

## **“What Has Athens To Do With Jerusalem? A Few Comments on Stanley Grenz’ Postmodern Theological Methodology” - David K. Ma (DipCS)**

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In many ways, Stanley Grenz has become a default reference when it comes to how evangelical theology sought to position itself amidst the postmodern condition. J.I. Packer regards his work as ‘interfac[ing] effectively with the intellectual thrusts of the postmodern and post-Christian culture...a tour de force that commands our attention’.<sup>1</sup> Clark Pinnock believes that ‘one can perhaps afford to leave Bloesch, Erickson, Packer, Wells...unread, but not Grenz’.<sup>2</sup> And in the latest issue of the CGST Journal, Andres Tang titles his introduction to Grenz’ theological methodology ‘Turning Crisis into Opportunity’,<sup>3</sup> fully acknowledging his construction of a postmodern understanding of evangelical theology. Indeed, it is difficult to find a review that is substantially negative about his postmodern framework. This paper, however, evaluates critically what his methodology means with respect to the responsibility of evangelical Christianity in reaction to the postmodern era.<sup>4</sup>

Grenz’ methodology is as much a response to postmodernity as to modernity, referring specifically to the theological tradition inspired by the Enlightenment movement in the form of an epistemological foundation. Despite the antagonism between the conservatives and the liberals, Grenz points to (as Barth did as well) the common ideology that underlies their differences. With the liberals’ reliance upon universal human religious experience and the conservatives’ anchoring on a literally inerrant Bible, they implicitly share the same faith regarding foundational knowledge, not only as in some beliefs must receive support from other beliefs, but also that some beliefs are unquestionably certain, such that through deductive reasoning alone an enterprise of truth can be established bottom-up with complete objectivity. As staunchly conservative theologian Douglas Groothuis puts it, truth must be ‘objective, absolute, universal, eternally engaging, antithetical and exclusive, unified and systematic, and as end in itself’.<sup>5</sup>

This way of doing theology in search of certain and objective truth propositions resembles the practice of secular scientific communities. Although it has long been unsettled whether such practice is the most appropriate for natural sciences alone or human sciences as well, the foundation seems to be severely shaken in recent decades even within the more familiar disciplines. The acceptance of an epistemological foundation in accordance with the

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley J Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), Back Cover.

<sup>2</sup> Clark H Pinnock, review of *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*, by Stanley J Grenz. *Theology Today* 58, no. 4 (Jan 2002): 606.

<sup>3</sup> 鄧紹光：〈化危為機--葛倫斯後現代非基礎主義的福音派神學路向〉，〈中國神學研究院期刊〉，第39期（2005年7月）：75。

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted here that Grenz’ theology is heavily influenced by several sources, including his teacher Wolfhart Pannenberg. However, comments on this influence are excluded from this paper because 1) a discussion on Panenberg’s theology would be beyond the scope of the paper, and 2) there is no consensus as to whether Panenberg’s theology can be regarded as postmodern.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 81.

Enlightenment project is based on two assumptions:

- Metaphysical realism: there exists a world of objects and properties that is independent of man's thoughts and discourses about such a world.
- The Correspondence Theory of Truth: truth is a relational property in which reality expresses itself through some factual characteristic(s).

However, advances in theoretical physics in the last century characterized by a disjoint between the understanding of the macroscopic gravitational force and the nano-scope quantum theory challenge the power of human reasoning and senses in comprehending reality. Thomas Kuhn's famous concept of 'paradigm shift' suggests that the way scientists pursue and interpret truths are highly subject to the specific communal culture and praxis attached to their own professions at some particular time period. In other words, the upholding of the scientific method itself must exist within the context of a myth, something which the scientific mind has grown accustomed to ridicule against. But perhaps the most significant development that catches Grenz' attention relates to the socio-linguistic theories advanced by Wittgenstein and a host of postmodernist thinkers afterwards. Their ideas echo with Kuhn's findings but make it much more generalized through focusing particularly on the nature and function of language. In a way, no human thoughts can transcend language. Postmodernists believe that how man understands the world is shaped by language, which constructs subjective meanings instead of reveals objective reality. Language is a cultural product; no truth as incurred in the mind can truly be objective. As such, foundationalism is illegitimated.

The response expressed by some conservative theologians against such a challenge is less than satisfactory. Groothuis, for example, defends the objectivity of language by asserting that 'the Christian worldview... understands language not as a self-referential, merely human and ultimately arbitrary system of signs that is reducible to contingent cultural factors, but as the gift of God entrusted to beings made in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:26).'<sup>6</sup> It seems to me that the theologian's reference to *Imago Dei* in Gen 1:26 incongruently appends the concept to the otherwise unrelated discussion of the language issue; and while language is indeed an entrusted gift from God, as everything else are, the fact itself suggests little of its features and limitations. Additionally, by stating that the Christian view should not regard language as 'merely human', Groothuis is riskily expressing quite a strong form of propositionalism, believing that the biblical text is inhumanly inerrant, literally true word by word. As JP Moreland once uttered, at least according to Groothuis' interpretation, 'When we affirm that the Bible is a revelation from God...we mean that God has revealed understandable, objectively true propositions.'<sup>7</sup> The irony here is that these foundationalists who uphold reasoning can exercise reasoning only subsequent to affirming a foundation, a man-made foundation. In defending this foundation,

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<sup>6</sup> Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, 66.

<sup>7</sup> Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, 67.

however, they amount to not much more than reasserting their claims once again, with a louder voice.

Of course, it is not without reason for Groothuis to bring into the picture the concept of *Imago Dei*, since successful or not he would very much like to fit the tool of language well into the schema of rationality, and rationality is precisely what *Imago Dei* stands for according to the conservative (and classical) understanding. But this exactly illustrates the kind of paradoxical situation the conservatives are embarrassingly located in. On one hand, they are enthusiastic defenders of the Christian faith. Christian theology is Christian theology, which 'has an inner dynamism that rises above the psychology, sociology and politics of its readers.'<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, they immerse themselves into the trenches of scientific reasoning, advancing theological arguments that play according to the Enlightenment game rules. The association between *Imago Dei* and rationality is as 'ultimately arbitrary' as, if not more so than, the postmodern theory Groothuis is attempting to deride. If Christians believe in biblical revelation and the metanarrative of salvation history with Jesus Christ as the climax as revealed by the same biblical revelation, then *Imago Dei* should identify itself with the true Trinitarian being of God as revealed by His self-revealing action, along the dimensions of covenantal and unconditional love. It is of no doubt that rationality too is honored by God, but the exaltation of this unconvincing but important part of Christian anthropology in order to hastily 'respond' to the modernist challenge fails to recognize that the ideology behind the enlightenment rationalism, i.e. individualism, is fundamentally incompatible with the prerequisite of receive true revelation, i.e. self-denial.

But has Grenz offered a methodology significantly better and distinctively Christian? What must first be highlighted is the influence of post-liberal theology and reformed epistemology upon Grenz' methodology, and in particular the emphasis on the community as the basis of Christian theology. Post-liberal theology, commonly known as the 'Yale School', is an endeavor most often attributed to Hans Frei and George Lindbeck in renouncing both the liberals' experiential-expressive doctrines as well as the conservatives' cognitive-propositional doctrines, and instead subscribes to a cultural-linguistic approach. In other words, the understanding of truth moves from realism to constructivism. A summary can be completed with four main points:

1. Post-liberalism regards as its starting point a Wittgensteinian view, which sees language as much more than merely an expressive tool for meanings directly corresponding to an external world of facts. Quite to the contrary, what Wittgenstein refers as 'language games' characterize language with a self-contained system governed by its own rules. Each use of language, each assertion of so-called 'facts', must inevitably be constrained by the context in which that particular language resides. The truthfulness of all possible propositions therefore cannot transcend the bounds of the language and its cultural context. It also

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<sup>8</sup> Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, 66.

means that language, instead of originating from some individual's mind, is actually at the bottom line a social phenomenon.

2. Bringing this worldview into the discipline of theology, Hans Frei aims at recapturing the focus of theological methodology from the dominance of liberal foundationalism and its supposedly objective critiques (such as historical criticism) to the biblical narrative itself, as evidenced from the title of his famous work *The Eclipse of Biblical Narratives*.<sup>9</sup> The way this focus on the text is related to Wittgenstein's linguistics is that the text, now immune from any external foundationalist influences, can be interpreted according to its own logic and its own context. As an extension of this perspective, Lindbeck regards doctrines as part of the Christianity's language game. Doctrines derived from the setting of biblical narrative represent the 'rules of grammar' that inform and instruct the thinking and acting of the believing community.
3. The Wittgensteinian inspiration also means for Lindbeck that doctrines are no longer propositions, no longer claims of universal and objective truths. As explained by Grenz, church doctrines as meanings derived from the biblical narrative are 'primary rules for speech about God rather than actual assertions concerning the divine reality.'<sup>10</sup> This cultural-linguistic approach, consisting of a system without foundation, naturally subscribes to the coherentist view of truth claims<sup>11</sup>, in which 'true' beliefs exist only as far as they come together to form an inter-related and explanatorily logical web, or 'mosaic', in Grenz' terminology. Lindbeck calls the result an 'intratextual theology', with truth derived only from the Bible and applicable only to the community that identifies with the Bible.
4. The fact that Grenz also rely on certain emphasis of the reformed epistemologists such as Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff is probably because while post-liberal theology certainly welcomes and acknowledges the uniqueness of community, its prime focus is still on hermeneutics; but Grenz exercises a preference for the community as his favorite link between evangelical theology and the postmodern condition. What the reformed epistemologists have to offer is the idea of partitioning foundationalism into its 'certainty' dimension and 'basicity' dimension. Essentially, they concur with the postmodern assault on Enlightenment foundationalism, but such attack should only bring about the demise of the 'certainty' dimension. Foundational beliefs as in unquestionably objective truth claims don't exist, but foundational beliefs as in some basic starting point of doing theology is legitimate. And since all truth claims are bounded by language which in turn is a product of the

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<sup>9</sup> New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> 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; Leicester: IVP; Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2000), 118.

<sup>11</sup> It must be noted though that coherentism represents a separate branch of thought in philosophy. Grenz explains that unlike the post-liberals, 'modern coherentists remain committed to the quest of epistemological certainty.' See Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic", 114.

community in general, the believing community must deem 'basic' for the Christian theology.<sup>12</sup>

If the above presentation correctly captures Grenz' adoption of post-liberalism and reformed epistemology, then it also creates great confusion, ending up with a theological framework that incorporates a heavy dose of atheistic element.

The first point has much to agree with. As an evangelical Christian, one should nonetheless acknowledge Wittgenstein's linguistic insights (it is true that in each and every use of language, one cannot escape from the influence of the cultural context behind), as long as the imperialistic inclination of these insights remains within their socio-linguistic domain. The general motto of 'faith seeking understanding' is tellingly relevant here and throughout. In the second point, for example, the perception of doctrine as grammar is by itself also very much acceptable as long as it exists in the form of a technique which enhances our understanding of doctrine under faith. And so is the coherent view of truth in the third point which perhaps can reinvigorate our interest in intratextual analysis, again under the same faith. But apparently, for Grenz and Lindbeck this coherence means something beyond the guidance of 'faith seeking understanding', with their anti-propositional inclination pointing to not simply how truths are to be most vibrantly expressed but instead to 'no actual assertion concerning the divine reality.'

It is under such light that the canonization of the believing community as the 'basis' of Christian theology in the fourth point may be comprehended. It is not incorrect to preserve a basic entry point as a 'foundation' as Grenz does, even if at the same time all truths are to be inter-related; Karl Barth, for one, concurs that 'strictly speaking, in dogmatics and in Church preaching every single statement is at once the basis and the content of all the rest',<sup>13</sup> but there still exists a particular basis 'in which we define completely the subject of all other statements.'<sup>14</sup> However, through the laborious effort of incorporating different thoughts to arrive at, in this particular case, the believing community as the basis, Grenz has inconspicuously diverted the nature of such basis from its theological norm and endows it with a sociological definition. In short, Grenz is talking sociology, not theology. Wittgenstein's linguistics is valid as far as linguistics is concerned; and its implication in refuting Enlightenment's epistemological foundation is also valid insofar as they share the same atheistic social context, i.e. the discussion of the possibility of a knowledge enterprise upon man's self-reliance and self-rulership (the auto-nomos). But if it then sounds logical in this foundationless world to establish a subjective basis, it is logical only to the extent that we remain within the same Godless social context, and as such we can talk of no theology; Grenz can talk of no theology. But why do we even need sociology? What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?

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<sup>12</sup> Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic", 120.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. GW Bromiley and TF Torrance, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 257.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, 258.

What evangelical theology needs is a theo-epistemological basis in its talking about God, and attending to such demand Barth begins at the beginning, with the Self-revelatory statement 'God is' – how singular and deep, unmoving and encompassing! When the enlightenment enterprise of the human pride is justifiably shattered into its ruins, the postmodern insight lures man to hold tight to these ruins in embrace of relativism and nihilism. It is the same rhetoric of the autonomy, that even though man is to compromise so dearly in having ever smaller-truths and pseudo-truths, man still cling onto them just to retain his pride and sense of ownership. But God *is*, and man *isn't*. God is who He has always been. Despite all the discussions on the nature of truth, God is Truth Himself and this anchors *the* foundation of Christian theology, rendering the Enlightenment rationality and the postmodern community as mere distractions. When Barth adds that 'God is who He is in His works',<sup>15</sup> the theological methodology based on revelation alone is firmly established.

It must not be mistaken that the statement 'God is Truth Himself' serves as some kind of a mega-claim that ignores and overwhelms all previous discussions and leaves them unattended and dissatisfied. To the contrary, it is at once truth in its most profound articulation as well as wisdom with enlightening radiance (towards the pseudo-truths). If only God Himself is Truth, then our mortal description of His being, be they in propositional, performative or other literal forms, can only be constrained by our own humanness, as Barth suggests. Wittgenstein is only reiterating this fact, or should I say discovering the result of this fact without knowing its theological cause, through the particular lens of language dynamics. But Christians should be able to stand firm in faith, seeking the understanding of the same point without confusing over what is to be sighed as human imperfection and what is to be embraced as truth. Barth spells this out clearly in his discussion on Roman Catholic dogmatics, whose teachings in 'Latin propositions given and sealed once and for all with divine authority in both wording and meaning' is 'theologically impossible'.<sup>16</sup> Theology is 'simply the results of human effort. As such they are a help to, but also the object of, fresh human effort'.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere Barth speaks of dogmatics as 'not a thing which has fallen from Heaven to earth' and that 'The Christian Church does not exist in heaven, but on earth and in time'.<sup>18</sup> However, Barth doesn't only pay condolence towards this 'on earth and in time' characteristic, i.e. the contextuality, but instead highlights within the same discussion on the Roman Catholic teachings the more positive note of 'contemporary responsibility'<sup>19</sup> as arisen from each and every Christian's own context. It is 'in face of this foundation of all Christian utterance [i.e. the Bible, that one is challenged] to ask...what Christian utterance can and should say today.'<sup>20</sup> The context, the 'being "on earth and in time"', represents both great limitations and extraordinary meaning; but Barth is careful in

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<sup>15</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, 260.

<sup>16</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. GW Bromiley and TF Torrance, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 15.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (NY: Harper & Row, 1959), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 16.

positioning this meaning strictly as proceeding from the Biblical revelation towards the worldly context, instead of the reverse. The reason: only God is Truth Himself. Even in its greatest meaning, the greatest relevance to the contemporary culture, humanness cannot be accepted by Barth to replace the totally transcendent Truth as the basis of Christian theology, let alone what is clearly an imperfection.

It is also because of 'God is Truth Himself' that the conveyed information per se of 'God is' and the rest of revelation's speech cannot do much Christian theology unless God and the recipient of His Self-revelation are engaged in a unique relation characterized by the gift of the Christian *faith* in Jesus Christ. If God is Truth Himself, then God is His own standard against which no other standard can measure. Man can know truth only through the gracious self-revelation of Truth to which he trusts by denying everything else. 'Faith as faith in God stands on its own feet and is the basis of knowledge'<sup>21</sup> proclaims Barth. It is then only in terms of this theo-epistemological understanding of faith that the Church or the believing community can possibly and properly be placed into the picture of dogmatics' praxis. The 'believing' of the community is first and foremost about faith, and not about a consensus among men on language or any other possible sociological focus. On such grounds, Grenz' theorizing of a postmodern theological methodology can never be theologically acceptable.

Grenz inevitably puts himself in a difficult position when the relativistic inclination of his postmodern framework comes into play and the treasured tenets of traditional evangelical theology call for reconciliation. Based on the community concept, 'theology is 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 symbol.'<sup>22</sup> Bordering on reducing Christianity to some democratic exercise among cultural anthropologists, Grenz nonetheless adds that it isn't a situation in which 'anything goes'. 'Rather, constructive theological conversation emerges through the interplay, or *perichoretic dance*, of an ordered set of sources of insights.'<sup>23</sup> It then turns out that these 'sources' include the Bible, tradition and culture. But if there should be anything perichoretic among them as Grenz suggests, it should always connote a sense of equality, among other things. But then he asserts that the Bible is the only 'norming norm in theology.'<sup>24</sup> Thereafter, Grenz emphasizes that 'all theology is – as the postmodern condition suggests – "local"',<sup>25</sup> again as a grounding truth and not a limitation. But what is there to unite the factions as 'Christian'? He then needs to salvage the situation by bringing in three 'motifs': Trinity, community and eschatology. The fact that these traditional evangelical elements of theology are reluctantly introduced much more as rescues rather than extensions or compliments to his postmodern basis is itself very worrisome. It can thus be seen

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<sup>21</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic", 124.

<sup>23</sup> Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic", 124.

<sup>24</sup> Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic", 125.

<sup>25</sup> Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic", 129.

that once the postmodern relativism is out of the Pandora Box, the pendulum-swing between authority and chaos, between God and man, will become an endless labor for the postmodern evangelical theologian, and this paradoxical situation is in many ways not unlike that encountered by his modern, rational counterparts.

What can be the consequence? The internal tension creates confusion and the lack of clarity induces arbitrary modifications and applications. In an article written in praise of post-liberal theology, Joshua Cho feels triumphant that post-liberalism, and Frei in particular, has fetched back the proper attention to the biblical narrative from liberal concerns,<sup>26</sup> as well as bringing back theology from academia back to the Church community.<sup>27</sup> In a way there is much to agree with these claims. However, the biblical narrative inevitably loses much of its authority if it is after all no more than a cultural product. Cho, for one, gives very confusing messages with regards to where the authority resides:

- ‘教義的權威並不單單源於基督群體的共識，而在於其所承載和傳遞的從外而來的言語(verbum externum)，就是基督的言語。’<sup>28</sup> This seems to suggest that the word of Christ at least shares the same authority as the community.
- ‘詮釋者須以批判的態度照明基督教敘事扭曲的地方。’<sup>29</sup> Cho illustrates as example the paternalistic tendency of the biblical narrative, which he deems as a mistake of the Bible and requires our correction. In other words, our own value preference can be more authoritative than the Bible’s.
- ‘詮釋者...不斷復取(retrieve)其從外而來的言語。因此，基督教神學的詮釋不單是一種由[聖經]敘事至世界的單向性活動，也是一種由世界走進[聖經]敘事的活動。’<sup>30</sup> Here the ‘verbum externum’ is rather ‘creatively’ reinterpreted to be the voice from the world and not from Christ. Theology serving as a prophetic voice in the secular world is acceptable, according to Cho, but at the same time it must in turn be shaped by the world. A penchant for ‘dialogue’ for dialogue’s sake renders the faithful independence of the prophetic character outdated.

Such arbitrary notions of reciprocity, plurality, or ‘dialogue’, or ‘tolerance’, are at times supported and at times rejected. The rough pattern is that the idea is typically rejected whenever it is situated in a traditional liberal setting, and supported whenever it is situated in a postmodern setting. There is a general perception that postmodernism presents a communal fidelity radically different from and superior to the modern individualism.

But that is an illusion. It is perhaps the appropriate point to introduce what Grenz would regard

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<sup>26</sup> 曹偉形著，關啓文、張國棟編：〈後現代文化與基督教〉，〈〈基督教神學的基礎：一個後自由神學的建議〉〉(香港：FES，2002)，頁 339。

<sup>27</sup> This by itself can be an incredible historical achievement, and I wish not to deny it. Only the Christian community can appreciate God as an absolute Subject; while the secular academia, seeing God as no more than an abstract object, can yield very little insight.

<sup>28</sup> 曹偉形：〈〈基督教神學的基礎：一個後自由神學的建議〉〉，頁 342。

<sup>29</sup> 曹偉形：〈〈基督教神學的基礎：一個後自由神學的建議〉〉，頁 345。

<sup>30</sup> 曹偉形：〈〈基督教神學的基礎：一個後自由神學的建議〉〉，頁 345。

as his unique contribution to theological construction beyond what is offered by post-liberalism: 'To Lindbeck's insights, I would add that there is no generic [Christian] religious experience, only experiences endemic to specific religious traditions, that is, experiences that are facilitated by a [theological] interpretive framework.'<sup>31</sup> Grenz regards this modification as even more advancing because on top of stripping the liberalist religious experience off its first cause status, as did the post-liberals, it also shatters its universality. Now not only that the Christian community manufactures its own truth vis-à-vis other religions, the Christian community itself should be fragmented into various traditions such that their own 'unique religious experience' as according to their 'own unique interpretive framework' can be abundantly treasured. Some people may call this an exodus from individualism, but it isn't. In the modern era, the individualistic man believes in universal truths, and universal truths unite mankind in the discovery process that underlies mankind's faith in unlimited progress. Men embark on their own journey without God and believe nothing transcendent. But they are integrated among themselves through fragile cooperative institutions such as markets, corporations, unions, civilian interest groups and, of course, religions. Under the postmodern influence, the equally individualistic man believes in so-called truths insofar as they don't span beyond his communal comfort zone, and the delusional notion of universal progress gives way to the equally delusional notion of communal complacency. Since the definition for the communal boundary is arbitrary and adjustable, and that postmodernity is just as individualistic as modernity and in fact is its natural successor, the individualistic impulse at work breaks up communities into ever smaller sub-communities, just as Grenz does. In a vintage Niebuhrian style, the prideful but inevitably unsuccessful reach for universal truths can only be followed by the subsequent escape into a narcissistic decadence of homey, cuddly communal warmth, with feeble souls curling up in a niche ever adjustable to meet the demands of self-importance. Only this finale can complete the story of individualism, the epic of the self, representing a further confusion consequent upon the original confusion of substituting the self for God as the center of existence. Certainly Grenz doesn't mean to envision such a Church. His ideal consists of a mission-minded, forward-looking and identity-conscious Church community in constant and vibrant dialogue with others. But the postmodern reality is and has already been reigning,<sup>32</sup> and Grenz' theology doesn't answer the problems.

In conclusion, I would suggest that Stanley Grenz does not provide a legitimate theological methodology, and in fact he fights a losing battle to begin with because the postmodern condition has few if any to offer theology. To push things through for the goal of a postmodern theology just to 'catch up with the world' may lead to or reinforce unintended and undesirable

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<sup>31</sup> Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic", 122.

<sup>32</sup> A new phenomenon in the U.S. of late is the emergence of a new generation of college students whose links with their families are unhealthily strong and affectionate. These students find difficulty in becoming independent and in socializing with their peers. They outsource, willingly, almost their entire college life to their parents, including day-to-day scheduling and term paper proof-reading on top of laundry, food and wake-up calls. This may aptly be interpreted as a postmodern phenomenon in which the boundary of community may have been reduced narcissistically to the family unit's. Without a transcendent Truth, even the most elevated 'family value' can be severely distorted.

consequences. Perhaps it is advisable to grant some of the postmodern theories the status equivalent to what Barth would assign to historical criticism, the enlightenment technique void of encompassing authority but useful in certain illustrations, but nothing beyond that. 'But [theology] cannot allow itself to be held by them [(other sciences)] what this [(its own task)] means concretely in its own case. As regards method, it has nothing to learn from them.'<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 8.