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BEFORE "FOUNDATIONALISM": A MORE BIBLICAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE GRENZ/FRANKE PROPOSAL FOR DOING THEOLOGY

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In the concluding chapter of his 1973 "classic" *The Evangelical Heritage* (as well as its subsequent reprintings), the late Bernard Ramm offered some sage advice concerning "the future of evangelical theology."[1] In order to avoid being the "church of the rearguard,"[2] evangelicals at the end of the twentieth century were summoned to (1) "be students of Holy Scripture"; (2) "know the inner structure of evangelical theology" (a prod to produce academically-competent works); (3) "know their cultural climate"; (4) "be diligent students of linguistics, philosophy of language, and communications"; and (5) "rethink the manner in which God is related to the world."[3] In many regards, evangelicals *did* respond positively to Ramm's mandates, which, in turn, allowed them to move from the fringes of academia into a respectable, if not somewhat prominent position in the circles of religious scholarship. During this time, some significant new projects appeared in the ranks of evangelical systematic theology, ranging from the multi-volume writings of Carl Henry and Donald Bloesch to more conventional "textbooks" authored by Millard Erickson, Wayne Grudem, and Stanley Grenz. All of these scholars exhibited many of the "maturity marks" that Ramm deemed necessary for a strong evangelical presence. Erickson, for example, explicitly produced a theology that reflected a Ramm-like agenda: biblical, systematic, done in the context of human culture, contemporary, and practical.[4] Yet just as evangelicals were showing the "intellectual muscle" required to compete in the world of the academy, that culture itself was on the way out. The "modern" world-view that had ruled the twentieth century had now fallen on hard times. Modernism's unbridled optimism in human reason and technology had proved to be an untenable thesis in a century devastated by war. Moreover, the certitude of naturalistic science and the autonomy of number theory had given way to relativity, Quantum Mechanics, and Goedel's Theorem. Furthermore, a burgeoning global awareness revealed a world of many and diverse cultural perspectives, causing many to question, if not openly reject, the former "superiority" of

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[1] Bernard Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage: A Study in Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 151.

[2] Ibid. 170.

[3] Ibid. 151–70.

[4] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1009) 23–24.

Western rationality. Such "Western" arrogance and chauvinism were hardly acceptable in the new intellectual climate. As the twentieth century, then, gave way to the twenty-first, evangelicals found themselves facing an intellectual challenge once again, but one quite different from the modernism that dominated the world of Ramm. In almost a postmodern-like "irony," conservative Christianity found its newfound "reasonableness" (in response to modernity's critique) objectionable to the new climate, precisely because it appealed to *rationality.* Consequently, the thoughtful, logical, and scholarly presentations of orthodoxy by Henry and others were now in danger of being dismissed as obscurantist in a culture where the "rules of the game" had dramatically changed. For a movement that had labored hard to escape the anti-intellectualism of its fundamentalist forebears, such a development was, to say the least, ironic.

Into this new postmodern arena, however, some bold, pioneering evangelical voices have entered, who, while still holding firm to the confessional standards of the past, nonetheless are attempting to restate them in terms meaningful to postmodernity. Chief among these men and women is the Canadian Baptist Stanley Grenz. The Carey/Regent College (and more recently, Baylor University) professor first served notice of his participation in the new postmodern project in his somewhat controversial 1993 volume, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology.* Soon after this, his aforementioned systematics text, *Theology for the Community of God*, made its appearance, offering the notion of community as a new, integrative motif, while dramatically relegating the doctrine of Scripture (an evangelical starting place since Calvin) to a subsection in a chapter on the Holy Spirit. It is, then, in this context—both the general one of postmodernity, and the specific one of Grenz's writings—that we encounter *Beyond Foundationalism*. This at first glance rather unremarkable volume (at least in size) is in reality a giant step in the evangelical development of a postmodern theology (not to mention the final volume of a "trilogy" of Professor Grenz's theological pilgrimage out of a "modernistically-oriented evangelicalism"). Co-written with Biblical Seminary professor John Franke, Grenz's volume sets forth a fairly well-defined method for constructing an evangelical theology in the current milieu. Contending that modernity's "foundationalist" epistemology has essentially brought a "fragmentation" to both evangelical and mainline theologies,[5] the

[5] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Post-Modern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 5–9. This "fragmentation" may be seen in theological liberalism's division into a "revisionist" camp (contemporary theologians who continue to pursue the goals and concerns of nineteenth-century "Liberal theology;" i.e. the primacy of universal human experience); and a "postliberal" movement (embodied in the writings of George Lindbeck) that actually reverses the direction of the former's program and rather calls the Christian community to a task of "self-description," and endeavor that is more concerned with understanding the shared language, practices and inner coherence of the Faith than it is with how these articulations are received by the outside world (p. 6). In a somewhat parallel fashion, evangelicals appear to be fragmented into at least two camps themselves (according to Olson), with the "traditionalist" oriented towards protecting the "boundaries" of conservative beliefs, and a "reformist" movement that views theology as a provisional, on-going discipline, with relatively undefined boundaries (pp. 8–9).

authors offer their case for a new, "postfoundationalist" methodology. This project, in turn, rejects the age-old correspondence theory of truth (a staple in Western culture since Aristotle, as well as its present, modernistic forms), in favor of the type of linguistic constructivism pioneered by philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein.[6]

While this paper's title clearly suggests that I (as well as many other evangelical scholars) have serious reservations about this new project, allow me to speak some words of commendation on behalf of the Grenz/Franke proposal. First, it can hardly be disputed that some evangelicals were (unwitting) partakers of the "tree of modernity[7]"—although the culprits might not necessarily be the ones that the authors cite. One can see the specter of modernism, however, lurking in the "Common Sense Realism" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which a Lockean epistemology often shaped a "pure, unbiased" reading of the Bible. My own Stone-Campbell tradition arose in such an epistemic environment, resulting in the conviction that Scripture's true meaning was apparent to all sincere seekers. This assumption, in turn, produced a "Pelagian-like" conversion process that practically relegated the Spirit's role to a mere footnote in an exercise of human reason.[8] Admittedly,

[6] Ibid. 38–42.

[7] Ibid. 33–37. Grenz and Franke have recently published updated and lightly modified versions of their earlier critiques (*Beyond Foundationalism*) of "standard" evangelical understandings of *sola scriptura*. See *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics* (ed. V. Bacote, L. Miguelez, and D. Ockham; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004); S. Grenz, "Nurturing the Soul In Forming the Mind: The Genesis of the Evangelical Scripture Principle" 21–41; and J. Franke, "Scripture, Tradition and Authority: Reconstructing the Evangelical Conception of *Sola Scriptura*" 192–210. While Charles Hodge, for example, might well have fallen into a modernistic trap in his formulation of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, it cannot be so easily demonstrated that the concept of an error-free Bible is itself the step-child of modernity. The notion of a wholly true Scripture seems to have been a given in the church until the rise of modern science. The ancient ecumenical creeds seem to presuppose that the Bible is true (the latter's veracity credentials the creedal expression), and the later Protestant Reformation was launched in large part due to the Roman Church's departure from genuine, scriptural teaching. While the term "inerrancy" admittedly was not used by either the early church theologians or their Reformation-era descendants, it is hard to account for the tone of normativeness that is inherent in their writings without some kind of concept of Scripture's unfailing truthfulness. See G. Bromiley, "The Church Fathers and Holy Scripture," in *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 195–220. In this article Bromiley demonstrates that virtually all the elements of the latter "Princeton view of inspiration" were present in Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Cassian, and others.

[8] I have discussed this unfortunate capitulation to Baconian epistemology in a paper delivered at the *2004 Stone-Campbell Journal Conference*, "If Bacon Is Not Raised, Is Our Faith in Vain?" While these "Scottish Common Sense Realists" framed their plea for a "restored Christianity" in this dubious manner, the credibility of their theological project is not ultimately contingent upon this outmoded and clearly flawed understanding of human cognition. Campbell's goal of a united Christianity is obviously a good and very biblical focus (cf. John 17:21) quite independent of Bacon's doctrine of perspicuous nature. The search for a "norming model" of the Christian faith does not rise or fall with these nineteenth-century evangelicals' universe "sanctified" appropriation of modernity, with the latter's naïve confidence in human reason. In fact, this "unholy union" resulted in an (unintended) reductionistic pneumatology, a theological consequence that also put this "free will" heritage at odds with its Arminian brethren. For a more complete discussion of this occurrence, see my "The Holy Spirit's Role in Conversion: Why Restorationists Seem Out of the Evangelical Mainstream," in *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement* (ed. William Baker; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

it can be argued that the rationalistic certitude sought by secular modernists did find some resonance in the ranks of theological conservatism, as the latter attempted to make the reliability of Scripture, for example, a postulate of reason, rather than an article of a naïve "faith." A quest for unshakeable foundations, and a confidence that such could be possessed by nineteenth and twentieth-century evangelicals, was undoubtedly due in part, to an uncritical acceptance and imitation of the modernist agenda. Perhaps the late twentieth-century compilations of "evidentialist" apologetic proofs, such as those popularized by Josh McDowell in his *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* series, are the last vestiges of this brand of evangelicalism's misguided effort to "match" the rationality of modernity. Conservative Christians, who still wish to maintain that our faith is built on "indisputable facts," have unfortunately allowed themselves to be "slaves" of a rationalistic system that has seen its better days.

Second, *Beyond Foundationalism* offers a needed challenge to evangelicals with a high view of Scripture to truly allow that Scripture to function as our "norming norm."[9] The Bible must not be relegated to the status of mere proposition, but rather must be recognized as the "Spirit's voice."[10] In addition, the Scriptures construct a particular "world view" for the believing community that "is nothing less than a new creation centered in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)."[11] Bible reading, then, is to be done with a pietistic "spiritual formation" goal[12] mediated through a believing "community"—both local and global. This approach is a welcome respite from the logic-driven reductionism and denominational isolationism that often characterize evangelical studies of Scripture.[13] Moreover, Grenz and Franke admonish us to respect the Bible as a canonical whole, appreciating it as a unified story rather than as "a storehouse of facts waiting to be systematized."[14]

Third, *Beyond Foundationalism* presents a theological method that incorporates ecclesiastical "tradition" in its "hermeneutical trajectory,"[15] an often neglected, if not openly disdained element in both mainline and evangelical approaches.

[9] *Beyond Foundationalism* 63–92.

[10] Ibid. 68.

[11] Ibid. 78.

[12] Ibid. 87.

[13] Ibid. 91–92. In a similar vein, Kevin Vanhoozer argues for a five-point "sapiential systematics": "We need a theology that is oriented toward wisdom, for wisdom integrates cognition (mind) imagination (heart), and action (strength)." "The Voice and the Actor," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method* (ed. John Stackhouse; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000) 74–75. Furthermore, we move towards this sapiential goal in dialogue with other "historic" Christian voices, not because there is a plurality of truths but rather because these diverse voices drive us back (repeatedly) to the biblical text (pp. 80–81). See also the excellent chapter on "The Spiritual Purposes of Theology" in David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), esp. 232–57.

[14] Ibid. 90. A welcome trend in favor of such a canonical reading of Scripture is becoming more evident in the ranks of evangelicalism, especially in the new emphasis upon biblical theology and in the development of hermeneutical approaches such as intertextuality.

[15] Ibid. 93. Alister McGrath also offers a healthy and helpful treatment on the positive roll of tradition in contemporary evangelical theology in "Engaging the Great Tradition," in *Evangelical*

Fourth, the authors raise some pertinent issues in their discussion of theology and culture, as they call us to "serve the present generation by speaking within and to the cultural context in which God has placed us."[16] (On the other hand, not a few of Grenz and Franke's reflections about the meaning and function of culture are certain to unnerve many evangelical readers.)[17]

A fifth focus that merits our attention and some commendation is *Beyond Foundationalism's* summons for a distinctive, "Trinitarian" theology.[18] This concern has obviously received some badly needed attention from evangelical theologians in recent years and inarguably sets the Christian faith in bold relief against the canvas of world religions.[19]

Sixth, this Trinitarian theology is to be fundamentally *lived*—expressed within the context of genuine Christian "community," which in the authors' use, is much more than the "buzzword" of postmodernity. On the contrary, for Grenz and Franke, community represents a serious-minded attempt to develop ecclesiology, a doctrine that often gets relegated to the periphery in conservative theology's emphasis on the individual's response to the Gospel.[20] Consequently, defining events in the church's life (e.g. baptism,

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Futures 139–58. According to McGrath, "the magisterial Reformation witnessed the development of an approach to theology that gave priority to Scripture *while fully acknowledging the sapiential and critical role of tradition*. . . . Tradition is allocated a positive and critical role as a servant in the interpretation and application of Scriptures" (p. 152; emphasis added).

[16] Ibid. 152.

[17] The author writes:

> Unlike either correlation or contextualization, this model presupposes neither gospel nor culture—much less both gospel and culture as pre-existing, given realities that subsequently enter into conversation. Rather, 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 the conversation itself. Hence, we are advocating a specifically nonfoundationist, interactionalist theological method (p. 158).

[18] Ibid. 169–202.

[19] Cf. the recent treatments of the significance of the Trinity by Erickson, Packer, McGrath, and others. In his non-technical exposition of "Evangelical Essentials" John Stott suggests that we "limit our evangelical priorities, namely the revealing initiative of God the Father, the redeeming work of God the Son and the transforming ministry of God the Holy Spirit. All our other evangelical essentials will then find an appropriate place somewhere under this three-fold or Trinitarian rubric" (*Evangelical Truth* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999] 25). Without a doubt, much credit for this Trinitarian "renaissance" must be given to the late Colin Gunton (cf., e.g., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997). Yet even Gunton's "trailblazing" work is, in reality, recovering a major emphasis of the great neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth (*CD* I/1). This new "trinitarianism" is being further fueled by a (re)discovery (on the part of evangelicals) of the writings of Eastern Orthodox theologians such as John Zizioulos, who have since ancient days begun their theologizing from God's three-in-oneness (cf. J. Zizioulos, *Being As Communion* [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997]). In contrast to the Western fathers who tended to make the Trinity subservient to God's substance, the Greek theologians—past and present—have argued that "the substance never exists in a 'naked' state . . . without hypostasis . . . outside the Trinity, there is no God" (p. 41).

[20] Ibid. 223–24.

Lord's Supper) find themselves subordinated to an almost indifferent status, doing little justice to either the NT or early Christian practice.[21] Moreover, community is a concept that communicates the church's unique role as the visible presence of the Kingdom in this time, unlike the inadequate versions of *basileia* found in liberalism ("a society of persons of good will") or amongst many evangelicals (purely a future, millennial rule of Christ). Grenz and Franke have accurately touched upon this critical area (ecclesiology) that clearly must be a (the?) major concern of twenty-first century projects in systematic theology, at least as they are crafted in evangelical circles.

A seventh and final area of commendation is the *Beyond Foundationalism* proposal that good theology should be "future-focused." In the words of the authors, eschatology should be no less than our "orienting motif."[22] Building heavily upon the work of Jürgen Moltmann, Grenz and Franke call the church (and especially its theological leaders) "to participate in God's work of constructing a world in the present that reflects God's own eschatological will for creation."[23] Such a "this-world-embracing" eschatology, then, more genuinely reflects the highly ethically nuanced end-time theology of the NT (cf. 1 Thess 5:1–11) and is also a most needed corrective to the heavily futuristic and highly unproductive discussions that still dominate eschatological discussion in many conservative circles.

In summation, there is much good in *Beyond Foundationalism*'s theological project. Grenz and Franke have served to point evangelical theology (and mainline versions as well) in some fruitful directions by (re)acquainting us with a wide range of sources, not to mention fundamental motifs, that can and should guide our own theological formulation in the present century. In many ways, these two creative thinkers have followed Ramm's thirty-year-old counsel on how to do theology. Doubtlessly, a postmodern-oriented systematic theology is desperately needed. However, whatever form(s) these projects take, they cannot operate with some of the basic presuppositions that have been too readily accepted in *Beyond Foundationalism*. Indeed, I would suggest that the very title of the work suggests a fundamental flaw that fatally undermines the Grenz-Franke theological project.

[21] Ibid. 224–25. Cf. Robert E. Webber, *Ancient–Future Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), who in a similar view to Grenz and Franke, argues that the postmodern era is positively challenging evangelicals to recover *ecclesiology*—"a strong theology of the church as God's earthly community" (p. 76), that in turn "restores" the sacraments (and other symbolic ways God's truth and presence is mediated to us; e.g. arts, music, space) to prominence in worship, rather than relegating them to the fairly marginal status they play in many conservative, Bible-centered churches (pp. 107–15). My own Stone-Campbell movement has probably done a better job at developing an ecclesiology than most evangelical churches, in large part due to her "restoration" of baptism's role in saving faith and a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper (cf. Acts 20:7). Our fellowship's dubious tendencies towards "patternism" have (perhaps unintentionally) contributed to the kind of "sacramental theology" that Grenz, Franke, Webber, and others see as vital to the development of a thoroughgoing evangelical ecclesiology. For further discussion on this matter see my 2001 ETS paper "The Stone-Campbell Understanding of Conversion: A Misunderstood 'Sola Fide.'"

[22] Ibid. 239.

[23] Ibid. 272.

I. *"BEYOND FOUNDATIONALISM" . . . OR* BEFORE?

The *Beyond Foundationalism* proposal is not a productive, nor a particularly biblically-faithful route for evangelicals to follow due to what I perceive to be serious deficiencies in at least three critical areas: biblical/historical, philosophical, and missiological.

1. *Biblical/Historical Problems*. *Beyond Foundationalism* seems to make an all too frequent error in implying that a "rational" epistemology (at least as found in mainline Catholic, and notably, evangelical circles) is of necessity an intentional (or "unintentional") byproduct of a foundationalism rooted in Enlightenment Modernism. While the authors do differentiate between the varieties of foundationalism (i.e. Cartesian Lockeian, experiential, and so on), a rationally grounded metaphysical realism and a correspondence view of truth seem to be unnecessarily coupled with modernity. Modernity's rationalism has rightly been critiqued and found wanting by its postmodern descendants; its hubris in locating certitude within the finite and often context-bound human mind has met its rightful humiliation. The arrogance of the *Aufklärung* and its supposed "objectivity" has rightfully been replaced by an academic spirit more aware of its own presuppositions and more tentative in its declarations. Indeed, one who speaks in too dogmatic tones today will find the reception to be less than welcoming. Modernity has for all practical purposes run its course.

Unfortunately, however, a serious error is being perpetrated in many circles—especially within evangelical theology—that the death of modernity has canceled out the validity of virtually any claim to "objectivity," or more specifically, any epistemic position that would claim that it is actually "decoding" (not "encoding") what is really there. This reduction of a realist epistemology to but another form of the discarded modernist paradigm is not only finding a home within the ranks of postmodern evangelical theologians such as Grenz and Franke but has attained almost "mantra status" with "Emergent Church" leaders such as Brian McLaren.[24] Unfortunately, the academic prowess of the former (theologians) is not matched by the latter (church practitioners), resulting in a dismissive attitude toward Christian "truth claims" ("modernism") and a heavy preference for "all things

[24] In his widely-read book *A New Kind of Christian* McLaren offers this "new" (postmodern) definition of theology (via "imaginary" e-mail, naturally):

> Sure, I'd be glad to try to define the term "theology." For me, it's not so much a list of beliefs or an outline of beliefs. It's more of a story, the *story* of how people have sought and learned about God through the centuries. Like any human story, it's got a lot of ups and downs, glories and embarrassments, the glories giving us glimpses of God's own story, and the embarrassment, giving us glimpses of God's mercy, patience and compassion (*A New Kind of Christian* [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001] 161).

This "expanded definition" of theology, then, is credited to Grenz and Franke, in *Beyond Foundationalism* (ibid. 170).

mysterious and spiritual."[25] But, we must ask, is the evangelicalism of the past really just "warmed-over" modernism? Grenz and Franke certainly think so, as they cite such contemporary philosophers as Westphal, van Huyssteen, and Wolsterstorff as authoritative voices who commit us to seek a new non-foundational approach to theology.[26] A search for "foundations" (Christian or otherwise) represents a program that is nothing more than a hopeless "quest for the Holy Grail."[27] Utilizing insights from the contemporary social sciences that radically challenged the objectivity and certitude of physical science-based modernism, we must finally be willing to admit that our twentieth-century evangelical concern with "truth" was the product of an epistemological model that was doomed from the beginning. And this is precisely where the authors (as well as other critics) commit a major biblical and historical error.

To begin with, historic Christian orthodoxy—from its inception—has not rooted itself in a modernistic confidence in human reason but in the ontological reality of a Creator God and his creation. Apart from whatever preconceptions and/or perceptions of the cosmos finite human beings may have, there is an objective status to reality, affirmed in the opening words of the Bible ("In the beginning God created the heavens and earth").[28] This state-

[25] In a recent Billy Graham Center evangelism roundtable, McLaren spoke disparagingly about presentations of the gospel that assert its objective, absolute truthfulness, and/or Christianity's status as the true metanarrative: "I think most Christians grossly misunderstand the philosophical baggage associated with terms like absolute and objective (linked to foundationalism and the myth of neutrality). . . . Similarly, arguments that put absolutism versus relativism, and objectivism versus subjectivism, prove meaningless or absurd to postmodern people. They're wonderful *modern* arguments that backfire with people from the emerging culture" ("Emergent Evangelism: The Place of Absolute Truths in a Postmodern World—Two Views," *Christianity Today* 48/11 [November 2004] 43). In response to McLaren's tendency to label logical argumentation as hopelessly modernistic, Wheaton president Duane Litfin reminded the audience that "an appreciation for the value of good reasons should not label people as modernists," noting that *reasonable argument* has had a long history prior to Enlightenment thinking; e.g., Paul's summary of the Gospel [1 Corinthians 15]" (ibid. 43).

[26] *Beyond Foundationalism* 38–49.

[27] Ibid. 38.

[28] The Bible begins with ontology—the (pre)existence of God followed by the creation of his grand, but finite universe. Ontology *precedes* epistemology in the creation narrative; that is, something/one is really there, independent of one's perceptions about the nature of that reality. Moreover, the Genesis account is actually a divinely-communicated corrective to the cosmological model generally intuited among animistic cultures—a capricious, magical, spiritual battleground that renders human beings vulnerable, if not totally helpless. Old Testament scholars have noted that the original act of creation is described in the hospitable terms of constructing and filling a tent (suggesting a secure and inviting universe for God's human creatures), a counterintuitive cosmic paradigm, to be sure, but one that clearly lent itself to what eventually became known as modern science. Enrico Catore deems the Genesis portrayal as the origin of a transsensible understanding of the cosmos, noting that the order and rationality that the Creator gives to his creation are attributes that propelled Christian scientists beyond the simplicity of Aristotelian atomism (cf. E. Catore, "The Christic Origination of Science" *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 51 (1985) 211–22). It also should be noted that creation should be understood in terms of the universe not merely restricted to the earth. This important distinction then elevates the scientific discussion from the all-too-common preoccupation with biology to the much larger field of physics and mathematical description.

ment posits the existence of an eternal, independent, and infinite Creator who is to be ontologically distinguished from the finite universe that owes its existence and sustenance solely to him. This triune Being, in turn, creates a cosmos that reflects his "goodness" in its order, diversity, coherence, and perceptible rationality.[29] God's crowning creation, humankind (itself a reflection of the "communitarian" God) is aptly and uniquely designated his "image" (Gen 1:26, 27), and given a distinctive mandate to exercise dominion over the rest of the Lord's universe, both animate and inanimate (v. 28).

The creation narrative (a motif that has to have a certain attractiveness to our "story-oriented" postmoderns) sets forth a real world that can be decoded by human beings, albeit in a humility which ought to properly reside in those who are still themselves creatures. Clearly a type of realism (to be distinguished from foundationalism) is expressed in these opening chapters of Scripture. The universe is ultimately knowable to humans because they are the *imago Dei*, but this does not necessitate a foundationalist epistemology that falsely promises that we have attained a certainty about either God or the cosmos. Even in humanity's pristine and presumably "uninhibited" state of enquiry one's knowledge of an infinite God and his finite but sizeable creation was always subject to a "critical" adjustment. After the Fall, of course, this lifelong pursuit of knowledge was complicated by the distortion of sin, producing patently incorrect and inaccurate readings of both God's general and special "speech."

The rebellious desire to "be like God" (Gen 3:5) was in actuality a precursor to the Enlightenment (and modernity's) confidence in autonomous human reason; hence, in a real sense, we could attribute foundationalism to the Fall. But this is not to be confused with the application of a "critical realism" that humbly but accurately describes what is really there. Historically speaking, then, it is difficult to deny that Christian (and orthodox Jewish) theists have generally assumed that one can discuss reality "truthfully," since creation (although fallen) is still ordered and purposed by God. The (revealed) nature of God—not the genius of humankind—is the actual basis for our "confidence" in perceiving things as they truly are, or as Kevin Vanhoozer has recently reminded us, "*First God*."

This "God-prompted" understanding is unquestionably reflected throughout the OT (cf., e.g., Isaiah's magnificent "creation theology" in Isa 40:25–26; 42:5; 44:24; etc.), and produced a comprehension of reality that sets off (or

[29] The rational structure of the cosmos set forth in Genesis is expanded upon in the NT's presentation of the Cosmic Christ. Mathematical physicist/theologian John Polkinghorne has perceptively noted that Christ is identified as:

> the Word (much more than rational principle but surely including the idea of such a principle) without whom 'was not anything made that was made' (John 1:3); the One of whom it can be said 'all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together' (Colossians 1:16–17); the One 'through whom also [God] created the world' (Hebrews 1:2). What greater encouragement could there be for the scientific exploration of the *rational structure of the physical world*, what clearer indication of its value? (*Reason and Reality* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991], 70).

should have set off) Israel from her neighbors who viewed life through local myths instead of the grand, global work of the one true God. The wonders of the heavens and the earth were not eternal and unfathomable deities, but rather created (and "bounded") "objects" that were under subjection to the Creator God, and therefore potentially "mastered" by his highest creature, the human being.[30] The well-known Psalm 8 eloquently expresses this theme of cosmic "knowability."[31] In the NT as well, the "realism" inherent in the "God/creation ontology" is commended to pagans as both an epistemological corrective as well as the basis for a transcultural gospel (cf. Acts 17:22–31). This certainty, however, clearly was not grounded in the hubris of human perception (modernistic foundationalism), but in the revelation of God, who desires that his human creatures correctly discern his nature in general terms (natural revelation) and in the relational specificity of the spoken, written and incarnate means of special revelation (cf. Heb 1:1–2).

The early Christian creeds also pick up this biblical realism, confessing that all reality begins with God ("the Father Almighty"), whose independent (pre)existence, in turn, gives definiteness, objectivity, and rationality to the world around us. As Paul's discourse in Athens shows, it is the lack of such a "God-first" ontology that creates the multiple and confusing perspectives of the Epicureans and Stoics (Acts 17:22–23). It was, in fact, these Greek thinkers who were making the epistemological mistake ("truth" comes from human reason) that has been repeated in modernity, and today has drawn the wrath of postmodern critique. Paul's Athenian address seemingly confirms a canonical maxim. When one attempts to formulate absolute truth claims without (at least implicitly) first recognizing the God of Scripture, such an

[30] Polkinghorne comments upon this relationship between the rationality of the universe and its apparent accessibility to human beings:

> If the deep-seated congruence of the rationality present in our minds with the rationality present in the world is to find a true explanation, it must surely lie in some more profound reason which is the ground of both. Such a reason would be provided by the rationality of the Creator (J. Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation: The Search for Understanding* [London: SPCK, 1988] 20–21).

This (pre)understanding of the rationality of the universe, existing as a reflection of its rational Creator, is where the "Creator/Creation" model emerges as an improvement over "Reformed Epistemology" (e.g. Plantinga, Wolsterstorff.) Although creation is fallen, it still bears the essential coherence of its Maker, which makes science possible. On the other hand, unlike Natural Theology, this rationality does not come merely by observation, but is rather prompted by the spoken communication of God recorded in the Bible. It must be remembered that "full-blown" scientific exploration came as a result of Scripture's admonition to "rule over" (Gen 1:28)—the latter was the formers necessary prequel. The recent "Intelligent Design" (ID) movement has also called attention to the "rationality" or "design" of the cosmos.

[31] "You made him [humanity] ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet" (Ps 8:6 NIV). This verse clearly echoes the "dominion mandate" of Gen 1:28, and with that Creation passage clearly anticipates an eschatological dimension to this "creation rule" (cf. Heb 2:6–8). Until the eschaton, our stewardship over creation will be limited, not to mention fallen; yet, it is historically undeniable that even finite, sinful human beings having been gaining an increasing "mastery" over creation (e.g. medicine, transportation, safety measures, etc.). However, such advances have too often been tainted by selfishness, greed, and a disregard for ecological matters.

endeavor will degenerate into an impossible relativism. (Obviously, postmodern thinkers would also concur with the latter part of this postulate.)

Consequently, it is not surprising that ancient Greek rhetoricians resorted to "persuasive speech" as the mechanism to adjudicate competing "truth claims," for truth in their materialistic system had to be ultimately an exercise in power, not ontology.[32] Of course, it would take the nineteenth-century Nietzsche to catch the very dark side to this *Wille der Macht*.

If in fact there is warrant to the charge that this writer's conviction of a biblical text-driven, God/cosmos rationality is itself the imposition of a later Western model, the brilliant work of the contemporary Roman Catholic scholar, Stanley Jaki, has capably demonstrated that the origins of modern science were inarguably forged from the biblical doctrine of creation and its resultant worldview that presented a cosmos of rationality, coherence, and comprehension (cf. *The Road of Science and the Ways to God*). In this groundbreaking work (that inexplicably still receives little interaction from evangelical treatises on theology and science; e.g. McGrath), the Benedictine Jaki shows that naturalistic attempts to produce an ongoing scientific enterprise (e.g. the ancient Greeks) always short-circuited the process, because these world views could not really account for an intelligibility in the cosmos that could transcend present human constructions.[33]

Only the Christian world view, on the other hand, could, and in fact did, free the observer to decode a universe much larger than his or her preconceptions. The rise of modern science did not come into being because of autonomous human reason and an unfounded optimism in one's rationality,

[32] Cf. Paul's statements in 1 Cor 2:1–4, in which he clearly demarcates his message from that of the Greek rhetoricians: while they presented their arguments on "wise and persuasive words" (v. 4), Paul's preaching was grounded in the truth ("testimony") of God (1 Cor 1:1).

[33] Jaki comments concerning the scientific efforts of the ancient Greeks:

> [They] came far closer than any other culture to formulating a viable science. . . . Compared with the natural theology of other ancient cultures, the one produced by the Greeks should seem perfection itself and so should their science! But like their science, their natural theology too halted just before reaching its proper objective. Assertions of monotheism and of a creation out of nothing were among the Greeks of old sporadic at best, like bursts of a fire never to become a broadly shared light. Something of this is acknowledged when a book of a rationalist on Greek rationality ends with the rueful remark that unlike Christianity, the Greeks "did not succeed in imposing any body of philosophical doctrine on the population as a whole." Yet, as it turned out, the rise of science needed the broad and persistent sharing by the whole population, that is, an entire culture, of a very specific body of doctrine relating the universe to a universal and absolute intelligibility embodied in the tenet about a personal God, the Creator of all (S. L. Jaki, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978] 33).

This work is a compilation of the author's Gifford Lectures, delivered in 1975 and 1976. I am frankly astonished that Jaki's writings have largely been ignored in recent evangelical discussions about the relationship between theology and science, and especially how the latter's governing presuppositions were drawn from Christian theology. Perhaps this is due to "our" tendency to begin our discussions of science with the rise of Reformation Protestantism rather than first tracing the presuppositions of science back to Scripture, and then tracing its development through the Roman Church.

but emerged instead after Western civilization set aside its (Greek) foundation of human epistemological self-sufficiency for one that started with the biblical God. Enlightenment-driven deism, then, was not the necessary consequence of the modern scientific revolution, but rather an "illegitimate stepchild" of a Creator/creation rationality that had been hijacked from the Bible and its historic creedal affirmations. As seventeenth and eighteenth-century scientists increasingly marginalized special revelation in favor of its historic, general companion, the self-sustaining/self-explaining "clockwork machine" (Newton) took permanent residence. Further developments in the history of science, however, were to expose the inadequacies of the Newtonian model and rightly question the human mind's ability to prescribe reality. But this *faux pas* of the Enlightenment (and the resulting modernist) epistemology is not, it must be repeated, a corruption of the rational realism that was inherent in the historic Christian faith. In fact, without the latter the former could have never been born.

In some ways, the history of science parallels the recent discussion in biblical studies about the chronology of the canonical gospels and their Gnostic aberrations; that is, which of these came first? In spite of certain protestations on the part of a very few academics and their "popularizers" (Dan Brown), consensus scholarship has clearly ruled in favor of the priority of the NT four Gospels.[34] Gnosticism, then, is a second-century "corruption" of a first-century tradition, dependent upon the prior existence of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. While one could rightly argue that Gnosticism's Greek philosophic elements predate the canonical writings, the story that they "Hellenize" could not have possibly arisen from these pagan sources. For that matter, the Gospels' presentation of the person and work of Christ could hardly have been created from the messianic conceptions of Second Temple Judaism.[35] Likewise, one could hardly get to the scientific rationalism of modernity without first traveling the path of a "pre-modern" rationality; the "aberration" of the former could not occur without the prior existence of the latter.

Thus Jaki's survey of the "history of science" seems to indicate that a rational (or "critical") realism was already well established in the early and genuinely orthodox presentations of Christianity. While the full bloom of scientific discovery was still a millennia away, the basic presuppositions that would eventually make "live-birthed science" a reality were put in place.[36]

[34] Cf., e.g., the recent works by Darrell Bock and Ben Witherington III, respectively, in response to the ahistorical assertions of the bestselling novel *The DaVinci Code*: *Breaking the DaVinci Code* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004); *The Gospel Code: Claims About Jesus, Mary Magdalene and DaVinci* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).

[35] Cf., e.g., N. T. Wright's magisterial work *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

[36] Jaki writes:

> Science failed to become an open-ended avenue in the great ancient cultures just as their quest for the ultimate in intelligibility, which is the quest for God, failed to go convincingly beyond man's own self and its cosmic extrapolation, an animated and self-contained nature. The ultimate in intelligibility was first placed firmly on a level transcending both

Centuries later, the Reformers, in particular, expressed a "pre-modern" confidence about the rationality of God's Word and world, yet they did so with an attitude that recognized that exegetical and scientific conclusions were themselves to be revisited as one continued to study the boundaries fixed in both Scripture and cosmos.[37] (Tridentine theology, on the other hand, demonstrated a resistance towards revisiting past beliefs—due to the Roman Church's understanding of unbroken, infallible tradition—resulting in a scientific enterprise that would find a more hospitable climate in Protestantism.)[38]

In summation, Grenz and Franke take Enlightenment foundationalism and use it to unfairly paint pre-Enlightenment, rationally-oriented epistemologies (namely Catholic and evangelical) with a broad brush of modernism. (I cannot help but muse about the irony suggested by this type of generalization, since the postmodern Grenz and Franke are in many ways repeating the kind of swashbuckling historical imprecision of the alleged "modernist" Francis Schaeffer, whose rational brand of apologetics they—and many others of their ilk—have rejected as obscurantist.)[39] While it is irrefutable that theological liberalism emerged as the "seeker-sensitive" stepchild of this human mind/experience-grounded epistemology (modernity), it is unjustifiable to contend that present-day evangelicalism has simply bought the same rationalistic package, albeit with a not-so-liberal belief in the supernatural.

More accurately, the renaissance of robust Protestant orthodoxy in the twentieth century by the likes of Clark, Henry, Kantzer, and others came

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> man and nature *during the Middle Ages* and in a way that constituted a cultural matrix. It manifested a broadly shared conviction that a personal, rational, and provident Being, absolute and eternal, is the ultimate source of intelligibility insofar as he is the Creator of all things visible and invisible. Conviction it was and not merely an intellectual fashion. Its most articulate spokesmen were medicant friars committed to an evangelical vision of man and world, a vision in which the order, beauty, and peace of nature were a shining reflection of the Creator and Father of all (*The Road of Science* 34; emphasis added).

Clearly, science was the product of the Christian *West*, not the Christian *East*, which was more mystically inclined. While Eastern Orthodoxy is currently experiencing a bit of a renaissance in Western Christian culture, and much of its strong Trinitarian emphasis is belatedly finding a home in our Evangelical theologies, the fact remains that the Western (Roman and later Protestant) Church came to grips with the rationality of God and his creation, leading to scientific development. While I am in no way deifying science, I do have to remind the "anti-science postmodernists" that the cars, airplanes, computers, medicines, and so on that are staples of our twenty-first century culture—and certainly the desire of our animistic neighbors—could not have arisen in a Christian environment that denounced reason. The historical development of science does provide an interesting, if not implicit commentary upon which reading of the Bible (rational or mystical) was more correct!

[37] Cf. Jaki, *The Road of Science* 90.

[38] And as such the prominent names in the "seventeenth century of genius" (Whitehead's expression) were invariably Protestant: Bacon, Newton, Clark, and others.

[39] In their critique of what they perceive to be "failed" evangelical attempts to contextualize their theology, Grenz and Franke attribute this failure to "the relatively uncritical acceptance of modernist assumptions by most evangelical theologians" (*Beyond Foundationalism* 15). Could it rather be that some (maybe much) of this present-day evangelical "caution" towards uncritically embracing the social sciences as any more than a descriptive enterprise is due to a pre-foundational (and scriptural) commitment to rationality and critical realism?

about as that generation recovered a biblical and historic (pre-Enlightenment) Christian commitment to rationality, though admittedly they did not always travel the history of science road that the Catholic Jaki navigates so well. While we may grant that some of these "classic" evangelicals often expressed themselves in jargon that too strongly resembled a modernist-like notion of "absolute certainty" (an understandable, though misguided attempt to demonstrate the intellectual credibility of the historic faith—an observation easy to make from hindsight), their ETS-founding principle of an "error-free Bible" was not merely the unfortunate product of a "naïve" modernity.[40]

Although the NT writers, Church Fathers, and even the Reformers did not express their confidence in Scripture's truth in exactly Warfield-like terms, it is hard to argue from their writings that something like an "inerrant" Scripture was not an assumed premise from the very beginnings of the Faith. Its later articulation in the familiar language of "Princetonian scholastism" was in reality not a new thought, but rather a recapitulation of an unquestioned article of the faith (until the Enlightenment) in terminology that probably pushed the boundaries of a healthy critical realism.

Rather than dismiss inerrancy as an untenable artifact of a conservative theology too willing to present itself in verbiage more befitting its modernist adversary, we should rightly nuance the term in a manner that more honestly represents the text, respects the historic convictions of the Christian Church, and perhaps most importantly, testifies to the virtue of the Bible's ultimate Author. Perhaps our contention that a Christian, rational realism is *before foundationalism* could actually help promote a more biblically and theologically-accurate alternative to the too-modern-sounding term "inerrancy" . . . such as *aletheia*?

2. *Philosophical problems.* The Grenz-Franke proposal of a post-foundational theology creates a second problem for the evangelical in its general philosophical position. While accurate in its critique of modernity's bankrupt claims to objectivity as well as its inability to generate universal truth claims from views that are conditioned by the observer's culture, the non-foundationalist cannot truly demand that any construction of reality is ontologically preferable to another. While many postmodern theorists do not want to succumb to relativism, their lack of criteria for "really knowing" makes the necessary criticism of alternative systems and behaviors very difficult.[41]

[40] The very pre-modern thinker Augustine of Hippo commented:

> The evangelists are free from all falsehood, both from that which proceeds from deliberate descent and that which proceeds from delicate deceit and that which is the result of forgetfulness. (*De Consensu Evangelistarum Libri* 2:12)

Now Augustine could, of course, be wrong in his analysis of Scripture—even naïve—but clearly his statement reveals that a notion such as biblical inerrancy was operative in the church nearly 1500 years before Warfield.

[41] In his recent chapter "Facing the Challenge of Postmodernism," Douglas Groothuis recounts an editorial that appeared in *The New York Times* following September 11, 2001:

> On September 22, 2001 . . . Edward Rothstein . . . opine(d) that the events of September 11 challenged the perspective of postmodernism. . . . But such assertions (the denial that truth

Grenz's well-known "Star Trek" illustration of the radically incompatible ethical systems of humans and Klingons is an apt, if not unintentional, portrayal of a dilemma that begs resolution, but in actuality can only describe.[42] This phenomenological orientation, it seems to me, carries both the blessing and bane of postmodern analysis. Postmodernism, using the tools of anthropology, sociology, and psychology (in difference to modernity's application of the instruments of the physical sciences) can help us profitably note the place of presupposition, culture, tradition, and community in our decision-making.

Thomas Kuhn's widely-quoted *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970) sets forth a convincing case that the history of science itself is a "paradigm shift" from one set of cosmological presuppositions to another. In other words, as the numbers of perceived anomalies increase, the integrity of the previously received model is challenged, until finally the "received view" is itself replaced.[43] (It must be noted, however, that Kuhn's alleged "incommensurability" of scientific paradigms is highly exaggerated in this otherwise epoch-making book. More accurately, "paradigm displacement" did not entail the wholesale rejection of the previous model; for example, Einstein's cosmic model did not abandon Newtonian equations, but rather, modified them.)[44]

Non-foundationalists rightly remind us that much knowledge is descriptive, limited to the time and location of the truth seeker. It is indeed hard to argue with Peter Berger that "we live in a social, cultural world of our own creation."[45] This is clearly a valuable lesson to both the naturalistic biologist who is convinced of the objectivity of his research or the evangelical pastor or scholar who believes that his or her exegesis of the book of Romans is solely governed by the Greek text absent from any cultural filters. On the other hand, if reality cannot really be known outside of the filters of one's own social construction, it would seem that science and theology both are confined to accepting each and every competing understanding as a legitimate portrayal of reality.

When Grenz and Franke posit a "preferred status" to their/our Christian community's reading it is hard to see why this "preference" is any more than a pragmatic one. While there is inarguably a basic (confessional) Christian

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and ethical judgment have objective validity) seem peculiar when trying to account for the recent attack. The destruction seems to cry out for a transcendent ethical perspective. Even mild relativism seems troubling by contrast (*To Everyone An Answer* [ed. F. Beckwith, W. L. Craig, and J. P. Moreland; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004] 251).

[42] Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism* 134.

[43] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). See especially pp. 111–35.

[44] Cf. Jaki, *The Road of Science* 230–45. Jaki writes:

> If, however, creative science drove an Einstein toward a world view which in its very core was identical to the one held by Maxwell, Faraday, Euler, Newton, Galileo, Kepler, and Copernicus insofar as objectivity and order are concerned, then one may suspect with good reason a *fair measure of identity* to be present in science throughout its cultivation from Copernicus to Einstein (p. 241; emphasis added).

[45] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969) 3–13. Cited in Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism* 139.

story that has been passed down through the centuries, it is hard for a postmodernist to press for its continuation merely because of its antiquity. Surely Christianity is only one of many *Weltanschauungen*, although it does offer some impressive historical contributions in the areas of human decency and altruism. This "record of human rights" (although there are also some notable "wrongs," such as the Crusades or European slavery) might make the Christian faith worth exporting (but not imposing) to others, but then again, if another faith is as virtuous, does it really matter if one becomes a Christian or not?[46]

But is ontology really beyond our grasp? As far as I know, most non-foundationalists assume that there are certain norms in our world (e.g. law of gravity, hygiene practices, the workings of the human heart, etc.). These norms seem to exist regardless of one's gender, culture, or bias. Whether a brain surgeon is a Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or Christian, he or she approaches the task with relatively the same set of assumptions about the human brain. Medical schools are generally ranked by how well they teach or research the generally recognized conditions of humanity, not by how they distinguish ethnic preferences. Some things in this world just happen to be true, which suggests a rational realism rather than a non-foundationalist epistemology. Alister McGrath quotes John Polkinghorne on this matter:

> The naturally convincing explanation of the success of science is that it is gaining a tightening grasp of an actual reality. The true goal of scientific endeavour is understanding the structure of the physical world, an understanding which is never complete but capable of further improvement. The terms of that understanding are dictated by *the way things are*.[47]

To the above, McGrath fittingly adds that "the simplest explanation of what makes theories work is that they relate to the way things really are."[48]

[46] David Clark rightly poses *the question* that Richard Rorty and other such postmodern pragmatists struggle to answer:

> "What warrants these (altruistic) beliefs?" Clark adds, "In justifying beliefs about these goals, pragmatists must either depend on a non-pragmatic strategy or else baldly assert, just posit their preferred goals. . . . They must either admit a certain kind of fideism (taking certain community values as mere posits—grounded in non evidence) or depend on the noetic strategies they take great delight in ridiculing" (*To Know and Love God* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2003] 16).

[47] McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature* 72–73.

[48] Ibid. 73. McGrath offers the following form of a realist epistemology that can productively guide our understanding of creation (science) and theology (noting again that the latter preceded the development of the former):

1. Ontologically, it is held that there exists a reality or realities, the existence of which is independent of an external to the inquiring human mind. This reality awaits our discovery or response, and is not called into being, constructed, projected or invented by the human mind.
2. Epistemologically, it is held that this reality or realities can be known, however approximately, and that statements which are made concerning it cannot be regarded totally or simply as subjective assertions concerning personal attitudes or feelings. It is possible to gain at least some degree of epistemic access to a reality which exists 'objectively,' while at the same time conceding that the manner in which this is apprehended or conceptualized may to some extent, be conditioned by cultural, social and personal factors.

It seems to me that non-foundationalism (including the version offered by Grenz and Franke) is an unnecessary over-reaction to the pretentious claims of a reductionistic modernism that dismissed God and creation as the origin of a rational (and apparently "correct") cosmic order. As we have previously argued, there could be no assumption about a rational structure to the universe without beginning with the Christian God. And yet, this biblical/historical starting place—that "birthed" the scientific enterprise—found itself displaced by, first, Descartes's mathematical certitude (autonomous self), and then by Kant's "transcendental ego," which in turn, laid the seeds of modernity . . . and ultimately, its late-twentieth-century demise.

In spite of the Enlightenment's claims that one could have "objective access" to universal verities, apart from God through the use of "pure reason," the "uncertainty" of locating these absolutes in a finite human mind would eventually come to call into question the entire notion of truth. Consequently, in recent times it has become apparent that we need to "go beyond foundationalism," for not only did it (foundationalism) promise things it could not deliver ("objectivity"), this epistemology was fundamentally "anti-theistic." However, the proposed postmodernist antidote is actually as, or more, dangerous than the faulty paradigm it rightly desires to replace. As a representative of these non-foundational projects, the Grenz-Franke proposal unfortunately accepts the modernistic model as the inevitable scientific paradigm, thereby "marginalizing" the supernatural to a "noumenal" status.

In this, they join a growing number of other evangelicals who presume that their escape from the "assured results of science" must lie in the approach of Barth and neo-orthodoxy. Seventy-five years ago, the brilliant Barth recognized that God must of necessity be independent and transcendent of this universe and that the scientific method could not account for all reality. However, instead of calling the scientific enterprise to its true, biblical, and historical origins, he unwisely (but understandably, given the times) tacitly accepted its (science's) naturalism, and "rescued" God in a fideistic manner.[49]

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3. Semantically, it is held that this reality may be depicted, described or in some manner represented, however inadequately or provisionally, so that it is possible to make statements concerning this reality which may be described at least as approximations to the truth. While fully conceding the limitations placed upon human language, it is held that this is neither inadequate nor inappropriate as a means of making meaningful statements concerning reality (pp. 75, 76).

Without hesitation, McGrath acknowledges the profound influence of T. F. Torrance on his natural science/theological realism model (pp. 76, 77).

[49] This is the thesis advanced by retired Lincoln Christian Seminary professor James Strauss. In his Th.M. thesis on Barth's doctrine of revelation, Strauss argued that Barth, like his nineteenth-century liberal "mentors," essentially accepted the reductionistic model of naturalistic (modernistic) science, instead of criticizing its questionable presuppositions. Unlike his forebears, Barth posited a transcendent God, thereby offering only a temporary respite from a still-modern culture. Barth's neo-orthodoxy is merely a rejection of a naturalistic worldview, not a substantive alternative to it. (Cf. J. D. Strauss, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Revelation" [Th.M. thesis, Chicago Graduate School of Theology, 1970]).

"Faith" was thus spared from the damning judgments of empirical reality, or so it appeared to the Barthians. Yet, the Barthian "reformation"—long-lived, compared to other twentieth-century theologies—could not really transcend its inherent subjectivism. In reality, it had not been much of a response to the challenges—and faults—of modernity; only a redirection. The real issue that needed to be addressed, namely the "stolen birthright" of modern science (Creator/creation rationality) was bypassed in favor of a more pietistic solution.[50] And the present-day evangelical "Barth renaissance" is in many ways following down this dubious path, albeit with the "un-Barth-like" context of a "majority" academic culture that calls for the end of foundationalism. But if Barth's "rebellion" essentially missed the mark, and neo-orthodoxy was only a temporary respite, why do his twenty-first century heirs think that a "Barth *redivivus*" is going to do much better in their world, where post-modernity's "irrationality" is already growing long in the tooth?

In spite of the authors' protestations, they, too, are falling prey into the same liabilities of neo-orthodox subjectivism. *Beyond Foundationalism*, in essence, offers little more than a similar, fideistically-oriented and critically-removed "non-answer" to modernism, although this is due to our culture's disdain for modernity, whereas Barth's project grew out of an environment in which such was embraced.[51] I must confess that even as I followed Grenz and Franke's adoption of "Trinity" as a defining motif (as well as that of eschatology)—both highly profitable and too-long-neglected moves in evangelical theology—I could not escape a nagging "suspicion" (perhaps, I am more postmodern than I would want to admit!) that this theological agenda is more complicated than just simply concerned with reviving some neglected orthodox doctrines. I may be totally incorrect in this analysis (and actually I hope I am!), but in seizing upon key Christian beliefs ("Trinity," "eschatology") that certainly stretch beyond the limits of easy human understanding, the authors seem to be advancing a subtle campaign against evangelical theologies that give a prominent place to rationality. While the recovery of a solid, trinitarian theology is surely necessary to a truly orthodox belief system, it seems that this "mystery" could very well be a most fitting "symbol" for a non-foundationalism that is inherently antagonistic to reason.

[50] Grenz and Franke dub their proposal ("Reading for the Spirit") a reclamation of the seventeenth-century "Pietist tradition" (*Beyond Foundationalism* 87–88).

[51] Robert Greer groups Stanley Grenz (as well as Miroslav Volf and James K. A. Smith) in the Barth-defined category of post-foundational realism. He writes:

> Standing in the shadow of neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth, post-foundational realists are characterized as post-*Cogito* without relinquishing their commitment to epistemological realism. They insist that truth is grounded, not in a methodology of radical doubt, but instead in a more intuitive dimension: the Holy Scriptures authenticated by means of the Holy Spirit speaking through them (or, as more commonly explained, the Holy Scriptures are self-authenticating). . . . Each has adopted a middle position, in some respects arguing in favor of postmodernism yet in other respects arguing against it. Specifically, (a) they insist upon the need for ontological referents to the Christian faith . . . and (b) they insist that no single theological system is normative for the Christian faith (*Mapping Postmodernism: A Survey of Christian Options* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003] 121).

What is more, I wonder if these and other postmodern evangelicals have, in their own way, not only appropriated Barth's "Christo-centric" theology, but translated it in the more postmodern-acceptable language of the "Spirit." This cognitively-elusive Third Person of the Godhead seems to dominate virtually every page of the Grenz-Franke text. In short, *Beyond Foundationalism* may not really be all that much "beyond" neo-orthodoxy, although its postmodern jargon may disguise its epistemological roots.

3. *Missiological problems.* In identifying the "community" as theology's "integrative motif," Grenz and Franke have once more latched onto one of postmodernism's key themes, an appropriation that is both helpful and crippling. The recognition that Western individualism is more an Enlightenment product than a biblical precept has certainly been a positive contribution to an evangelicalism that has often divorced soteriology from ecclesiology. What is more, cultural anthropology has ably described the role of community in the formation of beliefs, values, and orientation to reality. Communities also have narratives that tell their story, which for the Christian *ecclesia* is obviously found in the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation story that spans canonical Scripture.[52]

Yet if we accept the non-foundationalist understanding that the "real world" is no more than the "true interpretation of our situation," it becomes extremely difficult to see how any one "community story" can be elevated to that of universal significance.[53] Accepting that my own reading of Christ's Great Commission may not be entirely free from bias, it still remains hard for me to avoid the conclusion that Jesus is mandating that one particular narrative of reality (his person, ministry, and saving work) is to be commended to every ethnic group (Matt 28:18–20). On the non-foundational terms proposed by our authors, is this not to say, the least, presumptuous?

Why should *Jesus'* community—with its alleged "cultural-boundedness"—be imposed upon non-Christian communities? Given that these postmodernists would readily define "community" in primarily relational (not doctrinal) terms and/or find the true expression of Christianity in the church's pragmatic effect on culture (e.g. repudiating racism, calling for social justice, feeding the poor), is it still not incumbent upon these "Christian advocates" to articulate why one version of reality (theirs) is to be preferred over others? As one might recall, Barth was rightly chided over the universalism inherent in his somewhat Gnostic "Christ," who in spite of his protests to the

[52] Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism* 230–34.

[53] The fundamental question, however, still remains: Why give primacy to the world-constructing language of the Christian community? As Christians, we would likely respond by asserting that we believe that the Christian theological vision is true. But on what basis can we make this claim? . . . Here, we suggest, the wedding of communitarian and pragmatist insights offers assistance. Communitarians remind us that the goal of all social traditions to construct a well-ordered society. . . . Which theological vision provides the framework for the construction of true community? We believe that Christian theology . . . sets forth a helpful vision of the nature of the kind of community that all religious belief systems in their own way and according to their own understanding seek to foster (ibid. 54).

contrary, was hard to separate from "deity understandings" of the other world religions.[54]

In the same "fuzzy" way, is not the "communitarian theology" of Grenz and Franke actually a disincentive to the church passionately pursuing its evangelistic mission? One other thought: What really comes first, the community or the convictions that ground that community? Did the Christian community create its *evangel* or was it itself a product of the proclamation? Even though this question seems to be a repeat of 1950 discussions over the role of *Gemeindetheologie*, it does indeed deserve to be revisited in our present, non-foundational intellectual climate. Put another way, are there some "truths" that actually exist apart from anyone's social construction and that in fact give birth to distinctive, new communities? The NT *kerygma* appears to argue that some very unusual and culturally-irrelevant ideas (e.g. a crucified and risen Messiah) did indeed produce such a community that clearly transcended both Jewish and Greco-Roman thought patterns and ideologies.

In summary, because of its reliance on a non-foundational epistemology that in the end cannot adjudicate between competing "pictures of reality," *Beyond Foundationalism* fails to produce a compelling case for embracing the biblical summons to "take the gospel to every creature." While Grenz and Franke squarely place a certain normativity upon the metanarrative of Jesus Christ—an assessment that arguably drives the "Great Commission"—we are still left to wonder how this narrative can legitimately acquire this epistemological privilege given the non-foundational presuppositions that govern this work. It would seem that the accommodation to a postmodern premise would doom any attempt to get beyond a particularization of a narrative. Why should the "Christian story" be elevated to reality status" if "reality" is such an elusive thing and/or so prone to cultural distortion? While I have little problem in assenting to the normativity of the gospel—precisely because of a "Creator/Creation rational realism"—I wonder how Grenz and Franke can commend this "meta-structure" without such a model? Can their non-foundationalist brand of realism really promote what Christ has mandated to two millennia of his disciples? I have some very strong doubts that it can.

While I am convinced that "non-foundational realism" is not the preferred direction to travel theologically, one does not have the luxury to simply revert to discredited, "foundationalist" approaches in an environment that is "beyond" modernity. Ironically, the answer to the present-day epistemological

[54] Cf. the well-known critiques of Gordon Clark, Carl Henry, Millard Erickson, and others. In all fairness to Barth, the great Swiss theologian himself stops short of advocating universalism. (Instead, he speaks of a "universal election" of all human beings in Jesus Christ [*CD* II/2, 306, 352].) On the other hand, statements to the effect that in Christ, God has rejected himself and that for man, "there is . . . only a predestination which corresponds to the perfect being of God Himself; a predestination to His kingdom and to blessedness and life" (p. 172), leaves little room to conclude anything but that Barthian thought leads to universalism. Is it surprising, then, that this contemporary evangelical fascination with Barth is occurring at the same time that there is a strong inclusivist thrust?

dilemma seems to lie in the past—the "before Foundationalism" past—to a realism that is rational but not rationalistic, critical but not contentious, grounded in the nature of the Creator and his creation. This kind of realism produced the Western scientific revolution and then was corrupted by a foundationalism that fatally relocated "certainty" in the mind of the human observer. But we can and must "turn back the clock," not in some pre-modern sense, but in the restoration of an epistemology that produced the scientific revolution, itself. Indeed, the *postmodern future* of evangelical theology may well depend on how well we understand what happened prior to the *modern past*.