 2:36; 2 Pet. 2:20-21; Rev. 2:23)," notes O.A. Piper, "Knowledge," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, Vol. 3 (New York & Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 44; Summarizing the early Christian view of knowledge, R. Bultmann writes, "The Christian view of knowledge is thus largely determined by the OT. An obedient and grateful acknowledgement of the deeds and demands of God is linked with knowledge of God and what He has done and demands," in his article, "γινώσκω," 707; In Paul, knowledge is associated with wisdom (Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 12:8; Col. 1:9; 2:3); "Phrases like 'know God's decree' (Rom. 2:18; Acts 22:14), 'know the law' (Rom. 7:1), 'know God's will' (Rom. 2:18; Acts 22:14), do not imply a merely theoretical knowledge, but the recognition that it applies to the person individually and demands his obedience. (When Paul in Rom. 2:20 calls the law 'the embodiment of knowledge and truth' in his description of the Jew, he implies a clear distinction between existential knowledge and theoretical truth.)" E. Schütz & E.D. Schmitz, "Knowledge," 399; Similarly, A.G. Patzia, "Knowledge," 638-640; As with the OT, for Paul, knowledge of God "involves a willingness to obey (1 Thess 4:5; 2 Thess 1:8; 1 Cor 15:34; 2 Cor 10:5; Col 1:10)," from Ian W. Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 152.

[165] For instance, the writer of Colossians prays for increased knowledge of God so that it may lead to a worthy and fruitful life. "For this reason, since the day we heard you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light" (Col. 1:9-12). Also, Philip. 1:9-10.

[166] For instance, according to the gospel of John, Jesus said, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will know (γνώσεται) whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:17). In line with this perspective, John Calvin wrote, "All right knowledge of God is born of obedience." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* John T. McNeil, eds. (1960; repr. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), I.vi.2.

imply that obedience is internal to the knowledge of God.[167] Still others contend that knowledge of God is evidenced by obedience.[168] For the argument here, it is not necessary to decide precisely how obedience is related to the knowledge of God. It is sufficient to note that according to biblical scholars knowledge of God in Scripture is bound up with a way of life.[169] This is further demonstrated by noting that to *not* know God or to *not* have knowledge of God is to live unjustly, immorally and like the pagans.[170] On the other hand, conversion to the faith is sometimes referred to in the

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[167] For instance, Jeremiah delivers a severe warning addressed to Jehoiakim (Jer 22:15f): "Did not your father eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the Lord." Here justice and particularly concern for the poor is equated with knowledge of God. See G. Johannes Botterweck, "Knowledge of God in the Old Testament," in *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, ed. J.B. Bauer, Vol. 2 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1970), 472-3. Philosopher D.C. Schindler writes, "Any reflection on the epistemology presented in the Bible would be inadequate if it were to fail to recognize that obedience to the law and the active love of neighbor is not simply an external consequence of the knowledge of God, but is in fact *internal* to it. Knowing God and loving God and one's neighbor are in a certain respect one and the same thing." Furthermore, given the relational nature of knowledge of God, Schindler importantly observes, "if truth is not a mere quality, but is a person, then the love in and by which one comes to know the truth is not merely a means to one's intellectual grasp of that truth, but an intrinsic part of that very comprehension." In D.C. Schindler, "Mystery and Mastery: Philosophical Reflections on Biblical Epistemology," 187, 195.

[168] For instance, according to 1 John, knowledge of God is evidenced or demonstrated by keeping God's commandments and living like Christ (1 John 2:3-6), especially the command to love one's neighbor (1 John 2:7-11; 4:7f).

[169] Considering the ethical aspects of knowing in Hebraic thought, Ryan O'Dowd astutely comments, "Knowing is a responsibility as much as it is a process." Ryan O'Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah*, 182. In the NT, it is illustrative that knowledge finds itself among lists of virtues (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Peter 1:5-8), demonstrating that is part of the way of life in Christ. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that 1 Peter 3:7 appeals to husbands to live with their wives *kata gnōsin*, which seems to be more than an appeal to live "considerately" (RSV) or "with understanding" (NEB), but is an appeal to live in consonance with the knowledge of God in Christ in the marriage. R. Bultmann, "γινώσκω," 708. Robert C. Dentan expands, "It is a frequently noted paradox that the nation that gave the Western world its religion had no word for 'religion.' It goes without saying that it had no word for so intellectual a concept as 'theology.'" Dentan contends that the phrases which are functional equivalents for religion and theology in the Old Testament are "the fear of God" and "the knowledge of God." In biblical thought, "the life of man is a single reality – open to God at every point – which cannot be divided into separate, opposing spheres called the religious and the secular. When all of life is religious, there is no need for any special word for religion." Dentan, *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel*, 33-36. In my view, the same could be said for "ethics."

[170] There is theological significance in the phrase "not to know God" in the Old and New Testaments. Concerning the use of the word *yada* in the OT, Terrence E. Fretheim notes that "not to know Yahweh is to be unfaithful, guilty of harlotry, 'sleeping around' with other gods. 'A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD' (Hos 5:4). Though Israel may claim otherwise (Hos 8:2), there is in fact 'no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land' (Hos 4:1)." Fretheim, "ידצ," 413; See also Bergman & J. G. Botterweck, *"yāda`,"* 469; Furthermore, Old Testament prophets attribute Israel's spiritual depletion and exile to the lack of knowledge: Is. 1:3; 5:13; 56:10-11; Jer. 8:7; 9:3, 6; 14:18; Hos. 4:1, 6; 5:4). "When the prophets lament the lack of the knowledge of God, this practically amounts to *apostasy and idolatry* which bring on future evils and punishment… Moral decline is intimately connected with this absence of the knowledge of God." For example: Hos. 4:6, 10; 5:4, 7; 11:2, 5; Is. 1:2, 4; Jer. 2:8; 4:22; 8:5-6. Discussed in G. Johannes Botterweck, "Knowledge of God," 473; O.A. Piper writes, "Israel's lack of knowledge is not

New Testament as "coming to the knowledge of God."[171] Within its narrative framework, knowledge of God according to both Old and New Testaments includes ethics or a way of life.[172] Though Torrance does not locate ethics within the concept of knowledge of God by looking at the use of the related terms within Scripture, he does maintain that ethics are part of the knowledge of God by virtue of the incarnation, providing the perfect embodiment of the knowledge of God in a way of life. Torrance's ethical discussions are limited, yet to extend his Trinitarian framework faithfully, we conclude that participation in the knowledge of God involves a way of life.

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theoretical ignorance, but rather failure to practice the filial relationship in which they stand with God" (3:43). O.A. Piper, "Knowledge," 43; Likewise, there is a link between ignorance and sin in the New Testament. Rom. 1:21-25; 1 Cor. 2:8. In both Old and New Testaments, to not know God is to live as the pagans and the Gentiles: Jer. 10:25; 31:34; Gal. 4:8; Titus 1:16; 1 Thes. 4:5; 2 Thes. 1:8; Heb. 8:11. Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *TDNT*, Vol. V, Trans. By Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), S.v. "οιδα," pp. 117-118; Commenting on the use of the word *agnoeō* in the New Testament, Schütz & E.D. Schmitz note that it can mean to not understand, to not grasp, not be informed, and includes lack of responsive obedience. "It never means merely a lack of intellectual knowledge which can be removed by a neutral statement of facts. It is used in the OT sense. This lack of knowledge can be removed only by knowledge intimately linked with an existential recognition and acceptance." It can mean "a failure to know in the sense of a disobedient closing of the mind to the revealing word of God (Acts 13:27; Rom. 10:3)… Ignorance and disobedience are here [Rom. 10:3] used as parallels; ignorance is the guilty turning away from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ." E. Schütz & E.D. Schmitz, "Knowledge," 406-7.

[171] 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 3:7; cf. Heb. 10:26; 1 Tim. 5:3; 2 Tim. 2:25; Tit. 1:1; 2 Pet. 2:21; cf. Col. 3:10. The term *epignosis* became almost a technical term for conversion in the NT according to R. Bultmann, "γινώσκω," 707.

[172] Considering the foundations of ancient Hebrew epistemology in the Pentateuch, Ryan O'Dowd concludes, "We have found that Israel's way of knowing is grounded in a storied, ethical, and religious way of life. *Knowing*, in fact, is a matter of divine-imitation where creating, or imagining, is at one and the same time obeying God and knowing God. The laws thus fit naturally into this ethico-epistemological nexus; obeying God's commands is to be like him and know him." Ryan O'Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah*, 23-4; Michael V. Fox argues for the unity of knowledge and ethics in the Proverbs In "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," *JBL* 113, no. 2 (1994): 238; Cited in Ryan P. O'Dowd, "A Chord of Three Strands: Epistemology in Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes" in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God,* ed. Mary Healy and Robin Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 69; On the relationship between Pauline ethics and epistemology, Mary Healy, "Knowledge of the Mystery: A Study of Pauline Epistemology," in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God,* ed. Mary Healy and Robin Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 146-148. On 147: "For Paul it is inconceivable that a living contact with Christ would not increasingly shape a person's whole personality, leading to a perceptible effect on one's outward conduct. To be 'full of goodness' is inseparable from being 'filled with all knowledge' of God and his saving work (Rom 15:14)." On the ethical purpose for the knowledge of God in the gospel of John, Cornelius Bennema, "Christ, the Spirit and the Knowledge of God: A Study in Johannine Epistemology," in *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God,* ed. Mary Healy and Robin Parry (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 129; "The knowing of God is an act that includes the whole of one's life, unto its existential extremities, and both gives and demands that this life be properly ordered." D.C. Schindler, "Mystery and Mastery," 187; Also, E. Schütz & E.D. Schmitz, "Knowledge," 396.

5.4.3 Knowledge and ethics in the postmodern world

In the postmodern world, the social and ethical dimensions of knowledge have been rediscovered. In the Cartesian world, knowledge is attained by objective views "from nowhere," disconnected from the person and her relationships. It is a product of a "thinking thing" from a foundation of indubitable ideas intended to correspond with the external world. However, the postmodern world has reclaimed context, embodiment and social practices. For instance, Ludwig Wittgenstein argued how "forms of life" give rise to the many uses of language. For Wittgenstein, the speaking of a language is an activity that emerges from and is embedded within a culture's non-linguistic activities and thus must be understood within that context.[173] Fergus Kerr observed that theorists of meaning with a realist orientation focus upon indicative sentences where language is the attempt to represent reality. Yet, given other types of sentences, for instance questions and commands, reminds us as Wittgenstein did, that language is part of a multiplicity of forms and actions which "rehabilitate[s] the self as a responsive agent in vital connection with others of the same kind" instead of a "detached spectator in the world."[174] Thus, for Wittgenstein, an embodied, social way of life is the given. It is only as participants in a language-game, a way of being together and its set of practices, that humans can use language and have knowledge.

Three other recent philosophers considered postmodern in some sense have emphasized the social and ethical dimensions of human language and knowledge. First, central to his philosophical and historical works concerning healthcare, psychiatry, prison reform, sexuality and social ethics in general, Michel Foucault has argued that knowledge is conceived and defined within a nexus of social power which

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[173] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. by P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, 4th ed. (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Backwell, 2009), 14-15. Wittgenstein gives many examples in, *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations" Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 127-85. For discussion, see Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 28-31, 64-76, 132-6; David Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1983), 22-49; Naomi Scheman, "Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein,* ed. Hans Sluga and David G. Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 383-410; Thomas Morawetz, *Wittgenstein and Knowledge: The Importance of* On Certainty (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1978), 5-33; "Form of Life" in Hans-Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Reference, 1996), 124-29.

[174] Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein*, 134.

he called "power-knowledge relations."[175] For Foucault, power is not a possession but a relation between persons and institutions from whose practices knowledge emerges. As he put it, "power produces knowledge… power and knowledge directly imply one another… there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations."[176] Second, not without controversy but with a wide impact, Thomas Kuhn promoted a more complex view of the history and methodology of science than a strict empiricism had by drawing attention to the role of the social and psychological dimensions of the scientific community in the development of its theories and "paradigms."[177] Third, Alasdair MacIntyre has underscored the role of historical communities and tradition in ethics and human reasoning in general.[178] Practices within a tradition help to form virtues which assist the development and articulation of knowledge. The place of virtues in the development of knowledge has been championed within the field of virtue epistemology, giving attention to the affect of character upon epistemic activities.[179] The irreducibly lived and embodied

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[175] On power-knowledge relations, see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Tavistock, 1972), esp. 178-99; *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Sussex, UK: Harvester Press, 1980), esp. 55-62, 109-33; *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (1977; repr. New York: Vintage, 1995); *The Politics of Truth*, trans. L. Hochroch and C. Porter (1997; repr. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), esp. 147-167. For a good summary of this theme, see Tony Schirato, Geoff Danaher, and Jenn Webb, *Understanding Foucault: A Critical Introduction* (London, UK: SAGE Publications, 2012), 42-66. For discussion, see Joseph Ruse, "Power/Knowledge" in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 92-114. For theological engagement of this theme, see Jonathan Tran, *Foucault and Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 17-47; Jeremy R. Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual corporality and political spirituality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 109-141.

[176] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27-28.

[177] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Two further developments in the philosophy of science after Kuhn accenting the social and historical dimension were provided by Imre Lakatos and Paul Feyerabend. Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programes" in *Imre Lakatos: The Methodology of Scientific Research Programes (Philosophical Papers I)*, ed. John Worrall and G. Currie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 8-101; Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: New Left Books, 1977). Yet, defending the rationality of science in response to Kuhn, Lakatos and Feyerabend, see W. H. Newton-Smith, *The Rationality of Science* (London: Routledge, 1981), 102-124. Introductions to the discussion concerning the place of Kuhn in the philosophy of science include Alexander Bird, *Philosophy of Science* (1998; repr. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2002), 275-285; James Ladyman, *Understanding Philosophy of Science* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2002), 96-105, 114-122.

[178] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2007); *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1988).

[179] Ernest Sosa, *Knowing Full Well* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford

dimensions of human knowing have been important among postmodern epistemologies.

Theologians influenced by this postmodern theme have reflected upon how embodiment, forms of life, practices and thus ethics give rise to knowledge.[180] Four noteworthy examples include Nicholas Lash who gives emphasis to the practices in the Christian tradition, suggesting that "problems of knowledge are problems of ethics."[181] Beginning his systematic theology with ethics, James McClendon accentuates how the shape of the common life of the body of Christ gives rise to the community practices of doctrine and witness.[182] For John Howard Yoder, ethics are socially embodied, hermeneutics are located within a people and epistemology is within its body politic. In particular, nonviolence is an epistemology, for Christian knowing and understanding is to resist the temptation to rely on coercion or power over others.[183] The Latin liberation theologian, Gustavo Gutiérrez contends that

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University Press, 2007); Michael Brady and Duncan Pritchard, eds. *Moral and Epistemic Virtues* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology. Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998); "The Place of *Phronesis* in the Methodology of Theology," in *Philosophy and Theological Discourse,* ed. Stephen T. Davis (London: MacMillan, 1997), 204-223; Linda Trinkhaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind. An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jonathon Kvanvig, *The Intellectual Virtues and the Life of the Mind* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992).

[180] Terrence W. Tilley in his typology of postmodern theology names "communal praxis" as his fourth type, discussing Gustavo Gutiérrez and James W. McClendon in chapters 8 and 10. See his *Postmodern Theologies: The Challenge of Religious Diversity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 115-128, 142-152. Also on the postmodern emphasis upon the context of practices for theology, see Nancey Murphy and Brad J. Kallenberg, "Anglo-American Postmodernity: A Theology of Communal Practice," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology,* ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26-41; David S. Cunningham, "The Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 199-201.

[181] Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflections on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1990), 275. On 276: "In other words, it is only through the redemptive transformation of our human practices that we can acquire some sense of what the truth of these images might be when used as metaphors for our relation to the unknown God. Perhaps we might say that the only images we have of God are not the images that his people *use,* but the images that they *are.*" See also, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 115, 155; *Holiness, Speech and Silence: Reflections on the Question of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 55-6; *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (London: SCM, 1986), 95-138.

[182] In particular, see the sections "Why Ethics Comes First," in James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 41-46; and "What is Doctrine?" in his *Systematic Theology: Doctrine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 21-62. For a fuller discussion of McClendon's epistemology, influenced by J.L. Austen, see James Wm. McClendon, Jr. and James M. Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, Rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1994).

[183] John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984), 15-101; Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics," in *The Royal Priesthood* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 102-126; Yoder, "Walk and Word: The Alternatives to

theology is "critical reflection on praxis," beginning with the lived experience of the poor and oppressed.[184]

A postmodern theme from these philosophers and theologians is the social and practical embeddedness of knowledge. Practices, ways of life, and language games, performed in relationship help to inform and explicate knowledge. Participation in knowledge is bound up with a way of life and reciprocally, ways of living include ways of knowing. Thus, participation in the knowledge of God not only forms a way of life, but also participation in a way of life helps to clarify, explain and articulate knowledge of God. This echoes what Frederick D. Aquino has called a "patristic virtue epistemology."[185]

Torrance himself did not emphasize this postmodern theme, but he at least recognized the influence of the lives of the community of knowers upon the formulation of knowledge of God without compromising its divine origin or the priority of grace. As Torrance clearly put it,

> It is only as our minds are open and adjusted to God in accordance with his revealed nature, and only as we respond to him in faith, obedience and worship, that we can think and speak of God with the kind of precision that is appropriate to his divine nature. Piety and precision, godliness and exactness belong together and condition one another, for knowledge of God arises and takes shape in our mind under the determination of his revealed nature, and is maintained in the experience of worship, prayer, holiness and godliness. Thus empirical

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Methodologism," in *Theology without Foundations,* ed. Stanley Haeurwas, Nancey Murphy and Mark Nation (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 77-90; Christian E. Early with Ted G. Grimsrud, "John Howard Yoder on Diversity as a Gift: Epistemology and Eschatology," in *A Pacifist Way of Knowing: John Howard Yoder's Nonviolent Epistemology,* ed. Christian E. Early and Ted G. Grimsrud (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010), 133-54.

[184] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, ed. and trans. C. Inda and J. Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973), 6.

[185] The formation of character for knowledge of God, or the vision of God, is a theme that can be found in many patristic writers. Frederick D. Aquino, "The Healing of Cognition in Deification: Toward a Patristic Virtue Epistemology," in *Immersed in the Life of God: The Healing Resources of the Christian Faith,* ed. Paul L. Gavrilyuk, Douglas M. Koskela, and Jason E. Vickers (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 123-142. I recognize that most Reformed theologians do not put the development of character or anything before the reception of knowledge of God by grace and likewise do not typically engage the topic of virtues. Though an engagement with Augustine could help, who maintained the priority of grace and advocated the development of virtues, space did not permit me to expand this important concern. In the following paragraphs, I mention how Torrance discussed "dispositions of mind" as faithful response and responsible participation in the knowledge of God.

and theoretical, religious and theological elements blend indivisibly
together in theological understanding and formulation.[186]

For Torrance, as we respond to God with the divinely-provided actions, we are
enabled by the Spirit to conceptualize and articulate the knowledge of God in more
fitting ways. In obedient communion, important aspects of our knowledge of God
develop.[187] Torrance communicates this epistemic function of faithful human
response in various ways. He writes, "our human reason becomes adapted and
adjusted to knowledge of God in accordance with his nature" and we are brought into
more accurate knowledge of the Triune God.[188] We become "inwardly so adapted" in
order to learn "how to think worthily of God, that is, in a godly way appropriate to
God."[189] Our minds are "tuned" and "lifted up to a level of spiritual perception and
theological judgment appropriate for the knowledge of God." [190] We are "given the
capacity for forming theological concepts that answer faithfully to the revealed nature
of God."[191] In union with Christ, humans actively participate in the refinement of the
knowledge of God "from below" in worshipful acts and dispositions of mind in a
community of reciprocity with God.[192] From an early lecture, "knowing God brings
with it a necessary conformity to the object known."[193] This matrix of responsive,
mind-influencing dispositions is at work in the development of theological
knowledge.[194] They contribute to theological understanding in bringing knowledge of

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[186] *TF*, 54.

[187] Torrance approving notes the role of responsive obedience in developing knowledge of
God for Calvin in *GR*, 31-2: "For Calvin this involved also an acutely personal relation with God, for
God addresses us personally in His Word and summons us to make a personal response in obedient
love, and it is out of that obedience to God's self-revelation that our knowledge grows and deepens."

[188] *TF*, 56-57.

[189] *RET*, 48.

[190] *RST*, 121.

[191] *RST*, 122.

[192] *TF*, 43.

[193] "Knowledge of God," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript
Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 11.

[194] Beyond theological knowledge, Torrance recognized early in his career that "there is no
such thing as impartial thought" and that the "conclusions of our abstract thinking do not really arise
from the logical basis on which they seem to repose." Instead, "they come from something much
deeper, a certain habit and set of mind which gives these arguments their force." "Theology and
Action," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special
Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 10.

God to conceptualization and articulation.[195] These responses may be construed as *participatory epistemic practices.* These practices are part of the "responsible participation of the person as an active relational agent in acts of understanding and knowing" and thus make a real contribution in the person and mind of the knower for Torrance.[196] Torrance then went on to rehearse numerous actions of a person involved in knowing: thinking, meaning, interpreting, understanding, appraising arguments, correlating claims with reality, discerning patterns, submitting one's mind to reality, and responsibly committing to the claims of the reality.[197] It is significant to note here that personal knowledge includes various epistemic actions that involve the whole person which, Torrance contended, are to be engaged responsibly. Persons have choices as to *how* they will participate in the many epistemic activities involved in personal knowledge.[198] Thus, for Torrance the personal dimension of knowledge includes many active aspects involved in human knowing. These active ways of participating can be engaged responsibly or irresponsibly, helpfully or unhelpfully, suitably or ill-suitably for the development and refinement of knowledge. Likewise, with the many "acts of understanding and knowing" involved in the knowledge of God, there are responsible and irresponsible kinds of participation. The many active, human components which are part of participation in the knowledge of God can be engaged well or poorly, faithfully or unfaithfully, suitable with the nature of what is known or ill-suited. Because knowledge includes person-involving actions, the moral dimension of the person is included.

While knowledge of God cannot be reduced to either practices, language, relations or a way of life, nevertheless knowledge of God includes them as part of the whole complex of knowing.[199] So once again, knowledge of God is not reducible to one basic, isolated dimension, but is more like a complexity, which includes not only the

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[195] Torrance says of theological statements that they "are progressively deepened and clarified through the Church's worship and dialogue and repentant thinking within the whole communion of saints." *GR*, 190. More recently, William J. Abraham contends, "Through the grace of God, spiritual exercises help to focus the attention and to purify the doors of perception, and thus enable us to see God." *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*, 76.

[196] *RET*, 46.

[197] *RET*, 45-46. Also, *BSCL*, 141-42; *CTSC*, 66-67.

[198] Torrance credits Martin Buber for the rediscovery of the role of decision in theology in an early lecture, "Theology and Action," *The Auburn Lectures, 1938-39* (The Thomas F. Torrance Manuscript Collection. Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary Library), 4.

[199] Jones, *Reductionism*, 264-71.

various dimensions of the person (5.3), but also the relational, ethical dimensions of knowledge (5.4). This complex includes the knowing person, God, and the knowing relationship which is by participation, involving the whole person and a way of life.

In demonstrating that the knowledge of God is participatory, this section has located the bridge from Torrance's Trinitarian epistemology to ethics. As mentioned in the introduction, there have been very few discussions about ethics in the writings of T. F. Torrance.[200] This chapter does not construct the bridge, for participation in the knowledge of God already contains ethical dimensions. Neither does this chapter cross the bridge to explore the ethical or practical terrain. Rather, the thesis has unearthed the bridge, having traversed Torrance's epistemological landscape and located the connection near the center of his theological epistemology, within the nature and purposes of the Triune God.

Recovering the ethical dimension of theological eistemology is a necessary component to overcoming reductionist notions of knowledge and for knowledge of God to be viable in the postmodern age. As Justin Thacker has argued, the main reasons postmodern philosophers rejected the Christian narrative has "not to do with its perceived lack of epistemological warrant, but rather because of the social ethic (or lack of one) that it generates."[201] We agree that the ethical dimensions of the knowledge of God need to be embraced as an essential part of participation in that knowledge for the postmodern context.

We turn now to the conclusion to draw together the themes from the previous chapters' engagement and assessment of Torrance's Trinitarian epistemology in order to summarize a faithful and viable vision of participation in the knowledge of God for the postmodern, scientific age.

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[200] One exception is the two brief discussions of Paul D. Molnar. His discussion primarily aims to guard ethics against Pelagian tendencies by discussing the ethical implications of justification by faith within Torrance's theology in *Incarnation & Resurrection: Toward a Contemporary Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 100-104, 144-151. Beyond this concern, brief mention of ethics within Torrance can be found also in Molnar's book, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 102, 151, 168, 348-49.

[201] Justin Thacker, *Postmodernism and the Ethics of Theological Knowledge* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 37, 5-36.

CONCLUSION

BEYOND REDUCTIONISM: PARITICIPATING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN A POSTMODERN, SCIENTIFIC AGE

6.1 Introduction

We began by discussing how modern reductionist accounts of epistemology have atomized and deformed notions of the knowledge of God. We proposed that through an engagement with the Trinitarian epistemology of T. F. Torrance, this thesis would provide a more holistic, complex vision of participation in the knowledge of God that is viable in the postmodern, scientific age (Chapter One). This study then engaged the basic dynamics of knowledge of God for Torrance. Through that engagement, we concluded that knowledge of God can be a disciplined form of knowledge, but is best not characterized as "scientific" to avoid possible reductionisms in the contemporary context. We also concluded that knowledge of God is shaped by its distinctive ontology and thus most centrally Trinitarian. Furthermore, through the Son and Spirit, we maintained that knowledge of God is creation-situated. We argued that while such knowledge involves human reason and concepts, it is not reducible to reason. We affirmed that knowledge of God is transcendent, going beyond human concepts and language. Nevertheless, we argued that such knowledge is realist, providing actual knowledge while noting the constructive role of human language and concepts (Chapter Two). At the heart of these epistemological dynamics is the determinative object of knowledge, the Triune God. We agreed with Torrance that the persons-in-relationship or "onto-relations" of the Triune God are supremely important for a doctrine of God (Chapter Three). Continuing within his Trinitarian framework, we argued that the ontological Trinity and the onto-relations within give knowledge of God its personal and relational character (Chapter Four). Likewise, we argued that the Trinitarian shaping of epistemology also gives knowledge of God its participatory character which involves the whole person and a way of life (Chapter Five). This vision of participation extends the Trinitarian epistemology of Torrance with priorities to which his theological writings clearly point but which he himself did not develop.

In this conclusion, we will first pull together the threads of my critique and expansion of Torrance's Trinitarian epistemology to summarize three key aspects of a faithful and viable vision of participating in the knowledge of God for the postmodern, scientific age (6.2). This summary is not sequentially-organized,

unfolding the argument of each chapter as in the previous paragraph. Instead, this summary is thematically-organized to give a coherent vision of epistemic participation in the contemporary context. Second, we will note a few implications of this epistemological vision of participation in the knowledge of God (6.3). To discuss these implications, we return to the three contextual levels referenced in the introduction (1.3.1-1.3.3). These implications, both theoretical and practical, suggest the need for further research. Yet first, we begin with a systematic, three-point summary of the notion of participation in the knowledge of God developed through this engagement with Torrance's epistemology.

6.2 Retrospect

First, a faithful and viable notion of the knowledge of God needs to maintain both its ontological distinctiveness and its similarities with other forms of knowledge. To speak of participating in the knowledge of God in the contemporary era, one must admit that this type of knowledge, if valid, is in some ways unique. While a reductionist framework will attempt to explain knowledge of God on more basic levels, Torrance has helped us to recognize—along with other philosophers of science and theologians engaged in the science and religion dialogue—that reality is stratified or multi-layered. Recognizing ontological depth and pluralism gives rise to the possibility of differing epistemologies. Respect for multiple strata of reality and their consequent differing epistemological methods directly counters reductionist claims, allowing ontology to determine epistemology instead of the reverse. This allows for the possibility of knowledge of God to be understood on its own terms without either a necessary recourse to a lower level or isolating the discussion to its own intellectual ghetto. Thus, knowledge of God flows from its distinctive ontology, the ontological or immanent Trinity, which shapes its unique epistemology. Consequently, theology can be conceived as a *scientia* or discipline, but not as a science in the contemporary use of the term because of theology's unique subject. This preserves the distinctiveness and integrity of theology, guarding it against reductionism.

Nevertheless, while the source of this knowledge is ontologically distinct, Christian theology maintains that the transcendent, Triune God has definitively self-

revealed within the actualities of the space-time universe in the incarnation of Jesus and through the Holy Spirit. The incarnation holds together both the transcendent and creation-situated dynamics of theological epistemology while the Spirit enables human participation in both. Consequently, because knowledge of God is creation-situated, it has many of the same characteristics and boundaries of other types of knowledge within the world. The postmodern age has highlighted many of the constraints and lower-level factors which contribute to knowledge. We recall three postmodern epistemological themes encountered in this study. One postmodern epistemological theme is that knowledge is particular and contextual, moving beyond the supposed objective "views from nowhere" of foundationalism. Knowledge of God is also particular, given through the self-revelation of God among the people of Israel and uniquely in Jesus. While knowledge of God is contextualized among the various cultures in which the people of God inhabit, it is not without universal intent. One of the broadest contexts from which to consider the knowledge of God is the space-time universe. As Torrance argued, this makes possible a revised notion of natural theology, not autonomous from but grounded in God's self-revelation. Furthermore, it means that knowledge of God can find correlates with the empirical world. A second postmodern epistemological theme—including and extending beyond the sciences—is fallibilism. Knowledge of God, though of a transcendent origin communicated via revelation, involves human conceptualization. Whatever is known in the world cannot be fully captured by human knowledge. All creaturely reality transcends full cognitive grasp and God transcends creation. There is a real ontological difference between human concepts and reality as well as between creature and Creator. Thus, there is an inherent fallibilism and revisability within human knowledge, especially knowledge of God. A third postmodern theme is that human knowledge of reality is language-ridden and thus in some measure socially-constructed. The Trinity is not only important in enabling participation from the "top down" by self-revelation in Jesus, but also from the "bottom up" through the Spirit at work within God's people. The social and constructive elements of human knowing are part of that participation which the postmodern world helps us to see, and from a Trinitarian perspective, can embrace. These three postmodern themes—particularity, fallibility, and linguistic-constructivity—characterize human knowledge, including

knowledge of God. However, knowledge of God is not reducible to these dynamics. *Therefore, this thesis concludes that the transcendence and ontological distinctiveness of knowledge of God guards it against reductionism. Yet, recognizing that knowledge of God is creation-situated through the Son and Spirit, it finds parallels, analogies and consonance with other types of knowledge in the world.* Both dimensions are needed for the notion of participation in the knowledge of God to be faithful and viable in the contemporary postmodern, scientific age.

Second, knowledge of God is well-conceived as personal, relational and participatory forms of knowledge. We return to the ontological fount which forms the distinctive nature of the knowledge of God, the Triune God. This was not only the heart of Torrance's theological epistemology, but informs what is distinctively important about knowledge of God for the postmodern, scientific era. This thesis argued that the personal, relational and participatory forms of knowledge of God are derived from the personal-relational nature of the Triune God. Beginning with the personal form of knowledge, it is widely recognized that the subjective dimensions of knowledge have become particularly important in the postmodern era in response to the objectivist notions of the modern era. It is a person who knows, not simply a mind, brain, or reason. We explored the various dimensions of the person engaged in epistemic activity. This was further explored when we considered the participatory form of knowledge. Yet, in the personal form of knowledge, we argued that knowledge cannot be reduced to impersonal, formal relations between objects— whether scientific or theological knowledge—but involves a person, a whole person. Next, we recall the relational form of knowledge. The postmodern world is less concerned with divisive and reductionist categories and more concerned with discovering intricate and complex relationships. The scientific world from quantum theory to chaos theory—both micro-level and macro-sciences—are helping us to comprehend the webs of relationality that comprise our entangled world. Furthermore, knowledge itself emerges within a relationship between knowers and what is known. Though the nature of human knowledge is ontologically distinct from reality, there is a real relationship between them that gives rise to knowledge. Additionally, a postmodern emphasis is upon the networks of relationships or traditions which assist the development of knowledge. This can lead to reducing knowledge to some form of

social constructivism. While embracing the social coefficient of all knowledge, the notion of commitment to reality, inherent in Torrance's (and Polanyi's) realism, can serve as an important virtuous intellectual practice to avoid the pitfalls of subjectivism and relativism. Nevertheless, we argued that in multiple ways, knowledge is relational, including knowledge of God. Lastly, we have argued that knowledge of God is participatory, engaging the whole person and their relationships just described. Moving beyond reductionist anthropology means that such engagement involves the whole person, entailing the multi-dimensional faculties which enable humans to know. To recognize every emergent level of the human involved in knowing includes biological, psychological, social, ethical and spiritual dimensions. We maintained that human knowledge is a complexity, emerging from the manifold human faculties that enable knowledge. Hence, theological epistemology can benefit from neuroscience, evolutionary biology, psychology as well as theological and ethical reflection upon these and other scientific disciplines. Furthermore, because participation involves the whole person and their relationships, it also involves a way of life. Knowledge implicates life and reciprocally ways of living inform ways of knowing. The social and ethical dimensions which give rise to and result from specific types of knowledge are particularly important for the postmodern, scientific age. *Therefore, this thesis concludes that it is an ontologically faithful analogy to the Triune God and helpful in the postmodern, scientific age to conceive knowledge of God as personal, relational and participatory.*

Third, knowledge of God is like a multi-dimensional complexity, involving God, humans and the relationship between them. Knowledge of God in particular cannot be squeezed into a reductionist framework without deforming its structure and purpose. To begin, theological epistemology will be as whole as its undergirding theology. Neglect either a dimension of who God has revealed himself to be or the soteriological purposes of that self-revelation, and the nature and purpose of knowledge of God will be diminished. Likewise, theological epistemology will be as whole as its concomitant anthropology. Leave out a dimension of the human person, and an important aspect of human knowing is neglected. Lastly, theological epistemology will be as whole as the epistemic relationship between God and humanity. Overlook the mutual self-giving of God in Christ for humanity and humans

in response to God—both exemplified supremely in Christ—and knowledge of God will be moderated in form and function. Thus, knowledge of God cannot be reduced to either one aspect or activity of God, one dimension of human personhood, or one component of the knowing relationship. Each of these three realities and their interconnectedness is inexhaustibly complex. In order to properly conceive of the knowledge of God, the esemplastic skill of, as Torrance put it, "thinking conjunctively," "integrative knowing," or alternatively, thinking holistically about complexities is needed. *Therefore, to move beyond modernity's image of knowledge as a building built from a foundation (Descartes) and postmodernity's image of a web or net (W.V.O Quine), this thesis proposes the image of knowledge as participation in a personal-relational complexity, emergent from the multi-dimensional knowing person in relationship with the ontologically distinct other.* Knowledge involves the multi-dimensional knower, the multi-faceted known and the complex, dynamic relationship that holds them together. The use of person, relationship and complexity emerged from this engagement of theological epistemology, but has potential for other areas of epistemology, particularly in the postmodern, scientific age. With this summary of a viable notion of participation in the knowledge of God in mind, we close by noting a few implications and possibilities for future research.

6.3 Prospects

This notion of participation in the knowledge of God that has developed through our engagement with the Trinitarian epistemology of T. F. Torrance has many implications, both theoretical and practical. While each of these implications requires further development, they are worth mentioning here in the conclusion as containing potential for future research. To organize these implications, we return to the three contextual levels of conversation concerning the knowledge of God mentioned in the introductory chapter, the global and historical conversation (1.3.1), the Charismatic-Evangelical and Reformed theological contexts (1.3.2), and those scholars involved in T. F. Torrance scholarship (1.3.3). The focus of this thesis has been on the historical conversation concerning knowledge of God and thus this contextual level provides the most implications. Beginning with this contextual level, we will note seven implications which have potential for future research.

First, the model of complexity could help provide other analogies between epistemological methods or ways of knowing between theology and science. Torrance interacted with the epistemological developments that occurred within the sciences from the early to mid-twentieth century. Since then, there have been other epistemological developments among the sciences and the philosophy of science which could be engaged. While Alister E. McGrath has taken Torrance's project forward, interacting with the critical realism of Roy Bhaskar, there are other epistemological developments alongside critical realism that need exploration. For instance, the many sciences which have a systems or complexity methodology may bring further analogous epistemological insight for the knowledge of God.

Second, there are many analogies for theological epistemology with the epistemologies at work within the humanities. As Andrew Louth argued, epistemological analogies from the humanities may find closer resonance with theology than those of the sciences. While Hans Urs von Balthasar has insightfully used beauty, goodness and truth to organize his systematic theology operating within a framework of the *analogia entis*, more work could be done from the framework of the *analogia fidei* to find resonance between the ways of knowing in theology and the humanities, particularly those ways which could be considered personal, relational or participatory.

Third, a personal, relational, and participatory epistemology alludes to inter-disciplinary possibilities for the fields of theology, ethics and spirituality. Currently, the disciplines have well-intended boundaries which serve to keep the respective discussions on task, pursuing their own sets of questions. Nevertheless, within a complex framework, theology is necessarily intertwined with ethics and spirituality. To be true to the interconnected nature of the subject-matter, the lines which separate the disciplines should be further complemented by the lines which connect them. Consequently, Christian theologians, ethicists and those who study spirituality should at least be aware of the interrelations which call for attention and be open to further inter-disciplinary exploration.

Fourth, this thesis suggests the need for further discussion concerning theological method. Torrance was concerned with the integration of the form and methods of theology with the nature of the object or subject-matter. His focus was

upon the utilization of fitting intellectual methods. Yet, given the participatory nature of the knowledge of God, the whole person and life of the knower may need to be considered in discussions of theological method. Human beings are not autonomous minds, somehow thinking without passion, will or relationships. Hence, theological methods need to recognize further the dimensions which inform and direct human reasoning. More personal than the postmodern acknowledgement of perspectivalism which acknowledges the (historical, cultural and social) particularity of knowledge and more local than the contextual approaches which give attention to the culture (Black, Hispanic, Latin American, etc.) or gender (Feminist) from which one theologizes, such an approach could incorporate the significance of the lives of theologians, including perhaps their loyalties and commitments, communities of faith, and relevant practices as a formative aspect in the theology which they construct. While this may be generally recognized at some level in discussions of "praxis" and "experience" in theological method, there is still need for wider acceptance and engagement of the personal, ethical and spiritual dynamics which often drive theological methods. Further exploration is needed, not to centralize these personal factors, but to recognize and thus engage those factors from a Trinitarian framework with a Christological center and a Spirit-guided engagement with the Scriptures, tradition, and experiences of the church within its space-time and various-cultured context.

Fifth, this engagement of Torrance on the knowledge of God carries implications for those institutions which aim to cultivate and develop knowledge of God. If the nature of the subject-matter determines how we know it, then the nature of the knowledge of God should play a role in the ends and means of theological institutions. Epistemology brings implications for most all of the activities of the church, including its preaching, teaching, evangelism, education, and spiritual formation. The conception of knowledge undergirds and shapes how each of these activities are conceived and conducted. Likewise, there are implications for the institutions which train the leaders of the church, including its theologians. Given the person-involving and life-engaging dimensions of participation in the knowledge of God, theological institutions should take into account the overall formation of

persons-in-community in their programs. The relationship between epistemology and the aims and methods of theological institutions needs further exploration.[1]

Sixth, the ethical dimensions of knowledge are quite significant for the postmodern world with its concern for the personal, social, and political agendas behind or within claims to knowledge, especially knowledge of God. Postmodern philosophers such as Richard Rorty and Jean-Francŏis Lyotard have exposed modernity's strong foundationalist epistemology with its claims of objective truth and universal knowledge used to construct and maintain the power structures within Western society. There is a potent stream of ethical concern concerning power and knowledge that runs from Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" and his "genealogy of morality" to Michel Foucault's discussions of power and his "genealogy of knowledge." The postmodern ethos of Western culture on the academic and popular levels has palpable unease with authoritative claims to knowledge, and particularly claims concerning knowledge of God and the social agendas latent within them. Explorations of the ethics of knowledge of God could bring to light the many ethical and social implications of such knowledge, demonstrating consonance with the knowledge revealed in Christ who gave himself for the good of the world.[2]

Seventh, notions of knowledge of God raise not only ethical questions in the postmodern, scientific age, but more specifically the question of human flourishing. What is the relationship between participation in the knowledge of God and human well-being? This question and related ones have begun to be re-opened by theologians such as Ellen T. Charry as well as philosophers and various natural and social scientists who work within the interdisciplinary field of the science of well-being and

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[1] The conception of knowledge of God and its relationship to theological education has received attention in the last thirty years, seminally influenced by Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). A discussion in response to issues raised by Farley includes Charles M. Wood, *Vision and Discernment: An Orientation in Theological Study* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1985). The Association of Theological Schools' journal, *Theological Education*, frequently broaches the topic of reform, engaging the topic of epistemology. One published dissertation that engages Torrance's epistemology and the education ministry of the church is Robert K. Martin, *The Incarnate Ground of Christian Faith: Toward a Christian Theological Epistemology for the Educational Ministry of the Church* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998).

[2] One recent example, engaging the thought of Rorty and Lyotard and concluding with an ethic of love rooted in the Trinity, is Justin Thacker, *Postmodernism and the Ethics of Theological Knowledge* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007). Engagement with other postmodern thinkers (i.e. Nietzsche and Foucault) to answer their ethical concerns with the ethics inherent in knowledge of God is needed.

related fields.[3] This exploration could benefit greatly by theologians who are engaged in the dialogue between theology and the sciences, particularly those who are willing to engage in inter-disciplinary research and who are sensitive to complexity or systems theories to consider the numerous factors which contribute to human flourishing from a theological perspective.

Now we turn from the historical context to the more localized context of Charismatic-Evangelical and Reformed theology to mention two implications for each of these streams within Protestantism. What can Evangelicals, particularly Pentecostal and Charismatic Evangelicals, learn from an engagement with the Trinitarian epistemology of T. F. Torrance? The vision of participation in the knowledge of God that has emerged through this assessment suggests three implications, one more objective-oriented, another more subjective-oriented and the last includes both. First, this notion of participation can provide a Trinitarian framework for the Christological approaches to knowledge of God encouraged by Evangelical scholars[4] and the Pneumatological approaches promoted by Pentecostal scholars.[5] Christian theology's doctrine of God is uniquely Trinitarian and methodologically one does not need to choose between the Son and the Spirit in considering issues such as the knowledge of God, discernment or theological method. Rather, future research needs to equally consider the three distinct persons-in-relationship and their unity-in-diversity within the Triune God in developing these and other doctrinal themes.

Second, for Pentecostal and Charismatic Evangelicals, the question is often raised, "How are we to discern the presence of the Spirit?" Instead of looking for a particular sign or demonstration within an individual, Christian community or among

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[3] Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. 3-32, 233-45. See especially her full treatment, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). Also, see the entire issue dedicated to the topic of human flourishing, *Fuller Theology, News and Notes* (Spring: 2010): 1-31. For an introduction to how evolutionary biology, neuroscience, psychology, and sociology are contributing to the "science of well-being," see Felicia A. Hupper, Nick Baylis and Barry Keverne, eds., *The Science of Well-Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For a broad notion of the contribution of religion to human flourishing, David G. Myers, "Religion and Human Flourishing," in *The Science of Subjective Well-Being,* ed. Michael Eid and Randy J. Larsen (New York: Guilford, 2008), 323-46.

[4] For instance, see Alister E. McGrath's "contours of a scientific theology" which develops "why a scientific theology is Christocentric," but does not develop the place of the Spirit. Alister E. McGrath, *Reality*. Vol. 2 of *A Scientific Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 297-313.

[5] Amos Yong's approach is Pneumatological, but not entirely without Trinitarian engagement. Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), esp. 49-81; *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

world religions, a complex approach encourages the practice of discernment to consider multiple dynamics. In other words, the presence of the Spirit cannot be reduced down to one particular experience, activity or manifestation. Rather, the Spirit's presence is discerned among the multi-dimensional persons and communities, involving aspects from their whole way of life. Consequently, Paul lists a cluster of the fruits of the Spirit and there are lists of diverse gifts of the Spirit, yet it is the "same God at work" in all of them.[6] Furthermore, because of the unity within the one being, three persons of God, how the persons of the Father and Son can be utilized in the discernment of the Spirit needs further exploration. A complex, Trinitarian notion of participation in the knowledge of God suggests needed research into the complex of subjective dimensions of discernment of the Spirit.

Third, the wound of reductionism has afflicted both Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism in differing ways. From Schleiermacher forward, the role of experience has been normalized in the liberal Protestant traditions which Karl Barth and T. F. Torrance have challenged. In a distinctive way, the role of experience has been championed also in the conservative branches of Protestantism.[7] This has included the descendants of John Wesley, focusing here upon Pentecostalism and its Charismatic and "Third-Wave" descendants,[8] as well as those in the broadly-defined stream of Evangelicalism.[9] However, those within Protestant Evangelicalism have

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[6] On the fruit, Galatians 5:22-5. On the gifts, 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-7; Ephesians 4:7-13; 1 Peter 4:10-11. The quotation is from 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. Note its Trinitarian moorings. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."

7. These would be two quite different expressions of what George Lindbeck terms the "experiential-expressive" religious framework in *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 16.

8. The central experience of Pentecostalism is that of Spirit-baptism evidenced by glossolalia, which provides empowerment for mission. The central experience of Charismatics and those in the "Third Wave" certainly may include an initial experience of the Spirit, but is the ongoing empowering presence of the Spirit in Christian life and mission. For a perspective from the Vineyard, see Wilson and Nathan, *Empowered Evangelicals*, 205-28. "Indeed, I would suggest that a Pentecostal epistemology is always already a kind of aesthetic, an epistemic grammar that privileges *aesthesis* (experience) before *noesis* (intellection)." James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 81. On the inter-relationship of spirituality and theology within Pentecostalism, see Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality* (1993; repr. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 3-48.

9. The central experience of Evangelicalism is that of regeneration or being "born again." On the importance of the role of experience in Evangelicalism and Evangelical theology, see Stanley Grenz, *Reenvisioning the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000, 2006), esp. 33-60, 192-225; *Reenvisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the*

emphasized Scripture over experience in discussions of knowledge of God. Nancey Murphy has demonstrated how modern and postmodern philosophy has set up competing foundationalist paradigms of Scripture verses experience in discussions between fundamentalist and liberal theology.[10] Similar to the holism she suggests, a complex epistemology recognizes the intertwined relationship between Scripture and experience: our experiences influence our interpretation of Scripture, while Scripture interprets our experiences. Embracing this more complex relationship can help Evangelical and Pentecostal theology move forward.

For the Reformed tradition, perhaps an expanded functional anthropology could enlarge the tradition's epistemology and thus their notions of theology. To recommend an expanded *functional* anthropology suggests that a holistic person-involving, life-implicating epistemology is to be embodied, and not simply cognitively and verbally defined. This vision of participation in the knowledge of God could encourage the development of orthopraxis and orthopathy alongside this tradition's esteemed tradition of orthodoxy. Further research could extend the implications of this epistemology to most any aspect of the church's practices and Christian living.

As noted above, there is a reciprocal relationship between theology, ethics and spirituality. In aiming to be consistent with the doctrines of the sovereignty of God and *sola gratia*, the Reformed tradition has often given less attention to ethics, spirituality and the human dimensions of salvation, sanctification and the Christian life. Yet, as with this study's Trinitarian epistemology and its notion of participation—occurring supremely among humanity *in Christ* and *by the Spirit*—fears about "synergy" can be abated and theologians in the Reformed tradition can pursue the development of the many human facets and the manifold practices of the

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21st Century (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992); Roger E. Olsen, *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), esp. 67-94. On the problem of defining Evangelicalism, see Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 7-107; David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Hyman, 1989). Also helpful on Evangelicalism is David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975); Donald K. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds., *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991); George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).

[10] Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Valle Forge, PA: Trinity, 2003), esp. 11-35, 85-109.

Christian life. Though the theological frameworks will be different than those from the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Arminian Protestant traditions, human response, experience and Christian practices need further investigation from the Reformed perspective.

Turning to the most specialized context of theological discussion, T. F. Torrance scholarship, we conclude by noting two implications or suggestions for further research. Similar to the previous suggestion for the Reformed tradition, within Torrance's theology there is room for expanding discussions of the human dimensions of Christian thought and life. For a specific example, Torrance repeatedly encouraged certain dispositions of the mind as commensurate with the nature of the object known, and denounced others intellectual dispositions as unsuitable. What is the relationship between these cognitive dispositions and the discussions of intellectual virtue? How are they to be obtained? For a more general example, while Ray Anderson and Andrew Purves have most notably explored some of the ministry implications of Torrance's theological vision,[11] the implications for ethics and spirituality have not yet been developed.

Secondly, Torrance scholars could help to locate his place among the burgeoning theology and science dialogue. What influence did Torrance have on those engaged in that dialogue today? How does his vision compare with those whose first discipline is science and second discipline is theology? How does his vision compare with the other major twentieth-century theologian who engaged with the sciences, Wolfhart Pannenberg? Though this thesis located some of his theological incorporation of epistemological developments in the sciences of the mid twentiety-century, the question remains: what aspects of his vision of the relationship between theology and science are enduring and what aspects were transitory? Though a pioneer in this dialogue, why is it that his theology factors less prominently in the discussion today? The place and shape of Torrance's distinctive contribution to the science and theology dialogue needs additional demarcation.

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[11] Two good examples include Ray S. Anderson, ed. *Theological Foundations for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979); Ray S. Anderson, "The Practical Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," *Participatio* Vol. 1 (2009): 49-65. Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

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