
神學研究的學術性挑戰— 探討特雷西神學思想方法¹

The Academic Challenge to Theological Study:
Exploring the Theological Method of David Tracy

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Abstract

Catholic theologian David Tracy taught at Chicago University for many years, and presented an example of mastering academic trends while keeping his identity as a Catholic father. This paper will explore Tracy's theological method within his challenging academic context, with the aim of learning how to deal with the academic challenge for theological study.

Tracy argues that theology, as public discourse, must face three publics: society, academy and church. In his earlier period, he offered precise and systematic characters throughout his early trilogy. Yet in his later period, as he developed his later trilogy, he moved toward pluralism and ambiguity. The delay in the completion of his second trilogy reflected his adoption of a postmodern way of thought. Now he stresses the concept of the fragment, meaning that a religious tradition need not be a mirror in the process of differentiation and division; rather, what remains are many pluralistic characters of many unique individuals.

Tracy's theology has a broad scope of concern. His approach deals with the tension between two poles in order to include opposing positions, such as inclusiveness and exclusiveness, absoluteness and relativity, now and end, participation and distanciation. He argues for a mystical-prophetic theology in order to integrate a mystical religious type of manifestation with a prophetic religious type of proclamation.

From Tracy's theological method we can learn how to balance the presupposition of subjective faith and the requirement of objective academic research, the passion of religious experience and the standard of academic formality. In the context of the academic challenge to theological study, this is a vital issue. While doing theology in three different publics, what we learn from Tracy's theological method is that theology as public

discourse must emphasize the significance of praxis. Yet his focus on methodology may induce a side effect: decreasing the courage to engage in creativity or to embark on the adventure of theological writing.

Keywords: David Tracy, theological method, way of thinking, postmodern, public theology