

WHAT THE CHURCH CAN LEARN
FROM THEOLOGICAL ACCOMODATION:
A CRITICAL REVIEW OF STANLEY GRENZ AND JOHN FRANKE¹

Introduction

“There is a long trail of contextualized theologies, written over the last half century, in which the external dimension virtually replaces the internal, cultural interests eclipse biblical norms, and the result has been the kind of compromise, trendiness, and manipulation which ends up promoting worldly agendas, be they political, social, ideological, or personal, in place of biblical truth.”²

David Wells’ lament is only a contemporary reiteration of what the New Testament writers constantly said to the church. “Beware of false teachers!” Whether it was the apostle Paul, warning the Ephesian elders of “fierce wolves” (Acts 20:17-38); or John the elder, writing that “many antichrists have come...denying the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:18, 22); or Jude, the brother of Jesus, urging fellow believers to lookout for hidden reefs (Jude 12). The constant teaching of the church is that truth matters, and that shepherds of the church are to protect sound doctrine.³

Church history tells the story of how false teachers and theological accommodation have sparked controversy and required church-wide councils, creeds, and confessions to clarify biblical truth. Consequently, the admonition to beware of false teachers is as true today as it was

¹ Stanley Grenz and John Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001).

² David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 6-7.

³ Paul’s basic argument in his letter to Titus is that “sound doctrine” produces “good works.” D. Edmond Hiebert writes, “Titus was urged to insist on the need for sound doctrine and a high level of moral and social conduct...Christian behavior must be grounded in the basic truths of the gospel” (“Titus” in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981], 423).

in the apostolic church—maybe even more so. In the last two decades, postconservative evangelicalism — “a halfway house” between biblical conservatism and liberalism⁴— has arisen as a revised version of Christianity. It attempts a “new” method of theological correlation and as with many false teachings in church history, it too must be confronted.

This paper, following the work of others,⁵ examines and critiques the work of Stanley Grenz and John Franke,⁶ two major contributors to this revisionist theology. The former was professor of theology and ethics at Carey Theological College (Vancouver, BC) until his unexpected death in 2005. The latter is professor of theology at Biblical Seminary (Hatfield, PA) and an active proponent of postmodern thought and the emergent church. The format of this paper will include three sections: first, a historical pedigree of theologians leading to and influencing Grenz/Franke will be outlined to show how these modern thinkers, through various modes of correlation, strayed from biblical truth; next, a cursory overview of Grenz/Franke’s proposal will be given, focusing on the first five chapters of *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*; and last, Grenz/Franke’s theological method will be evaluated in light of Scripture and Biblical Theology. Finally, a postscript will be included to highlight the value of learning from the errors of extra-biblical accommodation. All in all, the aim of this paper will be to show how methods of correlation inevitably lead to theological distortion and false teaching.

⁴ Roger Olson describes at length the origins of postconservatism in his book *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

⁵ In particular, the book *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, eds. Millard Erickson, Paul Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004) has ably defended evangelical truth against postmodern theological endeavors.

⁶ Henceforth Grenz/Franke.

Grenz and Franke's Theological Forebears

Philosophically speaking, the Enlightenment changed everything! Through a confluence of political, intellectual, and religious (male) factors,⁷ “the way Christians [thought] about God, themselves, and their world was permanently and irretrievably altered.”⁸ The primary change was that of epistemology and philosophical/theological method. How does one know what he/she knows? Where Scripture and the church stood as the steadfast purveyor of meaning and authority before the Enlightenment, now “human reason replaced externally imposed revelation as the arbiter of truth.”⁹ The university replaced the cathedral, scientific experimentation overruled biblical exegesis, and the teacher supplanted the priest.¹⁰

All in all, the whole landscape of Western thought changed. Perhaps most significantly was the place of God’s Word in the church and in the world. “A shift from God-centered thinking to human-centered philosophizing”¹¹ had transpired, and now the doctors of the church had to give an answer. Unfortunately, many of the loudest apologists veered from the faith as soon as they stepped on the path.

⁷ The contributing factors are discussed at length in Andrew Hoffercker’s essay on the subject, “Enlightenments and Awakenings: The Beginning of Modern Culture Wars,” in *Revolutions in Worldview*, edited by Andrew Hoffercker [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2007], 240-280.

⁸ Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰ Credit goes to Stephen J. Wellum for introducing the idea of premodern, modern, and postmodern thought as priest, teacher, and artist.

¹¹ Hoffercker, “Enlightenments and Awakenings,” 254.

Georg W. F. Hegel

George Hegel developed his theology in the wake of the Enlightenment, and more precisely, he sought to ground his beliefs in ways that would withstand the shifting sands of the Age of Reason. To do this, Hegel posited a historical understanding of reason and knowledge.

This historical turn included three dominate features, each of which emphasize the dynamic nature of history and reality. First, Hegel speaks of the *Geist*, or “spirit,” as the life-sustaining force or being that upholds and animates all of reality and history. Second, truth is revealed over time “as the grand unity lying behind and revealed in the ongoing historical process.”¹² Third, Hegel articulates his “dialectic,” which can be “described in logical terms as the triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis,” where “first a thesis arises. This immediately generates its antithesis. The two are then merged in their synthesis. The thesis constitutes a new thesis, and the process continues.”¹³

These three dynamic concepts demonstrate the kind of theological method employed by Hegel—one that breeds uncertainty because it constantly absorbs new data. For if the Spirit keeps moving, truth keeps progressing, and theology keeps dialoguing, there cannot be a fixed point of knowledge, truth, or meaning. In Hegel’s day, Christianity was the pinnacle of revealed religion, “because it sets forth in representational form the ultimate philosophical truth concerning the unity of God and humanity.”¹⁴ However, this elevated placement lacks all permanence, because the only constant in Hegel’s system is change. Consequently, there is no historical-fixedness or eternal truth. They are always up for revision. Employed by philosopher-

¹² Grenz and Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology*, 34.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

theologians over the last two centuries, Hegel's dialectal method has safeguarded pluralism and advocated a kind of blissful uncertainty that today fuels postmodernism. Certainly, Hegel's undulating dialectic can be seen at work in *Beyond Foundationalism*.

Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher

Friedrich Schleiermacher grew up in a deeply pietistic Reformed home in Prussia. However, somewhere between boarding school and seminary, his once-orthodox faith was shipwrecked. Keeping his devotional piety and feelings for religion, he lost all confidence in the Bible. This hollowing experience would be programmatic for Schleiermacher's entire life and ministry. For while his writings promote a very deep sense of dependence on God, his doctrinal deficiency reveal distrust for dogma and biblical theology.

Surrounded by German Romanticists,¹⁵ Schleiermacher saw himself as a Christian apologist, one who might save Christianity from its "cultured despisers." He did this not by arguing for the validity or veracity of the Bible, but through romanticizing orthodox Christianity into a religion of deep pious feelings and personal experience. In *The Christian Faith*, he says, "[Doctrine] must be extracted primarily or exclusively from the Christian religious self-consciousness, i.e., the inward experience of Christian people."¹⁶ With such self-centeredness in his view of knowledge and revelation, it should not be surprising that his theology rejected divine revelation. "Rather than being the project of systematizing some supernaturally revealed set of propositions," he viewed, "Christian theology [as an] attempt to set forth a coherent

¹⁵ "Within a year of his arrival, [Schleiermacher] had attached himself to 'The Athenaeum', a group of thinkers and writers who were hostile to the spirit of the Enlightenment. He mixed with leading figures of the Romantic movement, such as Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel" (Alister McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology: 1750-1990* [Grand Rapids, MI: 1994; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001], 41).

¹⁶ Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 265 quoted in Grenz and Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology*, 47.

account of the religious experience.”¹⁷ Grenz/Franke, it will be shown, do the same thing. They depend heavily on experience and communal expression over against revealed religion.

Paul Tillich

No contemporary theologian is more (in)famous for his theological accommodationism than Paul Tillich. A world-renowned professor, author, and speaker, Tillich coined the term “method of correlation,” in which he asserted that “philosophy’s task is to pose problems and ask questions, while the challenge of theology is to enter the dialogue with philosophy, understand its questions, and struggle to come up with the answers.”¹⁸ In other words, “theology should be apologetic. It must formulate and communicate its concepts in a way that truly speaks to the modern situation.”¹⁹ Harshly critical of fundamentalism and other non-“situational” theologies (i.e. neo-orthodoxy), Tillich sought to “adapt the Christian message to the modern mind while maintaining its essential truth and unique character.”²⁰

In theory, this practice seems viable—culture supplies the question, and revelation gives the answer—but in reality, this method always leads to compromise.²¹ Tillich’s existential panentheism²² and symbolic Christology prove this.²³ “In actual practice, the content as well as

¹⁷ Grenz and Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology*, 47.

¹⁸ J.D. Spiceland, “Paul Tillich” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd Edition, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 1200.

¹⁹ Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology*, 116.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 120. Unfortunately, Tillich’s doctrine of revelation did not root itself in biblical soil. Instead, his media for revelation were limitless—“nature, history, groups and individuals, and speech; in fact, anything... if it becomes the ground of being” (123).

²² See John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 194-212.

²³ See Alister McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology*, 173-78.

the form became influenced, if not determined by the philosophical influence,”²⁴ so that the resulting theology is corrupted by extra-biblical philosophies.

Tillich’s clear adherence to this method of correlation illustrates the effects that philosophy has on theology. Without fail, the history of post-Enlightenment theology necessarily drifts towards heterodoxy when theology marries any kind of extra-biblical schema. From the three historic figures considered here, it would seem that Grenz/Franke would avoid their mistakes. Certainly they are not ignorant of the problem, for consider their own warning, “[T]heological history...provides numerous examples of the inappropriate accommodation of Christian faith to various ideologies and cultural norms.”²⁵ Unfortunately, they quickly forget their own instruction. Instead of seeing their own theological accommodation, they commit the same fallacy as Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Tillich.

Stanley Grenz and John Franke: *Beyond Foundationalism*

Os Guinness has been quoted as saying that “liberalism has no grandchildren,”²⁶ but unfortunately it does have promiscuous offspring. In *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*, Stanley Grenz and John Franke show themselves to be the intellectual heirs of Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Tillich. Like their liberal forebears, Grenz/Franke develop their theological method through studious attention to cultural trends and adoption of postmodern theory.

Grenz/Franke’s “postfoundational” epistemic web is the operating system by which they put their theology together. Like Hegel, theirs is a dynamic process of relating Scripture,

²⁴ Grenz and Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology*, 121.

²⁵ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 3-4.

²⁶ Quoted by Stephen J. Wellum in a class lecture, “Evangelical Theology in the Twenty-first Century” (classroom lecture, 28180—*Contemporary Theology, Pt. 10*, 1 May 2008).

tradition, and culture. Like Schleiermacher, they see religious experience as paramount in their interpretation of each of these modes of revelation. And like Tillich, they self-consciously meld their theology with postmodern philosophy. Not limited to theology, either, Grenz/Franke are equally influenced by (non)Christian thinkers from a wide range of disciplines.²⁷ As we consider their postmodernity and postfoundationalism this will become evident.

Postmodern

Chapter one in *Beyond Foundationalism* is devoted to explaining “Theology in the Contemporary Setting.” Starting with the problems and possibilities caused by philosophical-theological-ecclesial fragmentation, Grenz/Franke proceed to assume the place of postmodernity in the world today. They write, “The emergence of this postmodern ethos has affected all dimensions of Western culture today, including theology.”²⁸ As a result, their theological method is unashamedly postmodern.²⁹ In the aftermath of modernity, they are hopeful that postmodern theology will “spawn numerous new theological programs.”³⁰

²⁷ Grenz/Franke provide a survey of these influential thinkers with preference given to “anglo-American postmodern thinkers” (i.e. Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Jeffery Stout, Hilary Putnam, Alasdair MacIntyre, et al) over against the “desconstructive bent of Continental” postmoderns (i.e. Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard). To be clear however, Grenz/Franke cite from both groups in their work (*Beyond Foundationalism*, 19-20).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁹ In *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* edited by Myron Penner (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), John Franke is one of three proponents of postmodern theology. Penner describes Franke as someone who “sees postmodernism as a basic fact and a cultural reality” (26), and Franke himself sees great “promise in the postmodern theory” (106).

³⁰ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 22. For more on the modernity’s relationship with postmodernity see David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 13-90. Wells writes, “modernity and postmodernity are actually reflecting different aspects of our modernized culture” (62), and later, “The rejection of foundationalism should not be seen as marking off the postmodern from the modern but as unmasking what has been hidden in the modern...and what [this unmasking] does is to decrease the significance of the prefix *post* in postmodern” (82). This analysis finds support in Thomas Oden’s nuanced assessment that, in fact, postmodernity is really “ultramodernity” or hyper-modernity, and that it is only “post” in chronology and common parlance (“The Death of Modernity and Postmodern Evangelical Spirituality,” in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David Dockery [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995], 26-27).

Grenz/Franke narrow the ambiguity of postmodernity to one facet they call “chastened rationality.”³¹ Embracing noetic skepticism, Grenz/Franke list three ways that “chastened rationalism” denies certain, objective, and universal basic beliefs. First, taking cues from Nietzsche, Derrida, and Wittgenstein, Grenz/Franke reduce all knowledge to “language games.”³² They write, “No simple, one-to-one relationship exists between language and the world, and thus no single linguistic description can serve to provide an objective conception of the ‘real’ world.”³³ Next, Grenz/Franke reject any kind of overarching, universal story that explain all of life. Referencing Jean-Francois Lyotard, they say, “the very idea of the metanarrative is no longer credible.”³⁴ In a postmodern framework, meaning must be local.

Finally, they attack any and all rational models of theology that depend upon basic beliefs as an epistemological foundation. They write of foundationalism, “Its assertions about the objectivity, certainty, and universality of knowledge have come under withering critique. The demise of foundationalism carries fundamental and far-reaching implications for theological method.”³⁵ And thus they find legitimacy and necessity for their postfoundational project. Already, evidences of accommodation are visible as Grenz/Franke search for assistance in the extra-biblical voices of postmodern philosophy, literary theory, ethics, and science.³⁶

³¹ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 22-23.

³² *Ibid.*, 42. For a critical description of postmodern linguistics in light of biblical theology see, Brian D. Ingrassia, *Postmodern Theory and Biblical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³³ *Ibid.*, 23. Of course, if this is wholly true, how can they expect their readership to understand their language or to trust their metanarrative of local narratives?

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁶ This departure from Scripture’s authority is made explicit when they say, “A theology that seeks to take seriously postmodern sensitivities views itself as conversation. This theological construction may be characterized as an ongoing conversation we share as participants in the faith community as to the meaning of the

Postfoundational

Chapter two addresses “Theology after Modernity.” Having deconstructed foundationalism, Grenz/Franke attempt to pick up the pieces and offer a vision of theology adherent to postmodern sensibilities.³⁷ They return to the originator of foundationalism, Rene Descartes, and generalize that “most Enlightenment thinkers readily adopted Descartes’ concern to establish some type of sure foundation for the human knowing project.”³⁸ Failing to distinguish Christian thinkers from Cartesian philosophers, they contend that liberal modernists turned to the foundation of experience, while conservative modernists turned to the the Scriptures. This they conclude is a glaring weakness in modern Christianity.

In response, they proffer a model of thinking that is not founded on certain truths, but rather is suspended by a coherent web of beliefs. They describe theology as “the articulation of the cognitive mosaic of Christian faith. This mosaic consists of the interlocking doctrines that together comprise the specifically Christian way of viewing the world.”³⁹ Still the question remains, “What establishes their system of belief?”⁴⁰ In support, they turn to Wolfhart Pannenberg’s dialectal means of ascertaining truth and George Lindbeck’s narrative theology.

symbols through which we express our understanding of the world we inhabit. This constructive theological conversation requires interplay, or perichoretic dance, of three sources of insight or types of conversation partners.”

³⁷ Grenz/Franke call this postfoundationalism, but I would prefer polyfoundationalism, because in all of their argumentation they are borrowing capital from modern thought. It is as if, they are driving a gas-guzzling SUV from New York City to Washington, D.C. in order to speak about global warming and toxic emissions. The end is undone by the means. In the same way, when Grenz/Franke make universal statements about local narratives, appealing to rational evidence, using logical argumentation, they undermine their whole project. In the end, their project becomes a kind of foundationalism based on a multiplicity of sources.

³⁸ Ibid., 32.

³⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁰ Ironically, even Grenz and Franke cannot avoid using foundational language. In one place, they speak of the biblical narrative as “basic” for their interpretive framework (49); and in another instance, they term

From Pannenberg, Grenz/Franke develop the idea that all truth is eschatological. In other words, “the truth that emerges in the end is the truth of God.”⁴¹ From this Hegelian notion, truth is universal and discernible, but only as much as it corresponds to the final, eschatological reality of truth. Resultantly, truth is always in process. They write:

This suggests that theological statements, like all human assertions, are hypotheses to be tested. And we test out theological assertions as we seek to determine their internal and external coherence. In a manner resembling the modern pragmatist, therefore, Pannenberg maintains that the question of truth must be answered in the process of theological reflection and reconstruction.⁴²

Turning to Lindbeck, Grenz/Franke unite Pannenberg’s eschatological coherentism with the post-liberal’s understanding of doctrine. Citing Lindbeck, Grenz/Franke write:

Like rules of grammar, church doctrine has a “regulative” function, serving as “community authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action.” They are “teachings regarding beliefs and practices that are considered essential to the identity of welfare of the group.” As such “they indicate what constitutes faithful adherence to a community.” In short, Christian doctrines establish the ground rules for the “game” of Christian thinking, speaking, and living.⁴³

The effect of this Pannenberg-Lindbeck synthesis is a communitarian theology that exalts socio-religious conversation and eschews doctrinal certainty and authority. Truth may exist, but only in a provisional and temporal way. They write, “Theology, we might conclude, explores the world-constructing, knowledge-forming, identity-forming “language” of the Christian community.”⁴⁴ No longer is theology the humble study of God and his Word.

their “Christian interpretive framework as in a certain sense foundational for theology” (51). However, they quickly move to other language—“cognitive mosaic.”

⁴¹ Ibid., 44.

⁴² Ibid., 44-45.

⁴³ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 53.

For Grenz/Franke, theology is secondary language that attempts to describe the religious community's beliefs and behaviors. Gone from their theology is any notion of holy reverence or humble submission to the God who speaks. Instead, Grenz/Franke combine Scripture, tradition, and modern culture as their "integrative framework" for doing theology.

Scripture

When speaking of Scripture, Grenz/Franke propose a third way to formulate Christian doctrine, a method that cohabitates somewhere between the experienced-based religion of Protestant liberalism and the inerrant-word based faith of conservative evangelicals. For them, both of these hermeneutical approaches are flawed responses to modernism. In their place, Grenz/Franke suggest a pneumatological hermeneutic, where the community that Christian community looks for what the Spirit is saying. "Reading the texts theologically [i.e. for the purpose of theology] means reading with the intent of hearing the Spirit's voice. [Thus] the beginning point...is the presupposition that the Bible is the vehicle through which the Spirit speaks to us" (emphasis mine). And where do they go to get this idea of the Spirit speaking through the text? They point to the Westminster Confession of Faith. They quote:

The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of counsels, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture (I.10).

To appear historically Protestant, Grenz/Franke source this Reformed confession; however, as soon as they appeal to its foundational doctrine, they change the wording without explanation. Through literary sleight of hand, they change "Holy Spirit speaking *in* the

Scripture” to “Holy Spirit speaking *through* the Scripture,” and once they make the appositional transition, Grenz/Franke never return to the preposition “in” again.⁴⁵ They write:

The declaration that the Spirit speaking in *or through* scripture is our final authority means that Christian belief and practice cannot be determined merely by appeal to either the exegesis of scripture carried out apart from the life of the believer and the believing community or to any supposedly private (or corporate) “word from the Spirit” that stands in contradiction to biblical exegesis (emphasis mine).⁴⁶

At this point they are generally correct, the Word and the Spirit can never be bifurcated. However, in “taking the idea a step further,”⁴⁷ Grenz/Franke, with their linguistic subtlety, misrepresent the relationship between the Word and the Spirit, so that the locus of authority now rests in the Spirit and not Jesus Christ himself.⁴⁸ No longer is the Bible the canonical deposit of Spirit-breathed truth pointing to Christ, instead the Bible becomes merely the “choice” medium by which the believing community looks to hear the voice of the Spirit.

Tradition

If there was any thought that Grenz/Franke might hold to a view of *sola Scriptura* after their deconstruction of the Bible in chapters 1-3, they put all questions to rest in their

⁴⁵ This point of contention may appear minute and reactionary, but I think the concern is valid. While the Westminster Confession implies that the Spirit speaks *through* the Scriptures, the rest of the document limits the Spirit to the Scriptures. It reads, “Nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or the traditions of men” (I.6). Commenting on the matter, O. Palmer Robertson says, “This affirmation of the Confession unequivocally supports the *sola Scriptura* principle of the Reformation, but often does not find ready acceptance in the modern evangelical church” (“The Holy Spirit in the Westminster Confession of Faith” in *The Westminster Confession of Faith into the 21st Century*, edited by Ligon Duncan [Ross-shire: Mentor, 2005], 76). Conveniently, Grenz/Franke fail to include this part of the confession, and prove Robertson’s point that modern evangelicals “do not readily accept” *sola Scriptura*.

⁴⁶ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁸ Grenz/Franke write, “The authority of the Bible is in the end the authority of the Spirit whose instrumentality it is,” p. 65. While this point may not matter to Egalitarians who see no role distinction in the Godhead, for those who hold to a Trinitarian hierarchy, the shift is seismic. For a defense of authority and submission in the Trinity, see Bruce Ware; *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, & Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

chapter on tradition. Clearly, *sola Scriptura*, in the tradition of the Reformation, is not a valued commitment. They write:

While acknowledging the significance of *sola Scriptura* as establishing the principle that canonical scripture is the *norma Normans non normata* (the norm with no other norm over it), it is also true that in another sense *scriptura* is never *sola*. Scripture does not stand alone as the sole source in the task of theological construction or as the sole basis on which the Christian faith has developed historically. Rather, scripture functions in an ongoing and dynamic relationship with the Christian tradition, as well as the cultural milieu from which particular readings of the text emerge.⁴⁹

This commitment to the Spirit speaking through tradition and culture leads Grenz/Franke to a very synergistic interpretation. No longer is the Word of God uniquely authoritative. Gone is its function as the divine fiat that creates a redeemed community. Now the community participates in creating the Scriptures, and the Word's inherent authority is lost. They write:

[Previously] we suggested that the authority of scripture does not ultimately rest with any quality that inheres in the text itself but with the work of the Spirit who speaks in and through the text. Scripture is authoritative because it is the vehicle through which the Spirit speaks... Similarly, it is the work of the Spirit that accounts for the formation of the Christian community, the church. It is the Spirit who calls the community into existence and empowers it to accomplish his purposes, not least in the production and authorization of the biblical texts... The community precedes the production of the scriptural texts and is responsible for their content and for the identification of particular texts for inclusion in an authoritative canon to which it has chosen to make itself accountable... Apart from the authority of the Christian community, there would be no canon of authorized texts. In short, apart from the Christian community the Christian Bible would not exist.⁵⁰

This elevated view of the Spirit is not new, mystics have over emphasized a romantic experience of the Spirit for centuries; likewise, the concept that the believing community gave rise to the Scriptures is not new either. For more than a millennia, Catholics have held that the

⁴⁹ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 112.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 114-15.

authority of the Bible is derived from the church. What is new is Grenz/Franke's desire to make this mode of interpretation a valid option within evangelicalism.

Culture

The Scripture-Tradition relationship developed by Grenz/Franke would be problematic enough if it stopped there. Unfortunately, their polyfoundationalism deteriorates all the more as they submit culture as a third concept in their theological method.⁵¹ In their three-part schema, the emphasis on experience attached to Scripture and tradition naturally paves the way for cultural incarnation. Here is how Grenz/Franke summarize this perichoretic interaction:

In this manner, the biblical narratives function as the norming norm for Christian faith and life. Nevertheless, the tradition of the community provides a crucial and indispensable hermeneutical context and trajectory in the construction of faithfully Christian theology. But this performance always occurs in a particular historical-cultural context.⁵²

To explain culture's role, Grenz/Franke rely heavily upon Paul Tillich's method of correlation and the logic of contextualization as represented by missiologists, Charles Kraft and Robert Schreiter. Grenz/Franke are appreciative of Tillich's mediating position between conservatives and liberals. They, too, seek to develop a dialectal approach, a "method of correlation," between theology and secular society.⁵³

Contextualization shares this foundational approach, but as with correlation, Grenz/Franke find value in its recognition of culture and local particularities. What is most

⁵¹ In order to demonstrate how all three sources relate to one another, Grenz/Franke borrow an illustration from N.T. Wright. In his parable from the theatre, Wright suggests that the Scriptures provide the first four acts to a five-act play. In his parable, the fifth act has been lost and is to be creatively lived out on the basis of what has come before. The community of actors have in their possession the script to the first four acts and the tradition of those who have performed the fifth act in the past. Now it is their turn to finish the play.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 152-53.

helpful they say is to “begin with the culture” and work backwards towards the gospel.⁵⁴ They explain by quoting from Kraft, “‘relative cultural forms’ are able to serve as the vehicles for expressing ‘absolute supracultural meanings;’ for the divine message ‘while appropriately expressed in terms of those forms, transcends both the forms themselves and the meanings previously attached to those forms.’”⁵⁵ In other words, universal truths ought always be explained in local vernacular. This missional sensitivity provides Grenz/Franke with a model for understanding how transcendent theology can be communicated in immanent localities.

Selectively exploiting these two models, Grenz/Franke conclude:

Correlation and contextualization point the way forward. Held in tandem, the two models suggest that our theological method must employ an interactive process that is both correlative [i.e. answers questions posed by the culture] and contextual [i.e. expresses theological truth in local idiom]. Theology emerges through an ongoing conversation involving both “gospel” and “culture.”

More Language, But Less Word: Postmodernism and Postfoundationalism

Postmodernism. Like Protestant liberals before them, Grenz/Franke carry on the tradition of utilizing extra-biblical philosophies to further their theological project. This is perhaps the fundamental flaw in their proposal—uniting Christianity with a nihilistic and self-defeating postmodern philosophy. Concerning postmodernism, James Parker makes the case that it is inherently “suicidal,” because “postmodernism makes the assertion that truth is merely a social construct,” but he reasons that, “if that is the case, then postmodern thought is also just another social construct and has neither universal nor normative force.”⁵⁶ Ironically, postmodern

⁵⁴ Grenz and Franke are quoting Robert Schreiter to make this point, 154-55.

⁵⁵ Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 99 quoted by Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 155.

⁵⁶ James Parker, “A Requiem for Postmodernism—Whither Now?” in *Reclaiming the Center*, 308.

theories must look to modernism to supply grounds for reason and argumentation, because postmodernism that stays true to itself can only suggest opinions or fictions.

This is seen most clearly in the way that Grenz/Franke purposefully engage in “conversation” with a wide range of disciplines and communities, and shrink back from truth. Stephen Wellum contends that Grenz/Franke leave “Christian theology apologetically defenseless, a self-contained linguistic system that is not able to demonstrate before a watching world why it is indeed true.”⁵⁷ Indeed, when they attempt to answer the truth question, the most they can say is that Christianity is “best,”⁵⁸ leaving unanswered how “best” is to be evaluated without truth.

Their outright rejection of the metanarrative is also problematic for Christianity, because of the way such a denial endangers the sweeping claims of the gospel. The Triune God who created mankind, will also call all humanity into account at the end of the age. Necessarily then, the claims of the Bible are universal. Scripture’s exclusive message of salvation in Christ and Jesus’ Great Commission to make disciples of all nations are necessary components of the Bible’s metanarrative. So then, “Christian theology must be neither modern or postmodern.”⁵⁹ It must instead offer a transcendent vision of reality capable of correcting hubris in every system and relentlessly calling all people to repentance and faith.

⁵⁷ Stephen J. Wellum, “Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis” in *Reclaiming the Center*, 188.

⁵⁸ Grenz/Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 54. This notion of Christianity as the best community is really no different than “History of Religions” school which argued that Christianity was the highest and most evolved form of religion and thus the “truest” religion. But following this kind of school of thought, surely something could improve even this tradition.

⁵⁹ Stephen Wellum, “Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals,” 186.

D.A. Carson agrees and criticizes Grenz's, and by extension Franke's, naïve adoption of postmodernism. Grenz, he avers, "is utterly unable to detect any weakness in postmodern epistemology, and therefore his prescriptions for the future assume the essential rightness of postmodernism."⁶⁰ Clearly Grenz/Franke would do much better to heed the caution of R. Albert Mohler and "measure this emerging worldview inch by inch,"⁶¹ instead of putting all their stock in such a volatile philosophy.

Postfoundationalism. Just as Grenz/Franke's vision of postmodernism is impaired, so is their understanding of biblical Christianity. In the logic of Grenz/Franke, it appears as if no distinction is made between Christians who believe the Bible to be without error, and moderns who ground their worldviews in other less stable foundations. In other words, Grenz/Franke conceive of Rene Descartes and Charles Hodge making the same error—principle reliance on Enlightenment foundationalism. However, Grenz/Franke miss a radical difference between these two thinkers. That difference is God.

The Bible repeatedly teaches that God spoke and made himself known,⁶² and that this revelation has been captured in Scripture.⁶³ For Christians like Hodge, this God-inspired revelation is the ground for all doctrine and belief. For unbelieving Enlightenment philosophers like Descartes, it is not. The former can rest in the certainty of God's Word,⁶⁴ the latter can only

⁶⁰ D.A. Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Grenz's *Renewing the Center*" in *Reclaiming the Center*, 45.

⁶¹ R. Albert Mohler, "The Integrity of the Evangelical Tradition and the Challenge of the Postmodern Paradigm" in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 84.

⁶² Gen. 1; Ex. 20; Deut. 4:33; Psalm 33:6; Heb. 1:1-3.

⁶³ Ps. 19, 119; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

⁶⁴ Scripture has so much to say about the word of God being foundational. A canonical study of this imagery alone raises serious questions concerning Grenz/Franke's proposal (cf. Matt. 7:24-27; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Eph. 2:20).

be certain of endless vacillation.⁶⁵ Wellum agrees, “Knowledge, grounded in the one who is the Creator and sovereign Lord, is certainly *not* the same kind of ‘foundationalism’ as found in modernism.”⁶⁶

In fact it is more likely, in light of their self-conscious postmodernism, that Grenz/Franke fall into the same error that Brian Ingraffia critiques in his book, *Postmodern Theory and Biblical Theology*. Challenging three architects of postmodernity—Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida—Ingraffia demonstrates how each of these opponents of Christianity mistakenly challenged the God of ontotheology. He explains the difference between Descartes conception of God and the God of the Bible, and says, “postmodern theory relies on the ontotheology that it constructs for its rejection of biblical Christianity.”⁶⁷ Said another way, postmodern theory is “based on a profound misunderstanding of biblical revelation,”⁶⁸ that appears to stem from a categorical error in conflating biblical revelation with modern foundationalism. It seems Grenz/Franke are guilty of this same mistake. They, too, fail to distinguish between the ontotheology of Descartes and the biblical theology of Hodge, and thus they devise a theology that opposes the pure teaching of the Bible. This misapprehension will become more obvious as Grenz/Franke discuss Scripture, tradition, and culture.

⁶⁵ Equally valid are all the warnings given to believers to ground their faith in the steadfast word of God lest they be set adrift (cf. Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; James 1:6-8).

⁶⁶ Stephen Wellum, “Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals,” 187.

⁶⁷ Brian Ingraffia, *Postmodern Theory and Biblical Theology*, 6. Addressing Descartes, Ingraffia observes, “It is not the biblical God whose existence is proven [In Descartes *Cogito*], but rather the god of metaphysics, the god of ontotheology.” The point he goes on to make is that the founder’s of postmodernism all attacked a misrepresentation of Christianity, i.e. ontotheology.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Blurring the Lines: Misappropriating Scripture, Tradition, and Culture

Skimpy Scripture. Despite stating an appreciation for reading the Bible intratextually, Grenz/Franke are not intratextual enough. This can be seen in the way that they focus on the Spirit over and above Jesus Christ, when it was Jesus Christ himself who repeatedly identified himself as the focal point of Scripture (cf. Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39). Likewise, Grenz/Franke misconstrue the ministry of the Spirit, which Jesus said would always glorify Him (John 15:26; 16:14). In reading Grenz/Franke, it seems that they conscript the Spirit to say more than Christ intended. This is certainly the case in their manipulation of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

At the same time, Grenz/Franke's extratextual interpretation can be seen in their appeal to social sciences and not to biblical theology. Going to great lengths to malign the Princeton theologians, Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield, Grenz/Franke neglect Geerhardus Vos, another Princetonian, and the father of Biblical Theology.⁶⁹ Vos is important in this conversation because of his emphasis on reading the Bible according to the storyline of Scripture.⁷⁰ At multiple times, Grenz/Franke refer to narrative theologians George Lindbeck and Hans Frei, and commend their canonical approach to the Scriptures, but not once do they consider Vos or his brand of biblical theology that takes seriously both the biblical narrative and the Bible's historical veracity. Such neglect seems negligent. In the end, Grenz/Franke do not

⁶⁹ Richard Gaffin, in his introduction to Vos's shorter writings, explains, "Vos's work in biblical theology is largely without direct antecedents and indicates the originality with which he wrestled with the matter of biblical interpretation in the Reformed tradition" ("Introduction" in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, edited by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980], xii).

⁷⁰ In his inaugural address as Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Seminary, Vos expounds his views when he says, "Biblical Theology, rightly defined, is nothing else than the exhibition of the organic progress of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity" ("The Idea of Biblical Theology as Science and as a Theological Discipline" in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, 15).

give enough credence to the Bible dismissing its singular authority, its necessity, and its sufficiency for life and godliness.

Too much tradition. After reducing biblical doctrine, Grenz/Franke’s proposal seeks to make up its deficit by reenlisting tradition. In so doing they obliterate the positive work of the Protestant Reformation and one of its distinguishing marks for non-Catholic Christians, the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. As Grenz/Franke elevate tradition they deny absolute authority to the Scriptures; they introduce parochial questions about what tradition to follow; and they cause confusion when they suggest that the Spirit speaks through multiple media. “In contrast to [Grenz/Franke], what evangelical theology has argued and should argue is that when the Spirit speaks, it is always the speaking of Scripture.”⁷¹

Grenz/Franke are correct to assert that we cannot read the Bible without an awareness of the tradition to which we belong. They are also correct that there is value and learning to be gained from tradition. However, the place they give tradition is too great. Their method is too Catholic, and it does not give Scripture the freedom to speak to correct errors within Tradition. In the end, tradition that converses with the Bible to inform our theology, will always pull of us away from the pure gospel. For consider Jesus’ words to the traditionalists of his day, “You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men... You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition” (Mark 7:8-9).

Cultural encroachment. No one ever wants the Bible to be irrelevant, so at first-glance, Grenz/Franke’s cultural sensitivity and correlative dialogue seems promising. Regrettably, in so doing, Grenz/Franke give up the high ground of biblical revelation. They surrender the divine *Logos* and exchange it with a boundless natural theology of the Spirit, “who

⁷¹ Stephen Wellum, “Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals,” 192.

can speak in all things.”⁷² Haphazardly, Grenz/Franke ascribe authority to local cultures by asserting, “all theologies... are, to a degree, limited by the constraints of context.”⁷³ At the same time, they advocate the Spirit’s uninhibited freedom to speak “everywhere and anywhere.”⁷⁴ Moreover, their theological method is shaped more by social sciences, disciplines that often incorporate atheistic presuppositions, than by biblical theology and/or Scriptural exposition.⁷⁵

What Grenz/Franke fail to factor is that God is the sovereign Lord over culture, as Graeme Goldsworthy rightly attests, “God is in control of culture and he chose to shape the culture of his people as the means of conveying the eternal truths of the gospel.”⁷⁶ Moreover, in a section on a biblical theology of culture, Goldsworthy sets boundaries on how far the gospel can be immersed in culture, when he says there are certain “non-negotiable aspects to the question of contextualization.”⁷⁷ Grenz/Franke are not so steadfast. Sadly, they commit theological syncretism as they accommodate Christianity to the spirits of the age—postmodernism and, by extension, pluralism.⁷⁸

It is in theology’s merger with culture, that Grenz/Franke’s method of correlation is most plain. Unabashedly, they mix theology with sociology, God’s edifying word with postmodern literary deconstruction, and Christ’s church with secular society. Is it any wonder

⁷² Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 163.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 160-163.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁷⁶ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 287.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁷⁸ See David Wells for an insightful analysis of the effect these two factors have had on the church and Western culture in *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 60-124.

that the result of postfoundationalism is an amorphous religion that mirrors the ambient culture?⁷⁹ Clearly, for the purity and holiness of the Christian church, this kind of accommodation cannot be permissible. And it does not need to be.

A better way. Proposals by Graeme Goldsworthy and D.A. Carson show how a contextualized biblical theology has incredible potential for reaching the world with the gospel. Goldsworthy is surely correct when he states, “The centrality of the gospel as the meaning of all Scripture and the hermeneutical key to all reality reminds us that no transformation is valid that detracts from the gospel.”⁸⁰ To demur with Grenz/Franke, Christianity is more than just a preferable option in a world full of divergent cultures. It alone is true, and it alone saves. As D.A. Carson articulates, a Christian culture will be “most deeply Christian” when 1) it *includes* all biblical theological turning points, 2) *balances* all biblical theological turning points, and 3) *applies* them to local settings.⁸¹ In other words, for Christianity to be of any earthly good, it must bring a word from heaven!

Sadly, Grenz/Franke’s conception of Scripture, tradition, and culture fails here. It is a methodology “from below” with ever-changing language about transcendent possibilities. The result being a plethora of unstable communities conversing about ostensibly Christian views of God, man, and the world. This is insufficient. Postfoundationalism leaves the door wide open for pluralism and for the philosophers of Babylon to come and plunder the temple. This has been done repeatedly in the history of the church, as we have seen in Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Tillich. And now Grenz/Franke are once again leading Christ’s church away from the Truth.

⁷⁹ To see Grenz/Franke’s program manifested in a local church or pastoral ministry, just look to Brian McLaren and his emerging, postmodern/postfoundational theology (Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004]).

⁸⁰ Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 286-87.

⁸¹ D.A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 81-87.

May we in our day see their error, and learn a lesson from history that theological accommodation always compromises the gospel.

A Post Script for Evangelicals

Postmodern/Postfoundational/Postconservative Christians are not the only ones in need of reassessing their methods of theology. Fundamental evangelicals are just as vulnerable to the wiles of the devil and his deceitful schemes of correlation. Only they are much less inclined to recognize their deleterious methods. Thus evaluating contemporary theology, and in particular works like *Beyond Foundationalism*, is helpful in detecting our own methodological error.

From examining theological accommodation at length, this trend can be seen today in many self-consciously conservative churches. Even those churches that manage to avoid heterodoxy in their statements of faith, may have incorporated worldly practices in their ecclesial and ministerial methods. They unite biblical doctrine with secular methodologies borrowed from business, entertainment, advertisement, and urban planning. Thus it seems, that even in churches that would detect the doctrinal error in Grenz/Franke, they themselves participate in a similar kind of accommodation. Only the enterprise is more methodological, than theological. Or to say it another way, they have a method of correlation in their methodology.

David Wells provides a scathing critique to this kind of doctrinal deficiency in his book *Above All Earthly Pow'rs*. In one section entitled "Megachurches, Paradigm Shifts, and the New Spirituality," he details the ways (post)modern churches are accommodating to their culture. Consider some of his points:

Their [i.e. seeker churches] methodology is particularly adapted to this moment because to those who seek spirituality without religion, as so many in the postmodern world do, these churches are offering spirituality without theology.⁸²

The seeker churches have recognized that, for good or ill, they are operating in a marketplace... This has changed many things in this new experiment in how to “do church.” Among them is the fact that concerted attention is now being given to the way in which a newcomer “feels” about the church... [And why] entertainment has therefore emerged as a very important factor in the new mix.⁸³

Churches have been to the forefront in recognizing how the growth of cities, the evolution in the ways people shop, and the ways in which they have adapted to large, impersonal structures in society have all changed what they expect from church... [and thus] if our postmodern culture has consumption at its heart, it is then rather natural to propose that the Church should now construe itself in terms of marketing.⁸⁴

Wells analysis excoriates much of the ministry done today because of the ecclesial accommodation that it employs. Looking to the culture for practical means of reaching the unchurched, church leaders too often turn their backs on the Scriptures. Even in the churches where commitment to the Bible is maintained in teaching, discipleship, doctrinal formulation, and the like, the overall shape of the church may look more like McDonald’s, Disney World, or Oxmoor Mall than like the first-century assemblies in Asia Minor.⁸⁵ Something is awry with this scenario.

Mirroring the theological accommodation of mainline Protestant liberals and more recent postfoundationalists, contemporary church leaders are compromising the integrity of the church and the purity of the gospel. The issue is more than just style. In his chapter on “The Church,” Mark Dever makes the point that how one does church “is important because it is tied

⁸² David Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow’rs*, 269.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 270-71, 273.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 274, 276.

⁸⁵ These are just a handful of the commercial enterprises that Wells cites in his book.

to the good news itself... Take away the church and you take away the visible manifestation of the gospel in the world.” Along with this church-gospel connection, Dever postulates on the dangers of extra-biblical methods for ecclesiology. He writes, “Solutions treated as normative but that are not found in Scripture must be rejected as latter-day tradition that lacks the authority of the apostles.”⁸⁶ Nevertheless, pastors imperil churches through ventures with marketing, experiments in leadership, and fascination with technology and entertainment.

Time does not permit to explore in more detail the various ecclesial accommodations in leadership, Christian education, Christian counseling, preaching, evangelism, and church growth, but the principle remains. The method of correlation always leads to compromise and drift. This has been shown to be the case in the ontotheology of post-Enlightenment thinkers and in the theological method of Grenz/Franke. Even though these theologians sought to impact the “cultured despisers” with their theologically sophisticated Christianity, they in the end compromised the gospel because they missed this plain truth. “The churches that actually do influence the culture... *distance* themselves from it in their internal life”(emphasis mine).⁸⁷ They do not adopt it. “Studies on contemporary life, whether of a demographic or psychological kind, are helpful in understanding the way life is in a (post)modern world, but these studies do not themselves give the church its agenda.”⁸⁸

What theological accommodation in contemporary theology teaches the local pastor is that gleaning methodology from business, entertainment, psychology, or social theories always

⁸⁶ Mark Dever, “The Church” in *A Theology for the Church*, Daniel Akin (ed.) [Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2007], 854.

⁸⁷ David Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 224.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

leads astray. Ask Bill Hybels.⁸⁹ Or ask the apostle Paul, who being steeped in Jewish culture and tradition, trusted in the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16) and chose to preach Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). As one recent theologian has said, “The theology of the cross pronounces an either/or: either biblical revelation or philosophical speculation. The same either/or must be proclaimed to the present age: either biblical theology or postmodern theory.”⁹⁰ In opposition to Grenz/Franke and their theological heritage, it cannot be both/and. Accommodating methods of correlation always result in unholy unions and sterile offspring.

Such a radically biblical proposal may look antiquated or contrarian in a day when new programs, technological advances, and marketing strategies abound. Still the issue is not appearance, but authority. Whose word will evangelicals believe? Wells inveighs, “The church’s practice belies its profession of belief in the Bible’s authority,”⁹¹ and if Grenz/Franke are any indicator, there is much unbelief within evangelicalism today. So, it is with a call to biblical faithfulness that this paper concludes.

Theological and methodological accommodation are as old as Eden, and the effects are just the same—a diminished view of God; an unsettled faith; and expulsion from the presence of our Lord. Today’s shepherds, therefore, must guard their life and their doctrine, trusting foundationally that Christ has supplied his church with all that is needed for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-4). So that, instead of running after revisionist theologies and emerging

⁸⁹ In a recent and unexpected confession, Hybels said “We [i.e. Willow Creek Church] made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become ‘self feeders.’ We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their Bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own... Our dream is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions. Replace it with new insights. Insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture” (Bob Burney, “A shocking confession from Willow Creek Community Church leaders,” *Baptist Press* on-line article, accessed 5 May 2008; available from <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=26768>; Internet.

⁹⁰ Brian Ingrassia, *Postmodern Theory and Biblical Theology*, 241.

⁹¹ David Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant*, 226.

methodologies, these disciplined warriors would proclaim an eternal gospel secured in the unchanging word of God, and that they would have the confidence necessary to leave the ninety-nine and go after the one, even if his name is John Franke.

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