

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

TRADITION AS A VIABLE OPTION FOR PROTESTANT THEOLOGY: THE VINCENTIAN METHOD OF THOMAS C. ODEN

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Date Completed: March 2001

This dissertation analyzes Thomas Oden's theological method in order to understand its structural elements. Thus it facilitates a clearer comprehension of his commitment to the classical Christian tradition in response to increasing emphasis on postmodernism in Protestant theology. Given Oden's affirmation of the Christian tradition and his simultaneous commitment to postmodern sensitivities, the dissertation strives to examine how he is able to harmonize what appears to be a dialectical situation. Although Oden's emphasis on tradition raises the perennial issue of Scripture versus Tradition, the postmodern question raises the issue beyond the usual Scripture-Tradition controversy to a fundamental concern regarding the compatibility of the postmodern agenda and the classical Protestant tradition.

The introductory chapter defines the problem which Oden's Vincentian method is designed to solve and delineates the objectives, method, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of Oden's theological development, noting his major concerns and the influences that affected him. In this chapter Oden's shift from liberalism to classical orthodoxy is considered. Chapter 3 develops a formal, theoretical structure for understanding method in general. The formal structure developed in this chapter is subsequently applied in chapter 4 to describe and analyze Oden's Vincentian method.

The final chapter evaluates Oden's method in terms of the coherence of its parts and the consistency of its application. In this chapter, some tensions in the structure of Oden's method are noted, along with a few suggestions regarding adjustments that may need to be made to the system.