CULTURE AS THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT?: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE AND ITS USE IN STANLEY J. GRENZ'S THEOLOGICAL METHOD

by

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ABSTRACT

Stanley J. Grenz (1950-2005) has been widely known both within his own context of North American evangelicalism and beyond as a theologian who is committed to contextual and culturally-sensitive theological method and construction. One expression of this commitment is his decision to insert "culture" as one of the sources of theology in his theological method, along with "Scripture" and "tradition." The aim of this thesis is to trace, both theologically and methodologically, how Grenz comes to this methodological decision and to assess whether this decision is justified and hence commendable. At the outset, Grenz justifies this decision by making a connection between culture and the Holy Spirit. Culture must be engaged with and listened to because, along with Scripture and tradition, it is the media in which the Holy Spirit is present and speaks. To answer the thesis questions, we begin by placing Grenz's theological agenda within the broader picture of recent growing interest in the study of the Holy Spirit in the world with its multidimensional concerns and motives (Chapter one). In Chapter two we trace Grenz's understanding of his contexts and discover two determinants that influence his methodological commitments: his pietistic root and his engagement with postmodernism. However, it is the latter that has heavily informed and shaped his methodological choices (e.g. his nonfoundationalist commitment). With his methodological commitments, this thesis argues that Grenz eventually *have to* make both *community* and *the Holy Spirit* his "first theology."

Chapter three expounds Grenz's doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Strangely, it is not this systematic pneumatology that gives theological justification for Grenz's pneumatological understanding of culture. Instead, it is in his inclusivistic understanding of revelation and grace that we find the strongest indication of Grenz connecting culture with the work of the Holy Spirit. In Chapter four, we look at two major problems with this understanding: the problem with the concept of revelation and grace; and the problem with the Spirit-Christ relation. These problems are compounded by Grenz's uncritical appropriation of socio-anthropological view on culture, resulting in his "interactional approach" to Gospel-culture relation, where culture eventually assumes more than a ministerial authority to shape theology. In the end, these problems boil down to the important issues of criteria and authority. With Grenz's instrumental and minimalist view on the nature and the function of Scripture's authority – informed and shaped by his postmodern commitments – these problems are exacebated rather than eliminated. In the end, we are left with no stable criteria to discern the voice of the Spirit in the midst of other voices in culture. Moreover, the unity of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and Scripture as the *pattern* of divine authority is compromised; and the integrity of Scripture as the *norma normans* of teology is in jeopardy. In sum, Grenz's decision to insert "culture" as one of theology's sources fails both on theological and methodological grounds. The thesis will then be concluded by a brief summary, some methodological reflections, and some suggestions for further research (Chapter five).

This study is dedicated to the *civitas academica* of STT Amanat Agung, Jakarta, Indonesia.

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CONTENTS

Chapter

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have shown theologians' growing interest in reflecting on the presence and work of God, specifically of the Holy Spirit, outside the walls of the church/Christianity; be it in culture, other religions, or in creation. One fresh example of such reflections in the field of culture comes from American evangelical theologian Robert K. Johnston in his recent article on *Christian Century*.[1] Reflecting on his students' testimonies of encountering God in movies, Johnston laments the fact that theologians in general seem to "downplay the importance of God's self-revelation through creation, conscience, and culture, finding in such knowledge (and for them it is knowledge, not divine encounter) at best a mere echo of the divine presence, a trace of divine reality, which is unable to provide sufficient insight or compel obedience and devotion."[2]

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[1]Robert K. Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies: Film as a Source of Revelation," *Christian Century*, August 15, 2014, accessed October 25th, 2014, http://www.christiancentury.org/article/2014-07/meeting-god-movies. This article is a concise introduction to Johnston's new book, entitled *God's Wider Presence: Reconsidering General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014) and is by no means Johnston's first take on the subject matter. Johnston has been pondering on these issues in his previous writings, for example in his "God in the Midst of Life: The spirit and the Spirit," *Ex Auditu* 12 (1996): 76-93; "Discerning the Spirit in Culture: Observations Arising from Reflections on General Revelation," *Ex Auditu* 23 (2007): 52-73; and more recently "Art and the Spiritual," in *Interdisciplinary and Religio-Cultural Discourses on a Spirit-Filled World*, eds. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Kirsteen Kim, and Amos Yong (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 85-96.

[2]Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies," accessed October 25th, 2014.

Johnston points that in most theological discussions, the Spirit's revealing presence in the church and through Scripture has for so long been disconnected from that which occurs outside the church and without direct reference to the Christian faith.[3] The practical result is a further disconnection between "how the church speaks formally of God's self-revelation and how those who are not Christians speak of the same reality."[4] This is tragic because Johnston believes that "church and world, special and general revelation, the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit in creation intersect daily as they merge in our lives – as they did in these students' experiences with movies."[5]

Johnston believes that if God has indeed revealed himself to others through creation, conscience, and culture, then the church is impoverishing itself by being insensitive to that divine presence in others.[6] The church would surely lose a very precious opportunity for dialogue with and witness to the postmodern generation that once again considered spirituality as a public virtue.[7] Johnston strongly compels theologians to widen their theology of revelation with a refined pneumatology in order to accommodate to people's experiences of encounter with God. He states, "Limiting the Spirit's role to that of the Spirit of Christ makes the Spirit's wider presence in creation, conscience, and culture simply a means toward another end. With the church fathers, we must affirm the 'two hands' of God."[8]

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[3]Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies," accessed October 25th, 2014.

[4]Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies," accessed October 25th, 2014.

[5]Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies," accessed October 25th, 2014.

[6]Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies," accessed October 25th, 2014.

[7]Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies," accessed October 25th, 2014.

[8]Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies," accessed October 25th, 2014.

Another (earlier) instance of this growing interest comes from another evangelical theologian, Clark Pinnock (1937-2010), who is writing in the field of theology of religion. In his earlier work, *A Wideness of God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (1992), Pinnock argues against both restrictivists (who pessimistically limit the experience of salvation only to those who hear and consciously receive Christ during their life) and universalists (who believe that all people will ultimately be saved). Rejecting the "fewness doctrine" of the restrictivists, Pinnock wants to be more optimistic in affirming a wider hope for the unevangelized based on God's boundless mercy and universal love, but without forsaking the finality and particularity of Christ for salvation like pluralists do. He believes that high Christology does not entail either a pessimism of salvation or an exclusivist attitude toward people of our faiths. He still affirms that there is no salvation except through Christ, but for Pinnock "it is not necessary for everybody to possess a conscious knowledge of Christ in order to benefit from redemption from him."[9] Those who have never heard of Christ are judged by God "in relation to the light they have, not according to the light that did not reach them."[10] This is the idea behind "the faith principle" in his argumentations. Acceptance by God is based solely upon faith, which may have different content in different people. It is the reality of faith, not the content of theology, that is decisive.[11]

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[9]Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 75.

[10]Clark H. Pinnock, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of Religions," *JETS* 33, no. 3 (September 1990): 367.

[11]Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 105.

Pinnock brings his earlier proposal to a fuller pneumatological trajectory in his later work, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (1996). In his discussion of "Spirit and Universality" Pinnock boldly states that restrictivism is not only contrary to God's nature as Father and the universality of Christ's atonement, but also "the ever-present Spirit, who can foster transforming friendships with God anywhere and everywhere."[12] It is the universal and cosmic activities of the Spirit that makes salvation possible in places where Christ is not named. Pinnock states, "God is always reaching out to sinners by the Spirit. There is no general revelation or natural knowledge of God that is not at the same time gracious revelation and a potentially saving knowledge. All revealing and reaching out are rooted in God's grace and are aimed at bringing sinners home."[13] By implication, Pinnock is hopeful that the Holy Spirit is present in other religions: "If God is reaching out to sinners, it is hard to comprehend why he would not do so in the sphere of religion. … Spirit, who is at work everywhere, is at work in the history of religions, and religions play a part in the history of grace, as the Spirit moves the world toward the kingdom."[14] In a similar tone with

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[12]Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 187.

[13]Pinnock, *Flame of Love,* 187. Pinnock affirms, "Spirit is the key to the universality of our particularity. Grace is always present by the Spirit. Though one is free to accept or refuse the office, the possibility of salvation exists for everyone, grounded in the generous and reckless love of God." See Pinnock, *Flame of Love,* 212.

[14]Pinnock, *Flame of Love,* 203. It is fair to note that by affirming the presence of the Holy Spirit in any religions, Pinnock is far from being non-discerning and uncritical to the notion and the nature of religion *per se*. In p. 202 he states, "We have to say both yes and no to other religions. On the one hand, we should accept any spiritual depth and truth in them. On the other hand, we must reject darkness and error and at the very least see other faiths as insufficient apart from fulfillment in Christ." In p. 207, in his disagreement with Rahner's view, Pinnock explains further that "it would certainly not be wise to regard religions as such as vehicles of grace. … it is one thing to be attentive to the Spirit at work in

Johnston's, Pinnock urges Christian to avoid the "one-sided Christic view"[15] of salvation by referring to the universal ministries of the Holy Spirit in gracing people in other religions and mediating God's presence. He asks, "Why would God, who is present everywhere, absent himself so totally from the sphere of religion, the very realm in which people search for ultimate answers?"[16]

Modern Theologians on the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the World

Although there are some elements of newness in the growing phenomena described above (more about this in the subsequent sections), the theological reflections on the phenomena themselves are not entirely novel. Modern theologians[17] as early as G. W. F. Hegel have long been meditating on the issue of the Spirit in the world. Here, we will look at three theologians: G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Rahner, and Jürgen Moltmann. By looking at them, we will discover some commonalities characterizing modern engagements with this issue and how more contemporary engagements like Johnston's and Pinnock's (to a certain extent)

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a religious context and to be thankful if a religion helps inculcate holiness and virtue. It is another thing to claim that other religions are vehicles of grace and salvation."

[15]Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 206.

[16]Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 79.

[17]For the purpose of this chapter, following Bruce McCormack, modern theology is defined as a theological concept that has its origin in Germany, which has as its pre-conditions "in the scientific revolution, the growth in knowledge of non-European cultures and their histories as a consequence of the voyages of discovery, in Hume's devastating critique of natural religion and Kant's limitation of knowledge to the realm of phenomenal appearances …" See Bruce L. McCormack, "Introduction: On 'Modernity' as a Theological Concept," in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic & Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 3. Under this definition and a broader use of the term 'theologian,' G. W. F. Hegel can be regarded as one of the earliest modern theologians.

emulate them.[18] First, in using pneumatological categories to explain God-world relation, there is a consistent panentheistic tendency to blur the distinction between God the Creator and the world as His creation. Second, there is also tendency to conflate the distinction between grace and nature; supernatural and natural; revelation and experience. In other words, the traditional distinctions between general and special revelation and between common and saving grace are significantly undermined in their proposals. Third, there are attempts to emancipate the Holy Spirit by referring to Him autonomous from the salvation history, independent from the biblical testimonies, or without any direct reference to Christ. The presence and work of the Holy Spirit are then expanded beyond the narrow walls of the ecclesiastical boundaries, reaching out to any cultures, religions, and the whole creation.

G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831)

Hegel has been dubbed a "theologian of the Spirit,"[19] although Thiselton is quick to remind us that "Spirit" in Hegel's thought is not the same as "the Holy Spirit" in Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith* and that it remains debatable whether Hegel's view of the Spirit was dictated by biblical and theological concerns about God and the Holy Trinity or by his philosophy of history.[20] Thiselton notes that in *Phenomenology of Mind* (better,

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[18]For the purpose of this thesis, in Chapter four we will assess whether Grenz's engagement with this issue (i.e. the way Grenz understands the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world) has any resemblance with the general trajectory of these theologians.

[19]See Peter C. Hodgson, *G. W. F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

[20]Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit – In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 298. Thiselton adds that for Hegel, "Spirit" became as much a key category for his philosophical theology as "life" did for Wilhelm Dilthey, or "immediacy" did for Schleiermacher.

Spirit, Geist), Hegel uses "Spirit" in many different ways.[21] Nevertheless, the important and positive thing is that Hegel emphasizes "*the centrality of God as Trinity* and of God *as Spirit*."[22]

Hegel believes that all knowledge was "neither purely rational, as in Descartes and Leibniz; nor empirical, as in Locke and Hume; nor even transcendental, as in Kant; it was *historically* mediated by *historical* reason."[23] Within this historically conditioned understanding of truth as process, Hegel develops a dialectic/dynamic view of reality and sees God "not as a transcendent creator of the world but rather a Spirit permeating everything."[24] Grenz and Olson cited Hegel in saying "Without the world God is not God."[25] By this Hegel means that "God is *not* a self-sufficient being in and for himself; rather, God *needs* the world for his own self-actualization."[26] World history is then also God's history. Kärkkäinen argues that Hegel's view of God as Spirit, which is in the process of becoming, represents "a kind of pantheism in which a clear line of demarcation between God/God's Spirit and the world/world spirit cannot be drawn."[27] In a more positive tone, David Jensen suggests that because the infinite God reveals Godself in the finite, Hegel is "able to

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[21]Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit,* 300.

[22]Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit,* 300. Italics in the original.

[23]Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit,* 298. Italics in the original.

[24]Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 59.

[25]Stanley J. Grenz & Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 38.

[26]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 38.

[27]Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology,* 59, footnote 91.

overcome many of the dualisms that have plagued Christian thought: of spirit over matter, subject over object."[28] In Hegel, one can start to see a historical precedent of philosophical and theological reflection that refuse to confine the Spirit to specifically Christian ecclesiological or soteriological realms. In Hegel's scheme of salvation history, Jensen adds, "*all* of creation is caught up in the grand movement of the one subject Spirit, who makes us all subjects to one another, and summons our matter and bodies as components of the divine life."[29]

In their evaluation, Grenz and Olson argue that Hegel's "work of radical immanentism" is his most important and lasting contribution to contemporary theology; his vision of the God-world unity remained as a powerful option to theology.[30] Giving a more precise description than Kärkkäinen, they argue that Hegel's approach to God-world relation should be called "panentheism" (rather than "pantheism"); subsumed under this label is "any view that represents God and the world as inseparable yet distinct realities.[31] They believe that all later expressions of panentheism follow Hegel in their own ways at this crucial point.

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[28]David H. Jensen, "Discerning the Spirit: A Historical Introduction," in *Lord and Giver of Life: Perspectives on Constructive Pneumatology*, ed. David H. Jensen (Louisville: WJK Press, 2008), 17.

[29]Jensen, "Discerning the Spirit," 17. Italics in the original.

[30]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 38. The placing of Grenz's evaluative comment at the end of each exposition of these three modern theologians is intentional, in order for us to compare/contrast the views of these theologians and Grenz's comments on them with Grenz's own view, which will be explained and analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

[31]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 39.

Karl Rahner (1904-1984)

Rahner, one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the 20th century, attempted to overcome the sharp dichotomy between nature and grace, natural religious experience and supernatural revelation, as well as world history and salvation history (that was so prominent in Catholic Neo-Scholasticism) by proposing the concepts of *Vorgriff auf esse* ("pre-apprehension of being") and "supernatural existential." With these two concepts, Rahner rejects viewing human beings as a *natura pura* (pure nature). For Rahner, human beings are by their very nature already graced by God; they are transcendental and spiritual beings who are open and potentially receptive to God's revelation. Grace is not something completely foreign or exterior to humanity, but rather constitutive of their very beings. Moreover, not only are they always by nature open to God, human beings are also always "supernaturally elevated by God in that transcendental openness so that such elevation becomes an actual experience of God in every human life."[32]

Rahner's pneumatological insights lie in the fact that God does those things in the mystery of the Spirit. In his words, "If God as he is in himself has already communicated himself in his Holy Spirit always and everywhere and to every person as the innermost center of his existence, whether he wants it or not, whether he reflects upon it or not, whether he accepts it or not, … then there does not seem to be anything else which can take place on God's part."[33] It is the Spirit who elevates men and women from their unthematic and nonreflexive awareness of God and enables them to "actualize their natural and supernatural

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[32]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 245.

[33]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 139.

transcendentality and 'break through,' as it were, to a reflexive knowledge of God."[34] It is in these "break though" moments that people of any religion or no religion become 'anonymous Christians,' albeit their partiality, imperfection and error due to human depravity.[35] If this is indeed the case, then there is no radical break or discontinuity between world history and salvation history or between natural religious experience and supernatural revelation. The particular, historical revelation contained in the Bible (with its climax in Jesus Christ) is "not a 'bolt out of the blue,' but fulfillment and completion of the universal self-communication of God, both transcendental and categorical."[36] The Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is simply "the highest point of God's self-communication, the most intense mediated immediacy of God's presence in human history and experience."[37] In other words, "whenever human beings accept the Word that God has planted in their hearts, they reveal God and 'make' salvation history."[38]

According to Rahner, anonymous Christians are those "who lives in the state of Christ's grace through faith, hope and love, yet who has no explicit knowledge of the fact that his life is orientated in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ."[39] With this concept, Rahner wants to open the possibility of salvation outside the official and institutional Church

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[34]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 247.

[35]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 247.

[36]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 248.

[37]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 248.

[38]Mark F. Fischer, "Karl Rahner," in *The Routledge Companion to Modern Christian Thought*, eds. Chad Meister & James Beilby (New York: Routledge, 2013), 190.

[39]Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol 14, trans. David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), 283.

as well as affirm the saving significance of other religions. His ecclesiology is extended beyond the visible institutional boundaries to include all humanity who, by the power of the Spirit, hear the Word of God and obey it, albeit in varying degree of categorical reflections. Rahner believes that Christ is "present and efficacious in the non-Christian believer (and therefore in the non-Christian religions) through his Spirit."[40] He is confident that anonymous Christians are "justified by God's grace and possess the Holy Spirit."[41]

Grenz and Olson notice that the specter of a panentheistic interdependence of God and creation lurks in the background of Rahner's theology. His anthropology implies that "God needs the world and especially humanity as the mode of his self-expression."[42] Also, it implies that "the creation is not truly good until the Incarnation unites it with God."[43] In their assessment, "The specter that haunts Rahner's theology begins to look more and more like the ghost of Hegel, whose panentheistic philosophy of the 'true infinite' that includes the finite in itself blurred the distinction between God and humanity."[44]

Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926)

Moltmann's reflections on the Spirit's work in the world could be found primarily in *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (English translation, 1992).[45] Like

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[40]Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology,* 116.

[41]Quoted in Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 116.

[42]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 254.

[43]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 254.

[44]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 254.

[45]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). Kärkkäinen argues that this English

Rahner, Moltmann wants to affirm the Holy Spirit's work beyond specifically Christological and ecclesiological categories. He bemoans Western theology's tendency only to view the Holy Spirit solely as the Spirit of redemption. As a result, this redemptive Spirit is "cut off both from bodily life and from the life of nature. It makes people turn away from 'this world' and hope for a better world beyond. They then seek and experience in the Spirit of Christ a power that is different from the divine energy of life …"[46] Moltmann points to *filioque* as the reason behind this reductive pneumatology. Because of *filioque,* the Spirit has been understood only as the Spirit of Christ the Redeemer and not at the same time the Spirit of the Father the Creator. *Filioque* not only subordinates the Spirit to the Son but also limits the sphere of operation of the Spirit.[47] Within Moltmann's trinitarian framework, pneumatology can never be subordinated to and developed exclusively from Christology.

Moltmann strives to propose a new and holistic pneumatology that can overcome "the false alternative between Divine Revelation and human experience of the Holy Spirit"[48] in typical dialectical theologies, because this dichotomy only results in "revelations that cannot be experienced, and experiences without revelation."[49] His ambition is to overcome what he believes to be the gnostic or docetic tendencies of Western theology

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translation "does not quite capture all the nuances of the original German, *Eine ganzheitliche Pneumatologie*, which suggests a pneumatology that is 'holistic,' 'all-encompassing,' or 'comprehensive.'" See Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology,* 126.

[46]Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life,* 8.

[47]Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "The Spirit of Life: Moltmann's Pneumatology," in *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology: A Critical Engagement,* ed. Sung Wook Chung (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 136.

[48]Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life,* 5.

[49]Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life,* 7.

that separates creation and redemption, flesh and spirit, mundane and spiritual.[50] Under this "Platonization of Christianity," spirituality is defined merely in terms of church life and individual piety.[51] By acknowledging the Spirit as the Spirit of life and creation, it becomes possible "to experience God in, with, and beneath each everyday experience in the world."[52] Within this scheme, it becomes possible for human beings to really experience the immanent Spirit socially and politically in the midst of their struggle against violence and injustice. Here one can see how Moltmann's pneumatology is directed toward positive engagement with the world.

As the Spirit of life, the Holy Spirit is at work "everywhere there is promotion of life, growth, inclusivity, and reaching for one's potential; conversely, whatever destroys, eliminates, frustrates, and violates life is not from the Spirit of God."[53] The eternal Spirit is "the divine wellspring of life – the source of life created, life preserved and life daily renewed, and finally the source of eternal life of all created being."[54] Bauckham rightly notes that with this understanding of the Spirit, Moltmann is able to break the narrow association of

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[50]Thomas R. Thompson, "Jürgen Moltmann," in *The Routledge Companion to Modern Christian Thought*, eds. Chad Meister & James Beilby (New York: Routledge, 2013), 235.

[51]Kärkkäinen, "The Spirit of Life: Moltmann's Pneumatology," 135.

[52]Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 34.

[53]Kärkkäinen, "The Spirit of Life: Moltmann's Pneumatology," 134.

[54]Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 82. The implied consequence of this understanding is an extended understanding of the "communion of the Holy Spirit" to encompass the whole "community of creation" from the most elementary particles to atoms to molecules to cells to living organisms to animal to human beings to communities of humanity: "Any kind of community of creation is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be it ecological community or Christian community or a community of man and woman or, say, a self-help group of AA or the like." See Kärkkäinen, "The Spirit of Life: Moltmann's Pneumatology," 144.

the Spirit with revelation (which is characteristic of Barth's theology) and is enabled to give *experience* a place in theology, not as alternative to but in correlation with the revelatory word of God.[55] Consistent with his panentheistic orientation, Moltmann believes that "every experience of a creation of the Spirit is hence also an experience of the Spirit itself. And every true experience of the self becomes also an experience of the divine spirit of life in the human being."[56]

Not unlike their assessment of Hegel and Rahner, Grenz and Olson argue that in the end, Moltmann's theology "falls prey to the perennial temptation of contemporary theology to emphasize God's immanence to the detriment of his transcendence."[57] They affirmatively cite an interpreter of Moltmann who writes concerning his theology, "World history is taken up into the inner-divine history in such a way that the deity of God is made ontologically dependent upon world history and God only truly comes to himself through the completion of world history."[58]

Impetus for the Growing Interest in the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the World

Missiological/Evangelistic Dimension

Having observed some patterns in three modern theologians' viewpoints on the presence of the Spirit in the world, we are now ready to look at some impetuses for the

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[55]Richard Bauckham, "Jürgen Moltmann," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, 3rd Edition, eds. David F. Ford & Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 159. Italics in the original.

[56]Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 35.

[57]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 186.

[58]Grenz & Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 186.

growing interest in this field. It can be argued that the earliest reason for engaging with this issue was birthed in the field of mission and evangelism. As Western Christians in the modern world began their mission works outside the West and encountered religious others in their deep piousness and amazing cultural achievements, they were forced to rethink their traditional view and reconsider the possibility of God's presence and work among these people.

Harold Netland has cogently documented how Western Christians in the history of modern mission were undergoing shifts of perspectives on other religions.[59] As late as the early 19th century, Western Christians (both Catholic and Protestant) still regarded non-Christians in negative lights. Other religions were thought of as "the heathen" who were "spiritually lost" and in desperate need of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ (Catholics would add their famous Medieval formula *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* – outside the church no salvation),[60] and this perspective has motivated modern missionaries to commit themselves to foreign missionary works. By the end of the 19th century, however, their view has undergone some shifts. Netland records that from roughly 1804 onward, due to various factors, Protestant missions became "increasingly embroiled in controversy over the theology of religions."[61] Theologians like F.D. Maurice, B.F. Westcott, A.M. Fairbairn, Alexander V.G. Allen and Charles Cuthbert Hall began to shape the conversation and influenced theologians

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[59]Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), Chapter 1.

[60]Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 24.

[61]Among the factors in the controversy are greater openness to soteriological universalism and rejection of the traditional teaching on hell, increased sensitivity on the part of the missionaries to indigenous cultures and contextualization of the gospel, and the reflection of missionaries upon their own experiences with deeply pious Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. See Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 32.

and missionaries in adopting more positive views on other religion.[62] This led to the emergence of the "fulfillment theme view," a perspective that considers other religions more positively not as something entirely and radically discontinuous to Christianity, but as incomplete and imperfect anticipation of the perfect message of Christianity as revealed in Christ.[63] This 'fulfillment theme view' would later be more developed and become a dominant theme in twentieth-century theologies of religions. In 1938, Tambaram Conference of the International Missionary Council was held in Tambaram, India, and one of the crucial questions discussed in that conference was: "To what extent can we discern God's presence and revelatory activity within the non-Christian religions?"[64]

Within Roman Catholicism, it was not until Vatican II (1962-1965) that a fundamental shift occurred in their view of other religions. Karl Rahner, with his concept of 'anonymous Christians' discussed above, was one of the most influential figures at Vatican II and its subsequent developments. Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism struggled to reconcile the possibility of salvation in other religions without renouncing the normativity of Jesus Christ and the necessity of the church for salvation. Although Vatican II documents have started to give hints to the work of the Spirit in other religions, Clark Pinnock argues that the explicit and sustained pneumatological turn in the Roman Catholic theology of religions can

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[62]Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 33.

[63]One of the famous advocates of this view, John Nicol Farquhar (1861-1929), a missionary to India, presents Christianity in his book *The Crown of Hinduism* "not as something that radically displaces Hindu traditions but that fulfills or brings to completion that which is already anticipated within them." See Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 34.

[64]Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 41.

be seen in the writings of Pope John Paul II.[65] Pinnock argues that the references to the universal activity of the Spirit in Vatican II documents are only occasional (e.g. in *Gaudium et Spes* par. 22 and *Lumen Gentium* par. 16). With Pope John Paul II, however, "it has become a principal theme in practically every context in which he has spoken of the non-Christian world. … whereas the conciliar text spoke only of the working of the Spirit in individuals, this pope is prepared to speak of the activity of the Spirit in non-Christian religions and by so doing has left a mark on the development of these ideas."[66]

Pinnock himself is probably the earliest and one of the most determined evangelical theologians to persuade other evangelicals to embrace this Roman Catholic pneumatological turn. He drew from the well of Christian theological heritage to find supports for the wider work of the Spirit in the world and found one in Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace.[67] He also found another support from Celtic Christianity. According to Celts, to say that we are made in the image of God is to say that what is deepest in us is of

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[65]Clark H. Pinnock, "Religious Pluralism: A Turn to the Holy Spirit," *McMaster Divinity College*, http://www.mcmaster.ca/mjtm/5-4.htm, accessed October 28th, 2014.

[66]Pinnock, "Religious Pluralism: A Turn to the Holy Spirit," accessed October 28th, 2014. Pinnock gives some evidences along these lines: (1) In his first encyclical, "Redemptor Hominis," published on March 4th, 1979, Pope John Paul II emphasized respect for the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit among non-Christians, a presence and activity discernible even in their religious life, in their practice of virtue, their spirituality, and their prayers. He thinks of such fruits as being "an effect of the Spirit of truth, operating outside the visible confines of the mystical body of Christ." (2) In 1986, the Pope issued an encyclical letter on the Holy Spirit, entitled "Dominum et Vivificantem." In this document he says, "We ought to believe that the Holy Spirit, in a manner known only to God, offers to every man the possibility of being associated with the paschal mystery." (3) In 1990, in an encyclical on missions, "Redemptoris Missio," the Pope writes, "It is the Spirit who sow 'seeds of the word' which are present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for their full maturity in Christ."

[67]Pinnock, "Religious Pluralism: A Turn to the Holy Spirit," accessed October 28th, 2014.

God: "At the heart of who we are is the love of God who is present not only *beside* but *within* the human. Redemption in this model is about recovering the treasure that lies deep in our lives."[68]

Spiritual/Experiential Dimension

Another reason for growing engagement with this issue comes from the intensified hunger for spiritual experience so characterizing this late modern/postmodern generation. Harvey Cox in his book *The Future of Faith* describes this phenomenon as "the rediscovery of the sacred *in* the immanent, the spiritual *within* the secular."[69] In this book, Cox proposes to divide Church history into three different ages: Age of Faith, Age of Belief, and Age of the Spirit.[70] The first age began with Jesus and his immediate disciples. Characterized by brutal persecution but at the same time explosive growth, this is the age where to be a Christian meant "to live in his Spirit, embrace his hope, and to follow him in the work that he had begun."[71] The second age began around the fourth century and lasted roughly fifteen hundred years, where "emphasis on belief began to grow … primitive instruction kits thickened into catechisms, replacing faith *in* Jesus with tenets *about* him."[72] Cox contrasts the first and the second age by saying, "From an energetic movement of faith it coagulated into a phalanx of required beliefs, thereby laying the foundation of every

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[68]Pinnock, "Religious Pluralism: A Turn to the Holy Spirit," accessed October 28th, 2014. Italics in the original.

[69]Harvey Cox, *The Future of Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 2.

[70]Cox, *The Future of Faith*, Chapter 1.

[71]Cox, *The Future of Faith*, 5.

[72]Cox, *The Future of Faith*, 5. Italics in the original.

succeeding Christian fundamentalism for centuries to come."[73] During this period Christianity, at least in its official version, "froze into a system of mandatory precepts that were codified into creeds and strictly monitored by a powerful hierarchy and imperial decrees."[74] Cox believes that we are now in the midst of the third age, the Age of the Spirit, and he gives at least two reasons for this naming. First, it is because in this age we see "as though the Spirit, muted and muffled for century, is breaking silence and staging a delayed 'return of the repressed.'"[75] The fastest growth of Christianity today comes from Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, especially of the Global South, that stress direct experiences of the Spirit. Second, it is because in this age increasing numbers of people who used to describe themselves as "religious" are now "distancing themselves from the institutional or doctrinal demarcations of conventional religion and referring to themselves as 'spiritual.'"[76] Western people today are more anti-dogma and anti-hierarchy; they are drawn more to the experiential than to the doctrinal and institutional elements of religion. In many ways the Age of the Spirit can be understood as a comeback to the Age of Faith. In Cox's words, "Creeds did not exist then they are fading in importance now. Hierarchies had not yet appeared then; they are wobbling today. Faith as a way of life or a guiding compass has once again begun, as it did then, to identify what it means to be Christian. The experience *of* the divine is

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[73]Cox, *The Future of Faith,* 6.

[74]Cox, *The Future of Faith,* 6.

[75]Cox, *The Future of Faith,* 9-10.

[76]Cox, *The Future of Faith,* 10.

displacing theories *about* it."[77] Cox mentions three reasons why the term "spirituality" is in such wide use today. In his words,[78]

> First, because it is still a form of tacit process that reflects a widespread discontent with the preshrinking of "religion," Christianity in particular, into a package of theological propositions by the religious corporation that box and distribute such packages. Second, it represents an attempt to voice the awe and wonder before the intricacy of nature that many feel is essential to human life without stuffing them into ready-to-wear ecclesiastical patterns. Third, it recognizes the increasingly porous borders between the different traditions and, like the early Christian movement, it looks more to the future than to the past.

Diana Butler Bass, in basic agreement with Cox's proposal, argues that as people move from the Age of Belief to the Age of the Spirit, belief itself is not going to disappear and become a relic of the religious past. Rather, as religion gives way to spirituality, she believes that "the question of belief will shift from *what* to *how*."[79] Bass argues that today "belief itself is being enfolded into a new spiritual awareness as belief questions morph from what to how, from seeking information about God to nurturing experience of the divine."[80] And Bass argues further that "when belief springs from and is rewoven with experience, we arrive at the territory of being spiritual and religious: experiential belief."[81] Like Cox, Bass understands this new age of experiential belief not as a radically new era, but more as a comeback to the ancient idea of faith as mystical experience

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[77]Cox, *The Future of Faith,* 19-20. Italics in the original.

[78]Cox, *The Future of Faith*, 13.

[79]Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 113. Italics in the original.

[80]Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 114.

[81]Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 116.

and encounter with God. To be spiritual *and* religious is "to call for a new wholeness of experience and reason, to restitch experience with human wisdom and to renew reason through an experience of awe."[82]

Robert K. Johnston (discussed above) argues that this recent turn to experience and spirituality has changed the way people order life's transcendentals – truth, beauty, and goodness.[83] In 1960s, Western people were still oriented to the question of truth and ordered the transcendentals this way: truth, then goodness, and finally beauty. By the '70s and '80s, Western culture, having lived through the Vietnam War and having seen the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King Jr. had reordered these verities: goodness came first, then truth, and then beauty. Today, Johnston believes that increasing number of people think we must begin with beauty, and then move to goodness, before considering truth. Johnston believes that this recent cultural shift opens new opportunities for Christian theologians to pay more attention to people's encounters with beauty and to reconsider the Spirit of God's presence and revelation in these experiences.

Cultural/Contextual Dimension

The changing global realities,[84] and how these realities affected the global church, adds another (indispensable) dimension to the recent interest in the Spirit's extended

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[82]Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 128.

[83]Johnston, "Meeting God at the Movies," accessed October 29th, 2014.

[84]Michael Goheen mentions six global realities that has changed the landscape of Christian mission: (1) The collapse of colonialism in the twentieth century; (2) Globalization; (3) Urbanization; (4) The staggering social and economic problems that afflict our world; (5) the soaring population of the last century; (6) a resurgence in religions around the world; and (7) the tectonic shifts in Western culture, in which he mentions the emergence

works. It has been widely realized today that over the past century Christianity's center of gravity has shifted southward and eastward to Africa, Asia and South America, while regrettably the church attendances in the West are declining.[85] This recent growth of the church in new cultural locations of the world, interwoven with the emergence and the explosive growth of the global Pentecostalism in the 20th century, has contributed to the theological reflections on the issues of contextualization – how the Gospel relates to diverse cultural contexts – and the role of the Holy Spirit therein. Moreover, these changing global realities have also raised awareness of the contextual nature of any theological formulation. Theologians from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania are increasingly aware that traditional Western theologies are just as local, *ad hoc*, and contextual as their newly formulated theologies. They are also increasingly aware that Western theologies "do not really make sense within their own cultural patterns and thought forms;"[86] hence the need for

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of consumeristic/market-driven society and technological culture. See Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 20-25.

[85]Another way of describing this phenomenon is by looking at the three major shifts in the geographic location of Christendom: (1) During the first one thousand years, Christendom was centered in the eastern half of the Roman empire; (2) during the next millennium, Christendom was centered in the West; (3) in the third millennium, Christendom has shifted to the south. Quoted from Buhlmann in Michael Pocock, "The Disappearing Center: From Christendom to Global Christianity," in *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*, eds. Michael Pocock, Gailyn van Rheenen & Douglas McConnell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 132. Philip Jenkins calls this emergence and growth of Southern Christianity "the next Christendom." See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[86]Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 9-10.

self-theologizing[87] – formulating new, local, and contextual theologies as reflections on their own unique, concrete and real experience.

The dialectic between the global and the local[88] embedded in globalization processes requires theologians to maintain the balance between what Andrew Walls called the *indigenizing* principle and the *pilgrim* principle,[89] or between what Marc Cortez called *intra-contextual* and *trans-contextual theology*.[90] When theologians place undue emphasis on the *indigenizing* principle, they would assume that "every issue the church faces is, in the final analysis, so contextualized and conditioned by the particularities of the local setting and

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[87]A. Scott Moreau notes that in the height the colonial era, when churches planted in various colonies around the world were largely dependent on Western leadership and financing, missionary leaders Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn utilized "indigenization" to promote the idea of planting national churches that were (1) self-propagating; (2) self-governing; and (3) self-financing.[87] Then in 1985, missionary and theologian Paul Hiebert proposed that "self-theologizing" should be added to the equation, because he believed that indigenous communities must also be able to develop theologies that are biblically derived but framed in vernacular thought patterns as well as language. See A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualization in World Mission: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 123; 125-26.

[88]Robert Schreiter argues that as both extension and compression, globalization not only creates homogenity across cultures in the world, but also stimulates heterogenity as local responses (or resistances) to these homogenizing forces. As a result, globalization creates a dialectic between the global and the local that must be attended to by theologians. See Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 9-12. As *extension*, globalization "extends the effects of modernity throughout the entire world via the communications technologies that create a network for information flow." As *compression*, globalization "compress both our sense of time and our sense of space."

[89]Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 7-9.

[90]Marc Cortez, "Creation and Context: A Theological Framework for Contextual Theology," *WTJ* 67, no. 2 (2005): 360. Cortez explains that *intra-textual* theology attempts to interact primarily with the concerns and ideas of a limited context, while *trans-contextual* theology focuses on relating the theological perspectives of its context to those originating from other contexts.

the time in which they live that we become skeptical of the ability of any theologian to speak with authority or confidence about the claims of the gospel on someone outside his or her own cultural arena."[91] Conversely, when theologians put too much emphasis on the *pilgrim* principle, they would assume that "all the issues they face in their culture are the same faced by every culture. … their own theological reflection is universalized for the entire world."[92] In Cortez's words, while *intra-contextual* theologies are vital for the ongoing effectiveness of the church, "they must not remain isolated from theologies developed with a more global perspective or they risk becoming 'locked' in their contexts."[93] At the same time, *trans-contextual* theologies "must not become so concerned with the global perspective that they lose sight of their own situatedness and fail to become actuated in local theologies."[94]

As theologians engage in these global/local and universal/particular dialectics, many pneumatological reflections emerge. One of the key issues is to understand how and to what extent this plurality of theologies (constructed by theologians from diverse cultures and languages) are at the same time the work of the one and the same Spirit. The nature of the Spirit's presence and work within this whole process of theologizing needs further clarifications. Theologians need to clarify whether the Spirit's work is to help the community of faith, as they interpret the Scripture, to indigenize and translate the core message of the

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[91]Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 12-13.

[92]Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 12.

[93]Marc Cortez, "Creation and Context," 360. Tennent says it appealingly, "Every authentic theology must not only celebrate the insights of its own particularity, but also reflect a universalizing quality that expresses the catholicity shared by all Christians everywhere." See Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 264.

[94]Cortez, "Creation and Context," 360.

Gospel into particular contexts (Bevan's translation model)[95] or whether the Spirit has already present and at work in revealing God in a particular culture, and by implication it is the duty of theologians to acknowledge it and bring this hidden revelation into higher fulfillment in Christ (Bevans' anthropological model)[96] – or whether it is a mixture of both. Using Robert T. Rush's imagery, does the Spirit work in the community of faith as they do their works as "pearl merchant," bringing the unchanging Gospel to changing cultures, or does the Spirit work in assisting them to be "treasure hunter," discovering the presence of God already hidden in particular cultures?[97]

Stanley J. Grenz on the Presence of the Holy Spirit in Culture

It is within the above multifaceted matrix of contexts that this thesis will introduce the person and the work of Stanley J. Grenz (1950-2005). Grenz has been widely known both within his own North American evangelical circle and beyond as a theologian who is committed to contextual and culturally-sensitive theological method and construction. Convinced that he was living in the midst of a huge transition in cultural history (primarily understood by him as a transition from modernity to postmodernity), Grenz persuaded his fellow evangelicals to rethink the way theology has been done and should be done in responding to this shift.[98] In the preface of *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh*

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[95]Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 37-53.

[96]Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 54-69.

[97]See Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 56.

[98]Suggesting that this is indeed a transition of utmost importance and urgency, Grenz states that "we may be in the midst of a transition rivaling the intellectual and social

Agenda for the 21st Century (1993), his first book on evangelicalism and theological method, he shared his burden:

> As a committed Christian within the evangelical family, I am concerned for the future of the gospel witness in a rapidly changing world. The intent of this volume is to spark interest and discussion among thinkers who share with me the label "evangelical" as to how we should rethink key aspects of our theological agenda. Such rethinking – what I have called "revisioning" – needs to articulate the biblical, evangelical vision in a manner that both upholds the heritage we embrace and speaks to the setting in which we seek to live as God's people and share the good news of the salvation available in Jesus Christ our Lord.[99]

Grenz believes that the transition from modernity to postmodernity demands "nothing less than a rebirth of theological reflection among evangelicals, one that can lead to a renewal of our understanding of who we are as the people of God."[100] To this end, a renewed vision of evangelical theology is needed. In Grenz's words, "we must seek to determine what can serve as the foundation for a new vision of who we are as bearers of that grand heritage of the church we call 'evangelical.'"[101]

Grenz's vision for evangelical renewal in the midst of this changing cultural landscape is clearly expressed in the way he developed his theological method. One important indication is the way Grenz revised the sources of theology as traditionally

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changes that marked the birth of modernity out of the decay of the Middle Ages. The world appears to be entering a new phase of history, often designated – for lack of a better term – *postmodernity*." See Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 14. Italics in the original.

[99]Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 11.

[100]Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 17.

[101]Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 17.

understood (which include "Scripture," "tradition," "reason," and "experience")[102] by intentionally inserting "culture" and omitting both "reason" and "experience."[103] In his version, theology's sources consist of "Scripture," "tradition," and "culture."[104] Grenz believes that the historical-cultural context of the faith community performs a crucial function in the theological enterprise. He admits that although never the sole determining influence, the church's social-historical "presents specific theological issues with which the

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[102]Alister McGrath, for example, writes in his theology textbook, "Broadly speaking, four main sources have been acknowledged within the Christian tradition: (1) Scripture; (2) Tradition; (3) Reason; (4) Religious experience. Though not regarded as being of equal importance, each of these sources has a distinct contribution to make within the discipline of theology …" See Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th Edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 120. These four sources have traditionally been referred to as "Wesleyan Quadrilateral," although their origin can be traced long before John Wesley. Michael Horton explains that in the wake of the Enlightenment, within Anglicanism a moderating ("Latitudinarian") position emerged, treating reason, tradition, experience, and Scripture as four legs of a stool of ecclesiastical authority. While insisting on the primacy of Scripture, John Wesley affirmed this fourfold authority. In 1965, Albert C. Outler coined the term *Wesleyan Quadrilateral* for this view that he discerned in Wesley's writings. See Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 198.

[103]By doing this, Grenz is not replacing "experience" with "culture." In fact, Grenz critiques the Wesleyan quadrilateral because he contends that "experience" is not supposed to be regarded as a separate norm/source separate from the other three. He quotes Paul Tillich who says, "Experience is not the source of theology, but the medium through which theology's sources are received." See Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 15.

[104]Stanley J. Grenz & John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2001), 57-166. The three sources of theology are: (1) Scripture: Theology's "Norming Norm," (2) Tradition: Theology's Hermeneutical Trajectory, and (3) Culture: Theology's Embedding Context. In his earliest work on theological method, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, Grenz uses slightly different terms to refer to this three sources. He refer to them as the three pillars of theology, which consist of: (1) the biblical message, (2) the theological heritage of the church and (3) the thought-forms of the historical-cultural context in which the contemporary people of God seek to speak, live and act. See Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 93.

believing community must grapple if it is to speak a relevant message to the present."[105] He asserts,

> The social community in which the people of God participate contains its own cognitive tools - language, symbols, myths and outlooks on the world - that facilitate identity formation and the experience of reality. If the faith community would address the gospel message to the aspirations of people, therefore, it must understand the identity-forming and experience-facilitating concepts of the society in which it ministers the confession "Jesus is Lord."[106]

Grenz knew that inserting "culture" as one of theology's sources was indeed a controversial proposal.[107] What's more important is the theological justification given for this insertion. At the outset, Grenz did not provide much theological grounds to defend this insertion. He did provide some pneumatological justification by linking culture with the presence and the voice of the Holy Spirit. Part of his rationale is as follows:

> Because the life-giving Creator Spirit is present wherever life flourishes, the Spirit's voice can conceivably resound through many media, including the media of human culture. Because Spirit-induced human flourishing evokes cultural expression, we can anticipate in such expressions traces of the Creator Spirit's presence. Consequently, we should listen intently for the voice of Spirit, who is present in all life and therefore who "precedes" us into the world, bubbling to the surface through the artifacts and symbols human construct.[108]

Grenz was quick to give a caveat, though. First, in line with his belief that Scripture is the norming norm for theological construction, he reminded us that "whatever speaking that occurs through other media does not come as a speaking against the text … while being ready to acknowledge the Spirit's voice whenever it may be found, we still

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[105]Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 98.

[106]Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 97-98.

[107]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 131.

[108]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 162.

uphold the primacy of the text."[109] Second, he stressed that culture and text are not "two different moments of communication; rather, they are but one speaking. … we engage not in two different 'listenings,' but one. We listen for the voice of the Spirit who speaks the Word through the word within the particularity of the hearer's context, and who thereby can speak in all things."[110]

The Purpose and the Limitation of This Study

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, to critically assess Grenz's pneumatological understanding of culture. To what extent and in what ways does Grenz understand the Holy Spirit to be present and speak in culture? Is this understanding of culture theologically justified? Second, to critically assess whether Grenz's use of culture (understood as such) as one of theology's sources is theologically justified and methodologically sound – and thereby commendable for the future of evangelical theological method.

These thesis questions are important at least for three reasons. First, as evangelicals, we do want to affirm the importance of culture as the inevitable context of our theological enterprise. We acknowledge that all theology is contextual. However, we do want to assure that our understanding of culture is theologically grounded before incorporating it in our overall theological method. The understanding of culture that is not theologically grounded will result in inadequate or defective theological method and constructs. With the emergence of global Christianity and local theologizing, the need for a theological

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[109]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 162.

[110]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 163.

methodology that pays special attention to cultural context is becoming more urgent and hence the need for a theologically grounded understanding of culture. At the same time, we acknowledge that our methodological commitments can and will influence our methodological decision to insert culture as one of the sources of theology. It is then equally important to assure that our methodological commitments are themselves theologically sound.

Second, some important aspects of our doctrine of Holy Spirit is at stake. We are responsible for formulating and expressing our understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit biblically and theologically. On the one hand, we do not want to quench the work of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand nor we want to blaspheme the Spirit by claiming something about his person and work that has no theological justification. We dare not neglect the person and work of the Holy Spirit, but nor should we exaggerate them. We therefore need to deliberately investigate to what extent and it what ways it is legitimate to affirm that the Holy Spirit is indeed present and speaks in culture.

Third, Stanley J. Grenz is an important and influential figure within North American evangelicalism and beyond. Most evangelical theologians write on the issues of contextualizing the Gospel in a changing culture from missiological perspectives, but perhaps none of them, like Grenz, constructs a specifically "contextual" evangelical theological method for the postmodern context which concurrently incorporates "culture" as an explicit element within it. It is important for evangelicals to charitably and critically assess his thoughts, so that his real contribution can be fairly realized and clearly appropriated.

When explicating Grenz's thought, this thesis will attempt to present his view on the Holy Spirit and culture within the framework of his overall theological method. As a

consequence, this thesis will give most attention to Grenz's writings that deal specifically with the issues of evangelical theological method,[111] pneumatology, culture, and also postmodernity. Grenz's texts on ethics and ethical/pastoral issues will not be the focus of this thesis. Besides, Grenz's pneumatological view on culture surely has wide theological implications. In this thesis, however, the implications discussed – and consequently the critical assessment given – will be delimited to those who have direct bearing on the issues of evangelical theological method. Other than his books, Grenz's relevant essays in edited works and his journal articles will be consulted. In addition, I will also use relevant essays, articles, and books from various authors that deal with relevant aspects of Grenz's works.

Methodology and Organization

In order to investigate the thesis questions responsibly, this first chapter has already begun to place Grenz's theological agenda within the broader picture of recent growing interest in the study of the Holy Spirit in the world with its multidimensional concerns (i.e. ending the perceived supernatural/natural or grace/nature dychotomy; emancipating the Spirit from Christological boundaries; expanding the work of the Spirit outside the church) and motives (i.e. missiological/evangelistic; spiritual/experiential; cultural/contextual).

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[111]It should be mentioned that in this thesis, we will not look at Grenz's book series called "The Matrix of Christian Theology" (Two volumes; both published after *Beyond Foundationalism*). Our engagement with Grenz's books will stop at *Beyond Foundationalism*, Grenz's last methodological book that was intentionally written with more specifically evangelical audience in mind. As cited before, *Beyond Foundationalism* was co-authored with John R. Franke and published in 2001. In this thesis, when referring to this book, I will only refer to Stanley Grenz as the author, though I am aware of the fact that this book is actually the work of two authors.

In Chapter two, Grenz's understanding of his context and the influences it has on his methodological commitments and decisions will be explored. It will be shown that in Grenz's case this is of utmost importance, because the way he perceives his own context (which includes people, movements, and ideas that have influenced him in different ways and in varying degrees) provides him with rationales for moving beyond the traditional evangelical theological method and directly affects the way he develops his "contextual" theological method. Five problem areas or aspects will be used as heuristic tools to exposit Grenz's multifaceted contextual identity. At the end of this chapter, it should be clear that although there are two streams that run through Grenz's theological identity (i.e. pietism and postmodernity), it is postmodernity that has dominated the colors of his theological picture.

In Chapter three, Grenz's doctrine of the Holy Spirit will be explained. We will see to what extent his explicit pneumatology and other theological concepts (like his concept of grace and revelation) influence his pneumatological understanding of culture. At the same time, we will also see how his methodological commitments inform and shape this concept of culture and his decision to insert it as theology's sources along with Scripture and tradition. Some preliminary comments will be given to point to the potential problems with Grenz's proposal.

Chapter four is the apex of this thesis. Grenz's proposal will be fully assessed, both by way of appreciation and critique. With valuable helps from several conversation partners, I will try to show that Grenz's pneumatological understanding of culture is theologically unwarranted and flawed. Two problems will be highlighted. First, those associated with Grenz's concept of revelation and grace; and second, those related to the Spirit-Christ relation. I will also try to show that at the end Grenz's proposal fail both on

theological and methodological grounds, because it leads to serious problems pertaining to the issue of authority in theology.

In Chapter five, I will conclude this thesis by giving a summary, some methodological reflections, as well as possible avenues on how to take the trajectory of this thesis to the next level.

CHAPTER 2

GRENZ'S CONTEXTS AND HIS METHODOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to set forth Stanley Grenz's understanding of himself and his (changing) context, and to show how this understanding is inseparably intertwined with the methodological decisions and emphases he made in his doing of theology, especially as he attempted to "revise" and "renew" evangelical theology.[1] Authors like Brian Harris have produced the theological biography of Stanley Grenz in chronological order, surveying and tracing the developments of his life personally and intellectually.[2] Harris observes that in general – seen from the perspective of his different intended audiences – Grenz's writing career can chronologically be divided into three stages.[3] To certain extent, these different stages in Grenz's works reflect how he perceived and

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[1]It is to be noted that the nature of this chapter is descriptive rather than evaluative. The word "revise" and "renew" are noticeably allusions to the title of Grenz's books, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (1993) and *Renewing Evangelical Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (2000, 2nd edition 2006).

[2]For the most recent and the most comprehensive account, see Brian S. Harris, Jason S. Sexton & Jay T. Smith, "Stanley J. Grenz: An Theological Biography," in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Grenz*, eds. Derek J. Tidball, Brian S. Harris & Jason S. Sexton (Eugene: Cascade Book, 2014), 3-27.

[3]Brian Harris, "Beyond Individualism: Stanley Grenz's Contribution to Baptist Theology," *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 6, No. 1 (April 2010), 14.

responded to the changing context in which he found himself. Harris points out that in his early stage, Grenz was very consciously a *Baptist* evangelical theologian. In his middle stage, he was consciously an *evangelical* theologian, and in his later works he tried to reach an even wider audience and wrote primarily as a *theologian*.[4] In this chapter, however, the chronological delineation of Grenz's life and work will not be repeated. Instead, Grenz's biography will be presented in a synthetic fashion, focusing on five problem areas or aspects

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[4]Harris, "Beyond Individualism," 14. Harris adds that while Grenz never renounces his Baptist and evangelical roots, they feature less prominently in his later work. Although undoubtedly some exceptions are to be expected, Harris' observation is basically correct and heuristically helpful. If we look exclusively at Grenz's published books, we can divide the three stages as follows: (1) the early stage (1983-1985); (2) the middle stage (1988-2001); and (3) the later stage (2001-2005). The early stage began with the publication of Grenz's dissertation on Isaac Backus (1724-1806), a Puritan and Baptist pastor-theologian. Two years later, he published a book on Baptist belief and church polity, *The Baptist Congregation* (1985). In the middle stage, as Harris observed, Grenz began writing for the larger evangelical world as opposed to a narrower Baptist readership. He wrote mainly on issues facing the evangelical church, ranging on the issues of prayer, AIDS, millenialism, the role of women in the church and sexual misconduct in the pastorate, and postmodernity. At this stage, Grenz also wrote a book on the theology of his *Doktorvater*, entitled *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (1990, revised in 2005). Grenz took his work to a higher plane when in 1993 he published *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, his first programmatic book on evangelical theological method and theology, followed by *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* in 2000. Prior to *Renewing the Center*, Grenz published his systematic theology books (what he called his theological "trilogy"): *Theology for the Community of God* (1994, revised in 2000), *Created for Community* (1996, 2nd edition 1998), and *What Christians Really Believe ... and Why* (1998). This middle stage ended with the publication of *Beyond Foundationalism*, co-authored with John R. Franke, in 2001. *Beyond Foundationalism* is Grenz's last methodological book that intentionally written with more specifically evangelical audience in mind. The later stage began with the publication of Volume 1 of "The Matrix of Christian Theology" series, entitled *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of Imago Dei* and ended with the posthumous publication of the Volume 2, *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology*. Jonathan Wilson notes that this incomplete series (due to Grenz's untimely death in 2005) were initially intended to draw on six loci of doctrine. See Jonathan R. Wilson, "Stanley J. Grenz: Generous Faith and Faithful Engagement," *Modern Theology* 23, no. 1 (January 2007): 114. At this later stage, it is evident that Grenz was more explicitly trinitarian in his theology. In 2004, he published *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*.

that in aggregate reflect Grenz's understanding of his context, how they relate to his theological identity and subsequently, to his methodological commitments.

Between Baptist and Evangelical Identity

Stanley James Grenz was born in Alpena, Michigan on January 7, 1950. He was the youngest of three children born to Richard and Clara Grenz. Richard Grenz was a Baptist pastor for thirty years before he passed away in 1971. Grenz was raised in this context of German Baptist family that owes its heritage to the German Lutheran Pietism, commonly known for their conversionist spirituality, heartfelt piety, and warm relationality.[5] Grenz acknowledged how this upbringing has impacted his personal identity formation since his childhood and teenage years. Reflecting back, he realized how deeply steeped he is in the "warm-hearted, relational, pietistic conception of the Christian faith"[6] that he saw as a child in his father's ministry and imbued in the churches he served.

How does this Pietistic denominational identity relate to how Grenz sees himself as an "evangelical"? For one, Grenz distances himself from some Southern Baptists who sees their identity as Southern Baptist and being an evangelical in the either/or

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[5]Scorgie and Zylla explain, "Stanley Grenz's father pastored in what had been a tightly-knit regional community of German-speaking pietistic Baptist immigrants seeking to build new lives on the windswept prairies of the American upper Midwest and the Canadian prairies. Many of these European immigrant families were affiliated with the North American [German] Baptist Conference, although as English language proficiency developed some were integrating into existing English-speaking denominations." See Glen G. Scorgie & Phil C. Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist Theologians: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Stanley Grenz," in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Grenz* (Eugene: Cascade Book, 2014), 285-86.

[6]Stanley J. Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist with a Ph.D.," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 58.

framework.[7] One cannot be both Baptist and evangelical, they believe. Grenz also disagrees with the analysis of George Marsden when he speaks of "card-carrying evangelicals," referring to "those who identify themselves as evangelical first and members of a denomination second."[8] Instead, Grenz wants to affirm his identity as a Baptist and as an evangelical in a both/and framework. It is as a member of a Baptist denomination that he sees himself as an evangelical.[9] In his words,

> My entire life … I have seen myself as a Baptist and as an evangelical. In fact, I have come to see that it is as a member of my denomination that I am an evangelical, and this because I participate in an evangelical denomination – the family of Baptists. And because I hold to a view of what it means to be and live as a Christian which is shared by a family of believers that transcend my denomination, I am able to see myself at the same time as a participant in that broader coalition called "evangelicalism."[10]

The answer to the above question lies in what Grenz perceived to be the essence of evangelicalism. The core of evangelicalism is, for Grenz, a vision of the faith, not a body of beliefs or doctrine: "'evangelical' refers first of all to a specific vision of what it means to be Christian."[11] Although Grenz admits that this vision is connected to a set of shared convictions, Grenz thinks that it should not be exhausted by them. Rather than

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[7]Stanley J. Grenz, "Baptist and Evangelical: One Northern Baptist's Perspective," in *Southern Baptists and American Evangelicals: The Conversation Continues*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 1993), 54.

[8]Grenz, "Baptist and Evangelical," 54.

[9]Grenz, "Baptist and Evangelical," 54. One of Grenz's purpose in writing this article was to encourage Southern Baptists to ascertain to what extent being a Southern Baptist also means they too are "ex officio" (by virtue of their presence in the Baptist family, more specifically, by virtue of their involvement in the Southern Baptist expression of that family) in some sense to the term evangelical.

[10]Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 10.

[11]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 30-31.

describing the essence of evangelicalism in doctrinal terms, Grenz prefers to see it primarily as an *ethos* which is more readily "sensed" experientially than described theologically.[12] More importantly, Grenz believes that this shared vision is centered around a distinctive spirituality or religious experience, characterized by an experience of conversion or personal encounter with God in Jesus Christ and the subsequent life-changing transformation. Grenz believes that at the heart of the evangelical movement has always been what Donald Dayton calls "convertive piety" or what Roger Olson terms "conversional piety," i.e. "the message that 'true Christian piety-devotion, discipleship, sanctification – begins with a distinct conversion experience.'"[13] Grenz justifies this understanding of evangelicalism by tracing its roots back in the eighteenth-century Puritanism and Pietism.

The Puritans, seeing their work of reforming the church as a continuation of the Reformers' legacy, were concerned with the question of what constitutes a true church and sought to realize what they believed to be the "pure church ideal." The goal of the gospel for them is "to gather out of the world 'pure' churches, that is, congregations that contain only, or consist solely of, the elect of God."[14] The Puritans sharply critiqued the church in England because the church was content to remain a "mixed assembly,"[15] consisting of both the saints of God and the unregenerate. Full membership of the church was given to everyone born in the country, baptized in infancy and later confirmed. The result was a church populated by those who showed no evidence of true Christian belief or devotion to Christ.

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[12]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 31.

[13]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 63.

[14]Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 44.

[15]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 44.

The Puritans believed that a true church should strive to maintain a "regenerate church membership" and thereby "must rid itself not only of popish errors but of the unregenerate within it."[16] Grenz notes that this quest for a pure church ignited within the Puritans an apprehension regarding the possibility of gaining assurance of elect status. The result was "the development of a descriptive psychology of sin and regeneration that gave rise, in turn, to the practice of reciting personal testimonies of God's work of grace in the heart – which, when coupled with evidence of a subsequent Christian walk, could mediate to concerned believers 'full assurance' of salvation and of eternal election."[17]

Like the Puritans, the Pietists were reformers whose goal was "to complete the Lutheran reformation which in their estimation had degenerated to adherence to outward forms rather than fostering inward transformation."[18] However, unlike the Puritans, instead of questioning the status of the German Lutheran church as a true church of Christ and withdrawing from the church, their intent was to reform the church from within. The Pietists established the *collegia pietatis*, the gathering of lay people within the parish churches who meet weekly for worship, Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, discussion, and mutual edification.[19] The goal of these churches within the church (*ecclesiolae in ecclesia*) was not to separate "true" Christians from the unregenerate, but to be agencies for bringing the church to reflect once again the image of the early Christian community.[20] The Pietists

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[16]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 44.

[17]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 61.

[18]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 61.

[19]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 49.

[20]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 49.

critiqued the German Lutheranism of their day because they placed the marks of authentic Christianity in outward matters such as proper baptism and adherence to the Lutheran creeds. For them, authentic Christianity is more than mere head knowledge or adherence to outward forms; rather, it entails "a personal conversion that is accompanied by a transformed heart leading to right living."[21]

Historically speaking, Puritan and Pietist movements form "the immediate seedbed for the rise of the evangelical awakening in the eighteenth century."[22] The cross-pollination between Pietism and Puritanism burst into full bloom in British soil, both on the island and in the North American colonies.[23] At the heart of this new movement, exemplified by figures like John Wesley and George Whitefield, was "a concern … for true, heartfelt religion, in contrast to what the early evangelicals viewed as the nominalism of the day, which looked to baptism and church membership as the hallmarks of the faith,"[24] and Grenz believes that this vision of faith has continued (and should continue) to dominate evangelical theology to the present.[25] Besides the concerns for the assurance of salvation and the centrality of regeneration, Grenz notes that the eighteenth century evangelical awakening "was abetted by an approach to the Christian faith that … arose from the influence of the new empiricist, inductive, experiment-focused scientific method that had been mediated to

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[21]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 50.

[22]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 61.

[23]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 52.

[24]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 52.

[25]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 52.

Wesley and others by the Enlightenment thinkers, especially John Locke."[26] This makes evangelicalism an "experimental religion," that is, a faith that had been tried and proved by experience.[27] The eighteenth century evangelicals believed that "genuine religious affiliation is always experienced in life and its truth confirmed through personal experience, i.e. through 'experiment.'"[28]

In sum, Grenz's understanding of evangelicalism as a common vision of faith centered on "convertive piety," mediated in part by his own experience of being raised in a pietistic Baptist family, results in him viewing Christianity primarily as a religion of the heart.[29] The inward dimension of Christian spirituality must therefore take the primacy over the outward, albeit the importance of the latter.[30] In Grenz's words, "We give priority to the inward dimension as the wellspring of the outward, but we consider the inward dead if it does not lead to its proper outward expression in the life of discipleship."[31] Furthermore, the pietistic concern for experiential religion implies that "faith must be a matter of experience. It must transform life."[32] Grenz says that the pietistic impulse maintains that a personal

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[26]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 63.

[27]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 63.

[28]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 63.

[29]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 45.

[30]Grenz says, "… the *sine qua non conditio* of personal spirituality is not outward adherence to ecclesiastical rites, for holiness involves proper inner motivation." See Grenz, *Revisioning*, 46.

[31]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 49.

[32]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 46.

experience is foundational to Christian life, and the experience of new birth, as important as it is, is but the beginning of this experiential religion.[33]

Between "Convertive Piety" and "Right Doctrine"

Given the utmost importance of piety and spirituality in Grenz's understanding of evangelicalism, where is the place for theology and doctrine? Grenz thinks that the two are intimately linked. The way evangelicals as a community of faith make sense of and speak about their common experience of conversion and the subsequent life of discipleship cannot be separated from a Christian narrative that provides the categories to interpret that experience. It is in this context that Grenz talks about the roles of the Bible, theology and doctrine. No experience of a transformative religious experience occurs in a vacuum, Grenz argues, "no transformation comes to us apart from an interpretation facilitated by the concepts we bring to it."[34] Moreover, experience and interpretive concepts are reciprocally related: "Our experience determines the interpretive concepts we employ to speak about it; at the same time, our concepts facilitate the experiences we have in life."[35] As evangelicals, the encounter with God in Christ "both is facilitated by and expresses itself in

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[33]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 47. Italics in the original.

[34]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 34.

[35]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 34. The word "determines" seems too strong and somewhat inconsistent with Grenz's later writings. Although Grenz consistently believes that the two are intimately related, in his later writings Grenz repeatedly affirms that experience is always already conditioned and mediated by the interpretive concepts. He stresses that experience does not precede interpretation; instead, they are always filtered by an interpretive framework that facilitates their occurrence. He also says that there is no generic religious experience, only experience endemic to specific religious traditions. See Stanley J. Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic: Theological Method after the Demise of Foundationalism," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 122.

the categories that are of a theological nature and that arise from the Bible."[36] With this understanding, Grenz wants to show that his commitment to convertive piety does not implicate a neglect of right doctrine. To the contrary, he believes that his commitment to convertive piety leads inevitably to a concern for orthodox doctrine.[37] Nevertheless, he wants to emphasize that his strong regard for doctrine "arises as a crucial and necessary by-product of my being an evangelical committed to the gospel of heartfelt transformation"[38] For Grenz, "doctrine is the servant – a crucial servant to be sure, but a servant nonetheless – of the transforming work of the Spirit."[39] To summarize, Grenz believes that central to evangelicalism is "a common vision of the faith that arises out of a common religious experience couched within a common interpretive framework consisting in theological beliefs we gain from the Scriptures."[40] At the heart of evangelicalism, therefore, is "a shared experience cradled in a shared theology, which serves as the context for our ongoing life as believers."[41] Theology and doctrine are important "insofar as they serve and facilitate this shared life-orientation – and precisely because they are intended to do so."[42]

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[36]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 34.

[37]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 75.

[38]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 75. He explains further, "I am deeply concerned for right-headedness because I am an evangelical. Furthermore, my adherence to orthodox doctrine does not in and of itself constitute me as an evangelical. Indeed, not everyone who is doctrinally orthodox can claim (or would desire to claim) the descriptor 'evangelical.'"

[39]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 75.

[40]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 34.

[41]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 34.

[42]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 35.

Grenz repeatedly insists that "the *sine qua non* of evangelicalism is not primarily doctrinal uniformity, but a vibrant spirituality."[43] Rather than the quest for right doctrine, the commitment to convertive piety "must remain the integrative principle of the evangelical ethos."[44] He gives some considerations to argue that elevating the concern for biblical doctrine as the determinative or integrating characteristic of evangelicalism may well undermine the movement itself. First, "a doctrine-centered approach all-too-readily loses the distinctive character of evangelicalism as a renewal movement within the church."[45] Second, "viewing right-headedness as evangelicalism's integrating concern risks the demise of the generous spirit that has characterized evangelicals from the beginning, but which is all-too-often the first casualty in the battle for doctrinal uniformity."[46] Third, "giving central place to the doctrinal concern can blunt the central insight evangelicalism offers to the church,

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[43]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 70.

[44]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 74. Having said this, it is worth noting that Grenz does admit that "the concern for right doctrine" (understood as adherence to a set of basic dogmas that are viewed as encapsulating the essence of the faith) is the other ethos – the other side of the coin – that characterizes evangelicalism besides "the concern for convertive piety." He admits that its roots can be traced back to the history of the movement, especially since the mid-twentieth century. Since that time, the evangelical focus on convertive and experiential piety has been augmented by a cognitive aspect, i.e. the commitment to biblical doctrine. Grenz says that the introduction of this additional dimension suggests that the evangelical ethos consists of a material and a formal principle, the gospel of Christ and the authority of the Bible understood as the source of sound beliefs. Evangelicals' concern for the right doctrine can be traced back to Luther's principle of *sola scriptura* and to the Protestant scholasticism, but the more immediate roots can be found in Princeton theology in the nineteenth century and the subsequent fundamentalist movement. Grenz says that the legacy of the fundamentalist struggle against liberalism, waged on the terms set out by the Princeton theology, oriented evangelical theology toward the quest for propositional truth, in contrast to the interest in the person's relationship to God that had shaped and propelled the theological pursuits of the earlier awakening evangelicalism. See pp. 64-68.

[45]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 73.

[46]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 73.

namely that genuine Christian faith dare never be equated with externalism in any form, including the externalism entailed in mere adherence to orthodox doctrine."[47] Looking to the concern to doctrine as the integrative principle, therefore, "risks replacing the focus on warm-heartedness … with the very attitude – the creeping creedalism – that evangelicalism rose up to protest."[48]

This commitment to the primacy of "convertive piety" then relates to how (and in what sense) Grenz understands evangelicals as "the boundaried people" (*die begrenzte gemeinschaft*). Defining "boundary" as "anything forming or serving to indicate a limit or end," Grenz admits that boundaries are inevitable part of life; they are present everywhere, including in religious groups, even when the demarcated limits are fuzzy or difficult to depicher.[49] In his search for answer to what kind of boundaried people evangelicals are, Grenz drew insight from Paul Hiebert, a missiologist who himself drew insight from set theory in mathematics and applied them to missiological studies.[50] Hiebert differentiates between two types of sets that characterize a group: the "bounded sets" and the "centered sets." [51] A bounded set is "intrinsic" in that "it is formed on the basis of the

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[47]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 73-74.

[48]Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 74.

[49]Stanley J. Grenz, "*Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft* ('The Boundaried People') and the Character of Evangelical Theology," *JETS* 45, no. 2 (June 2002): 301.

[50]Paul G. Hiebert. *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.

[51]"Bounded sets" have certain structural characteristics: (1) The category is created by listing the essential characteristics that an object must have in itself to belong to the set; (2) The category is defined by a clear boundary; (3) Objects within a bounded set are uniform in their essential characteristics – they constitute a homogeneous group; (4) They are essentially static sets; (5) they are, as used in the West, are ontological sets. Hiebert argues

supposed essential nature of its member."[52] A centered set is "extrinsic" in that "membership [in this set] is predicated upon relationality, whether this be the relationship of the items to each other or, preferably for Hiebert, their relationship to a common reference point."[53] For Hiebert, viewing "Christian" as a centered set "shifts the focus away from attempts to define the church by appeal to its boundaries. Rather, the emphasis will be on Christ as the defining center of the church, and the church is seen as a people gathered around – or in relationship to – Christ."[54]

Grenz describes how contemporary evangelical theologians tend to view as self-evident that the movement is a bounded set and are convinced that evangelicalism's demarcating boundary is ultimately doctrinal in character. Nevertheless, agreeing with

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that if we define "Christian" as a bounded set, then: (1) We would classify a person as Christian on the basis of what she or he *is*; (2) We would draw a sharp line between Christians and non-Christians; (3) We would view all Christians as essentially the same; and (4) We would put great emphasis on conversion as the one essential change all people must experience to be saved. "Centered sets," on the other hand, has the following characteristics: (1) It is created by defining a center or reference point and the relationship of things to that center; (2) While centered set are not created by drawing boundaries, *they do have sharp boundaries* that separate things inside the set from those outside it – between things related to or moving towards the center and those that are not; (3) There are two variables intrinsic to centered sets. The first is membership. All members of a set are full members and shared fully in its functions. There are no second-class members. The second variable is distance from the center; (4) centered sets have two types of change inherent in their structure. The first has to do with entry into or exit from the set. The second has to do with movement toward or away from that center. If understood as a centered set, "Christians (1) would be defined as followers of the Jesus Christ of the Bible, as those who make him the center or Lord of their lives; (2) There would be a clear separation between Christians and non-Christians, between those who are followers of Jesus and those who are not. The emphasis, however, would be on exhorting people to follow Christ, rather than excluding others to preserve the purity of the set; (3) There would be a recognition of variation among Christians (e.g. in terms of their knowledge and maturity). See Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 112-26.

[52]Grenz, "*Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft*," 306.

[53]Grenz, "*Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft*," 307.

[54]Grenz, "*Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft*," 307.

Hiebert's proposal, Grenz suggests that "evangelicalism ought not to be understood as a bounded set, despite the widespread influence of this outlook."[55] Grenz argues that the attempt to treat evangelicalism as a bounded set by erecting a theological boundary for the movement as a whole is "theologically problematic,"[56] because "it in effect transforms what was meant to be loosely-tied, trans-confessional renewal movement into a particular confessional tradition, that is, to make the para-church into the church."[57] Furthermore, setting theological boundaries "runs the obvious risk of assuming that theology – or more particularly, a definitive list of doctrinal formulations – can function as the final arbiter as to who is 'in' and who is 'out.'"[58] According to Grenz, although this approach is not completely misguided, it is only of limited value.[59] Besides, theologians who set up a theological

[55]Grenz, "*Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft*," 309. Having said these, Grenz nevertheless argues that even though evangelicalism itself cannot be understood as a bounded set, in one sense its nature as a renewal movement "readily fosters viewing the *church* in a bounded-set manner … the evangelical focus on convertive piety suggests that the boundaries of the church are circumscribed by the experience of the new birth." The essential characteristic of being born again is not unique to the participants of the evangelical movement only, but is shared by all Christian believers who together constitute the church. Rather, the uniqueness of the evangelical coalition, which should be understood in terms of a centered set instead of a bounded set, is to be identified by their shared calling in "the mission of propagating the gospel of transformation and of renewing the church." Grenz explains further, "When viewed through evangelical eyes, the church appears to be a bounded set, insofar as the reality of being born of the Spirit comprises the essential nature of everyone who truly belongs to the community of faith. In this manner, the new birth emerges as the boundary marker of the ecclesial community and the 'ancient landmark' that, evangelicals declare, dare not be moved." See p. 311.

[56]Grenz, "*Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft*," 310.

[57]Grenz, "*Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft*," 310.

[58]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 184.

[59]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 184.

boundary "tend to elevate their own theology to the status of sine qua non"[60] and "all too often set up a linear continuum running from right to left."[61]

With this in mind, Grenz prompts evangelicals to leave behind the two-party bifurcation (mainline/conservative; liberal/evangelical; modernist/fundamentalist; left/right) and instead embrace the spirit of "generous orthodoxy" as originally proposed by Hans Frei.[62] Again, Grenz emphasizes the point that the two-party framework "grossly misrepresents the great diversity in American Protestantism from the eighteenth century to the present."[63] Not only that, Grenz believes that both sides in this "culture war" were in fact modernists (insofar as the entire debate was largely framed by and waged according to modern assumptions)[64]; these bifurcated labels were "the product of a philosophical problematic that emerged with the Enlightenment and, in turn, defined theology, both positively and negatively, throughout the modern era but especially since the mid-nineteenth century."[65] Grenz is convinced that perpetuating the use of the two-party model not only entails an oversimplification of what has been and continues to be a far more complex phenomenon, but also "theologically *dangerously* anachronistic."[66] Besides, the attempt to fit a new and changing situation with old bifurcated categories decreases the ability of theology,

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[60]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 185.

[61]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 185.

[62]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 333.

[63]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 335-36.

[64]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 338.

[65]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 336.

[66]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 338. Italics in the original.

and in turn the church, to engage constructively with the contemporary situation.[67] In this post-theological era (understood by Grenz as post-modern and post-foundationalist era),[68] the church "requires a 'generous orthodoxy' characteristic of a renewed 'center' that lies beyond the polarizations of the past ..."[69] Therefore, the way forward is for evangelicals to take the lead in "renewing a theological 'center' that can meet the challenges of the postmodern, and in some sense post-theological, situation in which the church now finds itself."[70]

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[67]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 338.

[68]More on this in the section sub-titled "Beyond Modernity and Postmodernity."

[69]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 339. Grenz anticipates the fact that the language of the "center" can be coopted into a new two-party paradigm characterized by a polarity between the "center" and the "margin." In this situation, certain persons all too readily assert that they alone are the legitimate heirs of the center to the exclusion of other, less pretentious voices, whose pedigree may in fact just as long and whose claim to the "center" equally valid. Grenz stresses that the center to be renewed here is not by nature political, social, or cultural, but *theological*: The quest to renew the center involves restoring a particular *theological* spirit to the center of the church. See p. 341.

[70]Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 339. The shape of this renewed evangelical center consists in three characteristics: (1) Gospeled in focus; (2) Doctrinal in orientation; (3) Catholic in vision. See pp. 344-59. The move to a "generous orthodoxy," "renewed center," and the characteristic of "doctrinal in orientation"are somewhat ironic and ambiguous given Grenz's prior warnings about the danger of making "doctrine" the distinctive characteristic of evangelicalism, the danger of externalism, "creeping creedalism," etc. In emphasizing the "centered" (instead of "bounded") nature of evangelicalism, he seems to perceive doctrines negatively because they tend to be divisive. It seems that when used positively, he has in mind the primary doctrines that has become the grand consensus of the church throughout the ages. When used negatively, he seems to have different denominational doctrinal formulations in mind. Still, one might question whether the emphasis on the "primary doctrines" instead of the "secondary doctrines" will not lead to the same dangers. Furthermore, given Grenz's commitment to move beyond foundationalism (to be discussed in the subsequent sections) one might also questions whether Grenz is consistently nonfoundationalist in proposing "Gospeled in focus" as the characteristic of this "renewed center."

Grenz testifies that the struggle to maintain a dynamic tension between warm-heartedness and right-headedness, between the concern for convertive piety and for the right doctrine, is something that is deeply personal for him and affects the way he incorporates the idea of relationality in his theology. In one interview, Grenz shared how he was initially raised in an environment that was deeply imbued in a warm-hearted pietism. However, things started to change when he went to university, then to seminary and to graduate school. During these years, and later during his first years as a theology professor, he admitted that he "gravitated to a more cognitive approach to the faith and consequently to theology as an intellectual discipline …"[71] In the mid- to late-1980's, two important events became catalysts in bringing his pietism back to the surface. First, he read Robert Bellah's analysis of the effects of radical individualism in American culture in *Habits of the Heart* (first published 1985). Second, he returned to Munich to write a book on the theology of his *Doktorvater*, Wolfhart Pannenberg. The result was "an awareness that something was missing in the 'scholastic' approach to theology: true piety."[72] He then said, "Upon my return to the USA,

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[71]Stanley Grenz, "Community & Relationships: A Theological Take," Interview with *Talk – the Mainstream Magazine*, *Stanley J. Grenz Personal Website*, http://stanleyjgrenz.com/articles/talk_mag.html, accessed January 16th, 2015. Retrospectively, Grenz says, "… looking back on those years I realize that I never lost the undergirding that the pietism of my upbringing had engrained in me."

[72]Grenz, "Community & Relationships," accessed January 16th, 2015. At the same time, he kept maintaining the tradition of intellectual rigorousness that he inherited from his mentors (e.g. Gordon Lewis, Wolfhart Pannenberg). In the preface of his *Theology for the Community of God*, he says, "In continuity with the training I received from my mentors, I acknowledge the crucial role of reason in the theological enterprise. At the same time, I am convinced that a personal faith commitment as nurtured in a community of faith – piety – is also significant in our attempt to understand and to pursue the constructive theological task. Thus, while theology may be an intellectual search for truth, this search must always be attached to the foundational, identity producing encounter with God in

where I was teaching at that time, I set out to rewrite my theological lectures in a manner that would incorporate into the foundational work that I had already done, the pietist aspect in a manner that gave place to the importance of corporate relationality, i.e., community. The result was my theology text, *Theology for the Community of God*."[73]

Grenz believes that along with the concern for the balance between the inward and the outward, evangelical spirituality should be equally concerned with maintaining the balance between the personal and corporate dimension of Christian life.[74] Grenz affirms that there is a valid place for individual dimension in Christian life. He says, "Both conversion and subsequent growth in the faith are first and foremost the task of the individual. All believers must shoulder responsibility for their own spirituality, for each is individually responsible to become holy and Christlike."[75] The principle of "individual competency" asserts that "each person is both spiritually responsible before God and capable under the impulse of the Holy Spirit to respond to God."[76] The implication is that no one can be brought into right relation with God by another person or by the church; Christianity is a matter of personal commitment.[77] Having said these, Grenz nevertheless stresses that at its best the evangelical approach to the life of faith "emphasizes the individual believer not in

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Christ. And it must issue forth in Christian living." See Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), xxxii.

[73]Grenz, "Community & Relationships," accessed January 16th, 2015.

[74]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 49-56.

[75]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 50.

[76]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 50.

[77]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 50-51.

isolation but within the corporate church fellowship,"[78] thereby balancing the two dimensions of the spiritual life. Grenz adds that although primarily the task of the individual, "spirituality is nevertheless a corporate project."[79]

Grenz observes that the proper emphasis on the corporate dimension of spirituality is timely given the context of rampant and radical individualism of the modern culture. In his critique to the modern North American society, he mentions how the society is built on the myth of the autonomous self that elevates and celebrates the unencumbered individual. This myth is evident in people's tendency to define themselves fundamentally in terms of the choices they make. Furthermore, the autonomous self of the Western myth "supposedly exists independently and entirely outside of any tradition or community, although the self may choose voluntarily to join some community."[80] According to this myth, the autonomous self "not only is the essence of the individual person but also forms the foundation of the social orders, all of which are viewed from the vantage point of social atomism."[81]

Grenz highlights the fact that evangelicals are not immune from the influence of this modern thinking, resulting in the individualization of the gospel and of the church.[82] The good news is, for Grenz, that this fascination with individualism is waning, as seen in the contemporary development in human sciences. This growing interest in the social dimension

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[78]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 50.

[79]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 51.

[80]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 149.

[81]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 149.

[82]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 16.

of life has led to the development of a new model called *communalism* or *culturalism*.[83] In contrast to radical individualism, the communalist emphasize the importance of the social unit – the community – for certain crucial aspects of human living, e.g. epistemology (the process of knowing), identity formation, sustenance of character, virtue and values.[84] Central to the knowing process is a cognitive framework mediated to the individual by the community.[85] In other words, the story of a person's life is "always embedded in the story of the communities in which the person participates, for traditions mediated by communities, not individuals, are the carriers of rationality. The transcending story is mediated to the individual by the community, which transmits from generation to generation and from group to individual traditions of virtue, common good and ultimate meaning."[86] Grenz believes that the radical individualism that has influenced evangelical theology and practice must be rejected, not only because it is out of step with this contemporary intellectual development, but because, and more importantly, it is out of step with the vision found in the Bible and bequeathed by the forebears of our faith community.[87] He says, "From the narratives of the

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[83]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 151.

[84]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 152-53.

[85]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 152.

[86]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 153. Grenz seems to accept Robert Bellah and his associates' definition of community in *The Habits of the Heart*. A community, they write, "is a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices … that both define the community and are nurtured by it." Quoted in Grenz, *Revisioning*, 154. Grenz adds that such a community is oriented toward the past, the future and the present, and through this threefold orientation it constitutes the "self" of its members.

[87]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 16. Again, Grenz is not trying to deny the individual dimension of Christian life; his intent is to achieve balance. In his book about postmodernity, he says that in one hand, "… we dare not entirely lose the emphasis on the importance of the

primordial garden, which open the curtain on the biblical story, to the vision of white-robed multitudes inhabiting the new earth with which the story concludes, the drama of the Scriptures speaks of community."[88] It is for this reason that Grenz intentionally and explicitly makes "community" the integrative motif for theology.[89]

The implication of this focus on community for Grenz's spirituality-directed and pietistically-inclined theology is self-evident. For one, Grenz asserts that theology must arise out of the life of the believing community. To put it in another way, "theological task can be properly pursued only 'from within' – that is, only from the vantage point of the faith community in which the theologian stands." [90] Furthermore, theology is to be understood as a "practical" enterprise – an enterprise that is related to the life and practice of the Christian community.[91] Theological discourse is a second-order discipline; it is a critical, reflective activity that presupposes the beliefs and practices of the Christian community.[92] The

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individual human person indicative of modernity. Indeed, we must always keep in view the biblical themes of God's concern for each person, the responsibility of every human before God, and the individual orientation that lies within the salvation message. He also gives warning about the danger of taking the communal dimension to the extreme: "… twentieth-century examples of totalitarianism are stark reminders that we must continually stand against the tyranny of the collective in all its various forms. Nevertheless, he says that "we must shake ourselves loose from the radical individualism that has come to characterize the modern mind-set." His constructive alternative, following the insight from the communitarians, is along the line of "the individual-within-community." See Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 167-68.

[88]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 156.

[89]See Grenz, *Revisioning*, 147-161 and Stanley J. Grenz & John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2001), Chapter 7.

[90]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 72.

[91]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 74.

[92]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 75.

theologian, consequently, speaks from the perspective of a personal faith commitment and participation in the life of the community. As a "practical" discipline, theology must also be "applied to life – to the theologian's own Christian walk and to the life of the church – in order that faith can issue forth in discipleship."[93] In other words, good theology must be able to "foster a truly godly spirituality that translates into ethical living in the socio-historical context in which we are to be the people of God."[94] Even though theology is a second-order reflection of the community of faith, Grenz hints that it does not mean that it is merely the product of that community's experience, because there is an important sense in which "the revealed truth of God *creates* our experience."[95] On the relationship between the Bible and theology and their respective functions, Grenz asserts, "The biblical narrative builds the conceptual framework by which the community views itself and its experience of the world. Theology, in turn, functions within the context of the Christian community by reflecting on its conceptual framework and belief structure."[96]

Between Modernity and Postmodernity

Crucial to Grenz's theological identity is his understanding that Christians in the West are in the midst of transition as great as "the intellectual and social changes that

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[93]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 25. Grenz adds, "The application of Christian commitment to life situations, therefore, likewise belongs to our activity as Christian theologians. At the same time, however, this application is the specific task of Christian ethics, which is an extension of the theological discipline."

[94]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 25.

[95]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 13.

[96]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 74-75. For the relationship between the conceptual framework and theology in Grenz's understanding, see the next section.

marked the birth of modernity out of the decay of the Middle Ages."[97] He believes that the world is entering new phase of history, from modernity to postmodernity. In the context of this transition, Grenz strongly believes that evangelicals must rethink and renew the way they do theology. In his words,

> The transitional era in which we live demands that we give honest thought to how we ought to articular in a new context the vision that inspired the giants of the evangelical tradition. In short, the transition to postmodernity demands nothing less than a rebirth of theological reflection among evangelicals, one that can lead to a renewal of our understanding of who we are as the people of God. To this end, we need to gain a renewed vision of evangelical theology; we must seek to determine what can serve as the foundation for a new vision of who we are as bearers of that grand heritage of the church we call "evangelical."[98]

Postmodernism is the quest to move beyond modernism; it is a rejection of the modern mind-set, says Grenz, but under the conditions of modernity.[99] It is a rejection of the Enlightenment project and the foundational assumptions upon which it was built. Building on the Renaissance, the Enlightenment elevates the individual self to the center of the world. The modern human, says Grenz, is "Descartes' autonomous, rational substance encountering Newton's mechanistic world."[100] In his macro-level analysis of modern/postmodern transition, Grenz notes that epistemologically, the modern mind assumes that knowledge is

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[97]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 14.

[98]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 17.

[99]Stanley J. Grenz, "Star Trek and the Next Generation: Postmodernism and the Future of Evangelical Theology," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 76.

[100]Grenz, "Star Trek," 76-77.

"certain, objective, and good, and that such knowledge is obtainable, at least theoretically."[101]

These assumptions of modern epistemology are now being attacked by postmodernism. The optimistic myth of progress and the assumption that knowledge is inherently good is being challenged by postmodern's "gnawing pessimism."[102] The assumption that truth is certain, and hence purely rational, is being challenged with postmodern's emphasis on holism, as postmodernists refuses to limit truth to its rational dimension.[103] Moreover, knowledge cannot be merely objective. Since the universe is not mechanistic and dualistic, but historical, relational, and personal, knowledge must be relative, indeterminate, and participatory.[104] In rejecting the myth of an autonomous observer, postmodernists claim that knowledge is not eternal and culturally neutral. Human understanding of truth is never individualistic, but always a function of (and therefore relative to) the community in which they participate.[105]

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[101]Grenz draws some implications from this. First, the demand for certain knowledge requires the search of a methodology that is able to demonstrate the essential correctness of philosophic, scientific, religious, moral, and political doctrines. Second, the assumption of objectivity leads to a claim to dispassionate knowledge in which the modern knower can stand apart from being an conditioned participant and to be able to view the world as an unconditioned observer. Third, the inherent goodness of knowledge means that its discovery is a self-evident, unchallengeable axiom; the Enlightenment spirit is rather optimistic. Together with the primacy of reason and this optimistic outlook, modernism also elevates human freedom, seen from individual terms: "The modern ideal elevates the autonomous self, the self-determining subject who exists outside of tradition or community." See Grenz, "Star Trek," 77-78.

[102]Grenz, "Star Trek," 80.

[103]Grenz, "Star Trek," 80.

[104]Grenz, "Star-Trek," 80.

[105]Grenz, "Star-Trek," 81.

In his micro-level analysis of the postmodern turn, Grenz focuses on the issue of foundationalism and its demise. Seen from this lens, Grenz sees postmodernism as the age of chastened rationality, which is characterized by (1) the transition from a realist to a constructivist view of truth and the world, and (2) the "loss of the metanarrative" and the advent of "local" stories.[106] The modern age is built on a specific theory of knowledge known as "foundationalism," characterized by "the desire to overcome the uncertainty generated by our human liability to error and the inevitable disagreements that follow."[107] The only way to solve this problem is "to find some means of grounding the entire edifice of human knowledge on something that is unquestionably certain."[108] This grounding is what usually called "the basic beliefs" or "the first principles," which anchor other (non-basic) beliefs. These basic beliefs are supposedly universal, context-free, and available – at least theoretically – to any rational person. Overall, this quest for complete epistemological certitude is often termed "strong" or "classical" foundationalism. In the postmodern age, however, this strong/classical foundationalism, together with the metaphysical realism and the correspondence theory of truth behind it, are under serious questioning. As alternatives to correspondence theory of truth, postmodernists offer both coherentism[109] and

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[106]Grenz, "Articulating," 108.

[107]Grenz, "Articulating," 110.

[108]Grenz, "Articulating," 110.

[109]Coherentism claims that the justification for a belief lies in its "fit" with other held beliefs, hence, justification entails "inclusion within a coherent system." One important feature of coherentism is the necessary interconnected of the corpus of beliefs, the set of beliefs must form an integrated whole, and this whole must carry "explanatory power." Instead of the image of the base/superstructure that describes foundationalism, coherentism can be pictured in the image of a network or a "web" of belief. In coherentism, truth is primarily a predicate of the belief system as a whole, rather than of particular assertions in

pragmatism,[110] while the alternative to metaphysical realism comes from the postmodern (Wittgensteinian) linguistic turn.[111]

Grenz indirectly appropriates the insights from these three strands of philosophy indirectly from their usage in the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, George Lindbeck, and the Reformed Epistemologists like Nicholas Wolterstoff and Alvin Plantinga. Pannenberg wants to be nonfoundational by incorporating the insights from coherentism and pragmatism while remain committed to a realist metaphysic, as can be seen in his understanding of truth. According to Pannenberg, truth is not merely subjective, but universal; any valid "personal truth" must be, at least in principle, true for all.[112] Truth is also essentially historical, and in the end all truth will ultimately come together in God, who is the ground of the unity of truth.[113] Because truth is historical, the ultimate certitude can only be

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isolation. Grenz notes that many coherentists remain committed to the quest for epistemological certainty. Summarized from Grenz, "Articulating," 113-14.

[110]In describing pragmatist's concept of truth, pragmatists like Charles Pierce declares that the truth of any belief ought to be measured according to the belief's success in advancing "factual inquiry" (that is, "the activity aimed at the discovery of truth"). Truth emerges as we engage in prediction followed by testing, observation, and experimental confirmation. Although Pierce believes in the objectivity of truth and the existence of the reality independent of human subjectivity (i.e. metaphysical realism), he nevertheless says that "the reality of that which is real does depend on the real fact that investigation is destined to lead, at last, if continued long enough, to a belief in it." Summarized from Grenz, "Articulating," 114-15.

[111]Wittgenstein claims that each use of language occurs within a separate and seemingly self-contained system complete with its own rules. Rather than being directly or primarily related to an external world of "facts" waiting to be apprehended, meaning and truth are an internal function of language, and all utterances can only be deemed "true" within the context in which they are spoken. Language is not an individual, but a social phenomenon; any statement acquires its meaning within the process of social interaction. Summarized from Grenz, "Articulating," 116.

[112]Grenz, "Articulating," 117.

[113]Grenz, "Articulating," 117.

reached in the eschatological future. In the meantime, truth will always remain provisional and its claims contestable.[114] Not unlike the pragmatists, Pannenberg maintains that "the question of truth must be answered in the process of theological reflection and reconstruction."[115] Lindbeck appropriates Wittgenstein's concept of "language game" in his understanding of truth and doctrine. He believes that doctrines are like rules of grammar of the believing community, they provide the rules for the "game" of Christian thinking, speaking, and living.[116] He further argues that to ask whether any of these rules of grammar is objectively "true" or "false" "involves a fundamental misunderstanding of the type of proposition the rule in fact is."[117] Linguistic rules are not intended to say anything true about a reality external to the language they regulate, but "only 'true' in the context of the body of rules that govern the language to which the rules belong."[118] With this understanding, doctrines are understood not as first-order truth claims about divine reality, but as second-order assertions that rule our speech about God.[119] Reformed epistemologists like Wolterstorff and Plantinga "question strong foundationalism while not rejecting the basic

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[114]Grenz, "Articulating," 117. Significantly influenced by Pannenberg, Grenz would later incorporate eschatology and the eschatological realism as one of the important motifs of his theology (He calls "eschatology" the orienting motif of theology). More on this later.

[115]Grenz, "Articulating," 117.

[116]Grenz, "Articulating," 118.

[117]Grenz, "Articulating," 118.

[118]Grenz, "Articulating," 118.

[119]Grenz, "Articulating," 118.

foundationalist insight."[120] They believe that reason is never neutral, but always "person specific" and "situation specific."[121] They do not categorically deny the validity of the foundationalist search for a type of basic belief, and in their search for what might be "basic" for Christian theology, they found their answer in the importance of the believing community.[122] Our inevitable situatedness in a believing community (and its traditions) shapes our conception of rationality and what beliefs we deem "basic."[123]

Agreeing with the basic insights of these theologians, Grenz believes that evangelical theological method "must proceed nonfoundationally and in so doing takes seriously the postmodern condition characterized by the move away from both realism and the metanarrative."[124] This leads Grenz to emphasize the importance of the interpretive framework/cognitive framework that shapes the experience of the believing community. Agreeing with Lindbeck while at the same time distancing himself from the classic liberal theology, Grenz affirms that "religions produce religious experience rather than merely being the expression of it."[125] He stresses that experience does not precede interpretation; instead,

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[120]Grenz, "Articulating," 118.

[121]Grenz, "Articulating," 118.

[122]Grenz, "Articulating," 118.

[123]Grenz, "Articulating," 118.

[124]Grenz, "Articulating," 119. To qualify his appropriation, Grenz gives a *caveat*: "In seeking to respond to this challenge, evangelical theologians can gain insight from thinkers such as Wolfhart Pannenberg and George Lindbeck, while not necessarily following either theologian's program in its entirety."

[125]Grenz, "Articulating," 122.

they are always filtered by an interpretive framework that facilitates their occurrence.[126] Another way to say it is that there is no generic religious experience, only experience endemic to specific religious traditions, that is, "experiences that are facilitates by an interpretive framework specific to that religious tradition."[127] However, Grenz wants to go beyond Lindbeck in affirming that Christian theology is not merely *descriptive* of the interpretive framework; rather, it is also very much *prescriptive*: "The theologians seek to articulate what *ought* to be the interpretive framework of the Christian community."[128] From this, Grenz then draws a conclusion as to what we must deem "basic" for Christian theology: "… the specifically Christian experience-facilitating interpretive framework, arising as it does out of the biblical gospel narrative ..."[129]

Following the trajectory of coherentism as manifested in Pannenberg's theological method, Grenz then argues that the relationship between the cognitive framework and theology cannot be understood in a foundationalist fashion. The cognitive framework is not a foundation/base on which the theological edifice can then be constructed. Rather, they are inseparably intertwined: "Just as every interpretive framework is essentially theological, so also every articulation of the Christian cognitive framework comes already clothed in a specific theological understanding."[130] Instead of understood through the metaphor of a building, then, theological enterprise must be understood through the metaphor of a web or a

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[126]Grenz, "Articulating," 122.

[127]Grenz, "Articulating," 122.

[128]Grenz, "Articulating," 122.

[129]Grenz, "Articulating," 122.

[130]Grenz, "Articulating," 123.

mosaic. The nature of theological work, then, is that of "articulating the 'belief-mosaic' of the Christian community, a mosaic consisting of … the set of interconnected doctrines that together comprise what ought to be the specifically Christian way of viewing the world."[131] Not only that, it also includes "demonstrating the explicative power of the Christian faith by indicating the value of the Christian worldview for illuminating human experience."[132]

Two implications flow from this. First, Grenz argues that theology must be understood as "a specific conversation."[133] Seen as a conversation, theology can be described as the ongoing process whereby participants in the faith community together seek to articulate what ought to be the Christian belief-mosaic by explicating the meaning of the shared cultural symbols – including sacred texts, language, rituals, and practices – through which Christians express their understanding of the world they inhabit. Constructive theological conversation, then, "emerges through the interplay, or perichoretic dance, of an ordered set of sources of insight"[134]: (1) Scripture: the primary voice in the theological conversation; (2) Tradition: the hermeneutical trajectory of the theological conversation; and (3) Culture: the wider context of the theological conversation. [135] Second, theology must be specifically Christian.[136] Because, following the postmodern trajectory, Grenz believes that all theology is "local" or "specific" and because theological conversations always happen in

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[131]Grenz, "Articulating," 123-24.

[132]Grenz, "Articulating," 124.

[133]Grenz, "Articulating," 124.

[134]Grenz, "Articulating," 124.

[135]Grenz, "Articulating," 124-29.

[136]Grenz, "Articulating," 129.

the context of a particular group of people in a particular moment of their ongoing existence in the world, Christian theology must be specifically "Christian."[137] Grenz then argues that a distinctively Christian theology must have "a trinitarian structure, a communitarian focus, and an eschatological orientation."[138]

Between Local and Universal Dimension of Truth

It has been indicated that in certain sense Grenz agrees with Lindbeck that theology is a "practical" discipline – a second-order reflection of the beliefs and practices of a community of faith that is always pursued "from within." "Theology is a second-order enterprise, and its propositions are second-order propositions,"[139] says Grenz. However, in

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[137]To anticipate the problem with this: If Grenz is consistent with his commitment to nonfoundationalism, social construction to reality, coherentism, the situatedness of the believing community within their cultural context, etc. how can Grenz safeguard the *Christian*-ness of a Christian community? Granted that he is right that believing community's experience is shaped by the interpretive framework arising from the biblical narrative and that this interpretive framework is basic for Christian theology, he still have to take into account (if he is consistent) the inescapable role of the society's/culture's interpretive framework in the construction of Christian community's identity. After all, Grenz admits that cultural context always play a role in the theological conversation.

[138]Grenz, "Articulating," 129-36. This perfectly illustrates the problem I set forth in the previous footnote. Why is Christ/Christology not mentioned by Grenz as one of the distinctive characters that makes Christian theology *Christian*? What can be more distinctive than Christology to differentiate a Christian theology from the rest? This should give us some hints as to the way Grenz finally reaches to these three focal motifs. It will become clearer as this thesis progresses that this "great omission" can happen because in formulating his theological method, Grenz is driven more by his *a priori* and uncritical commitment to engage with postmodernity rather than by any biblical and theological judgments. As it turns out, the interpretive framework of the society (i.e. postmodernism) plays more determining role than the interpretive framework arising from the biblical narrative in Grenz's theology. The problem will even be more evident when we look at Grenz's instrumental/functional understanding of the nature of the authority of Scripture in the next chapter.

[139]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 78.

another sense Grenz goes beyond Lindbeck in maintaining the realist dimension and the ontological nature of truth claims, while at the same time rejecting foundationalism. Grenz claims that Lindbeck's suggestion that theological assertions are "in-house" statements "potentially results in a 'sectarian' church – one that no longer assumes any role in the public realm."[140] Lindbeck's proposal raises the question, "Does the move beyond foundationalism entail a move away from metaphysical realism?" Grenz's answer is in the negative. In his words, "The assertion that theology speaks a second-order language is not intended to deny the ontological nature of theological declarations. Nevertheless, the ontological claims implicit in theological assertions arise as an outworking of the intent of the theologian to provide a model of reality, rather than to describe reality directly."[141]

Drawing from Michael Polanyi's concept of truth, Grenz argues that the fact that theology is a "practical" discipline that reflects a particular or local community of faith does not legitimize its retreat from the public discussion of ultimate truth.[142] Polanyi claims that although our thought always emerges from a particular place, time, and circumstances, it always carries a "universal intent."[143] However, Polanyi cautions "against confusing this

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[140]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 52.

[141]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 78.

[142]Grenz does not derive the concern for maintaining balance between local/private and universal/public dimension of truth only from Polanyi, but also from Pannenberg. Grenz accepts Pannenberg's belief that any valid personal truth must be, at least in principle, true for all. He says that despite its particularity as a specifically Christian theology, such a theology is also public, which means that "it carries with it an implicit claim to be articulating a belief-mosaic that is 'for all' in the only way that any claim to universality can be made, namely, as the belief-mosaic of a particular believing community." Such a theology invites wider response, Grenz believes, just as it is offered as a contribution to the wider public conversation. See Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 26.

[143]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 78.

concern for universality with any *claim about* universality."[144] Grenz explains that for Polanyi, "truth always transcends our apprehension of it, and this drives us ever onward in the search for truth; belief involves compelling orientations to which our formulations and propositions give only approximate expression."[145] Applying Polanyi's insight, Grenz makes provocative statements,

> As Christian theologians we run the risk of confusing one specific model of reality with reality itself, or one theological system with truth itself. … Because all systems are only models of reality – albeit informed by Scripture and by the mileposts of theological history – we must maintain a stance of openness to other models, being aware of the tentativeness and incompleteness of all such systems. In the final analysis, theology is a human enterprise – helpful for the task of the church, to be sure, but a human construct nevertheless.[146]

Grenz also finds further support for his argument from contemporary sociology and philosophy of language, especially in the world-constructing role of society in general and language in particular.[147] Drawing from philosopher like Ferdinand de Saussure who proposed that language is a social phenomenon and that a linguistic system is a product of social convention and sociologists like Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann who believes that human reality is "socially constructed reality," Grenz argues that theology "explores the world-constructing, knowledge-forming, identity-forming 'language' of the Christian community."[148] Endorsing the social construction view of reality, Grenz affirms that "we do

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[144]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 78. Italics in the original.

[145]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 78-79.

[146]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 84.

[147]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 52.

[148]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 52-53.

not inhabit the 'world-in-itself'; instead, we live in a linguistic world of our own making."[149] At the same time, however, Grenz wants to affirm that according to Christian perspective, there is a certain "objectivity" to the world, and the way he tries to juxtapose these two affirmations is to draw from Pannenberg's eschatological understanding of truth (as previously explained above). Grenz argues that "the objectivity of the world" is not a static reality existing outside of, and cotemporally with, our socially and linguistically constructed reality – it is not "the world as it is." Instead, it is "the objectivity of the world" as God wills it to be – and what God wills is not a present but a future reality. In other words, this is an objectivity of a *future*, eschatological world which is in Grenz's view "far more real – more objectively real[150] – than the present world, which is even now passing away."[151] This is what Grenz calls an "eschatological realism." Here, Grenz notes that the role of the Holy Spirit is significant in fashioning our present in light of God's eschatological future. As culture-constructing beings, we participate in the Spirit's world-fashioning process. Through the use of linguistic model and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, theologians "draw from the unique grammar of the biblical narrative to build a linguistic world for human habitation in the present, a world whose basis lies in the new creation that God is already bringing to

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[149]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 53.

[150]And "more actual." See p. 272.

[151]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 53. This eschatological universe is nothing short of a *new* creation. See p. 272.

pass."[152] The ultimate purpose of theology, then, is "to speak about the actual world for the sake of the mission of the church in the present, anticipatory era."[153]

Two important methodological entailments follow from Grenz's commitment to "eschatological realism." First, following Pannenberg, Grenz insists on the provisional and ongoing nature of theology.[154] In this side of the eschaton, the theological task will never be completed. For this reason, Christian theology can be described by the metaphor of pilgrimage; "theology is always *in via* – on the way."[155] This provisional nature is intimately linked to the contextual nature of any theological project.[156] In this theological pilgrimage, Grenz remind us that although the essential commitment of the believing community to the God revealed in Jesus does not change, the context in which this confession and its implications are lived out is in constant flux. Theology must always seek to explicate the implications, relevance, and application of the Christian faith to life in a particular social and cultural setting, and in doing so use the appropriate thought forms of the culture in which the church is situated.

The second entailment, very much related to the first, is the fact that an on-going, contextual, and relevant theology must engage with contemporary discoveries and insights of the various disciplines of human learning.[157] In other words, theology must to

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[152]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 273.

[153]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 273.

[154]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 16-17.

[155]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 12.

[156]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 16-17.

[157]Grenz, "Articulating," 127.

some extent be interdisciplinary. Grenz gives an example of how theories about addictions and addictive behavior can provide insight into the biblical teaching about sin. Concurring with Pannenberg's belief that God is the ground of truth and that all truth ultimately come together in God, Grenz suggests that "theology can draw from the so-called secular sciences, because ultimately no discipline is in fact purely secular."[158] Theology, therefore, looks to all human knowledge, for in so doing it demonstrates the unity of truth of God.[159] In his discussion about theology and the sciences, Grenz says that despite their differences,[160] the two disciplines have some commonalities. Both disciplines formulate understandings of

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[158]Grenz, "Articulating," 127. However, as Brian Harris rightly analyzes, there is a discontinuity between Grenz and Pannenberg in their use of sciences. Harris says, "Grenz recognizes the value of science, but does not share Pannenberg's enthusiasm for the scientific method and is deeply conscious of its missiological limitations in trying to communicate with those shaped by a postmodern ethos." Furthermore, despite Grenz's appropriation and agreement to the basic feature of Pannenberg's concept of truth, Harris notes that the they differ in their understanding of the nature and task of theology. Quoting Grenz, Harris mentions that Pannenberg understands himself as a "theologian called to serve the church in the public marketplace of ideas," while Grenz writes his theology "for the community of God." Harris believes that this difference in many ways reflects Grenz's Baptist roots. Pannenberg, who sees theology as a public discipline, wants to combat the widespread privatization of religious belief, and therefore has an apologetic motivation in his approach. Grenz's approach, on the other hand, is more "in-house." Harris argues that it is not that Grenz does not wish to be missional, but that his strategy is different. As a Baptist, Grenz believes that a renewed church will impact the world. See Harris, "Beyond Individualism," 11-12.

[159]Grenz, "Articulating," 127.

[160]The differences lie in their intent and method. First, scientists reach their conclusions through empirical observation of the universe, while theologians are not limited in their task to observation of the world, because they acknowledge the existence of divine revelation. Second, theologians go beyond scientists in that ultimately their subject is God and God's relationship to creation. In other words, theologians are interested in humankind and the cosmos not as mere natural phenomena, but as they relate to the Creator. See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 10. Grenz also makes the similar argument about the relationship between theology and philosophy and suggests how theologians may use philosophical categories as a context for their assertions.

reality and share a common area of exploration – the universe and especially human person. Grenz also implies that theologians can employ the findings of the sciences in their work.[161]

Conclusion

The observation of Grenz thoughts, seen from the heuristic lens of the above five problem areas, reveals two major determinants that drives the formation of his theological identity and his methodological commitments: a *pietist*[162] sensibility and a *postmodern*[163] sensitivity.[164] In Grenz's understanding, the need to revise evangelical theology simply means "to articulate the biblical, evangelical vision in a manner that both upholds *the heritage* we embrace and speaks to *the setting* in which we seek to live as God's

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[161]By way of anticipation, in the next chapter we will see that Grenz associates "culture" with these interdisciplinary human knowledge. This brings the issue of authority: how authoritative then is "culture" in theological construction?

[162]An explicit "pietist" designation of himself can be found in many of Grenz's writing. For example, in one article he says, "I may sport a doctor of theology degree, but in the end I remain a pietist – albeit a 'Pietist with a Ph.D.'" See Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist," 71.

[163]Grenz explicitly calls himself "postmodern evangelical," albeit in a qualified sense. He says in one article, "If we are to serve Christ's people today, we cannot be content merely to recount the theological debates of past generations … Nor can we be satisfied with merely repeating the theological formulations and statements of past luminaries … On the contrary, the Spirit invites us to engage in the theological enterprise cognizant of the context in the midst of which Christ calls us to be his people, which for many of us is the emerging postmodern society. In this limited sense and if defined in this manner, I would count myself as postmodern evangelical." See Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 2.

[164]In fact, Roger E. Olson, himself a self-designated Pietist and a close friend of Grenz, confesses in his article about pietism and postmodernism that he was inspired by Grenz: "My interest in comparing Pietism and Postmodernism arose out of late-night conversations with my late friend and co-author Stanley Grenz who considered himself both a critical Pietist and a critical Postmodernist." See Roger E. Olson, "Pietism and Postmodernism: Points of Congeniality," *Christian Scholar's Review* 41, no. 4 (Summer 2012): 369.

people and share the good news of the salvation available in Jesus Christ our Lord."[165] And one of the most important heritages that he believes must define the essence of evangelicalism is its pietist spirit. Having been neglected or undermined in some circles of evangelicalism, Grenz calls his fellow evangelicals to re-affirm and continuously embrace this pietist spirit as they seek to live out their missional identity in this postmodern setting.

The two determinants do not exist independently in Grenz's mind. Instead, Grenz's attempts to juxtapose the two in the making of his theology.[166] However, if we read this chapter backward, it can plausibly be argued that although pietism is definitely present in Grenz's contextual identity, it is postmodernism that provides the concepts and the categories that eventually informs and shapes his methodological commitments and decisions. In explaining the experiential dimension of Christianity's pietistic faith, he uses the Wittgensteinian-Lindbeckian language to stress the importance of interpretive framework in filtering the community's experience. His emphasis on community and relationality seems to be more immediately driven by his engagement with contemporary sociological and cultural studies rather than by a deliberate attempt to retrieve concept of "community" in the Pietistic tradition. This argument can be made even stonger when we see how he draws insights from postmodern (broadly-defined as "after-modern") philosophers, sociologists, and theologians

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[165]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 11. Italics mine. See also p. 17.

[166]An example is his suggestion that "a postmodern evangelical theology must be focused on spirituality." With a postmodern sensitivity, Grenz argues that we should not be under any illusion that the possession of knowledge – even theological knowledge – is inherently good. Knowledge is only good when it facilitates a good result, specifically, when it fosters spirituality in the knower. "In the postmodern world," he advises, "we must reappropriate the older pietist discovery that a 'right heart' takes primacy over a 'right head.'" See Grenz, "Star-Trek," 87.

and commit himself to (among other things) nonfoundationalism, coherentism, social construction view of reality, pragmatism, and communalism.

Although Grenz's integrative motif of community stems both from his pietist concern for balanced evangelical spirituality and his engagement with the contemporary "communitarian turn," it is the latter that frame his understanding of it. Stressing the importance of "community," he claims that although what is "basic" for Christian theology is the "specifically Christian experience-facilitating interpretive framework," in another important sense the church as the believing community is also "basic" for theology. He says how "the very existence of the faith community – the community in which faith is present – leads naturally to the reflection on faith that we call *theology*."[167] Using a stronger word "foundation," he adds, "And the existence of this community provides the only 'foundation' necessary for launching into the process of delineating the mosaic of beliefs, or explicating the interpretive framework, Christians share."[168] Grenz articulates it most clearly, "… community is the central, organizing concept of theological construction, the theme around which a systematic theology is structured. Community provides the integrative thematic perspective in light of which the various theological foci can be understood and the significant theological issues ought to be explored."[169] From here, it can be concluded that "community" is, to say the least, the starting point of Grenz's theological project – it is his "first theology."

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[167]Grenz, "Articulating," 132. Italics in the original.

[168]Grenz, "Articulating," 132.

[169]Grenz, "Articulating," 132.

If "community" is Grenz's starting point, how then he moves from "community" to "theology"? Under his postmodern/nonfoundationalist commitments, how does he explain the move from community's interpretive framework (that is "basic" to theology) to theology itself – and vice versa? With his rejection of modern foundationalism, how does Grenz understand the nature and the function of Scripture in this whole theological process? And more germane to the purpose of this thesis, how do all of these then relate to his decision to intentionally insert "culture" as one of the sources of theology? I believe the answer lies in Grenz's understanding and use of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and to this we will now turn.

CHAPTER 3

GRENZ'S PNEUMATOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE AND ITS USE IN HIS THEOLOGICAL METHOD

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have seen how Grenz's theological identity is influenced by both pietism and postmodernism and how these affect his methodological choices, one indication being his emphasis on the centrality of the believing community. In this chapter, we will observe how these methodological choices eventually affect his understanding of culture. Before that, we will first look at Grenz's explicit doctrine of the Holy Spirit and other theological concepts and examine how these doctrinal concepts might support his claim that the Holy Spirit is present and speaks in culture (i.e. his pneumatological understanding of culture). By examining these two strands, at the end of this chapter we should be able to preliminarily discern some potential problems with Grenz's decision to insert culture as one of theology's sources along, with Scripture and tradition.

Grenz on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Grenz begins his systematic treatment on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit with the exposition of the Spirit's identity in the salvation history, before moving to the trinitarian

pneumatology of the Christian church.[1] He believes that this salvation-historical approach must be the starting point, because Christian teaching about the Spirit did not arise *sui generis*, but "stands at the apex of a long history of God at work bringing the faith community to understand God's triune nature, as well as the place of the Holy Spirit within the one God."[2] His exposition of salvation-history centered on three segments: the Spirit in the Old Testament, the Spirit and the life of Jesus (pre-Pentecost), and the Spirit in the post-Pentecost era. He then explains the identity and role of the Spirit within the framework of both immanent and economic Trinity, before explaining the Spirit's work in believer's salvation (which he divides into three parts: conversion, sanctification, and glorification). Besides, Grenz also devotes a special segment in his treatment explaining the nature and function of Scripture within the Spirit's overall mission, emphasizing his point that bibliology must be subsumed under pneumatology.

Grenz's overall treatment of pneumatology is soterio- and ecclesio-centric and much in line with the Western conceptions of the doctrine, emphasizing close relationship between the Spirit and the Son. Grenz's exposition of the *present* presence and work of the Spirit "outside the wall of the church" (in creation, cultures, or other religions) is minimal. In his exposition of the salvation history, it is only mentioned in his treatment of the Old Testament. Based on the connection between "spirit" and "breath" in the Hebrew word *ru'ach*, Grenz explains that the Spirit was understood in the OT as "the life principle in living

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[1]See Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), Chapter 13-16 on pneumatology and relevant parts in Chapter 1-4 on the doctrine of God. The more concise version of this exposition can be found in Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* (Grand Rapids: BridgePoint Books, 1998), Chapter 7-8 and Chapter 1-2.

[2]Stanley J. Grenz, "The Holy Spirit: Divine Love Guiding Us Home," *Ex Auditu* 12 (January 1996): 2.

creatures," and because God is the source of all life, God's Spirit was closely connected with God himself. The Spirit is "the divine life-giving power at work in the world."[3] In terms of the Spirit's functions, the OT writers placed the Spirit's role in creation at the foundation of all dimensions of his activity, most importantly in the creation of humankind. Not only as a creator, the Spirit was also understood as the sustainer of life. Besides, He was also seen as God's power active in special ways in the life of certain persons. It is interesting that of all examples Grenz gives on this point (Bezalel and Oholiab, Othniel, Gideon, Samson, Saul, and Asa), none of them comes from outside the covenant community, with Balaam as the only exception. Even there, Grenz does not give any explanation to account for the Spirit's presence and work outside the covenant community. His point is more general, that is, "the Spirit's presence provided the recipient with the resources necessary to complete a divinely ordained task."[4] He further makes the point that in the OT, the Spirit's presence was not permanent and not enjoyed individually by all people, but corporately mediated by kings, prophets, and priests. Hence the eschatological expectation that one day the Messiah would come and pour out the Spirit on all God's people permanently. From there, Grenz is quick to move to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of this expectation. In like manner, in his discussion of the economic Trinity, Grenz's description of the role of the Spirit in the world focuses more on His redemptive and eschatological mission "to bring all creation to this divine goal, namely, the establishment of God's eternal community within the dynamic of the trinitarian

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[3]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God,* 361.

[4]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God,* 363.

life, which we will enjoy in the in the new creation. … He is the divine love at work drawing creation into fellowship – into true community."[5]

Turning from this relative lack of exposure of the Spirit's work outside the covenant community, we will now highlight some positive claims that Grenz affirms about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, Trinity, and the God-World Relation

To establish the divinity and the personhood of the Holy Spirit, Grenz first explores the eternal dynamic of the triune God (the immanent Trinity). He explains that the relationship between the Father and the Son, more specifically, "the eternal generation of the Son from the Father," constitutes the primary movement in the eternal God.[6] By this primary movement, the identity of the first and the second person of the Trinity are established. Following an Augustinian trajectory, Grenz then asserts that the Father and the Son are bound by an eternal "love": The Father loves the Son, and the Son reciprocates the Father's love. The Holy Spirit, in turn, is "the Spirit of the relationship between the Father and the Son, namely, love."[7] This constitutes the secondary movement in God, i.e. the eternal

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[5]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 11. His soterio- and ecclesio-centrism is evident, although he does not neglect the Spirit's role in renewing the cosmos. For him the eschatological community is a community of "a redeemed people dwelling in a renewed earth, enjoying reconciliation with their God, fellowship with each other, and harmony with all creation." This is the final goal of the work of the triune God in salvation history, and more specifically, it is the Holy Spirit's role to complete this work. See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 115.

[6]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 9.

[7]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 9.

"spiration" or "procession" of the Spirit.[8] Grenz establishes the Spirit's eternal deity by saying that because both the Father and the Son loves eternally, the bond that they share is likewise eternal and divine. Therefore, like the Father and the Son, the Spirit is eternal deity. In a similar manner, he establishes the personhood of the Spirit from the close relationship of the Father and the Son. Because both the Father and the Son are uniquely personal – the most personal of all persons – it follows that the relationship they share is unique, not an abstract or generic love, but a uniquely personal love.[9] Consequently, "we affirm that like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit – the one who binds them together – is uniquely person, the third person of the triune God."[10]

Grenz asserts that the Spirit's role within the divine life *determines* His role within the divine activity in the world (the economic Trinity).[11] The Spirit is "the Great Completer"[12]; by being the bond between the Father and the Son, the Spirit completes the eternal immanent Trinity. In the same manner, the Spirit acts as "the completer of the divine program in the world and hence the completer of the economic Trinity."[13] What is this divine

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[8]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 9.

[9]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 10. Grenz contrasts this understanding with people's tendency to understand "love" as an abstract and impersonal concept. He explains that the love between the Father and the Son is no mere abstract, impersonal force located in some ideal realm disengaged from the first and second persons of the Trinity. Nor is "it" a quality they each possess independently from the other. Rather, the love uniting them is embedded in their relationship. And because they are unique persons – persons constituted by their mutual relationship – the Spirit of their relationship is person as well.

[10]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 10.

[11]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 10.

[12]Grenz, *Created for Community*, 154.

[13]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 10.

program? It is the Father's initiative through the Son to share the eternal love enjoyed within the eternal Trinity to the world by establishing a community that will enjoy eternal fellowship with Him. The entire drama of creation and salvation, climaxing in the eschatological new community, is "the outflow of the eternal love relationship between the Father and the Son."[14] The task of the Holy Spirit, then, is "to bring all creation to this divine goal, namely, the establishment of God's eternal community within the dynamic of the trinitarian life, which we will enjoy in the new creation."[15] In the meantime, Grenz writes, the Spirit remains active in the world. He actively "brings us to experience a foretaste of the glorious future community – above all within the fellowship of Christ's people – the Church."[16] Moreover, the Spirit is also actively renewing the cosmos or the natural world,[17] looking forward to that day when the Creator will refashion the universe into the new heaven and new earth, which will be our eternal dwelling (Rev. 21:1-4)."[18] It can be noted here that although Grenz acknowledges the active presence of the Spirit in creation, he does not elaborate further how the Spirit undertakes the work of "renewing the cosmos," nor does he explain how this work might be juxtaposed with the Spirit's work of "establishing God's eternal community."

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[14]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 10.

[15]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 11. In other words, "The work of the economic Trinity which the Spirit completes … has its goal the participation of God's creation in the life of the immanent Trinity." See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 378.

[16]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 11.

[17]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 378.

[18]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 11.

In sum, Grenz wants to explicate that the identity of the Spirit as the power of the triune God in the world follows a significant theological movement "from creation to redemption and then back to creation."[19] The salvation history shows the interplay of the themes of creation and redemption, climaxing in the Spirit's role in the eschatological new creation. For this reason, Grenz designates the Spirit's ultimate identity within the economic Trinity as "the eschatological Creator Spirit."[20] The eschatological Spirit is "creative" both in that "He effects the new creation – salvation – among humankind"[21] and that "He effects the new creation in the universe."[22]

Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and the *Filioque*

The close relationship, and in a qualified sense the dependency, of the Spirit to the Son in Grenz's pneumatology is evident when we look at his view on the *filioque* and the relationship between the Spirit and the Son both pre- and post-Pentecost. With regard to the first issue, Grenz wants to acknowledge that there is a theological validity of both sides in the *filioque* controversy. For him, the Eastern church "were correct in their desire to retain the focus on the three trinitarian members – Father, Son, and Spirit – in the face of the overly relational emphasis of the Western model."[23] For example, Eastern thinkers have been less likely to speak of "God" as a personal, acting agent in the world, and consequently to posit

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[19]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 376.

[20]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 377.

[21]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 377.

[22]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 377.

[23]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 69.

"God" as the "real" person above the three trinitarian members. More pertinent to the subject matter of this thesis, Grenz adds that because the Eastern thinkers did not develop as strict connection between the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ demanded by the *filioque*, they have been less likely to limit the activity of the Spirit to God's purposes in the salvation of humankind as mediated solely through the church. In his words, "Eastern thinkers are in better theological position to develop a Christian conception of creation which links God's work in making the world with his activity in saving it."[24] On the other hand, Grenz also wants to affirm that the addition of *filioque* to the creed by the Western thinkers has biblical and theological warrants.[25] The biblical writers speak of the Holy Spirit not only as the Spirit of the Father of the Spirit of God, but also "the Spirit of the Son" (Gal. 4:6) and "the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:17-18). There are two theological importance of the *filioque* for Grenz:[26] (1) The Son-Spirit relationship provides the theological foundation guaranteeing the continuity of the present work of the Spirit with the completed work of the Son. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, the activity in which the Holy Spirit now engages is nothing less than the outworking or application of the work completed by Jesus of Nazareth; (2) The Western relational understanding [compared to the Eastern conception] appears to offer a stronger basis for understanding the eternal workings within God. It declares that the foundation of the inner life of the divine Trinity lies in the relationship between the Father and the Son, and that this relationship, in turn, is the Spirit, who is related to both of the other two. Overall, it can be concluded that in this *filioque* controversy, Grenz leans towards the

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[24]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 69.

[25]He says, "The addition of *filioque* to the creed did have a basis in Scripture." See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 69.

[26]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 69.

Western position.[27] He asserts, "… viewed salvation-historically, the Western church was correct in adding the *filioque* clause to the ancient creed. This clause emphasizes the normative significance of the work of Christ for the Christian understanding of the Spirit's activity."[28]

Seen salvation-historically, Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT pneumatological hope; He is the "Anointed One" (Lk. 4:18-19 quoting Isa. 61:1-2). Grenz explains that the New Testament shows the important role of the Spirit in Jesus' life, as indicated at certain crucial points of His earthly life, from his birth, baptism, ministry, up to His resurrection.[29] Being uniquely endowed by the Spirit, Jesus was also the one through whom the outpouring of the Spirit would come.[30] Before this could happen, Jesus needed to complete his own mission. He must first "go away" – that is, be glorified – so that the "Counselor" could come (John 16:7). The book of Acts records the similar point when in his Pentecost sermon, Peter declared that Jesus' exaltation bestowed on the risen Lord the privilege of pouring out the Spirit in accordance with OT prophecy (Acts 2:33). Jesus promised his disciples that the

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[27]In his essay, David Guretzki identifies five different approaches taken by evangelical theologians toward the *filioque* question: (1) The *filioque* is a metaphysical speculation; (2) The *filioque* is biblical, but theologically insignificant; (3) The *filioque* is theologically necessary; (4) There is a mediating or synthetic position between *filioque* and non-*filioque* positions; (5) The *filioque* is to be rejected for ecumenical and theological reasons. Guretzki puts Grenz on the fourth category, although he realizes that "in the end it is evident that Grenz still comes out with the scales tipped in favour of the *filioque*." See David Guretzki, "The Filioque: Assessing Evangelical Approaches to a Knotty Problem," in *Semper Reformandum: Studies in Honour of Clark H. Pinnock*, eds. Stanley E. Porter & Anthony R. Cross (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 183-207, esp. 191-92.

[28]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 372.

[29]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 365.

[30]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 366.

coming Spirit would stand with the disciples to assist them in their mission; the Spirit would be "a personal power present with his followers."[31]

Grenz notes that in the NT, the fulfillment of this promise can be seen in two occasions. The first is in the Fourth Gospel (John 20:22) and the second is in the book of Acts, in the midst of the Pentecost event (Acts 2). Grenz tries to reconcile both accounts by understanding them as "referring to the same spiritual experience while allowing each of them to stand on its own."[32] He argues that the event in the Gospel of John should be seen as a proleptic event, "an occurrence that forms a preexperience of what happens in its fullness only later."[33] The purpose of John's story is to "emphasize that the outpouring of the Spirit is dependent on the mission of Jesus and marked its completion. The Spirit was no new thing, independent of the gospel of Jesus the Christ. Rather, the work of the Spirit is the extension of what Jesus accomplished."[34] In the book of Acts, the emphasis is the fact that the coming of the Spirit "marked the inauguration of a new era, the age of the mission of the church."[35]

Grenz also notes that NT suggests both a close affinity and distinction between the Spirit and the risen Lord. In one sense, the coming of the Spirit constituted the coming of the Lord himself (John 14:15-18). In another sense, they are not simply interchangeable. Rather, the Spirit's function is "subsequent and instrumental to that of Jesus, whom he glorifies (John 16:14) and to whom he bears testimony (John 15:26). Grenz is

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[31]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 367.

[32]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 369.

[33]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 369.

[34]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 369.

[35]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 368.

unambiguously Christo-centric when he asserts that the Spirit is "the Spirit of the Lord."[36] Since Pentecost, therefore, the Spirit enjoys a new identity. He is "the 'vicar of Christ,' the mediator of the presence of the risen and exalted Jesus within his community. The Spirit teaches, leads, and empowers the church on the Lord's behalf. In so doing, he is the Lord at work in the believing community."[37]

Holy Spirit, Salvation, and the Church

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost signaled the birth of "the Spirit-endowed, Spirit-empowered, Spirit-led community – the church."[38] Grenz emphasizes that throughout this age of the mission of the church, the Spirit would focus on his work on the new community, the fellowship of the followers of Christ.[39] Although it is a nonrepeatable event, the effects of the Pentecost were not limited only to the disciples upon whom the Spirit fell on that day, but have been extended to every Christian in every nation and in every generation. Because we are believers, says Grenz, we have experienced Pentecost and received the endowment and the empowerment of the Spirit, and that brings us into union with Christ. In fact, "if we do not 'have' the Spirit we do not even belong to Christ (Rm. 8:9)."[40]

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[36]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 368.

[37]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 372.

[38]Grenz, *Created for Community*, 158.

[39]Grenz, *Created for Community*, 158.

[40]Grenz, *Created for Community*, 159.

The Spirit creates this community of Christ in the present age by His works of saving human beings. Or to put it differently, the salvation of the lost is a crucial means whereby God accomplishes an even greater goal: the establishment of community.[41] Grenz reminds us that throughout the New Testament, the foundation for our salvation rests in what God accomplished for us in Jesus of Nazareth. The early Christians proclaimed that through Jesus' great act of sacrifice, he became the atonement for human sin and thereby the foundation for our salvation. He died in order that we who were enemies to creation, to each other, and above all to God might enjoy reconciliation and fellowship – that is, "community."[42] If we are to participate in Christ's community, Christ's provision must be applied to our lives by the Holy Spirit, which is inaugurated in the event of "conversion."[43] In conversion, the Spirit initiates us into the present experience of community, which is the foretaste of the full fellowship that God will bring to pass at the culmination of history.[44] The effects of the Spirit's work in conversion are all directed towards God's goal of community; Spirit effects community with God, [45] with one another, and with all creation.[46]

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[41]Stanley J. Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program in Establishing Community," *Review and Expositor* 91, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 505.

[42]Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 510.

[43]Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 514.

[44]Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 514.

[45]Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 514-15. In effecting community with God, "the Spirit brings us to participate in the eternal relationship the Son enjoys with his Father, which relationship the Spirit in fact is." We share in the dynamic life of the Trinity, "although we remain forever distinct from God …" See p. 514.

[46]Again, what Grenz seems to have in mind is the community of Christ's disciples and creation in general (natural world; the cosmos that will be renewed). He says, "We are not saved in isolation; nor are we saved in order to enjoy an exclusivistic

Informed by his communitarian motif, Grenz reminds us that conversion is not *sui generis*. He says, "Rather than experiencing a saving encounter with God on our own, the faith community serves as the context for personal repentance and faith."[47] Conversion always occurs in "the context of a believing community which recounts in word, ritual, and practice the story of Jesus and its significance for all humankind."[48] Grenz mentions at least four ways in which community becomes the context for our repentance and faith:[49] (1) It mediates a new cognitive framework; (2) It mediates a new identity; (3) It mediates a new value system; and (4) It mediates a new allegiance. In other words, "our response to the gospel entails not only turning from sin to God, but also turning from an old to a new community of participation."[50]

After "conversion," the saving work of the Spirit is then continued by His ongoing work of transformation into Christlikeness ("sanctification") which leads to the Spirit's eschatological completion of our salvation into complete Christlikeness ("glorification"). Grenz relates this to the dynamic of the triune God: "the glorification occurs in and through our glorification of the Father."[51] By indwelling us (and all creation), the Holy Spirit unites us together in the Son and thereby leads us to glorify the Father through the Son: "As the Spirit leads us to glorify the Father *through* the Son, the Father

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relationship with the triune God. Rather, through conversion the Spirit brings us into community. We enjoy fellowship with Christ's disciples in the church and anticipate the new creation of God." See Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 515.

[47]Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 516.

[48]Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 516.

[49]Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 516-18.

[50]Grenz, "Salvation and God's Program," 516.

[51]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 11.

glorifies us *in* the Son. As we offer our eternal praise *to* our God, we receive the very goal of our existence, the praise *of* our God."[52] Grenz concludes his point by noting that there is a double movement of the triune persons within salvation history and hence within the divine life. He explains, "… the biblical narrative indicated that the Father sends the Son into the world, and through the Son the Spirit. But the sending of the Spirit leads to a dynamic that moves in opposite direction. The eschatological Spirit in the world gathers all things together in the Son into fellowship with the Father."[53]

Holy Spirit, Scripture, and the "World"-Formation

It is in the above context of the Spirit's mission to complete the divine program of the triune God in the world that Grenz speaks of the nature and function of Scripture/Bible.[54] As the "Spirit's book," the Bible is one aspect of the Spirit's mission of creating and sustaining spiritual life towards the goal of the eschatological community united eternally with the triune God. Grenz's pneumatological bibliology implies that the purpose of the Bible is "to proclaim the good news of salvation to sinful humans and to mediate spiritual nourishment to believers."[55] Because the purpose of the Bible is instrumental to the work of the Spirit, Grenz feels the need to put the doctrine of Scripture under the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. With this methodological structuring, Grenz is underlining his conviction that

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[52]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 12. Italics in the original.

[53]Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 12.

[54]In the exposition of his pneumatological bibliology, Grenz uses the word "Scripture" and "Bible interchangeably.

[55]Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 113.

bibliology must be closely connected with ecclesiology and eschatology, both of which also fall under the broader rubric of pneumatology.[56]

This methodological decision is expressed in Grenz's view of the nature of the authority of Scripture. Claiming that his view is consistent with the trajectory of the Protestant principle of authority (e.g. as articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith[57]), he brings Scripture and Spirit together by claiming that "the Bible is not authoritative because it is either inspired or inerrant; it is authoritative because it is the instrumentality of the Spirit."[58] In different occasion he reaffirms the same point, "Bringing Scripture and Spirit together provides the foundation for understanding in what sense the Bible is to be read as text, while undercutting any notion of the Bible as being *inherently* authoritative."[59] When we affirm the authority of the Bible, Grenz believes, what we are

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[56]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 115.

[57]Grenz quoted it as follows, "The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councels, opinions of ancient writers, doctrine of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." See Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word: The World-Creating Function of the Text," *Theology Today* 57, no. 3 (2000): 357-58.

[58]Stanley J. Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology in the Postmodern Context," *Didaskalia* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1998), 10. In other words, "The Bible is the norming norm in theology … because it is the instrumentality of the Spirit." See Stanley J. Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic: Theological Method after the Demise of Foundationalism," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 125. In *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* he writes, "the assertion of the inspiration of Scripture cannot function as the theological premise from which bibliology emerges, nor as the focal point of our understanding of the relation between the Spirit and Scripture." The church has confessed its belief in the biblical documents "because believers in every age hear in them the voice of the Spirit as they seek to struggle with the issues they face in their unique and ever-changing contexts." See Grenz, *Revisioning,* 118; 120.

[59]Stanley J. Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word," 358. He continues, "The Protestant principle suggests that the authority of Scripture does not ultimately rest with any

really doing is affirming the authority of the Spirit whose book the Bible is.[60] On the relationship between Scripture and revelation, Grenz refuses to equate them and instead accepts Paul Rainbow's thesis, suggesting that in important sense the "word of God," and hence revelation, precedes Scripture.[61] For Grenz, this is true both historically (the divine initiation of communication from God to humankind occurred before the inscripturation process) and logically (Scripture presupposes the reality of revelation). With this understanding, Grenz argues that Scripture is the servant of both revelation and the work of the Spirit.[62] As a consequence, "The Spirit-energized revelatory message presented through Scripture takes primacy over the vehicle by means of which it is transmitted. Whatever authority the Bible carries as a trustworthy book, it derives from the trustworthiness of the

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quality that inheres within it as such (for example, its divine authorship or inspired character)."

[60]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 10.

[61]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 394.

[62]Up to this point, we can broadly agree with Grenz that when we talk about the authority of the Bible, what we affirm is not the authority of the book itself, but the authority of the Spirit, although we want to affirm that it is not only the Spirit but the triune God that has the authority over the Bible. We also agree that the Bible is the servant of both revelation and the work of the Spirit (better: the work of the triune God). However, contra Grenz (as we shall see further), we do not want to downplay the work of the Spirit (better: the triune God) in *authoring* the Bible itself. Timothy Ward reminds us that the phrase "the authority of Scripture" must be understood to be shorthand for "the authority of God as he speaks through Scripture." Ward says that to speak about the authority of Scripture is really to say more about God, and about the ways he chooses to act and speak in the world, than it is to say something directly about Scripture itself. To speak of the authority of Scripture is "to make a claim about what Scripture is in relation to the unquestionably sovereign God." Moreover, Ward insightfully states that to speak of the authority of a book of any kind is really to make a claim about the authority of the book's author. In sum, "The authority of Scripture is dependent entirely on the authority of God, and comes about only because of what God has chosen to do in the way he authored Scripture, and because of what he continues to do in presenting himself to us through Scripture as a God we can know and trust." See Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 128. More on this in the "Critiques" section in the next chapter.

divine revelation it discloses and ultimately from the Spirit who infallibly speaks through it."[63] In declaring the trustworthiness of the Bible, Grenz stresses that "it is ultimately not the book itself which we are affirming,"[64] rather, it is "the Spirit who speaks his revelatory message to us through the pages of Scripture."[65] In the same manner, he also highlights that in declaring infallibility and inerrancy, "we are actually affirming the trustworthiness of the Spirit whose vehicle the Bible is."[66] Grenz even provocatively states that "the divine nature of Scripture or its status vis-à-vis revelation need not be demonstrated in the prolegomenon to theology."[67]

What is the function of the Bible? Here, Grenz borrows the insight from Francis Fiorenza and states that the Bible functions as "the constitution of an ongoing community."[68] The Bible reflects the formation of the Christian identity at the beginning and holds the primary status at all stages in the life of the church as "constitutive" for the identity of the Christian community. It is "constitutive" in that the Bible provides the "categories by means of which we as the Christian community understand ourselves, our world and our calling in the world."[69] The subsequent question, then, is:[70] How does the Spirit speak through Scripture? How do the Spirit-illumined Scriptures function within the community of

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[63]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 402.

[64]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 403.

[65]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 403.

[66]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 403.

[67]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 94.

[68]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 10.

[69]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 11.

[70]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 10.

the people of God? Employing the insights from speech-act theory within his postfoundationalist framework, Grenz introduces the idea of the Spirit's appropriation: "The Bible is the instrumentality of the Spirit in that the Spirit appropriates the biblical text so as to speak to us today. Through Scripture the Spirit performs the illocutionary act of addressing us. … By appropriating the text, the Spirit seeks to perform a particular *perlocutionary* act. And the specific perlocutionary act the Spirit performs is the creation of 'world.'"[71] To put it differently, the Bible is the instrument used by the Spirit to provide the "interpretive framework" for or "the paradigm for life" within the Christian community.[72] By speaking to the community through Scripture, the Spirit establishes and preserves the community's identity. The Spirit uses the Bible to orient our present on the basis of the past and in accordance with a vision of the future, [73] thereby creating a community of persons who live

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[71]Grenz, "Articulating," 125. The question for Grenz: Is "appropriation" an illocution? Is the Spirit's appropriation of the Bible or His action of "addressing us" an illocutionary act? I think not, and from this misunderstanding and misuse of the speech-act theory we can discover some serious problems with Grenz's theological method, especially pertaining to the issue of theological authority. We will explore this issue in the next chapter.

[72]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 11. This is what I call Grenz's "minimalist" understanding of the function of the authority of Scripture. For him, the important thing about Scripture is its function as an "interpretive framework" or "paradigm for life" of the believing community – understood from his postmodern framework. It is the overall/big-picture categories of biblical narrative that play the important role for Grenz. But how about the important role of the discourses of the Bible themselves (from the sentence level, paragraph level, the level of a literary whole/genre, the level of a testament, up to the canonical level) in the formulation of biblical and theological truth-statements? Again, this instrumental view will lead to a serious problem as we attempt to discern the Spirit's voice in culture. More on this in the next chapter. For different levels of discourses in Scripture (and their respective illocutions), see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 191-94.

[73]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 11-12. The Holy Spirit "transposes the contemporary hearer of the biblical narrative back to those primal events that originally constituted the community as a people. At the heart of this narrative is the life, passion, and resurrection of Jesus, and the subsequent sending of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit

out in the present the paradigmatic narrative of the Bible and view all of life through the interpretive framework of the Bible.[74] The theologian's task, in turn, is to assist the people of God in hearing the Spirit's voice, so that we can live as God's people in the world.

At this point, two things on Grenz's understanding of the Spirit's voice can be noted. First, Grenz refuses to equate the voice of the Spirit with the words of the Bible.[75] He critiques the "evangelical modernists" for equating the voice of the Spirit with "the intent of the original author," and by doing that, collapsing the Spirit into the words of the Bible.[76] He admits that the Spirit's illocutionary act of appropriation does not come independently of "the original meaning of the text," hence the need for careful exegesis, however he argues that "the Spirit's address is not bound up simply and totally with the text's supposed internal meaning."[77] Once an author creates a literary text, once it has been written, it takes on a life of its own.[78] Grenz adds, "Although the Spirit's illocutionary act is to appropriate the text in its internal meaning (to appropriate what the author said), the Spirit appropriates the text with the goal of communicating to us in *our* situation. This perhaps parallels in certain respects that of the ancient community; nevertheless it is unique."[79] Second, as the immediate

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also "leads us to view ourselves and our situation in the light of God's future and to open ourselves and our present to the power of that future, which is already at work among us and in our world."

[74]Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word," 369.

[75]As a response to this point, see the "Critiques" section in the next chapter, especially those directed to Grenz's misuse of the speech-act theory.

[76]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 10.

[77]Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word," 362.

[78]Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word," 362.

[79]Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word," 362.

implication of the first point, it is natural for Grenz to affirm that the cultural context of the people of God is important in this hermeneutical task, because "we seek to listen to the voice of the Spirit through Scripture, who speaks to us in the thought-forms, categories, and conditions of the world in which we live."[80] But Grenz does not stop there; he goes one step further in affirming that culture itself can be the voice of the Spirit, as we shall see next in the exposition of his pneumatological understanding of culture.

Holy Spirit, Tradition, and the "Extended" Authority

Grenz believes that in certain sense there is a parallel between the Spirit-Scripture and the Spirit-tradition relationship. The connection between the Holy Spirit and the church's tradition can be traced in his view on the Spirit's works in the community of faith and in the production of the biblical texts. Related to this is his revisioning of the classical/traditional evangelical views on the inspiration and the illumination of Scripture. Grenz argues that in an important sense, "the Bible is the product of the community of faith that produced it."[81] The community precedes the production of the scriptural texts and is responsible for their content and for the identification of particular texts for inclusion in an authoritative canon to which it has chosen to make itself accountable. He even provocatively (and perhaps ambiguously) states that "apart from the authority of the Christian community, there would be no canon of authorized texts."[82] He explains, though, that it was the Spirit that led and guided them to bring together materials throughout the course of the community's

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[80]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 391.

[81]Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2001), 115.

[82]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 115.

life in response to their corporate concerns. The Bible, then, "represents the understanding of those members of the faith community who formed the enduring trajectory of that community. The scriptures witness to the claim that they are the final written deposit of a trajectory – a traditioning – that incorporates a number of varied elements in their composition, including oral tradition and other source documents."[83] This leads to a broader concept of inspiration from what has traditionally been understood (i.e. that inspiration is applied restrictively only to the human authors). In Grenz's words, "While inspiration includes the composition of particular writings produced by individuals, it also incorporates the work of the triune God in the midst of the Hebrew and early Christian communities, leading these people to participate in the process of bringing scripture into being."[84] Conversely, however, Grenz also claims that in another sense, "the text produces the community,"[85] because "by its own corporate affirmation in the establishment of the canon, the church made itself accountable to scripture as the norming norm for its life, faith, and practice."[86] This leads also to a broader concept of illumination. The illumination of the Spirit has already begun in the process of the formation of Scripture (and has not ceased with the closing of the canon). By the Spirit's illumination, the community at the ancient time found some texts to be the vehicle through which they were addressed by God, they found these texts to be authoritative, interpreted them, and applied them to various situations. They also preserved them for the sake of the community's continuity. Grenz explains that the

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[83]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 115.

[84]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 116. The climax is the coming together of the canon as the book of the Christian community.

[85]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 116.

[86]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 116.

contemporary process of illumination parallels that experienced by the ancient faith communities "insofar as the Bible contains materials that represents the appropriation by the community of the writings and oral traditions of their heritage, some of which are rejected as being contrary to the established trajectory of the community."[87] However, there is a significant difference: The ancient communities "engaged in the interpretive task *within* the process of the formation of the canon, while the Christian communities that exist after the closing of the canon receive the illumination of the Spirit speaking through canonical Scripture."[88]

Grenz then moves to a narrower understanding of tradition, seeing it as "the history of interpretation and application of canonical scripture by the Christian community, the church, as it listens to the voice of the Spirit speaking through the text."[89] As a consequence of his "eschatological realism," Grenz sees tradition as always on-going, open-ended, and provisional. Tradition is thus "characterized by both continuity and change as the faith community, under the guidance of the Spirit, grapples with the interaction between scripture and the particular challenges of changing situations."[90] And insofar as tradition is

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[87]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 116.

[88]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 116. Italics in the original.

[89]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 117. He defines tradition as follows: "The Christian tradition is comprised of the historical attempts by the Christian community to explicate and translate faithfully the first-order language, symbols, and practice of the Christian faith, arising from the interaction among community, text, and culture, into the various social and cultural contexts in which that community has been situated."

[90]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 118-19. Grenz uses the metaphor of performance in explaining that tradition provides an essential component in the process of facilitating and enabling authentic "performance" of the Christian faith by the community in its various cultural locations. He illustrates, "While the score of [Mozart's] symphony is

the product of the ongoing reflection of the Christian community on the biblical message, says Grenz, "it is in many respects an extension of the authority of Scripture."[91] This work of the Spirit in the history of the church will only reach its consummation in the eschatological future. Until then, the church must grapple with the meaning and implications of the biblical message for its context as it listens patiently and expectantly for the voice of the Spirit speaking afresh through scripture yet still continuous with the Spirit-guided trajectory of Christian tradition.[92]

In sum, Grenz believes that the authority of both Scripture and tradition are derived from and contingent on the work of the Spirit. Although both are distinguishable, they are fundamentally inseparable. Both are "fundamental components within an interrelated web of beliefs that constitutes the Christian faith."[93] To set Scripture over against tradition or elevates Scripture above tradition (or vice versa) is to fail to comprehend properly the work of the Spirit, a distortion of the authority of the triune God in the church, and to fall into a foundationalist trap.[94]

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authoritative, it demands performance in order to realize the intention for which it was produced, and performance requires interpretation. However, not all interpretations of Mozart have equal integrity in the history of performance of his works; some are too radical or idiosyncratic. Determinations as to the legitimacy or illegitimacy of particular interpretations and performances emerge in the context of tradition." See pp. 127-28.

[91]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 119.

[92]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 126.

[93]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 117.

[94]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 117; 114. With this understanding of Scripture and tradition, one wonders in what exact sense should Grenz's classification between Scripture as the primary norm or the norming norm and tradition as the secondary norm be understood? He himself says that to ask "Which has priority, scripture or tradition of the church?" is unhelpful and it rests on a foundationalist mentality, which he wants to reject.

Socio-Anthropological Understanding of Culture

To understand Grenz's view on culture, it is important to look at the way he traces the dramatic shifts in the meaning of culture throughout history. Grenz explains that the word "culture" was originally derived from the Latin *cultivare* ("to till the soil"); linked to the idea of caring and tending of crops or animals with the aim of improving or perfecting them.[95] Extending this concept to human person, culture is connected to the idea of development or refinement of person, especially through education. In the wake of Enlightenment, this concept of culture reached its peak and was associated with the process of educating and refining individuals (as well artistic and intellectual products like art and literature) for the purpose of producing the "refined" or "civilized" person and the "high culture."[96] In the 1920s, there was a significant shift from this idea of "high culture" to the idea of culture as consisting of the customs and rituals of a particular social group.[97] The new field of cultural anthropology at that time focused their studies on the specific patterns of behaviors that unify any given society and distinguishes them from other societies. Since 1980s, though, this unifying character of culture was challenged by postmodern understanding that "takes seriously the historical contingency of human personal and social life."[98] Postmodern anthropologists believe that culture is "the outcome and product of social

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[95]Stanley J. Grenz, "Culture and Spirit: The Role of Cultural Context in Theological Reflection," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55, no. 2 (Fall 2000), 37.

[96]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38.

[97]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38.

[98]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38.

interaction, with humans as active creators, rather than passive receivers, of culture."[99] They reject the "integrated" focus in the modernist definitions of culture and discard the assumption that culture is "a pre-existing social-ordering force that is transmitted externally to members of a cultural group who in turn passively internalize it."[100] Quoting Anthony Cohen, Grenz states that culture should be seen as "that which *agg*regates people and process, rather than *in*tegrates them."[101] Most important for Grenz in this postmodern shift is the movement away from the focus on common human behaviors in favor of a greater concern for the connection between culture and meaning.[102] Grenz agrees with contemporary cognitive anthropologists like Cohen who understands culture as denoting "the framework of meaning, of concepts and ideas, within which different aspects of a person's life can be related to each other without imposing arbitrary categorical boundaries between them."[103] As a shared dimension of meaning-making, culture is closely connected to social-constructivist views of the world and of personal identity within that world. People share a culture to the extent that they have similar experiences, mediated by shared humanly created products and learned practices (and other cultural symbols like language),[104] which lead them to develop a

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[99]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38.

[100]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38.

[101]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38. Italics in the original.

[102]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38.

[103]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38.

[104]Cultural symbols transmit the shared meanings by means of which a people understand themselves, pinpoint their deepest aspirations and longings, and construct the world they inhabit. Moreover, through the symbols they share, members of a group express and communicate to each other their understandings of the central aspects of life, while

set of similar meaning-creating cultural schemas, all aiming for the formation of the socially constructed self.[105] Rather than being fixed and stable, Grenz notes, this on-going and dynamic socially-constructed process is always in constant flux.

Culture, Religion, and Theology

On the relationship between culture and religion, Grenz notices that in the contemporary landscape there are usually two views. One views looks at religious artifacts as a dimension of a broader phenomenon called culture. Bernard Meland, for example, believes that "religious expression is, itself, a cultural occurrence …"[106] The other view, however, moves in the opposite direction: cultural artifacts are expressions of the underlying religious ethos of a particular society. Paul Tillich, for instance, says that "religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion."[107] While not rejecting these views, Grenz himself endorses a sociological view, the foundation for which lies in the social construction theories of Peter Berger. According to Berger, religion's role is "to legitimate the world endemic to any particular society by locating it and its institutions within a sacred, cosmic frame of reference, by bestowing on its members a sense of being connected to ultimate reality, and by giving cosmic status to its interpretive framework."[108] Therefore, insofar as cultural expressions speak about what a society believes to be ultimate, they are religious. Grenz

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struggling together to determine the meaning of the very symbols they employ in this process." See Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 39.

[105]Grenz, "Culture and Spirit," 38.

[106]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 148.

[107]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 148.

[108]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 148.

notes that more recently, other thinkers have pushed Berger's idea into the realm of personal identity formation, speaking about the role of religion in legitimating or safeguarding the self identity within the socially constructed world.[109] It is with such understanding that Grenz attempts to determine the role of culture in theological reflection.

Grenz believes that if people inhabit a socially-constructed reality, as sociologists like Berger suggests, culture must become a crucial tool in this aspect of theological work. He says, "Discerning what characterizes the socially constructed worlds people around us inhabit places us in a better position to address the generation God calls us to serve." He believes that the church "must express the gospel through the 'language' of culture – through the cognitive tools, concepts, images, symbols, and thought forms – by means of which people today discover meaning, construct the world they inhabit, and form personal identity."[110] Furthermore, he asserts that the church's missional calling is advanced as they come to understand how Christian faith addresses the problems, longings, and ethos of contemporary people, "knowing that the social context in which we live presses on us certain specific issues that at their core are theological."[111] Cultural artifacts, Grenz writes, "offer a window into the psyche of people with whom we desire to engage the gospel."[112] To use culture for this purpose, three interrelated steps must be heeded. First, "hearing," entails "being observant of the various venues that provide a cultural voice, that give expression to the ethos of our day, or that embody the often unexpressed inner longings and structure of

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[109]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 148.

[110]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 159.

[111]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 159.

[112]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 159.

meaning indicative of people in our society."[113] Here, Grenz reminds us that our exegesis of cultural phenomena will not be an "objective" hearing because we engage with our context as participants in the faith community; "… just as there is no culture-free reading of the biblical text and no culture-free construction of Christian theology, so also there can be no "theology-free" reading of culture and cultural artifacts."[114] Second, "scrutinizing," involves "the process of bringing to the surface the particular assumptions, beliefs, or meaning structure lying behind, motivating, or being expressed in cultural phenomena."[115] At this stage, the goal is to understand through conversation the conceptions of God, ourselves, and the world that are bound up with the cultural items under scrutiny, and by doing this, seek to determine why the particular cultural item "resonates" with people today.[116] Third, "responding," includes "offering a theologically informed appraisal of the beliefs and meaning structures expressed in cultural phenomena."[117] At this point, we seek to determine the extent to which the cultural meanings and underlying belief assumptions of a cultural item square with Christian outlooks. In other words, we ask "in what sense (if any) a cultural item can serve as a point of contact with the gospel or even an expression of gospel sensitivities."[118]

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[113]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 159. Grenz says, "Examples of these venues include literature, music, film, television programming, art, even newspapers and magazines, as well as expressions of our institutional life."

[114]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 159.

[115]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 159-60.

[116]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 160.

[117]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 160.

[118]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 160.

Pneumatological Understanding of Culture

Grenz's understanding of the relationship between culture and theology does not stop there, however. For him, the interaction between culture and theology should be a "two-way traffic" (what he calls "the interactional approach"): "Not only does the theological interplay between gospel and culture serve to optimize our ability to address our context; it also ought to enrich our theological construction."[119] More boldy, he claims that cultural context and expression "ought to lead us to reconsider our understanding of the Christian faith."[120] A crucial aspect of this interactional approach, consistent with Grenz's methodological commitment mentioned in the previous chapter, is the use of contemporary "knowledge" in the theological task. Grenz believes that the discoveries and insights of the various disciplines of human learning offer assistance to us in our theological work; "theological reflections can draw from the so-called 'secular' sciences, because ultimately no truth is in fact secular."[121] He claims that throughout history, Christian thinkers "have always drawn images from the surrounding world as well as insights from the 'latest scientific

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[119]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 160. Still, he believes that this interactional approach should be taken one step further. Christian ought to engage with culture not only to speak to society and to gain insights for Christian theological reflection. Agreeing with Wolfhart Pannenberg, Grenz believes that "concern with culture also arises out of the apologetic task inherent in the theological enterprise." Because God is the ground of truth, all truth ultimately comes together in God. The goal of theology, in turn, is "to demonstrate the unity of truth in God, that is, to bring all human knowledge together in our affirmation of God. According to Grenz, the challenge of bringing all truth under the confession of faith in the God of the Bible requires that we interact with culture. See Stanley J. Grenz, "What does Hollywood Have to Do with Wheaton? The Place of (Pop) Culture in Theological Reflection," *JETS* 43, no. 2 (June 2000): 309-311.

[120]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 160. Grenz also claims, "… culture can be a means through which we gain theological insight."

[121]Grenz, "What does Hollywood Have to Do with Wheaton?," 310.

findings' to facilitate them in understanding and articulating Christian truth."[122] He gives an example of how socio-political changes, such as the rise of feudal society and later the advent of nation-states – effected the development of atonement theories. He illustrates further,

> Hence, one reason why Anselm raised the question, *Cur Deus Homo?* was a diminished credence the older ransom theory carried in feudal society. His satisfaction theory, in turn, needed alteration when the advent of modern nation-states rendered obsolete the concept of honor upon which it was based. In the new setting, Anselm's objective theory was metamorphed into the idea of penal substitution so widely articulated today.[123]

It is in this context that Grenz speaks of culture as the voice of the Spirit. He writes, "… reading our culture can assist us in reading the biblical text to hear more clearly the voice of the Spirit."[124] For this reason, Grenz urges his fellow Christians, "[W]e must move beyond the widely-held assumption that the church is the *sole* repository of *all* truth and the *only* location in which the Holy Spirit is operative. Rather, we must realize that God's Spirit – who is the Creator Spirit – is present everywhere in the world, and consequently the Holy Spirit can speak through many media."[125] Here, Grenz relates the Spirit's presence in culture with His role as a life-giver; as the divine power creating and sustaining life, hence causing creaturely life to flourish. To repeat his explanation,

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[122]Grenz, "What does Hollywood Have to Do with Wheaton?," 310.

[123]Grenz, "What does Hollywood Have to Do with Wheaton?," 310. In the next chapter, we will look at some serious problems with Grenz's notion of doctrinal development described here. To anticipate, his view ends up giving more authority to culture than he is ready to admit, in contradiction with his own claim that Scripture should be the norming norm of theological enterprise.

[124]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 160.

[125]Grenz, "What does Hollywood Have to Do with Wheaton?," 310.

> Because the life-giving Creator Spirit is present wherever life flourishes, the Spirit's voice can conceivably resound through many media, including the media of human culture. Because Spirit-induced human flourishing evokes cultural expression, we can anticipate in such expressions traces of the Creator Spirit's presence. Consequently, we should listen intently for the voice of Spirit, who is present in all life and therefore who "precedes" us into the world, bubbling to the surface through the artifacts and symbols human construct.[126]

It is apparent that Grenz gives only a thin description (and theological justification) of his pneumatological understanding of culture, relating it merely to the Spirit's role as Creator and sustainer of life and its flourishing.[127] He simply assumes that the Spirit is somehow present in human lives and induces them into creating cultural expressions, artifacts, and symbols – and in so doing expressing the Spirit's voice. One wonders how Grenz's pneumatological understanding of culture might be theologically supported by the important features of Grenz's pneumatology (e.g. how the Spirit's ministry in the world is determined by His role within the divine life, his view on the Spirit's mission vis-à-vis the mission of Christ, his view on the primacy of the church/believing community in God's salvation program and the role of the Spirit within it, etc.) – not to mention how it is congruent/consistent with them. Grenz seems to bypass his own explicit pneumatology in asserting his belief that the Spirit is present and His voice can be heard through the media of human culture.

Having said this, there is an indication that his pneumatological view on culture is theologically supported by another theological concepts, i.e. his inclusivistic take

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[126]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 162.

[127]As we have seen, even on this point, his discussion is limited to the Old Testament.

on the issue of revelation and grace.[128] Although Grenz himself never explicitly linked the two, it can be plausibly inferred that Grenz's belief that the Holy Spirit is present and speaks in culture is very much consistent with his understanding of God's revelation and grace beyond the realm of salvation and the church. In other words, it is God the Holy Spirit who is present and reveal himself outside the covenant community.

In responding to Donald Bloesch's theological method, especially his "Christocentric focus of divine revelation" that Grenz thinks is too pessimistic, Grenz

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[128]I hardly find another strong theological justification for Grenz's pneumatological view on culture from his systematic theology. The closest support might come from his discussion on "God as Transcendent and Immanent." Here, he appeals to the Spirit as the sustainer of creation (as cited earlier in this chapter). He writes: "… God is immanent in the world. This means that God is present to creation. He is active within the universe, involved in the natural processes and in human history. Paul emphasized this truth in his well-known speech to the Athenians. God 'is not far from each one of us,' he said, 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' (Acts 17:27-28). The Old Testament, especially the wisdom literature (e.g. Job 27:3; 33:4; 34:14-15; Ps. 104:29-30), repeatedly sounds the theme of God being the sustainer of creation through his Spirit." See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 81. In his discussion of "God as Spirit" he explains Hegel's conception of "Spirit"/*Geist*, where "Spirit" is understood not merely as a substance or an existing thing, but an active subject, an activity, or a process. While in general he is more descriptive in explaining Hegel's concept, giving neither his affirmation nor critique, at the end he affirms that "Hegel's understanding of 'spirit' as an activity rather than a passive or static being provides theology with a helpful insight. In fact, his view lies closer to the biblical concept of God as 'spirit,' than does the Greek conception which has dominated Christian theology." See p. 82. Grenz's emphasis here is that the Holy Spirit is active and dynamic rather than passive and static. Later, we will see how Grenz says that pop culture can become the playground of the Spirit when "it facilitates persons, who find themselves drifting in a sea of meaninglessness, in the task of fashioning a personal identity that is genuine." The same language is used when Grenz explains God's preservation work in the world. He writes, "More vital to us today than the purely physical understanding of God's agency in preservation is the confession that God is the one who preserves us in the face of the apparent meaninglessness of existence. Hence, when we confess God as the agent in preservation, we are providing the divine answer to the question, Is there meaning to life? The question of meaning arises both with respect to the existence of reality as a whole and individual existence." See p. 120.

wonders if Bloesch pays adequate attention to the universal activity of divine grace.[129] Special revelation is crucial for human salvation, Grenz admits, but at the same time the Bible seems to indicate the presence of a divine activity directed toward all humankind. He writes, "While not operative apart from Christ, this 'true light that gives light to everyone' (Jn 1:9) does appear to be active apart from the specifically salvific message of the gospel of Jesus Christ."[130] In this sense, Grenz argues that we can talk about a "general revelation at work prior to or even beyond the pale of the church's proclamation of Jesus as the Christ, even if this work is not adequate for human salvation"[131] and acknowledge the presence of "this kind of prevenient grace"[132] which would "lead us to look for a point of contact for the gospel not so much as an innate possession or a structure of the human person, but as the gracious operation of God in our lives even before we knew God's name."[133] Believing that there is both discontinuity and continuity (while emphasizing the latter) between creation and

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[129]Stanley J. Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism': Donald Bloesch's Antirationalist Theological Method," in *Evangelical Theology in Transition: Theologians in Dialogue with Donald Bloesch,* ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 56.

[130]Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism'," 56.

[131]Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism'," 56. This understanding of "general revelation" is similar to his treatment of the doctrine in his systematic theology textbook. For example, Grenz affirms that general revelation refers to that divine self-disclosure God has given to all humans or to humans in general; that it is "natural" rather than "supranatural," that it is "noetic" rather than "salvific," that the concept is valid and helpful, but also limited in scope, in its result, and consequently in its potential use. See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God,* 132-39. However, this basic understanding is at risk with the introduction of Grenz's inclusivistic concepts of revelation and grace, which contradicts his explanation of the nature of general revelation depicted here. In the end, Grenz's concepts blur the distinction between general and special revelation and between common and special grace.

[132]Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism'," 56.

[133]Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism'," 56.

new creation, Grenz urges Christian theologians to be "open to finding traces of divine grace within our present situation, even in its depravity and fallennes."[134] More clearly, Grenz claims, "I must admit that when the dust settles I find myself – contra Bloesch – sympathizing with Brunner in his famous dispute with Barth. Similarly, I find a host of traces of divine grace present in the midst of human brokenness."[135] As a consequence of this belief, he says that unlike Bloesch, he is "willing to speak of culture as a source of theology (to the horror of some evangelicals), albeit not in the sense of being the normative standard determining the nature of the gospel message itself but as a conversation partner that as theologians we must take seriously in our constructive articulation of the 'faith once delivered.'"[136]

A similar and somewhat more controversial view on revelation and grace can be found in Grenz's treatment of the theology of religions. In his attempts to show the role of the religions in God's purposes, Grenz find that the Bible teaches the following. First, from the context of creation, fall, and the new creation, it can be inferred that religion is both "a positive aspect of creaturely life and a flashpoint for human error,"[137] and that we must view religion in accordance with its role in God's ultimate intention for the creation, namely, "the

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[134]Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism'," 56.

[135]Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism'," 56. Recall that Grenz uses very similar language in explaining the Holy Spirit's presence in culture: "Because Spirit-induced human flourishing evokes cultural expression, we can anticipate in such expressions traces of the Creator Spirit's presence. See Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism,* 162.

[136]Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism'," 56. We will see in the next chapter whether Grenz can be consistent with his statement that culture is not to be "the normative standard determining the nature of the gospel message itself."

[137]Stanley J. Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 31, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1994): 56.

establishment of community."[138] Second, from the 'content' of salvation history, Grenz affirms that the biblical authors repeatedly sound the theme of a universal intent for particular election; God's purposes overflow the boundaries of any one people to encompass all humankind. He claims, "Not only is election is directed towards the nations, but God is also active among all peoples. … in the face of Israel's tendency towards self-righteousness, God asserts that other peoples have also been the recipients of providential guidance."[139] More provocatively, Grenz claims, "God's wider activity suggests that faith may be present beyond the particular boundaries of the covenant people."[140] He concludes that people of any nation who humbly seek to serve God and who depend upon God's grace "may find divine favor."[141] Evangelical theology of religions, therefore, "must give place to the possibility of God's activity beyond the central trajectory of salvation history – Israel, Christ, and the church."[142] Next, relating the previous point to the issue of worship, Grenz says that "true worship is not limited to those who join the covenant people in paying homage to the God of Israel."[143] He finds support for this idea of a "wider worship" in the New Testament from figures like Cornelius (Acts 10:4) – "for his prayers and acts of charity were accepted by God before he heard the message about Christ."[144] The biblical author, he believes, "did not limit

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[138]Grenz, "'Fideistic Revelationalism'," 56.

[139]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 57.

[140]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 57.

[141]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 57.

[142]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 57.

[143]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 58.

[144]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 58.

the ranks of those who were offering acceptable worship to the circle of devotees who attached themselves to Israel or to Jesus' followers."[145]

Because of these three points, Grenz feels the need to part company with the general evangelical theology of religions at two crucial points: "the foundational use of a differentiation between general and special revelation, and the focus on the question of individual participation in eternity."[146] Rather than accepting either of these starting points, Grenz believes that theology of religions must begin with the role of religions in God's purpose, i.e. "community."[147] Note that this negative assessment on the category of general and special revelation seems to contradict Grenz's earlier (and more positive) affirmation of them. Here, Grenz associates "general revelation" with the exclusivism position, where it is understood in the context of human's awareness of God the Creator because of the divine imprint in creation and in human reason or conscience. Within this definition, "general revelation" is only noetic and never salvific: "Rather than providing a means to salvation, … [it] only serves to condemn humankind."[148] In his previous essay, he wants to affirm that although general revelation in itself is "not adequate for human salvation," there is always

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[145]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 59.

[146]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 60.

[147]Parallel and very similar to his criteria for discerning the Spirit's voice in culture (whether culture is a playground of the Spirit or a diabolical device) that I argued emerged primarily from his socio-anthropological view of culture rather than from specific theological concept ("total depravity of humankind" might be the only exception), here Grenz uses the categories from contemporary communitarian studies to discern the positive and negative dimension of a religion. For Grenz, religion is positive to the extent that it contributes to the identity formation and social cohesion among human beings and thereby fulfills God's ultimate purpose of establishing a community. On the other hand, religion can be demonic when it becomes an expression of our fallenness. See Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 62.

[148]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 52.

"prevenient grace" at work at this sphere, preparing people to receive the special revelation, which is "crucial for human salvation." But now, Grenz seems to go further than that (and hence contradicting himself) in claiming that salvation, faith, and worship to the true God is possible outside the operation of special revelation and the covenant community.[149]

Here, we can readily see that Grenz's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is incongruent as several important points with his inclusivistic concepts of revelation and grace. And the irony is that the theological justification of his pneumatological view on culture comes more from the latter than the former. In the next chapter we will look at some serious problems with these concepts of revelation and grace. For the moment, it should be fairly mentioned that despite his positive affirmations on the work of the Spirit in culture, Grenz does acknowledge that culture is always a "mixed bag"[150]; to use his own expressions, culture can be either the playground of the spirit or a diabolical device, hence the need for discernment.[151] However, to repeat the same point, Grenz does not adequately employ his own explicit pneumatology to develop criteria of discerning the Spirit's presence and voice in culture. Instead, the criteria for discerning the Spirit's voice is more directly emerged from his socio-anthropological view of culture discussed above – i.e. culture as a meaning-making enterprise that is ultimately religious; a medium by which personal identity is socially

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[149]He says, "The Bible allows no such unequivocal rejection of the possibility of either faith or true worship beyond the central salvation-historical trajectory of Israel and the church." See Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 60.

[150]Grenz, "What does Hollywood Have to Do with Wheaton?," 310.

[151]Stanley J. Grenz. "(Pop) Culture: Playground of the Spirit or Diabolical Device?" *Cultural Encounters* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 7-35. The important question is whether the criteria for discernment he developed is consistent/congruent with his inclusivistic concepts of grace and revelation (described above) and also with his doctrine of Scripture (described below).

constructed – and only indirectly informed by theological concepts.[152] In answering whether pop culture is the playground of the Spirit or a diabolical device, Grenz says "Both." Grenz notes that for most people, pop culture serves as their chief referent, providing the central tools by means of which they engage in meaning-making, mediating to them the paradigmatic narrative by means of which they make sense of their lives and thereby construct their personal identity.[153] He then argues,

> To the extent that it fulfills this purpose well, pop culture becomes the playground of the Spirit. It serves as an instrument by means of which the divine Spirit nurtures the human spirit. It facilitates persons, who find themselves drifting in a sea of apparent meaninglessness, in the task of fashioning a personal identity that is genuine. To the degree that this occurs, pop culture functions rightly, fulfilling its cultural task under the lordship of the God of culture.[154]

On the other hand, Grenz argues that the meaning that people construct by means of the narrative that pop culture provides "all-too-often falls short of what is in fact the truth about their lives."[155] Pop culture, Grenz argues, "routinely fails to bring people in touch with the narrative of the God of the Bible, who is bringing creation to its divinely intended goal, namely, that of becoming the new creation fashioned around Jesus Christ, the Logos,

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[152]Grenz argues, "Debating the relative merits or demerits of the messages that pop cultural products carry, although not irrelevant, is ultimately superficial. The task of determining whether pop culture is the Spirit's playground or the devil's device requires that such a discussion be augmented by an attempt to delve deeper into the dynamics of cultural expression in general and pop culture as a vehicle of expression in particular." What Grenz has in mind is the religious character of the meaning-making task associated with culture. See Grenz, "(Pop) Culture," 21.

[153]Grenz, "(Pop) Culture," 25.

[154]Grenz, "(Pop) Culture," 25.

[155]Grenz, "(Pop) Culture," 25.

the one in whom all things find their interconnectedness and hence their true meaning."[156]

Hence,

> To the extent that the paradigmatic narrative mediated through pop culture moves its consumers away from the truthful narrative of God, pop culture becomes its own god. It becomes the god of pop culture. When this occurs, pop culture, which is intended by God to be the playground of God's Spirit degenerates into a device that is diabolical, and this to the detriment of all.[157]

Above all, to discern the Spirit's voice in culture, Grenz warns that the Spirit's voice will never be a speaking against the text of Scripture.[158] He says, "To pit the Spirit's voice in culture against the Spirit speaking through Scripture would be to fall prey to the foundationalist trap. It would require that we elevate some dimension of contemporary thought or experience as a human universal that forms the criterion for determining what in the Bible is or is not acceptable."[159] By way of anticipation, it can be argued that Grenz's stance on this matter is ambiguous and confusing, even contradictory. On the one hand, Grenz wants to emphasize the primacy of Scripture (as we shall see, he grants Scripture the status of the norming norm or the primary norm), but on the other hand he wants to avoid foundationalism and instead argues that we cannot hear the Spirit speaking through the text except by listening within a particular culture. This sentence reveals his ambiguity, "Even though we cannot hear the Spirit speaking through the text except by listening within a particular historical-cultural context, nevertheless hearing the Spirit in the text provides the only sure canon for hearing the Spirit in culture, because the Spirit's speaking everywhere

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[156]Grenz, "(Pop) Culture," 25.

[157]Grenz, "(Pop) Culture," 25.

[158]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 162.

[159]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 162.

and anywhere is always in concert with this primary speaking through the text."[160] Even more ambiguous and confusing (and contradictory to his previous statement) are his next sentences: "… culture and text do not comprise two different moments of communication; rather, they are but one speaking. And consequently we engage not in two different 'listenings,' but one. We listen for the voice of the Spirit who speaks the Word through the word within the particularity of the hearer's context, and who thereby can speak in all things."[161] The question for Grenz is simply this: Can we or can we not listen to the Spirit's speaking in Scripture except by listening within our particular historical-cultural context?

Culture as One of the Sources of Theology

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Grenz sees the whole theological enterprise as conversation. As conversation, theology emerges through the interplay, or perichoretic dance, of an ordered set of sources of insight, which includes Scripture, tradition, and culture. Some important points need to be noted with regard to Grenz's stance on the sources of theology: (1) Grenz believes that all of the three sources are interrelated and must be equally emphasized;[162] (2) It is implied, at least from his interchangeable uses of the

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[160]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 162-63.

[161]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 163. In his other writing, Grenz says the same thing but with some additions: "… culture and biblical text do not comprise two different moments of communication *(with tradition then forming a third)*; rather, they are ultimately one speaking. … we listen for the voice of the Spirit, who speaks the Word through the word within the particularity of the hearers' context and who thereby can speak in all things, *albeit always according to the Word, who is Christ*." See Grenz, "Articulating," 128-29. Italics mine.

[162]Grenz says that emphasizing Scripture to the exclusion of undermining of the other two sources leads to "biblicism" or "fundamentalism." Exclusively emphasizing

terms "sources," "norms," "pillars," and "tools," that each of the sources has some degree of authority; (3) In fact, at first glance, Grenz seems to attach some authority to each of them (albeit in different degree), with Scripture being the primary norm, tradition being the secondary source, and culture being the tertiary tools. Grenz points to the "biblical message" or "kerygma" as the primary norm for theology.[163] Tradition, or, the theological heritage of the church, is "an *extension* of the first [norm]"[164]; it is "an intermediate, mediating source that carries secondary importance."[165] Culture, or the contemporary context of the recipient of the kerygma, is "the tertiary pillar for theology";[166] (4) Having claimed that, however, as we have seen above, Grenz nevertheless refuses to acknowledge that Scripture (or any other sources for that matter) is the foundation of theology; (5) He insists that the inherent authority of these sources comes only from the triune God, and more specifically, from the Holy Spirit. He claims, "If we must speak of a 'foundation' of the Christian faith at all, then, we must speak of neither scripture nor tradition in and of themselves, but only of the triune God who is disclosed in polyphonic fashion through scripture, the church, and even the

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tradition leads to "confessionalism," while exclusive emphasis on culture leads to "progressivism" or "liberalism." See Grenz, *Revisioning*, 101-104.

[163]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 93. In p. 94 Grenz says, "The biblical documents mediate to the theologian the kerygma - the gospel proclamation of the early communities - which is likewise foundational to our exposition of the faith of the community. This kerygma is the primary norm for theology."

[164]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 95.

[165]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 94.

[166]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 97.

world, albeit always normatively through scripture."[167] Moreover, "… neither scripture nor tradition is inherently authoritative in the foundationalist sense of providing self-evident, noninferential, incorrigible grounds for constructing theological assertions. The authority of each – tradition as well as scripture – is contingent on the work of the Spirit …"[168] Again, by way of anticipation, there seems to be a contradiction between his assertion that Scripture should be the primary or the norming norm and his belief that – following his nonfoundationalist sensibilities – none of the sources should be the foundation of theology. In light of this, it can also be mentioned that his interchangeable uses of "sources," "norms," "pillars," and "tools," are ambiguous.

Having said that, Grenz's selection these three as his sources of theology is far from arbitrary. For one, the selection is consistent with his integrative motif/orienting concept of "community." I concluded the previous chapter by arguing that "community" is, to say the least, the starting point of Grenz's theology – it is his "first theology," emerged from both his pietist and postmodern methodological commitments.[169] In Grenz's scheme,

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[167]Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 117-18. We can infer from this statement that for Grenz, culture, too, must not in and of itself becomes the foundation of theology.

[168]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 117.

[169]I intentionally use the phrase "to say the least" because "community" surely has more (though not less) weight of significance for Grenz than merely a "starting point." For example, as early as 1993, in his *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, he has already made a proposition that "community" should be theology's "integrative motif," "orienting concept," "central theme," or "organizing principle." He gave some examples in the history of theology to illustrate what constitutes a theologian's integrative motif. For Aquinas, it is the concept of "the vision of God"; for Luther, it is "justification by faith"; for Calvin, it is "the glory of God"; for Wesley, "responsible grace"; for Schleiermacher, "human religious experience"; for Karl Barth, "the nature of revelation" or "the self-disclosure of the triune God to the human person." See Grenz, *Revisioning*, 137-38. In stating that "community" is Grenz's "starting point," I would like to highlight the fact that it is the place,

theology *begins* because of the very existence of a believing community which engages in the activity of reflecting on their faith. To repeat his statement, "… the existence of [this] community provides the only 'foundation' necessary for launching into the process of delineating the mosaic of beliefs, or explicating the interpretive framework, Christians share."[170] Because theology is a second-order discipline, it must be preceded by distinctively Christian religious experience of the faith community, which itself must be preceded or facilitated by the interpretive framework that has its sources in that community's shared cultural symbols.[171] As the community engages in the on-going process of delineating what ought to be the Christian interpretive framework or its belief-mosaic, the three sources – Scripture, tradition and culture – must be consulted simultaneously.

The sources of theology are understood by Grenz from the category of community. In other words, it is "community" that brings them together. For Grenz, Scripture is "the book of the community"[172]; it is "the product of the community of faith that cradled it."[173] Grenz states that in engaging in the theological task, we may simply assume the authority of the Bible "on the basis of the integral relation of theology to the faith

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methodologically, where his whole theological project starts. Grenz himself gives three reasons to justify why Christian theology must be communitarian: (1) because it is linked to a particular community, namely, the community of the disciples of Jesus; (2) because it is the explication of the Christian conception of God. Christian theology speaks about the God known in the Christian community. And the God to whom the Christian community bears witness is the Triune God; (3) Christian theology is the study of the narrative of this God fulfilling the divine purposes as disclosed in the Bible. The biblical narrative presents God's ultimate goal as the establishment of community. Grenz, "Articulating," 132-33.

[170]Grenz, "Articulating," 132.

[171]Grenz, "Articulating," 122-24. The shared cultural symbols include the sacred texts, language, rituals, and practices of that faith community.

[172]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 94.

[173]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 121.

community."[174] Grenz emphasizes the functional dimension of the Bible as used by the faith community when he says, "Because the Bible is the universally acknowledged book of the Christian church, the biblical message functions as the central norm for the systematic articulation of the faith of that community."[175] Next, tradition is "the product of the ongoing reflection of the church on the biblical message."[176] Tradition shows the believing community's attempts to explicate the meaning of the kerygma within changing historical contexts. Furthermore, all expressions of faith in the church's theological history are always culturally conditioned and formulated in the linguistic and philosophical frameworks of the age in which they were written. The contemporary faith expressions are no exception in this matter, hence the importance of culture as the wider context of the theological conversation.

Another reason for Grenz's selection of these three sources has to do with the importance of the Holy Spirit in his designation of theological processes (the move from community's interpretive framework to theology, and back). First, we must remember that in Grenz's mind, a *generic* community never exist; in other words, a *Christian* theology must begin with a distinctive *Christian* community with its distinctively *Christian* interpretive framework.[177] To begin the whole theological processes, then, Grenz needs to appeal to pneumatology as it is the Holy Spirit who brings the Christian community into existence

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[174]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 94.

[175]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 94.

[176]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 95.

[177]In the previous chapter, we have already hinted at the potential problem with this, i.e. whether Grenz is able to consistently safeguard the *Christian*-ness of the Christian theology given his nonfoundationalist commitment and his social construction view of reality. This problem is now significantly compounded given Grenz's belief that the same Spirit can also facilitate true salvation and worship (and hence faith and theological reflections) outside the distinctively *Christian* community!

through His convertive work in the lives of individuals. Once the Christian community is created and its existence assumed, the on-going process of faith reflections – characterized by the employment of proper theological sources and informed by specifically Christian motifs – can be initiated. As it turns out, the Holy Spirit is the important Subject and the Divine Agent that Grenz must strategically appeal to in order for his pietistic, nonfoundationalist and communitarian methodology to "make sense" and "work." It is the Holy Spirit who creates the *Christian* community (and hence the possibility of any faith reflection), and it is the same Spirit that makes the *conversation* or the "perichoretic dance" between Scripture, tradition, and culture possible and thereby advances the on-going process of articulating the community's belief-mosaic. Given this inseparable nature of community to the Holy Spirit, we can even say more specifically say that *both* community *and* the Holy Spirit constitute Grenz's "first theology." Scripture, tradition, and culture are brought together not only by his integrative motif of "community" but also by his belief in the authority of the Spirit.

In order for Grenz's distinctively *Christian* theological *conversation* to work, culture – under the authority of the Holy Spirit – must be inserted as one of theology's sources, because it is "impossible for theologians to withdraw from their social and historical context into some supposedly culture-free realm in which only the 'language of Zion' is spoken."[178] Although it can be a diabolical device, Grenz believes that culture can also be the playground of the Spirit – the place where the Spirit presents and His voice can be heard. The same Spirit uses and appropriates Scripture, culture, and tradition simultaneously – not separately or sequentially – to make His voice heard. The following paragraph summarizes Grenz's point well,

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[178]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 13.

> The ultimate authority in the church is the Spirit speaking through Scripture. The act of the Spirit, however, is always a contextual speaking; it always comes to its hearers within a specific historical-cultural context. The specificity of the Spirit's speaking means that the conversation with culture and cultural context is crucial to the hermeneutical task. We seek to listen to the voice of the Spirit through Scripture as the Spirit speaks to us in the particularity of the historical-cultural context in which we live.[179]

Conclusion

Culture is indeed very important for Grenz and his theological method. He says, "The social context in which we live presses upon us certain specific issues, which at their core are theological. We avoid grappling with these only to our peril! … at its best, theology seeks to respond to the perceived needs and questions posed by society."[180] At the same time, however, he warns that the appeal to culture as a source for theological construction "ought not to be confused with syncretism." Trying to be consistent with his differentiation between primary, secondary, and tertiary "norms" of theology, he claims, "I am not elevating culture above either the biblical message or our theological heritage. I am not proposing that contemporary thinking about religion and morals sit in judgment over Christian teaching on these matters."[181] He warns his fellow evangelicals to avoid cultural captivity. In his words, "… as evangelical theologians we must be vigilant lest our legitimate concern to speak to culture does not degenerate into merely an accomodation to biblical

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[179]Grenz, "Articulating," 127. In the next chapter we will give a fuller assessment on the issue of authority implicit in these statements.

[180]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 14.

[181]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 13.

message to the dictates of culture, thereby repeating the mistake of classical liberalism."[182] He even believes that society should not set the agenda for theology or the church.[183]

Is Grenz being consistent here? At one point he laments that "the ghost of Protestant liberalism and the spectre of Tillich's method of correlation still haunt the evangelical theological mansion,"[184] pointing out that "the chief difficulty with any method of correlation is its inherent foundationalism."[185] But can Grenz be confident that his own theological mansion is completely free from these ghost and spectre? More importantly, within the framework of his nonfoundationalist methodological commitments, how can Grenz secure his convictions that culture will not have the last word, that theologians will not fall into cultural accomodation or syncretism, and that society will not set the agenda for theology and the church? If the Spirit's speaking is always a contextual speaking and always a "one speaking," how then can theologians detect any cultural captivity? With these initial concerns, we are prepared to give a fuller evaluation of Grenz's proposal.

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[182]Grenz, *Revisioning*, 108. Again, he believes that "our commitment to biblical authority and our concern for fidelity to the historic faith of the church place us as evangelical thinkers … in the best possible position to avoid cultural captivity."

[183]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 13. He continues, "Indeed, we might say that theology ought to do more in the way of setting the agenda for society."

[184]Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology," 13.

[185]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 154.

CHAPTER 4

AN ASSESSMENT OF GRENZ'S PNEUMATOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE AND ITS USE IN HIS THEOLOGICAL METHOD

Introduction

Having expounded and preliminarily examined Grenz's pneumatological view on culture and its use in his theological method, this chapter will offer a fuller assessment of his proposal by way of both appreciation and critique. Two important questions need to be answered by the end of this chapter. First, "To what extent and in what way it can rightfully be said that the Holy Spirit is present and speaks in culture?" Flowing from this, the second question is whether Grenz's employment of culture as one of theology's sources is theologically justified and methodologically sound.

Appraisals

On Grenz's Motives

An appreciation of Grenz's proposal can be given from different levels. For one, the overall motive of his theological undertaking is to be commended. His is a theological engagement that blends inextricably the spiritual/experiential, cultural/contextual, and missional/evangelistic impetus that we discussed in the first chapter. Responding to what he perceived as too individualistic, rationalistic, and dualistic tendencies in modern evangelical theologies, he tries to shift the pendulum and creates some balance by rightfully

reminds us that – consistent with the historical trajectory of the movement – evangelicalism must be recognized not only for its commitment for right doctrine, but also for its distinct spirituality and religious experience (i.e. the convertive piety). As his colleague John R. Franke puts it, Grenz "believed passionately in the great convictions that have shaped North American evangelicalism … Yet he also asserted the importance of the continual reformation of the church and its theology through the ongoing guidance of the Holy Spirit 'speaking' in and through the text of the Bible."[1] By doing this, he hoped to move beyond propositionalism and recover theology as an experiential, life-transforming and practical discipline.

His persistent efforts to make theology and its fruits relevant to the current cultural and philosophical context (i.e. postmodernity) and his creative engagement with recent developments in other disciplines (e.g. social sciences) – not to mention his engagement with contemporary theologians – must be adequately appreciated. His stubborn insistence on the theme of community is a timely antidote to North American strong individualistic culture. More importantly, Grenz repeatedly stresses in his writings that the *raison d'être* behind all of his theological project is nothing other than a missional drive, consciously conducted as a participant in the evangelical big family. He deeply believes that a theologians's central constructive task is that of "setting forth an integrated statement of Christian doctrine for the sake of the mission of the contemporary church." – and this can

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[1]John R. Franke, "Stanley James Grenz (1950-2005)," *Theology Today* 6, no. 3 (April 2006): 95. The great convictions that Franke mentions includes the inspiration and the inerrancy of scripture, the deity of Jesus Christ, the triunity of God, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the particular significance of conversion and the new birth in Christ, and the return of Jesus at the consummation of the age.

only be done from within a distinctively Christian community.[2] In this, we cannot but agree with Grenz.

On the Importance of the Holy Spirit for Theological Method

On another level, Grenz's proposal brings back the significance of pneumatology for theology and theological method, especially as it speaks to the issues of theological authority, sources and norms. Jason Sexton highlights Grenz's creative theological achievement by observing that "no other North American evangelical theologian placed scripture directly within a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, including Donald Bloesch in his seven-volume Christian Foundations series and Clark H. Pinnock (who also never proposed a systematic theology) either with *The Scripture Principle* or *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit.*"[3] Kevin Vanhoozer notes that Grenz's concern to reclaim the role of the Spirit for a doctrine of Scripture and a theological hermeneutic is to be admired.[4] Millard Erickson agrees. He writes, "Grenz has correctly noted the Enlightenment ideal still sometimes found in the thought of evangelical theologians."[5] Erickson illustrates that some evangelical

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[2]Stanley J. Grenz, "An Agenda for Evangelical Theology in the Postmodern Context," *Didaskalia* 9 (Spring 1998): 2.

[3]Jason S. Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 44 n. 30. Sexton adds that in a personal conversation, Scottish theologian A. T. B. McGowan told him that Grenz's work was the first he had ever read that located Scripture under a pneumatological rubric with the traditional systematic categories.

[4]Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "On the Very Idea of a Theological System: An Essay in Aid of Triangulating Scripture, Church and World," in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. A. T. B. McGowan (Leicester: Apollos – Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 146.

[5]Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 97.

theologians adopt the hermeneutical method and presuppositions of E. D. Hirsch which allows virtually no role for the Holy Spirit in interpretation. Against this stream, "Grenz's ascription of the positive role for the Holy Spirit in the hermeneutical process is more in keeping with the Reformation heritage on this matter,"[6] Erickson comments.

In an appreciative tone, Sexton also mentions that "there is an organic unity flowing from Grenz's principal source to the other sources as a result of the pneumatological governance and organic 'extension of the authority of Scripture' into church tradition and then into the contemporary context …"[7] Vanhoozer acknowledges Grenz's positive contribution in his attempt to triangulate Scripture, tradition, and culture, although he is not as optimistic as Sexton in evaluating whether Grenz was successful in doing so.[8]

Scorgie and Zylla highlight that Grenz's emphasis on the work of the Spirit flow naturally from how he brought the Pietist heritage of evangelicalism to bear on the "creeping creedalism" that he saw in contemporary evangelicalism. The imminent danger as Grenz saw it was "that doctrinaire theologians could latch on to an epistemological ground independent of the actual experience of faith, and on that basis feel empowered to go their own way."[9] His counter-proposal was simply "to begin with, and stay tethered to, the work of

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[6]Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 98.

[7]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 45.

[8]Vanhoozer, "On the Very Idea of a Theological System," 145. Vanhoozer writes, "While he [Grenz] is right to worry that some conservative approaches to the Bible and theology 'collapse the Spirit into the Bible,' his own approach risks collapsing the Bible into the Spirit's speaking through tradition and contemporary culture." More on this on the "Critique" section.

[9]Glen G. Scorgie & Phil C. Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist Theologians: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Stanley Grenz," in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Grenz* (Eugene: Cascade Book, 2014), 298.

grace that the Spirit of God has done, and continues to do, in believers' hearts in the context of Christian community."[10] In emphasizing this spiritual/religious experience, Grenz has been accused by some of resembling Schleiermacher in his approach. Scorgie and Zylla try to defend Grenz by showing that both theologians moved along divergent theological trajectories. Schleiermacher made feeling (or sensibility) his epistemological foundation, while Grenz promoted "a 'tethered' Pietism – one characterized by robust evangelical experience and abiding allegiance to Scripture and the contours of a scriptural worldview."[11] Schleiermacher became the father of modern liberal theology, while Grenz became an important spokesperson for orthodox evangelical renewal at the beginning of this millennium.[12] Schleiermacher claimed that the religious experience he espoused "was universally accessible to everyone (reflecting, many think, a Romantic quest for universals)."[13] Grenz, however, commended "a distinctively Christian experience that was particularized and restricted to those who have encountered Jesus Christ clothed in the same gospel the apostles taught and the historic Christian confessions have always affirmed."[14]

Furthermore, Scorgie and Zylla believe that Grenz did not 'bury' the doctrine of Scripture under pneumatology because he had somehow lost faith in it or was embarrassed by it. Rather, he located it there "to preempt the temptation to re-establish Scripture as a kind of 'secular' intellectual foundation, a source of doctrine independent of the divine work of

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[10]Scorgie & Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist," 298.

[11]Scorgie & Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist," 286.

[12]Scorgie & Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist," 286.

[13]Scorgie & Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist," 296.

[14]Scorgie & Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist," 296.

Christ-centered redeeming grace in the hearts of believers."[15] Grenz's commitment to the logical and chronological priority of the work of God in Christian life and theology, combined with his nonfoundationalist postmodern sensibility, results in him rejecting any source of human knowing as the autonomous foundation for Christian faith and, instead, to place the Holy Spirit as the foundation superintending any theological sources. In his response to D. A. Carson's critique of his *Renewing the Center*,[16] he writes, "Much of what I write in *Renewing the Center* is driven by the desire to call us to elevate God's eternal purposes, God's *telos* for creation, as the ultimate perspective from which the world ought to be viewed."[17] Whether he is successful in doing so is another matter to be investigated, but his giving priority to God (through the Holy Spirit) on the theological enterprise must surely be admired.[18]

On the Importance of Culture for Theology

Grenz's appropriation of the insights from socio-anthropological disciplines, especially in affirming that culture ultimately has deeper religious and theological

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[15]Scorgie & Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist," 298. Citing Grenz, they writes that it was strategic to Grenz's agenda "to preserve the priority of the new birth and reiterate that doctrine is the servant – a crucial servant to be sure, but a servant nonetheless – of the transforming work of the Spirit." See Stanley J. Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist with a Ph.D.," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 75.

[16]Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*, 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000.

[17]Stanley J. Grenz, "Toward an Undomesticated Gospel: A Response to D. A. Carson," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 461.

[18]To repeat his statement, "If we must speak of a 'foundation' of the Christian faith at all, then, we must speak of neither Scripture nor tradition in and of themselves, but only of the triune God…." See Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2001), 117-18. The apparent immediate problem with this sentence is of course: Is it even possible to know the triune God apart from Scripture?

dimensions, is helpful insofar as it helps evangelical theologians to move beyond surface-level types of engagement with culture and toward a better culturally-sensitive theology. At this point, Grenz's conviction that our exegesis of the culture phenomena will never be a "theology-free" reading is a helpful reminder for a specifically Christian theological engagement with culture. Moreover, it should be granted (albeit tentatively) and fairly appreciated that Grenz does attempt to escape both the extreme of cultural accommodation and cultural avoidance. He is fully aware that culture is always a "mixed blessing," it can function not only as "a playground of the Spirit" but also "a diabolical device," and acknowledges that culture should never be the primary norm of theology. Again, in his response to Carson, he states the following:

> … I neither vilify modernity nor glorify postmodernity. My intention in the book, which he seems to miss, is to treat both as philosophical and cultural phenomena, as givens, as aspects of the context in which God calls us to live as gospel people, and hence as being by their very nature a mixed blessing. I focus on the postmodern turn, simply because my calling is to engage with this particular context. Moreover, I seek to do so in a manner that continues the legacy of our forebears who devoted themselves in engaging with modernity.[19]

Grenz is aware that evangelicals can fall into the trap of cultural accommodation and that postmodern turn (as well as modern turn before it) offer dangers to evangelicals in this regard. Nevertheless, he believes that there is theological work left to be done and the burden of his work (in this case, *Renewing the Center*) is "to direct our theological conversation toward the crucial task of charting an apologetic evangelical

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[19]Grenz, "Toward an Undomesticated Gospel," 457-58.

theology that can assist the people of God in meeting the challenge of the contemporary world, including the postmodern aspects of that challenge."[20]

Sexton positively affirms that for Grenz, culture is always "a servant"[21] and never the master of theology. Sexton notes that on one hand Grenz, following Pannenberg, was eager to draw from findings of academic disciplines because both believes that all truth will ultimately come together in God. However, contra Pannenberg, Grenz is "completely unwilling to subject theology to the ultimate judgment of other disciplines,"[22] as he understood theology as "occupying the preeminent place among the disciplines – it being the queen of the sciences."[23] Hence his insistence that Christian theology must always be done 'from within' as a faith reflection of the Christian community.

Sexton also believes that Grenz's inclusion of cultural context as one of theology's sources is not driven by any concern that comes out of his contemporary context (in this case, postmodernism), but simply – and paradoxically – by his "supra-contextual" conviction that theology is indeed always contextual. Regarding Grenz's motivation, Sexton writes, "Rather than assessing Grenz on the nature of this practice, making judgment about the degree to which factors in the contemporary context might have driven his program, it

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[20]Grenz, "Toward an Undomesticated Gospel," 461.

[21]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 14.

[22]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 32.

[23]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 31. Furthermore, Sexton argues that Grenz's work moves beyond Pannenberg in showing the greater interest in the significance of theology itself as a social science. Grenz also goes one step ahead Pannenberg in highlighting not just the scientific nature of theology but also the theological nature of science. Because of his belief that theology is the queen of science, Sexton argues that Grenz takes less interest in fields such as sociology per se (or any other soft or hard science).

must be granted that there is always a situated location in which theology is done."[24] It is (always) in this situated location that "the church's 'missiological calling' is advanced and her theological engagement is mandated …"[25]

For Sexton, Grenz's inclusion of "culture" makes a lot of sense if one observes his view on the close relationship between cultural context and God's revelation and more specifically how he, influenced by Pannenberg, situates revelation under pneumatological heading.[26] Sexton writes that Grenz's view of revelation is "Spirit-driven, corresponding to his understanding of the Spirit working in culture."[27] Grenz believes that God does speak, and in doing so He is always revealing Himself in and through a particular "context" (i.e. real history). Sexton highlights that this is not to be contrasted with the fact that God speaks in and through Scripture.[28] To the contrary, "Emphasis on the historical context is consistent with the notion that God spoke prior to scripture's actual inscripturation (a speaking that happened in historical-cultural contexts), speaks in and through the texts of scripture (both in the historical context where it was written and the subsequent history of the church's interpretation of it), and also speaks today (in the present historical-cultural context). Here is where Grenz found justification for his dependence on other theologians

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[24]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 46.

[25]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 46.

[26]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 44-45.

[27]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 44. Sexton adds, "His view of revelation does not equate the Spirit with culture, nor does it subject the Spirit to culture, or remove the Spirit from culture. Rather, the Spirit *reveals* God within culture."

[28]Sexton reminds us of the fact that for Grenz, the Spirit's speaking in "context" (i.e., real history) is not speaking independent of scripture. See Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 44.

from church history, and those working in the present context, says Sexton.[29] Furthermore, Sexton argues that in emphasizing the Spirit's speaking through theology's cultural context, Grenz always has ethical and practical implications for the community of faith in mind, and this is consistent with his working definition of the nature, task, and purpose of theology as a "practical" discipline. "Context" is important for Grenz because "it is not only where the Spirit speaks but also where (extending from the biblical text through church history and into the present context) the Spirit is working. And if the trinitarian God is speaking and acting, this must be worked-(thus act-) out in performance by those who have encountered this God."[30]

Having said these, however, Sexton fairly admits that Grenz's pneumatological view on culture was "perhaps the one area where Grenz received the most astute critique, especially while operating under the rubric where he saw the Spirit's speaking in Scripture and in culture as 'ultimately one speaking.'"[31] In commenting on the exact nature of influence of both Pannenberg's soft foundationalist epistemology and Grenz's own doctrine of Trinity in his methodology, Sexton is willing to grant that "incidentally, some lack of precision and clarity on Grenz's position had to do with some of his own methodological ambiguity and the inchoate nature of his theology, which was actively seeking to read cultural developments. [32]

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[29]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 44.

[30]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 45.

[31]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 13.

[32]Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 36 n. 103.

On Grenz's Socio-Anthropological Understanding of Culture

Despite his good intention for cultural engagement and culturally-sensitive theology, as well as his explicit warnings on the danger of cultural accommodation, it is hard to miss that Grenz's conception of culture is heavily and uncritically informed and formed by contemporary socio-anthropological insights. From Geertz, Grenz learns about the connection between culture and meaning, and the active and creative role of a person in determining and internalizing cultural meanings. Citing Cohen, he concludes that Geertz was thereby responsible for "shifting the anthropological view of culture from its supposedly objective manifestations in social structures, towards its subjective realisation by members who compose those structures."[33] From Berger, he learns that this personal dimension of cultural meaning-making is never separated from its social context; self is never autonomous but always social in its pursuit of personal identity (hence, the socially constructed self). Consequently, "cultural meanings are both psychological states and social constructions."[34] Grenz seems to accept these insights at face value, without giving any critique or qualification on appropriating them in his theological project. It is with this understanding that Grenz wants to move beyond "correlation" and "contextualization" method toward a "specifically nonfoundationalist, interactionalist theological method"[35] that we discussed in the previous chapter. Grenz explicitly says that unlike correlation and contextualization

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[33]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 137. Cited from Anthony P. Cohen, *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1994), 135.

[34]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 138.

[35]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 158.

method that he believes are trapped in foundationalism, this model "presupposes neither gospel nor culture – much less both gospel and culture – as preexisting, given realities that subsequently enter into conversation."[36] Rather, he claims, "in the interactive process both gospel (that is, our *understanding* of the gospel) and culture (that is, our *portrayal* of the meaning structure, shared sense of personal identity, and socially constructed world in which we see ourselves living and ministering) are dynamic realities that inform and are informed by conversation itself."[37]

Some obvervations and critical comments are in order. First, this interactional model assumes that because Christian community always live within the context of a society, there will always be conversation and mutual/reciprocal influencing between the two (and hence between their "interpretive framework") in their struggle for meaning and identity construction. Second, this model therefore assumes that culture has the same, equal voice (and hence authority) as Scripture in theological construction.[38] "Gospel" and "culture" are equal conversation partners which are always in a constant flux. Third, because of Grenz's *a priori* commitment to this nonfoundationalist socio-anthropological view on culture, Grenz cannot but make an extreme contrast between "Gospel" and "our understanding of the gospel" (in Chapter 2, we saw that he made the same contrast between "Truth" and "one theological system," or "Reality" with "our model of reality," "world-in-itself" and "world of our making.") The first is complete and transcends our apprehension, while the second is

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[36]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 158.

[37]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 158.

[38]To repeat Grenz's own words, culture "ought to enrich our theological construction," "ought to lead us to reconsider our understanding of the Christian faith," and "can be a means through which we gain theological insight." See Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 160.

always provisional, tentative, incomplete, impartial, open for revision and reconstruction – to be proven true, real, and objective only in an eschatological future (hence Grenz's eschatological realism). While it is true that we are never able to understand God's truth and reality ("the Gospel") incomprehensively and exhaustively, and while it is true that our understanding can and must always be deepened, does it mean that we cannot – now, before the eschaton – understand this Gospel truly and adequately?

There are some serious problems with this view. If the interpretive framework (IF) of a society and the IF of the Christian community are so intermingled and have reciprocal and equal influence to one another, how do we detect when the IF of society/culture has began to shape (or worse, has trumped) the agenda and the IF of the Christian community? In other words, how do we detect when a Christian community is no longer distinctively *Christian*? At this point, Grenz might say that it is the Holy Spirit that will keep the Christian community distinctively *Christian* by using Scripture as the community's paradigmatic narrative to bring about in the present the eschatological world that God intends to create. However, as we shall see shortly, the problem is not overcome but compounded when we analyze Grenz's instrumental or functional view on the nature Scripture's authority. At the end of the day, we are left with no secure criterion to detect syncretism between "Gospel" and "culture" and can never draw a sensible boundary between a culturally-sensitive and a culturally-co-opted theology. In fact, it is hard to juxtapose Grenz's interactional model with his concept of "The Church as a Culture."[39] There is a tension between Grenz's concept of the church as a particular social group with a particular culture (and particular symbols that convey particular meanings) with the fact that this

[39]Grenz & Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 163.

particular group is always a part of a larger culture/society (with its symbols and conveyed meanings) which inevitably will have influences on their identity construction. Grenz's commitment to nonfoundationalism makes it impossible for him to consistently retain the distinctiveness of a *Christian* community. The follow-up question then relates to how far Grenz is actually willing to follow the trajectory of his commitment to nonfoundationalism.

On Grenz's Pneumatological Understanding of Culture

In the previous chapter, we have seen how Grenz's pneumatological view on culture is theologically supported by his inclusivistic concepts of revelation and grace. Seen from this perspective, it is hard to miss that Grenz's view resembles (at least in disposition if not in every details) the position of theologians that we discussed in Chapter 1. While he might disagree with the panentheistic tendencies of Hegel, Moltmann, and Rahner, like these theologians, Grenz wants to emancipate the Spirit by affirming that divine presence and voice (and thereby divine revelation and redemption) do exist outside the walls of the covenant community narrowly associated with "Israel, Christ, and the church" – and we can add, Scripture.

If Grenz is consistent with his view, he must not disagree with Johnston that the Holy Spirit can and does facilitate a genuine religious experience/encounter with God in the lives of an unbeliever and that God can and does reveal Himself in and through that encounter. He must also agree with Pinnock who says that "God is always reaching out to sinners by the Spirit. There is no general revelation or natural knowledge of God that is not at the same time gracious revelation and a potentially saving knowledge. All revealing and

reaching out are rooted in God's grace and are aimed at bringing sinners home"[40] or Pinnock's statement that preparation for Christ does not entail gospel witness because the Holy Spirit is able to "foster transforming friendships with God anywhere and everywhere."[41] Like Pinnock and other inclusivists, Grenz still wants to retain the particularity and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ for salvation, but his language is ambiguous at best: "For all the exclusivism it implies, the confession of the finality of Christ nevertheless remains an inclusivist – perhaps even a pluralist – declaration. It means that wherever God is truly known, the God who is known is none other than the One who is revealed through Jesus Christ."[42] Perfectly resembling Rahner's "fulfillment" view and the concept of "anonymous Christian," Grenz affirms that the finality of Christ means that through Jesus, we discover the "truest vision" of the nature of God. This confession (the finality of Christ) means that "Jesus is the vehicle through whom we come to the fullest understanding of what God is like."[43] Through Jesus we enter into a "fuller relationship" and "fuller community" with the eternal God. A relationship with Christ constitutes "a more complete appraisal of the human situation and the divine intention."[44] At the end of the day, he says, "It is simply not our prerogative to speculate as to the final outcome of the eschatological judgment, which will be a day of surprises. Rather, we continue the

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[40]Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 187.

[41]Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 187.

[42]Stanley J. Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 31, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1994): 64.

[43]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 64.

[44]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 65.

evangelism mandate – sometimes to carry the truth into the realm of darkness, sometimes to bring to light the truth that is already hidden, *and sometimes to bring to explicit confession of Christ the implicit covenant with God already present in our hearers*."[45]

From this observation, we can identify two major problems with Grenz's belief that the Holy Spirit is present and speaks in culture (and in the religions). The first relates to the problem with his concept of revelation and grace and the second relates to the problem with the Holy Spirit-Christ relation.

Problem with the Concept of Revelation and Grace

Grenz's concept of revelation and grace blurs the distinction between general and special revelation and between common and saving grace in and through Christ, and by doing so undermines the significance of both special revelation and the saving grace. If culture, through the work of the Spirit, is "revelatory" and can mediate salvation in Jesus Christ (albeit without conscious awareness of the people having faith in Him), what is the necessity and the authority of the special revelation? And if culture is "sacramental" and can mediate in anyone's life a religious experience/encounter with the true God, what is the difference between God's presence in unbelievers' and in believers' life? If the world is already full of traces of divine grace that makes salvation and worship to the true God possible without the redemptive work of Christ being made known, is there any qualitative difference between the faith of those who are aware of their salvation in Christ and those who are already in the covenant without knowing it? The question then is: what is the significance of mission and evangelism?

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[45]Grenz, "Toward an Evangelical Theology of the Religions," 65. Italics mine.

Ted Turnau, writing in the realm of popular culture,[46] helpfully makes an important distinction between general revelation from God and human response to it. Culture, he believes, is the latter and not the former.[47] When we "do culture," Turnau says, we aren't simply making meaning. Rather, "we are *responding* to meaning that is already there, woven into creation."[48] We are taking meaning-filled creation and reshaping it in our hands.[49] Our created meanings are always *derivative* in the sense that they are drawn from creation and the meanings inherent within creation – that is, general revelation. Doing culture is, in a sense, reconfiguring creation.[50] And because of common grace, we can be sure that "there *will* be aspects and insights in culture that are worthy of affirmation."[51] He grants that God "*can* and sometimes *does* speak through"[52] culture. In other words, Turnau is ready to grant that culture can sometimes be "revelatory."[53] However, Romans 1:18-25 tells us that

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[46]Ted Turnau, *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2012. Although in this book Turnau speaks about popular culture, his observation and analysis can be applied perfectly to culture in general.

[47]Although "culture" broadly understood can be a response to both general and special revelation, in the context of this discussion the focus is on "culture" as a response to God's general revelation.

[48]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 47.

[49]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 47.

[50]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 58 n. 30.

[51]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 183.

[52]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 183.

[53]Culture can also be "revelatory" because of the existence of residual knowledge or reminiscent knowledge of special revelation that has been passed down through the generations. This truth of God was originally given to Adam and Noah and has not been entirely lost by the human race. Todd Miles states that contrary to evolutionary models of religion that posit a progress in religious understanding, Scripture teaches "a devolution in knowledge of the Lord as people have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and

everybody is in the business of suppressing and trading away God's truth for idolatry. All of us, Turnau says, "are looking for some way to preserve our precious autonomy from God and to avoid his voice, a voice that really does register in the core of our beings."[54] As a consequence, "there is always going to be a mixture of sin and grace, revelation and distortion in culture."[55] Turnau reminds us that our hearts always contain that messy mixture, and we should expect it in our popular culture. Hence, it is "not to be unequivocally equated with the voice of God."[56] Granting culture the authority for theology is therefore unwise, he claims. Theologians' engagement with culture, then, must involve both "listening to the grace *and* critiquing the idolatry."[57] So for Turnau, the *real* question is: If God sometimes speaks in and through human culture, how can we discern "the difference between God's voice and the junk"[58]? His answer: "God has provided a written text to give us a sieve through which we can sift what culture gives us."[59] Different from Grenz, whose conviction in Scripture as the norming norm is ambiguous, Turnau is unapologetic in asserting the final

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chosen to worship the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25)." Because of this, Miles asserts that there is always a mixture of accuracy and inaccuracy in culture. See Todd L. Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?: The Gospel and a Theology of Religions* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 336-37.

[54]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 183.

[55]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 183. Turnau says that we will always find two voices in culture: "the voice of God that comes through his good gifts, and a countervoice that attempts to distort the message of the first voice beyond recognition." This countervoice is never completely successful in drowning out the voice of (general) revelation. If it were, it would be pointless and wrong for Paul to claim (as he did) that people *know* God in Romans 1:21. See. p. 71.

[56]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 197.

[57]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 183.

[58]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 183.

[59]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 183.

authority of Scripture. He claims that the Bible "has an authority that commands our loyalty in a way that popular culture cannot. The Bible conveys God's voice in a way that popular culture does not."[60] He clearly states, "Either God speaks authoritatively through the Bible (and the Bible says that people are these messy mixtures of grace and rebellion) *or* you believe that God speaks most eloquently through the voice of the people, perhaps in dialogue with Scripture (in which case the stuff that the Bible says about sin, the distinctiveness of grace, the cross, and so on becomes debatable and, ultimately, expendable)."[61] With merely an instrumental view on the nature of the authority of Scripture and the minimalist view on the function of Scripture's authority as "paradigmatic narrative," Grenz does not have a clear criterion to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit from other voices (the voice of the devil, the society, the Christian community, etc.) in human culture – and hence the ability to critique or confront culture according to the authoritative judgments of Scripture.

Is culture "sacramental"? Is the Creator Spirit "present" everywhere in the world wherever life flourishes as Grenz affirms? Here, Turnau makes another helpful distinction between the extensive and the intensive presence of God. Granted that the Spirit is not only the Spirit of redemption but also the Spirit of creation, and granted that God is rightfully omnipresent, it is still necessary to distinguish His intensive, special, redemptive presence within the covenant community and his extensive, general, creational presence everywhere in the world – and reserving the word "sacramental" only to the former.

Turnau points to God's special presence in the Old Testament temple and then Christ's special presence with his people in the New Testament to emphasize that "the Spirit

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[60]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 186.

[61]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 188. Of course Turnau is aware that this claim does not negate the need for responsible work of interpreting the Scripture. See pp. 186-89.

dwells in an especially intense way with the people of Christ."[62] Moreover, Turnau argues that "God's presence in creation is supposed to *lead us* into his redemptive presence."[63] Regarding popular culture, this means that it "sometimes serves as a motivation and road sign to the sacraments, but is not itself properly sacramental."[64] To put it differently:

> God's common grace (his creative presence) is supposed to act also as general revelation, to lead us into inquiring after, searching for, and giving thanks to the God who provided for us life through the sacrifice and resurrection of his own Son (his redemptive presence). … creation and salvation aren't really in competition: the one willingly serves the other. Creation and the grace it disseminates exist to broadcast God's loving call to a rebellious, twisted people to come and bathe in the saving and transforming grace bought by Christ.[65]

Just as the Spirit's voice is mixed with other voices, His presence in culture is "always mixed with impurities and other stuff that needs to be sifted through."[66] Again, this means that the experience of encountering "the sacred" in culture "need to be reflected on using a biblical, spiritual discernment."[67] Turnau rightly argues that while popular culture can serve as a reminder of the riches we have through Scripture and all the means of grace, it "cannot and should not serve as the primary vehicle for encountering God."[68] It can be enjoyed as a good gift from God, but "it's no substitute for the body of Christ or for the

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[62]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 201.

[63]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 201. Italics in the original.

[64]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 202.

[65]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 201. Turnau realizes that there is a tragic flip side of this gracious, creational call: it can become a pronouncement of judgment for those who blind and deafen themselves to this invitation to redemption.

[66]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 202.

[67]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 202.

[68]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 203.

Spirit's revelation of Christ in the Bible."[69] Using terms such as "sacramental" only confuses the motivation for engaging popular culture, he believes.

Problem with the Holy Spirit-Christ Relation

There are also problems with the Holy Spirit-Christ relation in his pneumatological view on culture and the religions. Like typical inclusivists, Grenz still retains the belief in the finality of Jesus Christ. But it is hard to justify the need for mission and evangelism, and the significance of conscious faith in Jesus Christ, if the Holy Spirit is able to produce true faith in people's lives without the name of Christ ever proclaimed and faith in Him ever confessed. Grenz might answer that evangelism is still crucial because compared to other faiths, Christian faith in Jesus Christ gives a "fuller" or "more complete" vision of God as triune and even "more complete" salvation, but is the difference qualitative or quantitative? In affirming the possibility that sometimes evangelism simply means "to bring to explicit confession of Christ the implicit covenant with God already present in our hearers," we can infer that for Grenz the difference between conscious faith in Christ and other faiths is merely quantitative. More importantly, how consistent is Grenz's view with his Christo-centric, soterio-centric, and even ecclesio-centric pneumatology? Recall that Grenz does affirm *filioque* and affirms that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ/the Spirit of the Lord; that the activity in which the Holy Spirit now engages is "nothing less than the outworking or application of the work completed by Jesus of Nazareth" and that the Spirit's function is "subsequent and instrumental to that of Jesus, whom he glorifies (John 16:14) and to whom

[69]Turnau, *Popologetics*, 203.

he bears testimony (John 15:26)."[70] In his pneumatological view on culture and the religions, is it not true that the Holy Spirit has been so emancipated that His works becomes too independent from the redemptive works of Christ, His bride – the church, and His special revelation – the Scripture?

Todd Miles, in responding to growing inclusivism in both evangelical and non-evangelical circles, reminds us that our theology of religions (and by analogical extension, our theology of culture) must be explicitly informed and shaped by Jesus Christ as the center of biblical theology. He argues that the methodologies advocated by pneumatological inclusivists "distort the relationship between the Son of God and the Holy Spirit that is integral to the biblical story built through the pages of Scripture."[71] They have "subordinated Christology to pneumatology and reverses the roles of the Son and Spirit as they are developed in Scripture."[72] Miles correctly points us to the right direction when he asks methodological question: "Is theological inquiry and formulation a free play where the only boundaries are those of the theologian's imagination, or are there limits arising from the nature of the discipline itself and its subject matter?"[73] He surveys the relationship of the Son

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[70]See the section entitled "Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and the *Filioque*" in the previous chapter.

[71] Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 256.

[72]Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 256.

[73]Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 257. Miles summarizes his own proposal for theological method in four points: (1) Theology must treat Scripture as fully authoritative, first-order truth; (2) Theological inquiry should rely heavily on biblical theology, picking up categories and vocabulary from the text of Scripture itself; (3) It should also be canonical, consciously asking throughout its development where and how the relevant texts fit into redemptive history; (4) Christian theology should be consciously and intentionally Christocentric. See pp. 268-69. Note his heavy emphasis on Scripture and biblical theology and that there is a lack of any attempt to triangulate Scripture with church

and the Holy Spirit within the whole canonical Bible (from the preincarnation of Christ, incarnation, in the church age at the present time until the consummation) and concludes that "to emphasize the role of the Spirit to the detriment of the Son is to misunderstand the role of the Spirit, ignore biblical teaching, distort redemptive history, silence the gospel, and pervert eschatological promises."[74] Holy Spirit always seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and any proposal that grants a relative autonomy to the Spirit, independent of the Son, "fails on Christological and pneumatological grounds."[75]

This intimate relations between Scripture, Christ and the Spirit reminds us to Bernard Ramm's insights about the *principle* and the *pattern* of authority that must be persistently held by Christians. In explaining Ramm's ideas, Studebaker Jr. notes that only in Christianity do we encounter a divine *principle* of authority (one that incorporates the notion of a 'final' imperial authority) along with an extensive *pattern* of authority through which the principle is graciously expressed and executed in practical ways.[76] According to Ramm, the Christian *principle* of authority is the triune God in self-revelation. The Christian *pattern* of authority consists of three interrelated elements of God's self-revelation: (1) *Christ*, who is the personal Word of God, the living, supreme revelation of God, and supreme depository of the knowledge of God (Col 2:3); (2) *The Holy Spirit*, who conveys revelation, who delegates its authority, and who witnesses to its divinity; (3) *The Sacred Scriptures*, which are inspired

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tradition and contemporary context. However, that does not mean that we cannot agree with these four points.

[74]Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?*, 327.

[75]Miles, *A God of Many Understanding?*, 276.

[76]John A. Studebaker Jr., *The Lord is the Spirit: The Authority of the Holy Spirit in Contemporary Theology and Church Practice* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 5-14. The basis of Studebaker Jr.'s exposition is: Bernard Ramm. *The Pattern of Authority*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.

by the Holy Spirit and therefore the document of revelation, which witness to Jesus Christ, and which are the Spirit's instrument in effecting illumination. The pattern of authority involves both objective and subjective factors. God's objective revelation results in the written and authoritative Scriptures. The subjective factor refers to the operation of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the Scriptures and then illuminating this written revelation in the mind and heart of the believer.

Within this context, it must be noted that Grenz's criteria for discerning the Spirit's voice and presence in culture (and in the religions) lack any Christological substance. In answering the question whether the Holy Spirit is at work among people of other faiths, Ivan Satyavrata explains that usually Christians take extreme positions. Some gives an unqualified no to this question, since "the Holy Spirit's activity is Christ-centered and is consequent upon the objective revelation and reconciliation in Jesus Christ."[77] Others simply say yes because "they do not differentiate between the Holy Spirit and the general immanence of God, and consequently have no problem conceding that the Spirit is present and at work everywhere in the same way he is among the believing community."[78] Satyavrata believes that a more nuanced, balanced, and better answer is available. It is possible to affirm the Christ-centered presence and activity of the Spirit while recognizing his work in the world in the midst of people of other faiths and no faith. Like Turnau, he acknowledged the messy mixture of grace and rebellion in the world; for him, the challenge is to be able to recognize where the Spirit is at work in the midst of a fallen world marred by

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[77]Ivan Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit: Lord and Life-Giver* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 158.

[78]Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit*, 158.

sin. He understands that the Holy Spirit is not the only spirit at work in the world – there are other "spirits" too.

To discern this, Satyavrata asserts, "The simple test is *Christ* – wherever Christ is worship, his lordship acknowledged, his word celebrated, his will affirmed and his kingdom purpose advanced, the Holy Spirit must be at work."[79] He believes that the Spirit is always the Spirit of Christ that would guide us into all truth and would testify about and bring glory to Jesus. But is this answer not the same as the first extreme position that he mentioned earlier? He explains the difference of his answer and the extreme position by pointing that "the Spirit's movement in the world has essentially two directions: he (1) equip the church for mission in the world, and (2) draws the world to Christ and his kingdom."[80] These two are intimately related and mutually reinforcing. Satyavrata asks, "The Holy Spirit is in the business of drawing the world to Christ, but where is Christ seen today?" In emphasizing the importance of Christ's church and its mission, he answers: "The world has a right to look for him in the church, the community of people who claim to be Christ's followers. The church will look like Christ to the extent that the Holy Spirit is allowed to work in the lives of its members. … When the Holy Spirit is given his rightful place at the helm of the church's missionary program, we shall see God's kingdom mission continue to advance in our generation."[81] However, in affirming the finality of Christ and the significance of His church, he argues that "it is unhelpful to discount a priori any *pointers*

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[79]Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit*, 159. Italics in the original.

[80]Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit*, 159.

[81]Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit*, 170-71.

whatsoever to redemptive truths in other traditions."[82] He writes, "A commitment to the decisiveness and finality of Christ thus enables us to follow the Spirit in freely pursuing truth, beauty, and goodness wherever they may be found. If and when we find them in the midst of non-Christian religions and cultures, we are not afraid to celebrate their existence and use them as 'landing strips' to communicate the gospel of Christ."[83]Although he does not use the language of "common grace" or "general revelation," he is in total agreement with Turnau that the key is discernment, and here the Bible plays a very crucial role. He firmly believes that the Bible "provides this external authoritative basis for judging between true and false religious experience"[84] and that "a true experience of the Spirit must conform to the biblical testimony concerning Christ and be consistent with the teaching of Scripture."[85]

On Grenz's Use of Pneumatological Understanding of Culture in His Theological Method

Brian Harris observes that in his theological method Grenz uses of the term "culture" with variety of meanings. At times, Grenz seems simply to be calling for a "culture-sensitive theology," at other times he views culture as a "resource" for theology.[86] If these are the only meanings of "culture" that Grenz has in mind, the reactions from his fellow evangelicals would not be as strong and intense. The controversy starts when Grenz uses

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[82]Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit*, 168. Italics mine.

[83]Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit*, 169.

[84]Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit*, 21.

[85]Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit*, 21.

[86]Brian Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?: Some Insights from the Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz," *Crucible* 1, no. 1 (May 2008): 10.

"culture" as one of the three conversation partners sourcing theology.[87] To see clearly the problem with the use of culture in Grenz's theological method, therefore, we cannot see culture as an independent entity, but must see it in the context of its on-going conversational relation to Scripture and tradition superintended by the Holy Spirit.[88] As indicated earlier, the most serious problem has to do with the issue of authority.

Regarding Scripture, Brian Harris claims that Grenz's pneumatologically mediated approach to Scripture and its derived authority has led to major concern, i.e. "that the approach is subjective and undermines the concept of the authority of scripture by taking the locus of authority from the text and placing it within the contextualized, Spirit-guided, community of faith."[89] Vanhoozer states that Grenz's account of Scripture as the norming norm for theology is inadequate. His identification of Scripture with the Spirit's speaking in and through Scripture, when combined with his contention that the Spirit's speaking goes beyond authorial discourse and may be heard in and through tradition and contemporary culture too, "leaves him without a criterion for distinguishing between the word of God and the hearing of the church, or between the gospel and its possible distortions in the community's understanding."[90]

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[87]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 10. To be precise, for Grenz it is not the "culture" in itself but "the Holy Spirit speaking in and through culture" that is the source of theology. The same thing should be said with regard to "Scripture" and "tradition." These three sources are always pneumatologically mediated.

[88]Harris rightfully detects the problem with this, "Openness to pneumatological mediation may reflect a pious and reverent approach to theology, but its hazy boundaries make it hard to either affirm or refute. See Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 9

[89]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 8.

[90]Vanhoozer, "On the Very Idea of a Theological System," 147.

This inadequate and instrumental view on the nature of the authority of Scripture is evident in Grenz's use (or, misuse) of the speech-act theory. Because of his nonfoundationalist commitment, Grenz is very reluctant to give Scripture an ontological authority,[91] thereby contrasting the "Spirit-energized revelatory message presented through Scripture" and "the vehicle by means of which it is transmitted" or "the book itself." Scripture is authoritative when it is used – as an instrument – by the Spirit when the Spirit appropriates the biblical text so as to speak to us today. Through Scripture, the Spirit

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[91]By "ontological authority" I do not mean that the Scripture, the book itself, has an inherent authority independent of its A/authors (divine and human authors) – see footnote 62 of the previous chapter. The term is used here as a contrast to Grenz's functional/instrumental view on the nature of Scripture's authority that eventually downplays the work of the triune God in *authoring* Scripture. Following Nicholas Wolterstorff and Kevin Vanhoozer, I want to assert that the Bible is a divine discourse (better: a triune discourse or a triune communicative action). The Bible is the Word of God, understood in terms of double discourse or dual-author discourse. The idea is that one agent is performing a speech-act by means of the speech act of another. The Bible is a human discourse, for sure, "something someone said about something in writing to someone, in some way, for some purpose." Yet it is more than that; it is also a divine discourse, for God is the ultimate author, and God says something by means of what the humans say. Quoting Wolterstorff, Vanhoozer writes, "Scripture is divinely appropriated discourse – discourse whereby one person (God) says/does something with words that another person (e.g., Isaiah, Paul) utters or inscribes." See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 38; quoted in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Triune Discourse: Theological Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks (Part I)," in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, eds. Daniel J. Treier & David Lauber (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 48. See also Vanhoozer, "Triune Discourse (Part II)," 50-78. Identifying the Bible as the Word of God need not result in bibliolatry, however, "so long as God's communicative acts are not mistaken for the divine being itself." Unlike Karl Barth, I want to affirm that the Bible is *more than* merely a *witness* to revelation. We agree with Barth that Scripture cannot save, but points to the One who can. However, as Vanhoozer ponders, "Does this mean that the Word of God is not a verbal phenomenon? Does the 'Word' of God have nothing to do with semantics (the study of verbal meaning)? … The neo-orthodox emphasis on the self-revelation of God is faulty only in its neglect of the semantic means by which this disclosure takes place." See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 131; 148; 151. In the end, with Vanhoozer, I want to think of the ultimate authority for Christian faith, life and thought as *the triune God speaking in and through the Scriptures*.

performs the illocutionary act of "appropriating the text" and "addressing us" and the perlocutionary act of "creating a world." But this is a misunderstanding and misapplication of the speech-act theory in support of Grenz's agenda – to the detrimental effect of a low view of the authorial intent and its inextricable link to the textual content of Scripture. Vincent Brümmer, in explaining J.L. Austin original ide of speech-act theory, writes that a *locution* is the basis of the performance of illocutions and per-illocutions; it is *in* performing a locution that I perform an illocution, and it is *by* performing an illocution that I perform a per-illocution (and therefore also a locution).[92] Illocutions are performed *in* performing a locution, and per-illocutions are performed *by* performing illocutions.[93] The Spirit's act of "appropriation" is not an illocutionary act but is to be associated more with perlocutionary act insofar as the Spirit illumines the readers of Scripture to respond in a certain way. There will never be any appropriation (perlocutionary effect) without the existence of (logically and chronologically) Spirit's illocutionary act in Scripture, which themselves are logically dependent on the locutions of Scripture (the words of Scripture which are inspired by the same Spirit).

Even though he can agree with Grenz that the Spirit's perlocutionary act is to "create a world" and that the Spirit "leads people to reconceive their identity and worldview by means of the interpretive framework found in Scripture that recounts the eschatological

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[92]Vincent Brümmer, *Theology and the Philosophical Inquiry: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 11.

[93]Brümmer, *Theology and the Philosophical Inquiry*, 11. Following William Alston, Kevin Vanhoozer asserts that there is an asymmetrical dependence of perlocutionary on illocutionary acts. He also finds that there is a theological counterpart of this idea with the idea that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son* (i.e. *Filioque*). Perlocutions "proceed" from locutions and illocutions, but not vice versa. On this understanding,. he creatively coined the term *illocutioque* ("and from the illocution"). See Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 200.

event of Jesus Christ,"[94] contra Grenz, Vanhoozer stresses that the Spirit performs this act not independently of Scripture's illocutionary act but *by*, *with*, and *through* them.[95] In other words, the Spirit performs the perlocutionary act "only on the basis of the concrete textual illocution – the content! – of Scripture."[96] For Vanhoozer, Grenz's account "fails to explain how we can infer what illocutionary acts have been performed and to whom we should ascribe them. Consequently he leaves unanswered the fundamental question of how Scripture's actual content is related to the Spirit's accomplishing his further, perlocutionary, effects."[97] To summarize, "The Spirit's creating a world, then, is not a new illocutionary act but rather the perlocutionary act of enabling reader to appropriate the illocutionary acts already inscribed in the biblical text, especially the narrative act of 'displaying a world.'"[98]

Regarding tradition, Grenz's claim that the believing community will be pneumatologically guided to discern which aspects of tradition to embrace "flies in the face of the very history of the church that Grenz wishes to uphold."[99] The church history itself gives many evidences of conflicting answers that have been adopted by different segments of the faith community, and Grenz is silent on how this impasse is to be overcome, other than to note the helpfulness of having the interacting voices of scripture, tradition and culture rather

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[94]Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 198.

[95]Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 198; 199. Italics in the original.

[96]Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 198.

[97]Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 198.

[98]Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 198. Vanhoozer borrows the insight of Susan Sneider who says that the peculiar role of a narrative, or its distinct illocutionary act, is to "display a world."

[99]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 9.

than a monologue by scripture alone.[100] What is lacking in Grenz's proposal is any criteria that is valid to test the authoritative status of any particular theological tradition. In Harris' words, "tradition needs to be an interactive player subject to other criteria."[101] Harris found the same problem with culture. At the end of the day, in triangulating Scripture, tradition, and culture, "… how does one decide if a conversation partner is speaking too loudly? If conversation partners contradict each other, how are we to adjudicate between their conflicting claims?"[102] As a matter of fact, for much of the church's history, the biblical kerygma has been at odds with contemporary culture. The question begging to be asked is what choices should be made when sources seem to conflict.[103]

Although different in their theological outlooks in many ways, Donald Bloesch does not have a problem agreeing with Grenz that culture is a source for theology, albeit in a very qualified manner, saying, "I do affirm culture as a source for theologizing but not as a norm for determining theological truth. We need to utilize the language and concepts that culture and philosophy provide, but we must be adamant in refusing to allow these concepts to subvert the meaning of divine revelation."[104] He even says that theologians must search for sociological and psychological points of contact with their listeners, saying, "How

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[100]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 9.

[101]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 9.

[102]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 11.

[103]Brian S. Harris, Jason S. Sexton & Jay T. Smith, "Stanley J. Grenz: An Theological Biography," in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Grenz*, eds. Derek J. Tidball, Brian S. Harris & Jason S. Sexton (Eugene: Cascade Book, 2014), 17.

[104]Donald G. Bloesch, "Donald Bloesch Responds," in *Evangelical Theology in Transition: Theologians in Dialogue with Donald Bloesch*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 185.

can we communicate effectively unless we speak in the language of our hearers?"[105] Bloesch thinks that Grenz is too optimistic on the promise of culture. In his words, "My problem with Grenz is that he tends to see mainly promise in cultural achievements and not also deception and self-aggrandizement. As Christians we are free to enjoy and appreciate the achievements of culture without placing our trust in any cultural ideology or social program that claims to be a panacea for the human condition."[106] Bloesch contends that in a viable biblical, evangelical theology "culture is neither deified nor demonized but relativized."[107]

Grenz's functional and instrumental concept of Scripture's derived authority is seen also in how he understands Scripture as a function of the Christian community; that Scripture is the book of the community. His justification for Scripture as a key theological sources is largely pragmatic – the Bible is the book shaping the faith community and its tradition, providing sufficient justification for its authoritative employment in the life of the community. The problem with this is that, "it reduces the force of appeals that might be made to Scripture in naïve and potentially dubious ways. If the Bible is simply the book of the church rather than a divinely inspired book, appeals to its permanent and ongoing authority

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[105]Bloesch, "Donald Bloesch Responds," 185. However, in emphasizing discontinuity and antithesis, Bloesch stresses that we "must resist creating theological points of contact, because divine revelation signifies a structure of meaning that overturns rather than crowns or completes the human search for meaning and purpose and life." By saying this, Bloesch wants to emphasize that theology-culture relation is neither correlation nor accomodation but should be one of confrontation. See p. 185.

[106]Bloesch, "Donald Bloesch Responds," 186. He says, "With Grenz I affirm the universal light of God's presence in all histories and cultures. The question is: How can we discern or understand this light?" See p. 185. For Bloesch, only in the light of God's self-revelation in Christ do we adequately grasp the full meaning and impact of these lesser lights in non-Christian culture and experience.

[107]Bloesch, "Donald Bloesch Responds," 186.

become tentative."[108] Following this, Scripture will then be understood primarily as part of the church's tradition. It is a source of theology because tradition is a source for theological construction. If the faith community were to modify its tradition and pay attention to another text, there would be no compelling reason to continue to be guided by Scripture.[109] Ironically, if we juxtapose this instrumental and community-bound view of authority with Sexton's earlier assessment that Grenz's emphasis on the historical context is consistent with the notion that God spoke prior to scripture's actual inscripturation (a speaking that happened in historical-cultural contexts), speaks in and through the texts of scripture (both in the historical context where it was written and the subsequent history of the church's interpretation of it), and also speaks today (in the present historical-cultural context), then the significance of culture becomes more determining and ubiquitous. To put it differently, while Grenz wants to affirm that Scripture is the primary norm, tradition is the secondary norm, and culture is the tertiary norm, in "practice" the order is reversed. Without an adequate view on the nature of the authority of Scripture, even if Grenz says that he wants to give the authority of theology to the Holy Spirit, ironically it is culture that will eventually be the primary voice and shape theology's agenda.

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[108]Harris, Sexton & Smith, "Stanley J. Grenz," 17. As tangential issue, they agree with Daniel Strange's argument that if the Bible is simply the book of the church, it may be authoritative for the faith community, but there is no obvious reason why those outside that community should feel obligated to follow its teaching. To restrict the sphere of the Bible's relevance to that of the faith community has significant missiological implications and limitations. See p. 17 n. 56 and also Daniel Strange. "Not Ashamed! The Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology." *Themelios* 36 no. 2 (2001): 238-60.

[109]Harris, Sexton & Smith, "Stanley J. Grenz," 17. These authors understand that it is not that Grenz would deny the inspiration of Scripture. In their opinion, perhaps Grenz is just being a little provocative, and wants to make a point that he believes was receiving insufficient attention.

We saw this very problem in Grenz's example of how socio-political changes, such as the rise of feudal society and later the advent of nation-states – effected the development of atonement theories.[110] Without a proper belief in Scripture's authority, how do we know and evaluate that Anselm's move from ransom theory to satisfaction theory was indeed guided by the Holy Spirit's voice in culture that was rightly discerned by him? How can we be sure that that was not Anselm's own subjective voice, or the Christian community's voice, or worst, the diabolical voice in culture? Grenz's instrumental view on the nature of Scripture's authority becomes even more problematic when we see his minimalist view on the function of Scripture's authority, whereby Scripture is no more than a "paradigmatic narrative" for the believing community. For Grenz, it is the Bible's 'categories' that are important – e.g. creation, the exodus, the cross – and not the Bible's statements or truths in the first instances.[111] Vanhoozer rightly asks, "how can we determine what the Spirit is saying if and when his speaking goes beyond 'what is written'?"[112]

A better theory of doctrinal development that honors Scripture's authority while at the same time appreciates changing cultural contexts is offered by David Yeago. In his insightful essay entitled "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," Yeago argues that the Nicene concept of *homoousion* is "neither imposed *on* the New Testament texts, nor

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[110]Stanley J. Grenz, "What does Hollywood Have to Do with Wheaton? The Place of (Pop) Culture in Theological Reflection," *JETS* 43, no. 2 (June 2000): 310. To recite his argument quoted in the previous chapter: Hence, one reason why Anselm raised the question, *Cur Deus Homo?* was a diminished credence the older ransom theory carried in feudal society. His satisfaction theory, in turn, needed alteration when the advent of modern nation-states rendered obsolete the concept of honor upon which it was based. In the new setting, Anselm's objective theory was metamorphed into the idea of penal substitution so widely articulated today.

[111]See Vanhoozer, "On the Very Idea of a Theological System," 146.

[112]Vanhoozer, "On the Very Idea of a Theological System," 146.

distantly deduced *from* the texts, but rather describes a pattern of judgments present *in* the texts, in the texture of scriptural discourse concerning Jesus and the God of Israel."[113] Yeago uses this to illustrate the importance of making a distinction between "judgments" and "concepts" in which those judgments are rendered.[114] With this distinction, Yeago argues that the judgment about Jesus and God made in the Nicene Creed is "indeed 'the same,' in a basically ordinary and unmysterious way, as that made in the New Testament text such as Philippians 2:6ff."[115] Because of this distinction, there can be rooms for diversity and variety in concepts stemming from different cultural contexts, but within a stable limit of authoritative biblical judgments: "… the same judgment can be rendered in a variety of conceptual terms, all of which may be informative about a particular judgment's force and implications."[116] At the same, there are also rooms for mutual enrichment and improvement of theological concepts between segments of Christian community from different time and places, because of the fact that "we ourselves often do not realize the full implications of the judgments we pass: only *some* of their implications are ever unpacked in the particular renderings we have given them."[117] It is always the judgments of Scripture that must have the last words and not the culturally-bound concepts: "judgments are not instrumental to

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[113]David S. Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 153.

[114]Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 159.

[115]Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 160.

[116]Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 159.

[117]Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 159. Italics in the original.

concepts but concepts to judgments…"[118] Yeago's insight will help theologians maintain the status of the Bible as the primary norm of theology without neglecting the important role of changing cultural contexts to help them in redescribing, re-rendering, and rearticulating the same biblical judgments in a creative and faithful ways.

Again, the question now is: how far does Grenz actually follow the trajectory of his postmodern methodology? To what extent is he consistent with it? Here, the consistency of his nonfoundationalist commitment is at stake. As indicated in the previous chapter, if Grenz is consistent with his nonfoundationalism, "the evangelical conviction that primacy must be given to the voice of scripture will no longer be indulged."[119] Simply deferring to the voice of scripture is "a return to foundationalism, with an inerrant and authoritative Bible the foundation upon which all other theological insights are built."[120] If culture is genuinely a pneumatologically mediated source for theology understood within nonfoundationalist framework, it would seem reasonable to expect that a changed cultural context might lead to different conclusions being drawn.

Using an example of Grenz's treatment of homosexuality in his *Welcoming but Not Affirming*,[121] Harris observes that Grenz is actually very selective in his analysis of culture and privileges those cultural voices which cohere with the classical biblical exegesis and the mainstream understanding of church tradition on the issue and "does not pay serious

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[118]Yeago, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma," 159.

[119]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 11.

[120]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 11.

[121]Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville: WJK Press, 1998).

attention to the significance of the shift in attitudes to homosexuality."[122] His conclusion, as to be expected, is perfectly consistent with evangelical traditional stance. In other words, Grenz is only willing to move beyond foundationalism when he is confident that the extra biblical voices will help confirm the voice of scripture. When this is not the case, he lapses back to foundationalism.[123] In doing so, Harris claims, Grenz "signals that any attempt by evangelicals to move beyond foundationalism will, at best, be inconsistent."[124] In the end, Harris concludes, "If a hallmark of evangelicalism is to continue to be its insistence that scripture serves as the norming norm in theological construction, the effort to construct an evangelical theological method that embraces postfoundationalism might prove more difficult than initially imagined."[125]

In sum, Grenz's understanding and use of culture as a source of theology in his nonfoundationalist theological method (or, for lack of better words, "in theory") is inconsistent and ambiguous. On one hand, he wants to affirm that culture is one of the equal conversation partners in theology besides Scripture and tradition. However, this is in direct contradiction and cannot be harmonized with his desire to keep his distinctive evangelical commitment to Scripture as the primary norm in this conversation (and culture as merely a tertiary tools). This "theoretical" inconsistency in turn results in "practical" inconsistency in the process of doctrinal/ethical formulations. As it turns out, "in practice," Harris suggests that in the end both tradition and culture serve not as equal partners, but more as what

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[122]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 12.

[123]Harris dubbed Grenz's approach "a chastened foundationalism." See Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism," 15.

[124]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 15.

[125]Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism?," 15.

Macquarrie describes as "formative factors."[126] Grenz is trapped in this inconsistency and ambiguity because of his *a priori* commitment (which is unnecessary and uncritical to begin with) to correlate with and accommodate postmodern cultural context and let this context shapes his version of evangelical theological method. At the end of the day, he simply cannot have the best of both worlds.[127]

Conclusion

Could culture then be one of the sources of theology? Strictly speaking, the problem is not with the term "source" itself, but with what the term signifies. Evangelicals traditionally have no difficulty affirming tradition, reason, and experience as sources of theology, as long as the qualitative difference between these sources and Scripture is kept intact. Evangelicals affirm that Scripture is the final authority and norm, the only source that has the magisterial authority in theology. Other sources (tradition, reason, and experience)

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[126]Brian Harris, "Why Method Matters: Insights from the Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz," *Crucible* 2, no. 1 (November 2009): 11. As Harris explains, Macquarrie prefers to speak of formative factors as this clarifies that each factors is not on the same level or of the same importance. While acknowledging many formative factors, he discusses six, experience, revelation, scripture, tradition, culture and reason. See John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, Revised ed. (London: SCM, 1977), 4-18.

[127]Referring to *Beyond Foundationalism* co-authored by Grenz and Franke, Stephen Knowles says, "The root of the problem for Grenz and Franke is that they do not engage critically enough with postmodern culture. There seems to be a 'bowing down' to postmodern culture, which puts Grenz and Franke in danger of theological accomodationism to culture. This leaves them open to that very same criticism to which they subjected those theologians who absorbed traits of enlightenment thought." See Stephen Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism: The Theological Methodology of Stanley J. Grenz* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 128. Quoting Archie Spencer, Knowles writes, "What is clear from what has been said is that theology must engage postmodernism critically, not just in order to seek points of continuity. Certainly it must respond to this cultural reality … But this response must be recognised as a theological response in culture and not a responsibility of theology to culture." See Archie Spencer, "Culture, Community and Commitments: Stanley J. Grenz on Theological Method," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57, no. 3 (2004): 347.

only have ministerial authority. If understood within this framework, culture, too, can legitimately be regarded as one of theology's sources. Michael Horton writes that "the classic Protestant position with respect to the sources of theology is simple, though somewhat clumsily expressed: the norm that norms but is not normed (*norma normans non normata est*)."[128] "As with tradition," he adds, "the relationship of Scripture to culture, experience, and reason is *magisterial* and *ministerial*, respectively."[129]

Given Grenz's understanding of culture, however, it is very difficult for him to consistently preserve the supremacy of Scripture as the *norma normans* of theology, albeit his good intention to do so. His interactional approach to the Gospel and culture, informed by the social construction view to reality, undermines the integrity of Scripture and consequently put the distinctiveness of a *Christian* community he strives to uphold in jeopardy. His pneumatological view on culture, in contradiction with the overall shape of his own pneumatology, in the end leaves us with no stable criterion to discern the voice of the Spirit from other voices in culture. This problem of authority is amplified when we observe his ambiguous and inconsistent understanding of the notion "source" of theology, making no distinction between "source" and "norm," "pillar," or "tools." Bounded to his nonfoundationalist commitments, Grenz must assert that the authority and the foundation of theology is not inherent in any of the sources, not even in Scripture, but in the Holy Spirit alone. But this appeal to the Holy Spirit for authority only complicates the matter because without the belief in the Spirit-inspired Scripture as the secure foundation, ironically it is very easy for culture to turn into a domineering partner who aggressively set the agenda for

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[128]Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 201.

[129]Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 201.

the theological conversation. At the end of the day, Grenz's insertion of culture as one of theology's sources fails both on theological and methodological grounds. Culture should only be inserted as one of theology's sources when our theological understanding of it and our methodological commitments can sufficiently and substantially safeguard the triadic unity of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and Scripture as the *pattern* of divine authority.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary

Having explored and critically assessed Stanley Grenz's theological contexts, methodological commitments, as well as his doctrinal contents and concepts – especially his pneumatological understanding on culture and its use in his theological method – it is apt to give Grenz a designation of a deliberately "contextual" theologian. He is "contextual" in realizing and responding to the current cultural and intellectual shift in which he found himself, i.e. the shift from modernity to postmodernity. For him, this transition is too important to ignore, as it offers both opportunity and challenge for evangelical theology. For the sake of the church's missional calling, he believes that evangelicals must respond to this change. However, mere surface-level "responding" is not enough, Grenz thinks. What we need is a radical (*radix*; *root*) "revisioning" of the whole evangelical theological agenda based on our timely engagement with postmodernity, which includes "revisioning" of the way we understand the nature of the theological task, theological authority, and subsequently theological sources. He wants to do all these while maintaining his evangelical identity, and this is where his pietistic heritage comes on the scene. Grenz can also be seen as a "contextual" theologian from different level, i.e. from his methodological decision to insert "culture" as one of his theological sources, along with Scripture and tradition. The focus of this thesis has been to trace, both theologically and methodologically, how Grenz comes to

this methodological decision, and whether this decision is justified and hence commendable. Before going more in-depth with our observation and analysis, we discovered at the outset that this decision is at least theologically supported by Grenz's belief that culture must be engaged with and listened to because, along with Scripture and tradition, it is the media in which the Holy Spirit is present and His voice is heard. In Chapter one, we saw how Grenz's appeal to the presence of the Holy Spirit in culture is not his unique contribution. Modern and more contemporary theologians like Hegel, Rahner, Moltmann, Pinnock, and Johnston have showed interests in finding the presence of the Holy Spirit in creation, culture, and the religions – albeit with different motives. Granted their differences, some commonalities characterize their theological endeavors: the panentheistic tendencies to explain God-world relation; the blurring of the supernatural-natural or grace-nature distinctions; the attempts to emancipate the Spirit from Christological limits and to liberate Him from any ecclesiological confines.

In Chapter two, we traced Grenz's understanding of his contexts using five problem areas as heuristic tools to see how these influence his methodological commitments. Two determinants turn out to be dominant: his pietistic root and his engagement with postmodernity. Upon closer scrutiny, it is hard to miss that it is postmodernism and Grenz's enthusiastic embrace and appropriation of its insights that has heavily informed and shaped his methodological choices. Among other things, this includes commitments to social construction view of truth, reality, meaning- and identity-making; nonfoundationalism; coherentism and pragmatism; theology as a second-order reflection of the faith community; the importance of interpretive framework in shaping community's religious experience; the inevitable situatedness of all theological formulations; the provisional and interdisciplinary

nature of theology; and eschatological realism. Grenz tries to juxtapose these commitments with his commitment to evangelical heritage and found "community" to be an appropriate point of equilibrium. Using postmodern insights like the "individual-within-a-community" and the "socially constructed self," he tries to explain the primacy of the Holy Spirit as the only "foundation" for theology, the only Agent who is able to initiate personal religious experience (hence the "convertive piety"), bring the community of believers into existence, and thereby make the faith reflections on the community's interpretive framework possible. With this, both *community* and *the Holy Spirit* have become Grenz's first theology.

This methodological chapter prepared us to see in Chapter three why and how Grenz insert culture as one of theology's sources. The same Spirit speaks in and through Scripture (the Book of the community), tradition (the ongoing reflection of the community on Scripture), and culture (the embedding context of the community) to the Christian community as they engage in the work of faith reflections and theological constructions. But is this methodological move theologically justified? In order to answer that, we surveyed Grenz's explicit pneumatology and concluded that his is very Christo-, soterio-, and ecclesio-centric. Agreeing with the typical Western conception of the relation between the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, he believes that the ministry of the Spirit is "nothing less than an outworking or application of the work completed by Jesus" and that His function is "subsequent and instrumental to that of Jesus, whom He glorifies and to whom He bears testimony." Grenz also emphasizes the Spirit's mission in creating and sustaining the church as the outworking of the triune God's program to establish an eschatological community. However, it is strange that most of these affirmations are largely "lost in translation" in the theological justification of his pneumatological understanding of culture. Instead, it is in his

inclusivistic understanding of revelation and grace – which significantly incongruent and contradicting his explicit pneumatology – that we found the strongest indication of him connecting culture (and the religions) with the work of the Holy Spirit. Admitting that he is more on Brunner's side rather than on Barth's, he wants us to be optimistic in "finding a host of traces of divine grace present in the midst of human brokenness." However, this is not an affirmation of "common grace" as traditionally understood in the Reformed tradition – Grenz wants to affirm more than that, as clearly indicated in his inclusivistic view on revelation and grace. On this, he writes statements like: "faith may be present beyond the particular boundaries of the covenant people"; "Evangelical theology of religions … must give place to the possibility of God's activity beyond the central trajectory of salvation history – Israel, Christ, and the church"; "we continue the evangelism mandate … sometimes to bring to explicit confession of Christ the implicit covenant with God already present in our hearers"; etc. We cannot but hear echoes of Rahner and Pinnock in these assertions. This theologically problematic view on culture is even compounded with his appropriation of socio-anthropological insights, resulting in him believing that culture must have a place in shaping our theology (i.e. his interactional approach to culture).

In Chapter four, we looked at problems with Grenz's pneumatological understanding of culture under two axes: the problem with his concept of revelation and grace, and the problem with the Spirit-Christ relation. If culture, through the work of the Spirit, is "revelatory" and "sacramental," and can mediate encounters with the true God, what is the authority and the necessity of the special revelation? What gives mission its justification? Turnau helpfully explains that culture is not the general revelation itself but human response to it. Because of common grace, culture *can* indeed be revelatory; but

because of our depravity, culture can simply be an expression of idolatry. Culture is always a "mixed blessing," it is not to be unequivocally equated with the voice of the Spirit – hence the constant need for discernment through the lens of our authoritative and final norm, the Bible. The Spirit may also be present in culture, but it is necessary to distinguish His intensive, special, redemptive presence within the covenant community and his extensive, general, creational presence in the world – and reserving the word "sacramental" only to the former. This way, the important distinction between general and special revelation – and between common and saving grace – can be preserved.

Furthermore, Grenz's inclusivistic understanding of Holy Spirit-Christ relation creates serious problem on how to define the true faith and the true community. Is the difference between the two faith (conscious/explicit and unconscious/implicit) and the two communities (explicit covenant and implicit covenant community) merely *quantitative*? Miles traces the whole Bible and argues that the inclusivistic understanding of the Spirit-Christ relation "misunderstood the role of the Spirit, ignore biblical teaching, distort redemptive history, silence the gospel, and pervert eschatological promises." Satyavrata reminds us that the Spirit is indeed at work in the world, but there are also other "spirits" at work. The simple test to discern is *Christ* – and for that we need the Bible: "a true experience of the Spirit must conform to the biblical testimony concerning Christ…" These two axes are again compounded by Grenz's nonfoundationalist "interactional approach." If "Gospel" and "culture" (understood as our constructions of them rather than the Gospel and culture in themselves) are equal conversation partners which are always in flux, how can we detect when the boundary between a culturally-sensitive and a culturally-co-opted theology has been broken? How can we safeguard the *Christian* community to remain *Christian*?

As we can readily see, all of these problems (and the suggested solutions) boil down to the important issues of criteria and authority – "how to discern the voice of the Spirit in culture?" And at the end of the day, Grenz's instrumental and minimalist view on the nature and the function of Scripture's authority exacerbates rather than eliminates these problems. Despite his affirmation that Scripture should be the norming norm for theology, his pneumatologically mediated doctrine of Scripture ends up undermining Scripture's authority by bypassing its textual illocutions. With this, as Vanhoozer states, "we are left with no criteria for distinguishing between the word of God and the hearing of the church, or between the gospel and its possible distortions in the community's understanding." Subsequently, we are also left with no stable criteria to discern the voice of the Spirit in the midst of other voices in culture. Without a belief in the Spirit-inspired Scripture as theology's secure foundation, it is very easy for culture to turn into a domineering partner who aggressively set the agenda for the theological conversation. An important insight is offered by Yeago, who differentiate between "judgments" of Scripture and "concepts" in which those judgments are rendered. With this distinction, there can be rooms for diversity and variety in concepts stemming from different cultural contexts (although we must admit that not all concepts are created equals), but within a stable limit of authoritative biblical judgments. Theologians, then, can be relevant without losing their identity; they can be creative yet remain faithful.

Could culture then be one of the sources of theology? The answer is "yes," as long as we can: (1) sufficiently and substantially safeguard the triadic unity of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and Scripture as the *pattern* of divine authority (Ramm); and (2) consistently preserve the supremacy of Scripture as the *norma normans* of theology. Given Grenz's

serious theological and methodological problems, it will be very difficult for him to accomplish both.

Methodological Reflections

One important issue that needs to be reflected upon in our study on Grenz's methodology is the issue of coherence and ambiguity. Throughout our study, we saw more or less incoherent tensions in many different levels, e.g. between Grenz's explicit doctrine of the Holy Spirit and his more radical and inclusivistic version of it; between his explanation of the nature of general revelation in his systematic theology and his undermining of it in his exposition of an inclusivistic concept of revelation and grace; between his emphasis on the *Christian* community (created by the Holy Spirit) as the seedbed of a uniquely Christian theological reflections and his belief on the existence of the *implicit* covenant community (made possible by the same Spirit) that, logically, can and will do their own theological reflections; between his assertion that Scripture should be the norming norm of theology and his belief that the only authority should be the Holy Spirit speaking in and through Scripture, tradition, and culture; between Scripture as the norming norm (and culture as the tertiary tools) and their identities as equal conversation partners; ambiguity in the interchangeable uses of the terms "source," "norm," "pillar," and "tools" themselves; between his concern to maintain the *Christian*-ness of Christian theology and his belief of the inevitable influence of culture to inform and shape the construction of Christian identity; between his rejection of Tillichian "correlationism" (because he found it to be too foundationalist) and his apparent attempts to correlate with postmodern concerns. Granted that our theology will never be perfect and always in need for further clarification and correction (not to mention that there must always be a room for divine mystery), it is important for systematic theologians to try

their best in minimizing incoherences and ambiguity in their theological system. After all, it is the task of a systematic theologian to "set out the varied ideas of the Christian faith in a coherent, comprehensive, and well-ordered manner."[1] There might be many reasons for these phenomena, here I want to highlight one: the role of postmodern philosophy in Grenz's methodology. As Paul Allen reminds us, one of the fundamental issues that must be attended to in a good theological method is "the role of philosophy and related epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions in theology."[2] Grenz tries to correlate Christianity with postmodern sensibilities by accepting their critique of modern individualism and of Enlightenment rationality, as well as their nonfoundationalist, communitarian and socially-constructed view of personal identity formation.[3] With this, Grenz *have to* make the believing community, the church, as "basic" to Christian theology. Augmented by his pietistic impulse that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in initiating and sustaining Christian religious experience, I have argued that both *community* and *the Holy Spirit* become Grenz's theological starting points, his first theology.[4] But this leads to another problem, i.e. the problem of authority. As Vanhoozer rightly points out, "… it is one thing to

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[1]Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Systematic Theology," in *The Routledge Companion in Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Chad Meister & James Beilby (New York: Routledge, 2013), 713.

[2]Paul L. Allen, *Theological Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2012), 208.

[3]Vanhoozer fairly states that "Grenz is not so much capitulating to as correlating with postmodern sensibilities." See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Evangelicalism and the Church: The Company of the Gospel," in *The Future of Evangelicalism: Issues and Prospects*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Robin Parry & Andrew West (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), 67.

[4]Allen mentions this as his second fundamental questions at issue in theological method: "the coherence of individual criteria that serve as theological starting points (e.g. Barth's Word of God)." See Allen, *Theological Method*, 208.

acknowledge the church – as a community of inquiry – to be a necessary condition (basic) for doing theology. It is an altogether different matter, however, to suggest that the community is a basis of authority."[5] Grenz's efforts to correlate with postmodernity has made community (instead of Scripture) and made the Spirit (instead of the triune God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) as "basic" for theology. In classical terms, Grenz's methodology has threaten the unity of the triune God as the *principium essendi* (the essential principle of theology), and undermined the authority of Scripture as the *principium cognoscendi* (the principle of knowledge) of theology. With Grenz's *a priori* commitment and uncritical appropriation of postmodernity, it is no wonder why Grenz's view on culture and its place in his methodology eventually lacks Christological *and* Trinitarian substances. And as this thesis has shown, it is no wonder why these also lead to Grenz's ambiguous understanding and use of the sources of theology.[6]

As important as it is, philosophy or other contemporary disciplines in our cultural context should never set the agenda for theology. On the danger of correlationism, Vanhoozer says it best, "The danger of correlating theology with this or that philosophy (or any other discipline) is that of domesticating the divine, of reducing the strange new world of the Bible to this-worldly terms, of exchanging the scandal of the cross for the pottage of intellectual respectability."[7] This is not to say that Grenz has these intentions in mind, but

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[5]Vanhoozer, "Evangelicalism and the Church," 68.

[6]This is the third point in Allen's *criteria*: "how one emphasizes various sources of theology such as the Bible." See Allen, *Theological Method*, 208.

[7]Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Pilgrim's Digress: Christian Thinking on and about the Post/Modern Way," in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*, ed. Myron B. Penner (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 81-82. Vanhoozer qualifies, "…. My dispute is not with philosophy per se, only with the pretensions of philosophy as a discourse that

that his pre-occupation with correlating evangelical theology with postmodern sensibilities could bring these problems (and has brought some of them, as this thesis has tried to expose).[8] Grenz's strong belief of the importance of the contemporary intellectual and cultural developments for theological formulation is surely to be commended, but they should never be confused with the authority of Scripture. Sung rightly reminds us, "… context qua '*locus theologicus*' calls for qualification: though context is an indispensable source for theology, it is problematic that some models assign context revelatory status on a par with Scripture. Because limits, fallibility, and fallenness attend all group life, contexts are not self-interpreting or privileged sources *in se*, but normed by Scripture."[9] Instead of philosophy or any contemporary discipline, it is canonical Scripture and its judgments that must set the agenda for theology, as Yeago insightfully argues. The larger issue at stake here is nothing less than the classic debate between extratextuality and intratextuality: "Is the systematic framework and organizing principle underlying one's orderly accounts foisted upon Scripture (i.e., is it a foreign or 'extratextual' system?) or does it emerge from within

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aspires to metanarrative status. As a discipline philosophy, like physics and psychology, has a legitimate place; however, again like physics and psychology, *this place is not that of the governing framework of Christian thought*." Italics in the original.

[8]Vanhoozer notes in his recent essay that one of the reasons Grenz gives for stressing relationality is its resonance with the postmodern context, in particular, its rejection of autonomous individualism. Grenz cites this resonance with contemporary culture as a reason for being Trinitarian. The problem is, as Vanhoozer rightly points out in interrogative form, "But what if communitarianism falls out of cultural favor?" See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology: On the Very Idea of a Trinitarian System," in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Grenz*, eds. Derek J. Tidball, Brian S. Harris & Jason S. Sexton (Eugene: Cascade Book, 2014), 47.

[9]Elizabeth Yao-Hwa Sung, "Culture and Hermeneutics," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, gen. ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 153.

Scripture (i.e. is it an 'intratextual' system?)"[10] Choosing to reside in the intratextuality camp does not instantly solve all the problems, though. In fact, the (more) difficult hermeneutical and theological task of moving from Scripture to doctrine – from Bible to theology – has just begun.[11]

The pre-occupation with (only) postmodern philosophy in our theological undertakings will soon become suspect in this increasingly globalized world, and a truly "contextual" theologian cannot dismiss the significance of other contexts if he/she is to be more adequately "contextual." Derek Tidball argues that while Grenz has "bravely grappled with an attempt to recontextualize a genuinely *evangelical* theology, his approach to the debates, together with those of his conversation partners, may soon be overtaken by the growth of evangelicalism in the Global South."[12] Tidball sees a symbiotic relationship between the growth of evangelical theology and the growth of the evangelical movement itself. Given the recent growth of evangelicalism in the Global South (Africa, Asia, and South America) Tidball thinks that we should expect more contextualized evangelical theology being produced in places where postmodernism has never been an issue. He claims, "It is, I believe, a mistake of the arrogant West to assume that globalization means that

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[10]Vanhoozer, "Systematic Theology," in *RCMTC*, 719.

[11]Vanhoozer argues that intratextual systematic theology is in fact more difficult to do. He says, "It is easier to see how extratextual systematic theologies work: one simply takes an already developed conceptual scheme, and *–ism* (e.g. Platonism, Hegelianism, existentialism) as the spectacles through which one interprets Scripture. By way of contrast, how systems emerge from Scripture itself is more difficult to discern." See Vanhoozer, "Systematic Theology," in *RCMTC*, 719.

[12]Derek J. Tidball, "Evangelical Theology After Grenz: Evangelical Theology and Global Evangelicalism," in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Grenz*, eds. Derek J. Tidball, Brian S. Harris & Jason S. Sexton (Eugene: Cascade Book, 2014), 420.

Western culture, with its preoccupation with postmodernity, will conquer everywhere. The resurgence of Islam and of what Westerners often feel is a more 'primitive' form of Christianity shows that the triumph of Western liberal democracy, its cultural concomitants, and a spiritually 'sophisticated' worldview cannot be assumed."[13] However, again we must be reminded that our theological engagement with this plurality of contexts should not be driven by the need to correlate the Gospel with *even more* cultural and contextual variables – otherwise we will fall into the same trap. To the contrary, this reality should make us realize the vanity of correlating the Gospel to *any* philosophical or cultural variables and the high costs we must pay in letting *any* of them set the agenda for theology. Instead, our engagement these plural and changing contexts should be driven by the plurivocal nature of the Scripture itself. As Vanhoozer says it, "A canonically bounded polyphonic tradition that includes Western and non-Western voices, ancient and modern, best corresponds to the nature of the Scriptures themselves."[14] Theology must be plurivocal because no single interpretive tradition or community "could discern all that there is to be gleaned from Scripture."[15] To say that systematic theology should be plurivocal does not mean "anything goes," because the whole Scriptural canon in its unity and its diversity is our measuring rod in doing theology. As Yeago would say it, our theological concepts can be culturally-sensitive and changing, but the judgments from which those concepts came from should be canonically-bound – and for that reason, not any concept will do! Mikhail Bakhtin reminds

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[13]Tidball, "Evangelical Theology After Grenz," 420.

[14]Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Systematic Theology," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, gen. ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 779.

[15]Vanhoozer, "Systematic Theology," in *DTIB*, 779.

us about the possibility of a "plural unity,"[16] both with regard to the biblical voices and the interpretive traditions. For Bakhtin, truth cannot be articulated only by one single voice or single perspective. Many voices and many perspectives are needed to do justice to the Truth. Many perspectives need to be put into dialogue for the truth to emerge, and the characteristic of the dialogue itself is its "unfinalizability."[17] T.D. Gener and L. Bautista have noted that in the context of contemporary global theologies, the plurality of biblical voices "provides a necessary impetus for plurality of theological expressions and continues to inspire the recognition of 'new explosions of different forms (narrative, ritual, symbol, concept).'"[18] And as we, the body of Christ from different corners of the world, engage with one another and with those who went before us (i.e. the Church tradition) in theological conversations and constructions, we are not left alone. Instead, we can be rest assured that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will guide us into all the truth – and the important thing is that He will not speak on His own! (John 16:13, NIV). This is what Billings calls "the Spirit's varied yet bounded work." He writes, "… the Spirit's work in shaping the church through Scripture has a bounded and specified character. The Spirit does not shape churches to conform to one cultural form or ideal. Rather, the Spirit generates a bounded diversity as it conforms many peoples to the image of Jesus Christ. The 'boundaries' of this diversity are ultimately

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[16]Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal about the Ministry and Minstrelsy of Theology," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Metho*d, ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 80.

[17]Vanhoozer, "The Voice and the Actor," 80.

[18]T. D. Gener and L. Bautista, "Theological Method," in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness & Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 893.

constituted by Jesus Christ himself."[19] With this, Billings wants us to affirm two things and holds them in balance: (1) that "the scriptural interpretation from diverse contexts can be received as mutual enrichment, gifts of the Spirit for the whole church"[20]; and (2) that "the Spirit uses Scripture as a tool to confront the cultural idols that seek to make the Spirit's word through Scripture captive to its own cultural interests and priorities."[21]

This reality should lead us away from Grenz's social constructivism (and his *eschatological* realism) and instead to affirm some form of *moderate* or *critical* realism. Sung notes that a critical-realist hermeneutic "recognizes a moderate form of contextualism and constructionism in our interpretive products, since communities and readers are positioned, conditioned, and invested variously (theologically, culturally, sociologically) with respect to the concrete and the biblical worlds."[22] However, Sung explains that this approach believes that there is something in the text of Scripture prior to the act of reading and a critical-realist reader will follow the text's cues, seeking to understand before overstanding it.[23] It is an approach that, "while affirming a reality independent of our language and theories, nevertheless acknowledges the necessity of language and theories for making contact with reality."[24] A moderate realist insists that "though our knowledge of the world is

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[19]J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 127.

[20]Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God*, 108.

[21]Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God*, 108.

[22]Sung, "Culture and Hermeneutics," 153.

[23]Sung, "Culture and Hermeneutics," 152.

[24]Vanhoozer, "Pilgrim's Digress," 89. Vanhoozer uses different term, aspectival realism, to explain the same idea. He writes, "… an *aspectival realism* has nothing

partial it can still be true."[25] This is different from Grenz's belief that our knowledge of the reality can only be confirmed in the eschatological future, and that our present knowledge is at best only a "model of reality," a "reality of our making," or a "reality-as-we-understand-it."

Lastly, I want to point out that Grenz's pre-occupation with contemporary thoughts and his relentless efforts to correlate with them come at the great expense of serious and sustained dialogues with the treasured traditions of the church. Despite his belief on the importance of tradition and his inclusion of it as one of the sources of theology, in practice, his theological method lacks adequate engagements with past theologians and exegetes. Although we admit that tradition has only ministerial authority and never the magisterial authority, lack of conversations with it will ironically impoverish our engagement with contemporary context. As important as it is to be engaged with contemporary thoughts and to be relevant, we must be aware of the danger – lest our enthusiasm and fascination with "the new" blind us to the fact that "the old" may have something significant to say to guide us toward a better (i.e. more biblically and theologically sound) engagement with the present. To give a little example, Grenz would surely come to a better trajectory in his pneumatological view on culture (and avoid unnecessary missteps along the way) had he

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to do with perspectivalism that holds that what we see is *constructed* by our theories. No, *the world is there, mind-independent and differentiated, yet indescribeable apart from human constructions and only partially accessible to any single theory*." See p. 88. Italics in the original.

[25]Vanhoozer, "Pilgrim's Digress," 90.

retrieved and appropriated important theological insights from John Calvin, who himself affirms the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of unbelievers (the "natural men").[26]

Suggestions for Further Research

There are some possible avenues to take the trajectory of this thesis to the next level. Here, I will mention three. First, due to the specific purpose and limitation of this thesis, we have not engaged with Grenz's series called *The Matrix of Christian Theology*,[27] where Grenz discusses his social Trinitarian theology in greater details and how this relates to his communal and relational anthropology (Volume One) and the ontological category of "being" and the importance of "naming" as they are used to account for the identity of the triune God (Volume Two). It is interesting to observe and analyze how Grenz applies his theological method to these theological works. For example, we can specifically assess how Grenz's understanding of theology as an ongoing conversation involving Scripture, tradition, and culture is actually displayed in these works. Is he being consistent with his method? Is there any development in his method as it is applied in these works? Does his method actually "work"?

Second, with regard to pneumatological understanding of culture, more works need to be done in closely connecting the work of the Spirit in creation and culture to Christology, the doctrine of the Trinity, and soteriology. Two inspiring theologians come to

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[26]See for example John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), II.2.15, 273-75; II.3.3, 292-93.

[27]The first is entitled *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the* Imago Dei (2001) and the second volume is entitled *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology*, published posthumously in 2005 after Grenz's untimely death. Both were published by Westminster John Knox Press.

mind in guiding our research in this direction: Abraham Kuyper[28] and Colin Gunton.[29] In fact, it is encouraging to see a recent work by William Baltmanis Whitney that tries to analyze commonalities between Kuyper and Gunton "in how they understand the created order, and how this understanding influences their conception of culture and the arts."[30] Both Kuyper and Gunton emphasize the order of creation and the relation between salvation and redemption and what this means for human action in the present through cultural activities.[31] Both perceive the tendency in other "theologies" to see the material world as less important than the spiritual.[32] In some ways, however, Whitney argues that Gunton extends and broadens Kuyper's theology of culture, for example in his emphasis on the "perfecting" role

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[28]See for example: Abraham Kuyper. *Lectures on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931; Abraham Kuyper. "Common Grace" & "Sphere Sovereignty." In *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, edited by James D. Bratt, 165-201 & 461-90. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998; Abraham Kuyper. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, translated by Henri De Vries. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1900. For a secondary work that explicitly link Kuyper's doctrine of common grace with his doctrine of the Holy Spirit (i.e. his cosmic pneumatology), see Vincent E. Bacote. *The Spirit in Public Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. For the Christological foundation of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace, see Cambria Janae Kaltwasser. "Assessing the Christological Foundation of Kuyper's Doctrine of Common Grace." In *The Kuyper Center Review, Volume Two: Revelation and Common Grace*, edited by John Bowlin, 200-220. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

[29]See for example: Colin E. Gunton. *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998; Colin E. Gunton. *Christ and Creation*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1992; Colin E. Gunton. *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Towards a Fully Trinitarian Theology*. London: T&T Clark, 2003. For a comprehensive account of Gunton's doctrine of creation, see William B. Whitney. *Problem and Promise in Colin E. Gunton's Doctrine of Creation*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

[30]William Baltmanis Whitney, "The Correlation Between Creation and Culture in the Theology of Abraham Kuyper and Colin E. Gunton," in *The Kuyper Center Review, Volume Three: Calvinism and Culture*, ed. Gordon Graham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 76.

[31]Whitney, "The Correlation," 82-83.

[32]Whitney, "The Correlation," 86.

of the Holy Spirit. Whitney writes, "Gunton's pneumatological emphasis gives clarity to how humans participate in the action of God within the created order (his conception of 'perfecting') – and this should be seen as related to his Trinitarian account of God's action in the world."[33] Though we might not always agree with them, reading both Kuyper and Gunton will surely aid us toward formulating a more robust pneumatological (as well as Christological and Trinitarian) understanding of culture.

Lastly, is it possible that a better way for renewing evangelical theology is not by endless *revision* for the sake of cultural relevance, but by *retrieval*?[34] Many recent theologians believe so, as recently well-documented by Michael Allen and Scott Swain.[35] Writing from the standpoint of Reformed tradition, Allen and Swain argue that while not every form of retrieval or every case of remembrance will be helpful, still "there are

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[33]Whitney, "The Correlation," 87.

[34]See Michael Allen & Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015; W. David Buschart & Kent Eilers. *Theology as Retrieval: Receiving the Past, Renewing the Church*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015; John Webster. "Theologies of Retrieval." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Systematic Theology*, edited by John Webster, Kathryn Tanner & Iain Torrance, 583-99. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

[35]Allen and Swain lists thirteen contemporary theological trends that – in their own ways – celebrate or call for retrieving elements, practices, and texts from earlier Christian churches: (1) Nouvelle Théologie; (2) Karl Barth and the Revival of Dogmatic Theology; (3) Reception History (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of the Bible; (4) Donald Bloesch and "Consensual Christianity"; (5) Thomas Oden's "Paleo-Orthodoxy"; (6) Robert Webber's Ancient-Future Christianity; (7) The Modern Hymns Movement; (8) Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson's Evangelical Catholicism; (9) Theological Interpretation of Scripture; (10) Radical Orthodoxy; (11) Evangelical *Ressourcement*; (12) The Emerging or Emergent Church(es); (13) *Ressourcement* Thomism. See Allen & Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 4-12. With this, Allen and Swain say that their call toward Reformed catholicity "is not that of a lone voice calling in the wilderness." Despite their differences, the advocates of these thirteen movements agree "in the judgment that modern theology, in more conservative and progressive forms, has exhausted itself as a mode of theological inquiry and that the path toward theological renewal lies in retrieving resources from the Christian tradition." See p. 4.

Reformed and ecclesiological warrants for pursuing a program of retrieval, that we can and should pursue catholicity on Protestant principles, and that pursuing this path holds promise for theological and spiritual renewal."[36] They warn us, though, that retrieval "is not merely a pragmatic maneuver or strategic approach to hermeneutical analysis or ministry philosophy."[37] Instead, retrieval is "a mode of intellectual and spiritual operation because it fits well with the divine economy and the principles of theology."[38] John Webster explains that although theologies of retrieval are widely divergent, "they entertain a common attitude to the biblical and theological traditions which precede and enclose contemporary theology: more trustful, more confident in their contemporary serviceability, unpersuaded of the superiority of the present age."[39] Webster adds that these theologies "eschew saying anything new – not in the sense that they are content themselves with formulaic repetition, still less in endorsing everything the tradition has ever said."[40] Instead, they do this because they operate on the presupposition that "resolutions to the questions which they address may well be found already somewhere in the inheritance of the Christian past."[41] While Grenz attempted to lead the renewal of evangelical theology in the twenty-first century by *revisioning* it, in the final analysis he might have been better served by another *re-* word: *retrieving*. It would

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[36]Allen & Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 13.

[37]Allen & Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 13.

[38]Allen & Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 13-14.

[39]John Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Systematic Theology*, eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner & Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 592.

[40]Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval," 592-93.

[41]Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval," 593.

indeed be interesting to see the flourishing of these retrieving endeavors within the global evangelicalism in the years to come.

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