In this book, Jason Radcliff undertakes a complex and useful exploration of Thomas F. Torrance’s engagement with the patristic tradition which will appeal to theologians from both the Orthodox and Reformed traditions who have an appreciation for Torrance’s ecumenical scholarship. No work has previously attempted to trace Torrance’s patristic theology despite the depth of Torrance’s engagement with the Church Fathers. This book explores Torrance’s reconstruction of major themes within patristic theology, particularly of the Alexandrian heritage and methodology, and its appropriation into Torrance’s own Reformed tradition. Radcliff argues that Torrance’s reconstruction of elements of the patristic tradition based on the Nicaean ὁμοούσιον τω Πατρί offers a sustainable Reformed Evangelical framework yet to be appreciated by scholars and theologians.

Radcliff begins by surveying the different meanings of Consensus Patrum as used within the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Reformed traditions. He argues that Catholicism understands Consensus to be quantitative, to rely on an Augustinian/Thomistic lens, and to be continually developing. Radcliff suggests that in Catholicism, the Fathers are seen as infallible and equal to Scripture in their authority. Whether that would be agreed with by Roman Catholic theologians is another matter. Alternatively, Radcliff suggests that in Eastern Orthodoxy Consensus Patrum is synthetic and is centralized around the Byzantine Patristic tradition. For Protestants, according to Radcliff, Consensus Patrum was developed in the ‘golden-age’ before the decline of the church, but is not authoritative, and is Augustinian-based. Consequently, he makes the claim that the Protestant understanding is more in line with the Fathers than Catholicism. Radcliff further suggests that despite the differing outlooks on Consensus Patrum, the patristic tradition remains an inheritance of all three groups and that liberal evangelicals rediscovered the Greek Fathers in modern times. Radcliff emphasizes that this modern rediscovery of the Greek Fathers led many to convert from the evangelical tradition to both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Radcliff tries to argue that Torrance’s works are primarily based on his understanding of ὁμοούσιον in the writings of Athanasius and his reading of the patristic tradition theologically rather than patrologically. He further details Torrance’s theological methodology as being dogmatic, scientific, ecumenical and historical. Radcliff then engages with various themes in Torrance’s theology.
and their inner interconnectedness. He shows that Torrance’s theology is Christologically centered with its emphasis on the ὁμοούσιον as the foundation for his Trinitarian theology and pneumatology. Radcliff also emphasizes Torrance’s reliance upon ὁμοούσιον as a hermeneutical and theological key. He argues that an important aspect of Torrance’s theology is his ‘scientific theology’ and the kind of ‘realist epistemology’ which was first developed in the Alexandrian tradition by the Athanasian understanding of κατά φύσιν. This realist approach, argues Radcliff, is inevitable if we truly believe in the Son being ὁμοούσιον τω Πατρί. This led Torrance to develop his notion of the vicarious humanity of Christ which focuses on the entirety of the works of Christ as a model of salvation rooted in the ‘exchange’ which advances humanity to θέωσις.

Subsequently, Radcliff appraises Torrance’s theology as reconstructed from within the Reformed tradition using three major theological ‘streams’. He suggests that Torrance’s appropriation of the ‘Athanasius-Cyril axis’ constitutes the evangelical stream in contrast with the Byzantine and Latin streams which Torrance rejected as dualist. He suggests that Torrance recognized an early Byzantine dualism in the distinction between the essence and the energies of God, a distinction which he considered overused in such notable Eastern Orthodox theologians as John Zizioulas and Vladimir Lossky. Radcliff questions the legitimacy of Torrance’s theological streams while at the same time stressing his success in using the Greek Fathers as a foundational platform for his ecumenical efforts. Successively, Radcliff celebrates Torrance’s ecumenism and his understanding of theology as a ‘dialogical’ process in which God dialogues with the totality of the Church and not a specific tradition. Within this context, Radcliff focuses on the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue and its fundamental dependence on ὁμοούσιον as the root for advancing Trinitarian theology, ministry and sacramental theology. The book concludes by offering a constructive overview for advancing evangelical patristic theology through adopting certain elements from Torrance’s notion of Consensus Patrum such as asceticism, while disregarding others including his recognition of dualism in the Byzantine tradition.

Radcliff’s book is clearly written, follows a coherent structure and is properly referenced. In it he provides references to various theological themes in both classical and contemporary scholarly works. Additionally, Radcliff interacts with Torrance’s theological engagement with the patristic tradition. However, certain aspects of his analysis are somewhat simplistic. For example, I would propose that the notion of consensus for Eastern Orthodox, while heavily informed by the Byzantine tradition, is not Byzantine-centered but rather Christ-centered due to its synthetic nature. One reason for this is that such a