

Theological Science in the Thought of Thomas F. Torrance: The Integration of Natural and Revealed Theology and Its Implications for Kataphysical Knowledge

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Abstract

In this article, the notion of “theological science” is examined in the thinking of Thomas F. Torrance (1913–2007), with particular attention paid to his synthesis of revealed and natural theology and its consequences for kataphysical knowledge—the comprehension of God via divine self-disclosure. Torrance redefines natural theology as the logical intra-structure that is crucial to theological reasoning, not as a separate field of study. Natural theology creates a full framework for comprehending divine revelation when combined with revealed theology. This research shows how Torrance’s technique reconciles human reason with God’s self-revelation, resulting in a coherent theological methodology. It analyses his reconstruction of natural theology within its proper intellectual and philosophical settings. The paper also discusses Torrance’s theological model’s applicability to Indian Christian contexts, contending that his integrated method provides an essential means of fostering a more profound theological comprehension in modern Indian churches. It becomes clear that pursuing kataphysical knowledge in the way that Torrance does is essential to promoting theological discourse and participation, especially in contexts that are pluralistic and diversified. As a result, this essay presents Torrance’s ideas as a vital addition to the current theological conversation and as a template for addressing the difficulties of faith and knowledge in a multicultural environment.

Keywords: Theological Science, Natural Theology, Revealed Theology, Kataphysical Knowledge, Theological Methodology.

Introduction

Thomas F. Torrance’s reconstruction of natural theology demands understanding the pertinent intellectual milieu in which his concepts evolved. Through his work, Torrance brings together the material content of God’s self-revelation and the rational structure of human experience within the framework of theological reasoning. From his perspective, revealed theology supplies the material substance, while natural theology is the rational intra-structure that supports theological science when combined. According to Torrance, natural theology is not just an independent field but also an essential component of theological research that has to be developed, especially in Indian churches.

This article seeks to position Thomas F. Torrance's (1913-2007) concept of natural theology in its right philosophical framework, emphasising its relevance and applicability to the Indian Christian community. Torrance reinterpreted natural theology as a logical structure that is closely linked to revealed theology, creating a cohesive foundation for "theological science." He contends that a comprehensive grasp of divine revelation is crucial for theological thought, and his combination of natural and revealed theology emphasises this point. The importance of Torrance's method is seen, where the search for *kataphysical*¹ knowledge—that is, the understanding of God by divine self-disclosure—becomes an imperative undertaking for the advancement of theology.

Torrance was born to missionary parents in Sichuan, West China. Most importantly, both parents had a "living, and dynamic faith centred not on a system of belief, but the person of Jesus Christ."² Torrance was Scottish and influenced by elements of Scottish thought³ and theological traditions. Torrance was also profoundly influenced by Scottish theologians of the nineteenth century, such as John McLeod Campbell, who challenged federal theology.⁴ Torrance was a creative Reformed theologian who established within the Reformed tradition.⁵ Torrance was greatly influenced by his interaction with Karl Barth and was a major interpreter of Barth's principles.⁶ In the end, Torrance did not believe that Barth had completely resolved the conflict between heavenly truth and human reason. Torrance was also greatly impacted by Barth's dichotomy of God's main and secondary objectivity.⁷

Torrance studied patristic theology in great detail. Still, Torrance was no patrologist, as Radcliff indicated. Rather, Torrance provided a reconstruction of the consensus patristic tradition that was both Reformed and Evangelical.⁸ Torrance was a pastor and a Churchman⁹ and throughout his career, Torrance also participated in ecumenical work.¹⁰ The intersection of the scientific sciences and religion piqued Torrance's intense attention. The Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion for Christian Theology and the Natural Sciences was given to Torrance in 1978.¹¹ Importantly, Torrance argued that he was a product of the scientific revolution and benefited from its outcome.¹² This understanding is significant as it provides a theological model for Torrance to build upon without becoming dependent on epistemological principles drawn from the natural sciences.

¹ "According to T. F. Torrance, Christian Theology, If It Is to Avoid Being Pelagian, Is an Exercise Pre-Determined by God's Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ. In Other Words, for Torrance, the Theological Task Is Either *Kataphysin* ('According to the Nature of Thing' under Inquiry) or It Is Simply a Self-Projection of the Would-Be Knower in Regard to Thinking God; and Thus, Self. So, for Torrance, Who God Is, Is Not Known by a Prior Optics Developed by People Attempting to Think an Idea of an Abstract Infinite, or Actus Purus ('Pure Being'), a Part from Godself. For Torrance Knowledge of God Is Purely Ordered by God's Free Choice to Be for Us in Jesus Christ. It Is This Antecedent, Extra Nos ('Outside of Us') Reality That Is the Ground by Which Any True Knowledge of God Will Obtain. This Is, for Torrance, the Basis for a Theological or Critical Realism. That Is, That Knowledge of God Is Not Discovered, but Instead It Is Self-Revealed by God for Us, Because of Who God Is as Triune Love, that a Potential Theologian Might Actually Come to Know the True and the Living God. Torrance Calls His Approach to a Knowledge of God a 'Stratified Knowledge of God.' He Explicates What That Entails in His Book *Christian Doctrine of God*."

² Colyer, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 3–4.

³ Fergusson, "Torrance as a Scottish Theologian," 77.

⁴ Colyer, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 36–40.

⁵ Palma, "'Thomas F. Torrance's Reformed Theology,'" 2–46.

⁶ Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance*, 6.

⁷ Torrance, *Theological Science*, 135–37.

⁸ Radcliff and Noble, *Thomas F. Torrance and the Church Fathers*, 57.

⁹ Palma, "'Thomas F. Torrance's Reformed Theology,'" 4.

¹⁰ Torrance, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 16–17.

¹¹ McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 195–236.

¹² Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 260.

Torrance's Reconstruction of Natural Theology: Epistemology

Now the question arises what is Natural Theology? Natural Theology is not a concept that can be easily defined because, in practice, there have been such a wide variety of different formulations of Natural Theology. Various scholars try to explain it differently. Taliaferro recommends the following definition of Natural Theology:

Natural theology is the practice of philosophically reflecting on the existence and nature of God independent of real or apparent divine revelation of Scripture. Traditionally, natural theology involves weighing arguments for and against God's existence, and it is contrasted with *revealed theology*, which may be carried out within the context of the ostensible revelation of Scripture¹³.

Alston's view of Natural Theology is considered by implication from foundational grounds that are not recognised by religious acceptance, finally resting on an assumption concerning a divine being as established within the premise.

Natural theology is the enterprise of providing support for religious beliefs by starting from premises that neither are nor presuppose any religious beliefs. We begin from the mere existence of the world, or the teleological order of the world, or the concept of God, and we try to show that when we think through the implications of our starting point, we are led to recognise the existence of a being that possesses attributes sufficient to identify him as God.¹⁴

The ontological and cosmological arguments are rebuilt in Torrance's vision for Natural Theology. Different academics have emphasised different concerns in Torrance's reconstruction of Natural Theology during the critical discussion, while some have completely ignored some themes. Within his presentation of Torrance's theory of creation, Colyer arranges his examination of his natural theology and does so right after talking about how theological and natural science complement each other.¹⁵

Torrance's rebuilt Natural Theology, according to Habets, is a poorly defined and intricate nexus of elements that includes a theology of nature, natural revelation, and Natural Theology. He identifies this vagueness as a degree of ambiguity in Torrance's scholarship¹⁶ McMaken argues that "Torrance's Natural Theology 'rejects with no exception' the possibility of a natural knowledge of God."¹⁷ According to McGrath, the relationship between the natural sciences and theology is Torrance's Natural Theology. He identifies a contradiction in this partnership, particularly considering Torrance's strong agreement with Barth's thesis of God's self-revelation. The concept that knowledge of God should only come from divine revelation seems to be at odds with a focus on the natural sciences, which also runs the risk of reducing revelation to something that may be found in nature.¹⁸

Holder explores Torrance's Natural Theology in the framework of Torrance's comprehensive engagement with the natural sciences. In this, Holder maintains that Torrance's work on Natural Theology offers some "opportunities for a more conventional kind of natural theology," which "would restore rationality to his theological enterprise."¹⁹ Moreover, Torrance's reconstruction of Natural Theology has also been considered as the 'rational intra-structure' of theology. Morrison argues that Torrance's Natural Theology reconstructs Natural Theology within a Christocentric theological

¹³Craig and Moreland, *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, 1–23.

¹⁴Alston, *Perceiving God*, 289.

¹⁵Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 156–92.

¹⁶Habets, *Theology in Transposition*, 91–92.

¹⁷McMaken, "The Impossibility of Natural Knowledge of God in T.F. Torrance's Reformulated Natural Theology," 319–20.

¹⁸McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 175.

¹⁹Holder, *The Heavens Declare*, 141.

approach.²⁰ Morrison's reasoning suggests that Torrance's goal was to guarantee that human intellectual processes are used appropriately, directed by God's self-revelation, rather than to maintain the independence of these structures.²¹

According to Murtha-Smith, Torrance's Natural Theology is not extrinsic to the knowledge of God but rather 'can articulate the material logic of the knowledge of God.' Torrance's Natural Theology is a "theological geometry"²² that can articulate the material logic of the knowledge of God."²³ Weightman argues that Torrance's Natural Theology is closely connected to the influence of Michael Polanyi²⁴:

Natural theology of this kind strives for an appropriate rational structure embedded within and bound up with the actual content of the knowledge of God. Under the compulsion of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ, the rational structure of our knowledge of God arises in our understanding. Put another way, natural theology has an epistemological structure that develops under its direct object's compulsion.

According to Newell, Torrance's Natural Theology provides a fundamental theological framework that is comparable to real-world geometry and physics. In this framework, a distinct conceptual structure is used to gain a thorough understanding of the subject and to build our knowledge of it.²⁵

Torrance's integration of the rational structure and material content of knowledge is based on his understanding of reality.²⁶ According to Torrance's method, the distinction between produced reality and divine realities is made up of the congruence between the observer's perception of reality and its inherent existence. According to Torrance, knowledge is only authentic when the character of reality determines the methodology as well as the conceptual frameworks that are employed to portray it. According to Torrance, "You know something only by 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."²⁷ Torrance defined this rationale as *kataphysical*²⁸ knowledge— 'according to nature.'²⁹

²⁰Morrison, "Thomas Torrance's Reformulation of Karl Barth's Christological Rejection of Natural Theology," 57–75.

²¹70.

²² "The Phrase 'Theological Geometry,' Which Alludes to the Methodical and Ordered Manner Theology Approaches Comprehending God, Is Figurative and Is Frequently Connected to the Ideas of Theologians Such as Thomas F. Torrance. It Implies That Theology Functions According to a Natural Rational Order or Framework, Just like Geometry. Similar to How Geometry Offers an Organised Framework for Comprehending Shape and Space, Theological Geometry Aims to Describe Divine Truths Using Logical, Cogent Ideas That Are Consistent with God's Self-Revelation. Theological Geometry, as Used by Torrance, Stands for the Notion That Theology Has an Internal Rationality, Which Is the Development of Theological Notions and Knowledge of God in an Ordered, Linked Manner, Similar to How Geometric Reasoning Is Founded on Links and Structures. But Instead of Being Just Independent or Speculative, This Reasoning Must Always Be Based on and Consistent with the Reality of God's Self-Revelation."

²³Murtha-Smith, "The Advancement of New Theology Using Science: The Three Key Concepts of Thomas Torrance," 69.

²⁴Weightman, *Theology in a Polanyian Universe*, 144–63.

²⁵Newell, "Participatory Knowledge," 127.

²⁶Carr, "The Rationality of the Cosmos: A Study of the T.F. Torrance and Dumitru Stăniloae," 240–57.

²⁷Torrance, *God and Rationality*, 52, 114–16.

²⁸ "In Contrast to Knowledge Produced from Solely Human Reason or Empirical Observation, *Kataphysics* Refers to Knowledge That Originates from or Is Rooted in Divine Self-Revelation. When Referring to an Understanding of God or Ultimate Reality as Revealed by God, as Opposed to What Can Be Deduced Just from Nature or Philosophy, This Word Is Occasionally Employed. Theologically Speaking, *Kataphysical* Knowledge Highlights How Genuine Cognition Requires Divine Unveiling. It Implies That Although People Are Capable of Reason and Observation, Genuine Knowledge of God Necessitates God's Revelation, Especially via Occasions Such as the Incarnation of Christ or the Writing of Scripture. This Is in Contrast to Metaphysics, Which Frequently Addresses the Essence of Reality through Abstract Intellectual Theory without Depending on Revelation from God. In Essence, *Kataphysics* Supports the Notion That Human Reason or Observations of the Natural World Alone Cannot Provide Us with Knowledge of Divine Truths; Rather, Understanding of Such Truths Must Originate from above (God's Revelation)."

²⁹Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 51.

The primary approach that *kataphysics* employed in theology and philosophy is to interpret and comprehend divine revelation. It emphasises that knowledge of God and ultimate reality is based on God's self-revelation, which is especially evident in scripture, religious experiences, and the incarnation of Christ. It takes many forms, but here are some of the main ones: theological reflection must begin with God's self-revelation rather than just human reason; epistemology is based on the person and work of Christ; scripture is understood as a direct channel for divine disclosure; human knowledge is considered inadequate in the absence of divine revelation; sacramental theology recognises physical objects as concrete manifestations of God's grace; ethics are based on divine will as opposed to human reason. Ultimately, *kataphysics* asserts that genuine comprehension of the divine and reality results from God's self-disclosure rather than from independent human judgement, placing a higher priority on divine revelation than on human reasoning.

Torrance was a realist. Torrance maintained that reality exists independently of any relationship to the human observer.³⁰ He maintained that reality is inherently comprehensible and held that true knowledge is derived from an appreciation of reality's fundamental relationships.³¹ Furthermore, "the rational structure of knowledge is by the rational structure of reality."³² By highlighting the relationship between reality's innate order and how it seems to the observer, Torrance's realism makes the case that direct experience is how reality shapes cognition.³³ In the opinion of Torrance, the truth that is expressed in human language originates from the reality it refers to and is formed by, rather than from an inherent quality.³⁴ These guidelines form the basis of Torrance's perspective on reality and its conceptual representations.

According to Torrance, the reality of God's doctrine is that "Christian theology arises out of the actual knowledge of God given in and with concrete happening in space and time. It is knowledge of the God who actively meets us and gives Himself to be known in Jesus Christ – in Israel, in history, and on earth. Positive knowledge, with articulated content, is mediated in concrete experience. It is concerned with the fact, the fact of God's self-revelation."³⁵ The Son is God, just as the Father is God, which implies that God reveals Himself through the Son—*homoousion*.³⁶ Moreover, the central idea in Torrance's theology of God is the correspondence between the ontological relationships in God's triune nature and the Trinitarian structure of the redemption economy.³⁷

Torrance characterises modes of knowing that actively impose understandability on cognitive phenomena. In the words of Torrance, science is an organised body of knowledge that aims to teach us things only by their very nature.³⁸ The actual structure of reality can influence our conceptual frameworks because of scientific understanding. The development of scientific theories should be viewed as revealing the order that already exists in reality rather than as imposing order onto it since reality has its intrinsic order.³⁹ The laws of nature are not read into nature; instead, they are discovered.⁴⁰

³⁰Moore, *Realism and Christian Faith*, 1.

³¹Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance*, 323–25.

³²Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance*, 117–23.

³³Moore, *Realism and Christian Faith*, 1.

³⁴Torrance, *Ground and Grammar of Theology*, 32–37.

³⁵Torrance, *Theological Science*, 26.

³⁶Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 222–26.

³⁷Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 38–39.

³⁸Torrance, *Theological Science*, 116.

³⁹Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind*, 30.

⁴⁰Torrance, *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture*, 113.

By connecting the subject-object relation to the object-object connection, Torrance attempted to reconcile the subject-object dichotomy.⁴¹ He had not fully resolved the problem that he had created. However, Torrance maintained that for the epistemic subject to consider the nature of the object, they must possess prior, autonomous ways of thinking.⁴²

So, he distinguished between general science and the special sciences. The meticulous process of attempting to understand things according to the nature of reality, letting the subject of study determine everything that is known about it⁴³ is called general science. On the other hand, specialised sciences operate under the premise that reality is manyfold; in fact, the fundamental tenet of scientific inquiry requires several forms of rationality, each influenced by the particulars of the object under study.⁴⁴ In the view of Torrance, our conceptual representations are shaped by experience, and scientific knowledge encompasses the internal consistency of reality.⁴⁵ Thus, theories have an unambiguous ontic correlation and are objectively derived.⁴⁶

Torrance's Empirico-Theoretical Objectivity

Torrance's empirico-theoretical version of objectivity determines the framework of assumed that the subject participates with phenomena. In another sense, Torrance explicitly identified himself as a critical realist.⁴⁷ The fundamental connection between the 'logical structure' and 'material content of knowledge' is defined by Torrance's empirico-theoretical approach to objectivity. His theory of objectivity is based on a correct synthesis of theoretical and empirical components, implying that genuine objectivity in the mind emerges when these two components naturally cooperate. Torrance creates a synthesis between the "logic of empirical form," which bases knowledge on experience, and the "logic of systematic form," which arranges knowledge into logical theoretical frameworks, to demonstrate this. His comprehension of objective information is largely dependent on this integration.⁴⁸

According to Torrance, human cognition is objective when theoretical realisations flow naturally from empirical experiences and reflect the unity that exists within our experiential knowledge because the world, we meet is intelligible in and of itself. This method highlights how reality's inherent logic produces the clarity and order that we find in our knowledge rather than having them imposed from the outside.

In turn, McGrath contends that the relationship between the knower and the known is what defines Torrance's critical realism.⁴⁹ This indicates that the two poles of the knowing connection are the subject and the object of knowledge,⁵⁰ "the subjective pole is the 'knowing, believing, acting person,' and the⁵¹ objective pole is the 'reality independent from [the subject].'"⁵² This prompts us to examine Torrance's

⁴¹Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology*, 44.

⁴²Torrance, *God and Rationality*, 10.

⁴³Torrance, *Theological Science*, 112.

⁴⁴112.

⁴⁵Torrance, *Ground and Grammar of Theology*, 113.

⁴⁶Torrance, *God and Rationality*, 6–7.

⁴⁷Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 132.

⁴⁸ Irving, "Natural Theology as the Intra-Structure of Theological Science: T. F. Torrance's Proposals for Natural Theology in the Context of the Synthesis of Rational Structure and Material Content," 107–9.

⁴⁹McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 217–18.

⁵⁰Munchin, *Is Theology a Science?* 88.

⁵¹Hoyningen-Huene, *Formal Logic*, 3.

⁵²Torrance, *Belief in Science and in Christian Life, Relevance of Michael Polanyi's Thought for Christian Faith & Life*, 11.

acceptance of logic in his thinking, especially as it relates to his cohesive conception of reality and his definition of objectivity.

Torrance acknowledged that formal logic is an effective cognitive tool for ensuring that propositions may be validly inferred from one another. The synthetic technique used by Torrance entails the ‘logic of empirical form’ and the ‘logic of systematic form.’⁵³ Traditional logic constructs and evaluates valid connections between propositions by drawing deductively valid inferences. Traditional logic is anxious with the *soundness* of an argument. On the other hand, argument soundness is not addressed by symbolic logic. Rather, it uses symbolic notation to represent abstract logical structures.⁵⁴ Torrance recognised the distinction between traditional logic concerning soundness and validity and symbolic logic in its exclusive focus on formal validity. For Torrance, knowledge is all about connections.⁵⁵

Traditional logic uses ordinary language,⁵⁶ but symbolic logic is detached from reality⁵⁷ and this method treats objects and existence as though they are part of the physical world, yet it seems to confine relationships, shape, and order to the cognitive sphere. This argument not only rejects the existence of any inherent rationality or knowability in the real world, but it also implies that thinking in terms of connections causes the real world to be more greatly misrepresented.⁵⁸ Torrance’s most detailed analysis is ‘Problems of Logic.’ How can human logical forms be brought into relation to the ‘logic’ of objective reference, which is the intrinsic intelligibility of reality? There is a challenge in connecting the logic of human conceptual systems to the real connections (the ‘material logic’) of the item understood. This is the *ontological* dilemma.⁵⁹ Again, there is a dilemma in reconciling the rational structure of theological notions to the truth of God. This is the problem of *Theologic*.⁶⁰

Torrance erected a bridge between the synthesis of rational structure and material content in the problem of *ontologic* and how he would come to address the issue of *Theologic*. Torrance claimed that theology, like any other study, required ‘logical machinery.’ A logical framework that offers a cogent conceptual depiction of the world theology seeks to comprehend is necessary.⁶¹ On the other hand, Torrance said clearly that autonomous natural theology was not acceptable. Apart from God’s self-revelation, he opposed the doctrine of knowing God only through the means provided by nature.

Theological Science and Its Relevance to Indian Christianity

The Reformed tradition has a convoluted history with natural theology. It is outside the purview of this research to analyse in detail the many stances taken in this tradition about Natural Theology.⁶² Karl Barth disagreed with natural theology because he saw it as a manifestation of human independence and autonomy in opposition to the mercy of God.⁶³ In his commentary on Romans, Barth examines the tension between grace and religion, which is where his position comes from.⁶⁴ Natural Theology, according to Barth, is a manifestation of human autonomy that opposes God’s grace by attempting to

⁵³Tarski, *Introduction to Logic*, 169.

⁵⁴Hoyningen-Huene, *Formal Logic*, 12.

⁵⁵Torrance, *God and Rationality*, 11–15.

⁵⁶Torrance, *Theological Science*, 224.

⁵⁷250.

⁵⁸225.

⁵⁹205.

⁶⁰225.

⁶¹263.

⁶²Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 270–310.

⁶³Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics*, 29–30.

⁶⁴Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 229–70.

understand God on human terms and denying the exclusivity of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.⁶⁵ Torrance agreed with Barth when he rejected autonomous Natural Theology. His analysis recalls and supports Barth's conclusion that the main problem with Natural Theology is human autonomy rather than God's grace.⁶⁶ Theology, according to Barth, may only be considered scientific if it employs every method to ascertain God's self-revelation.⁶⁷ Barth was described by Torrance as an "interactionist" theologian as opposed to a dualist⁶⁸ who disapproved of Natural Theology because he believed that grace came first in understanding God.⁶⁹ Torrance argued that Barth's "struggle with the problem of natural theology is also a struggle for rigorous scientific method in theology."⁷⁰

Torrance's construal of Barth's denial of Natural Theology establishes the groundwork for his subsequent affirmative recommendations about the matter. According to Torrance, Barth was not quite aware of Natural Theology's beneficial function as the logical framework for theology. He emphasised that God's self-revelation occurs within the framework of created space and time.⁷¹ The topic of human autonomy is central to Torrance's denial of autonomous Natural Theology. According to Torrance, this is equivalent to forcing "an alien form of thinking" onto God's self-revelation, which can only be understood through the application of an a priori rational paradigm.⁷²

Torrance made an effort to reassemble Natural Theology as the logical internal framework of theology, as established by God's revelation. The following premise serves as the foundation for the shift from Torrance's rejection of independent Natural Theology to the reconstruction that followed. According to Torrance, "All this must not be taken to mean the end of natural theology, but rather its need for a radical reconstruction through a more profound way of coordinating our thought with being."⁷³ Torrance employed the analogy of the connection between practical geometry and physics to explain the relationship between his rebuilt Natural Theology and revealed theology.⁷⁴ Torrance thought that revealed theology must unavoidably come from the subject matter of Christian theology, and he employed this relationship to clarify and magnify that relationship.⁷⁵ There has been a significant shift in the basic epistemological framework of scientific research.⁷⁶ According to Kuhnian theory, Einstein's physical theories contributed significantly to this shift and initiated a "revolution" in human cognition, at least as far as Torrance was concerned.⁷⁷

Integrating Natural and Revealed Theology

Torrance contends that the flaws of autonomous, idealised geometry were revealed by the Theory of Relativity. The premise is that the three-dimensional Euclidean geometry that came before it was discovered that reality is a four-dimensional space-time continuum was insufficient to conceptualise

⁶⁵Barth, *Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation*, 8–10.

⁶⁶Morrison, "Thomas Torrance's Reformulation of Karl Barth's Christological Rejection of Natural Theology," 64–65.

⁶⁷Gill, "The Doctrine of Revelation in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance," 108, 127.

⁶⁸Torrance, *Karl Barth Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 138.

⁶⁹Holder, "Natural Theology in the Twentieth Century," 121.

⁷⁰Torrance, *Karl Barth Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 145.

⁷¹Torrance, 152.

⁷²Torrance, "Scientific Hermeneutics, according to St. Thomas Aquinas," 261.

⁷³Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 39.

⁷⁴39.

⁷⁵McGrath, *T. F. Torrance*, 32–33.

⁷⁶Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge*, 71.

⁷⁷243–44.

external reality.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Torrance maintained that “theological science” must follow a similar process, where God’s “imageless relations” must have “supreme regulative” authority over the rational framework of cognition.⁷⁹ By emphasising that a “bi-polar relation between natural theology and revealed theology is demanded,” Torrance attempted to overcome this.⁸⁰ The bi-polarity of this relation is essential: Natural theology must be conducted following revealed theology and cannot exist independently of it. Natural Theology is a “theological geometry,” according to Torrance, that is shaped in harmony with God’s self-revelation.⁸¹ As noted by Torrance, revealed theology necessitates a unique “four-dimensional geometry.” Natural theology will now be intrinsic to true knowledge of God rather than extrinsic, serving as a kind of “theological geometry” inside it. Our task is to explain the internal material logic of divine knowledge.⁸² Natural theology is increasingly essential to knowing God, not just an afterthought. It will act as the foundational element of theological science. Our goal is to establish the internal material logic that emerges from our exploration and comprehension of God.⁸³ As the essential internal framework of theological science, natural theology will serve as our means of unfurling and articulating the logical forms of our comprehension as they emerge from the compelling reality of God’s self-revelation. Natural theology is no longer extrinsic but intrinsic to the actual knowledge of God.⁸⁴ In the view of Torrance, the proper goal of theology is God in his self-disclosure, and this determines human cognition in such a way that our views about God are shaped by the internal logic of revelation.⁸⁵ The Church is the foundational environment in which this shaping of human cognition occurs because God’s self-revelation is integrated into our core convictions (or ultimate beliefs), which then inform our further investigation, in the fellowship of God’s worshipping people and through the reading of Scripture.⁸⁶ To simplify this common experience, theological research must find the common thread between them and develop a theory that would enable God’s self-revelation to be further revealed, therefore “bringing to light its inner logic.”⁸⁷ Therefore, “Theological science” is not formal science in the academic sense, but real science, the science of God and God in his interaction with the creation of and in space and time.⁸⁸

Dilip Mandal’s understanding of Indian churches is constrained since he sees their success solely through the prism of proselytisation.⁸⁹ Indian churches deal with their own set of problems, such as caste, corruption, secular and scientific questions, institutional agendas, and patriarchy. These issues with Indian Christianity must be acknowledged and resolved. Appreciatively, most churches take significant theological considerations and respond in this direction.⁹⁰ but not all churches are taking such steps. Now, the New Age churches are tossing out theology with their institutional agendas to gain soft power. Furthermore, existing theology cannot answer the secular and scientific questions of the present time. Now, it is essential to revisit the idea of the church, its foundation, and its mission. At this point,

⁷⁸68–71.

⁷⁹Torrance, 90.

⁸⁰Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 42.

⁸¹Torrance, *Space, Time, and Incarnation*, 70.

⁸²70.

⁸³Torrance, *Karl Barth Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, 148–49.

⁸⁴Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 40.

⁸⁵82–86.

⁸⁶84–85.

⁸⁷Torrance, 85–86.

⁸⁸65–66.

⁸⁹M. Athyal, “Christianity Has not Failed in India. Conversion Isn’t Its Only Goal.”

⁹⁰M. Athyal.

Torrance has put forward what a church is. Torrance's scientific theology is the future of Indian Christianity.

Torrance's Natural Theology provides a strong foundation for dealing with these modern issues. His method combines the principles of divine revelation with logical structure to offer a cogent framework for comprehending faith in the contemporary world. Indian churches can benefit from Torrance's focus on the union of revealed and natural theology as they negotiate secular and scientific issues while maintaining a firm grasp on the meaning of divine revelation. Indian churches may better confront contemporary concerns, preserve doctrinal integrity, and further their mission with a fresh focus on the integration of faith and reason by embracing Torrance's Natural Theology.

Reorienting Indian Christianity

The church as the "Body" is most important, for in the expression "the Body of Christ" it directs us at once to Christ in such a way that we must emphasise "*of Christ*" and *not* upon "Body," and Christ is Himself the crux of the Church.⁹¹ I believe that "As Indian Christians, we need to make the Christological reference paramount in our thinking and understanding of the Church. At no point must we allow anything in the Church to obscure Christ Himself. Christ clothed with His Gospel is the essence of the Church."⁹² The Church emphasises equally vertical and horizontal aspects of communion or participation in Christ. The only way the Church can develop into a horizontal love community, a fellowship of reconciliation, and an association of the redeemed is by vertical communion with Christ.⁹³ The members of the Church are essential to its existence, as is their communion with God's life. The Church does not originate from below, but rather from above.⁹⁴ The Church is already a portion of the everlasting life of God that freely pours out through Him to all mankind since Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, resides among them on earth, constituting the Church His own Body, or His earthly and historical form of existence.⁹⁵ The Resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost did not create the Church. That was not its origin, but rather its new birth; it was its metamorphosis into the enlivened and Spirit-filled Body of the rising Lord.⁹⁶ It therefore becomes evident in the novel form that the Risen Lord has given to the Church.⁹⁷

The church is united in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁸ The Communion of the Spirit is inherently connected to the collective union with Christ—there is one Spirit, and therefore one Body, one Christ, and consequently one Church, all united through the shared Communion of the Spirit with Him.⁹⁹ The Church represents the New Covenant—a community of individuals who find their life not within themselves, but in Jesus Christ. They do not live, think, or act based on their significance or importance, but in everything they do, think, and say, they do so in the Name of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁰ The church's goal, according to Torrance's concluding argument, is to "let this mind be in you which was

⁹¹Torrance, "What Is the Church," 7.

⁹²8.

⁹³9.

⁹⁴Torrance, "The Foundation of The Church," 113.

⁹⁵114.

⁹⁶126.

⁹⁷131.

⁹⁸Torrance, "The Mission of the Church," 131.

⁹⁹134.

¹⁰⁰137.

also in Christ Jesus.” This occurs when we commune with Christ in the Body and Blood during the Holy Supper and make the decision to follow Him in obedience to the Cross.¹⁰¹

Torrance has clearly stated what a church is and its foundations and mission. Natural Theology is a suitable synthesis for theological science, which in arrears to the demands of its object, must have a proper place for human reasoning in such a way that God’s self-revelation positively shapes our rational structure. Indian churches need to change their attitude and invest more in Torrance’s Natural Theology for the future of the churches. Therefore, the logical framework of human thinking is established by God’s self-revelation. According to Torrance, theology is a science that examines the delicate relationship between God’s self-revelation and the appropriate human form that enables us to understand it. Natural Theology cannot be ‘an intra-structural theology but rather a secondary theology’¹⁰² defending Christian truth in the modern secular and scientific environment.

Conclusion

Thomas F. Torrance offers an innovative framework for comprehending and applying theological science through his fusion of revealed and natural theology. Torrance successfully integrates natural theology with revealed theology, forming a coherent and dynamic framework for understanding divine knowledge, by presenting natural theology as the logical framework that underpins theological reasoning. This synthesis not only refutes the common division between revelation and reason but also creates new avenues for theological inquiry that are firmly grounded in both the human condition and God’s self-disclosure. Torrance’s approach presents a convincing framework for enhancing theological thought in the setting of different cultural and religious environments for Indian Christians. The focus on *kataphysical* knowledge—knowing God by divine self-disclosure—becomes especially important since it promotes a deeper interaction with the existential and theological enquiries that Indian churches are currently addressing. Torrance’s method emphasises the value of combining reasoned analysis with the practical application of theology, encouraging a comprehensive perspective that includes both analytical rigour and spiritual insight. In light of this, this essay upholds Torrance’s significance as a key source for contemporary theology and encourages further research and application of it in situations where theology seeks meaning amid complexity and diversity.

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¹⁰¹ 143.

¹⁰² “Natural Theology Is Generally Considered a Secondary Theology Rather than an Intra-Structural Theology: Generally Speaking, Natural Theology Is Seen as a Secondary Theology as Opposed to an Intra-Structural One. Without Reference to Supernatural Revelation, It Aims to Comprehend and Communicate Knowledge about God via Reason and Natural World Observation. Natural Theology Serves as a Supplemental Discipline That Supports and Enhances Revealed Theology, Which Is Predicated on Direct Revelation from God through Scripture and Tradition. On the Other Hand, the Emphasis of Intra-Structural Theology Is on the Logical Arrangement and Internal Consistency of Theological Ideas That Are Drawn from Revealed Truths. Because Intra-Structural Theology Is Based on the Internal Coherence of Divine Revelation, Natural Theology Is Thus Secondary Because It Draws on External Observations to Augment Theological Knowledge.”

- Torrance Knowledge of God Is Purely Ordered by God's Free Choice to Be for Us in Jesus Christ. It Is This Antecedent, Extra Nos ('Outside of Us') Reality That Is the Ground by Which Any True Knowledge of God Will Obtain. This Is, for Torrance, the Basis for a Theological or Critical Realism. That Is, That Knowledge of God Is Not Discovered, but Instead, It Is Self-Revealed by God for Us, Because of Who God Is as Triune Love, that a Potential Theologian Might Actually Come to Know the True and Living God. Torrance Calls His Approach to a Knowledge of God a 'Stratified Knowledge of God.' He Explicates What That Entails in His Book *Christian Doctrine of God.*," n.d.
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- Frequently Addresses the Essence of Reality through Abstract Intellectual Theory without Depending on Revelation from God. In Essence, Kataphysics Supports the Notion That Human Reason or Observations of the Natural World Alone Cannot Provide Us with Knowledge of Divine Truths; Rather, Understanding of Such Truths Must Originate from above (God's Revelation).," n.d.
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