

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

THE USE OF SCIENCE IN THEOLOGY: CASE STUDIES OF LANGDON B. GILKEY AND THOMAS F. TORRANCE

Researcher: Martin Frederick Hanna
Faculty Adviser: Fernando Canale, Ph.D.
Date completed: November 2003

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to address the problem of the use of science in theology in the writings of Thomas F. Torrance and Langdon B. Gilkey. Chapter 1 introduces the problem in terms of definitions of science and theology and the history of the use of science in theology. Attention is given to definitions of science as exclusive or inclusive of theology and to definitions of theology as the study of God and/or the study of divine revelation. The historical background to the problem is surveyed in terms of premodern, modern, and postmodern shifts in science and in the use of scientific theory and method in theology.

Methodology

Chapters 2 and 3 analytically describe Torrance's and Gilkey's models for the use of science in theology. The following questions are addressed. Who are Torrance and Gilkey? Do they propose models for the use of science in theology? Are their models responsive to the postmodern shift in science, theology, and the use of science in theology? Are their models Christocentric, bibliocentric, or cosmocentric? Is a dialogical or dialectic/correlational model indicated in their references to the uses and the limits of the use of science in theology? Are the postmodern, dialogical, and dialectical elements of their models controlled by the Christocentric and cosmocentric structure of their models? Chapter 4 compares and contrasts their models. Chapter 5 summarizes the dissertation and gives its conclusions and recommendations for further study.

Conclusions

In response to the postmodern shift, Torrance proposes a Christocentric-dialogical model for the use of science in theology, while Gilkey proposes a cosmocentric-dialectical model. There are comparison and contrast between the models in each area evaluated in this study. From each other's perspectives, contrasting elements and elements of comparison may indicate nonviability or viability of parts of their models. Another perspective would result from the use of a comprehensively revelational model based on biblical revelation. Such a model could provide a biblical interpretation of divine revelation in Christ and the cosmos and also be responsive to the postmodern shift in the use of science in theology.