

tion *extra ecclesiam* is, argues DiNoia, a mistake—but only because salvation is a particularly *Christian* goal. The argument is based on a remark made to the author by a Jewish rabbi, that Jesus Christ was the answer to a question he had never asked. In similar fashion, he argues, nirvana is the answer to a question which can only be broached by way of Buddhism. While the case for “nonexclusive particularism” is interesting, DiNoia makes the most of his argument by using two very different traditions (Christianity and Buddhism), and we are left to wonder whether this approach would be sufficient in, say, Muslim-Christian dialogue, where salvation may be a similar end for which are prescribed divergent, and even mutually exclusive, means.

In short, this is—for all the questions it may raise, and the provocation involved—a timely and important book, one that cannot be easily wished away by anyone concerned with the future of Western Christianity. One could contest the (very nineteenth-century) Hebraic-Hellenic distinction made by many of these authors (the longest essay in the book, by Kenneth Paul Wesche, is a rather academic treatment of the “Jewish apocalyptic” roots of Christianity), and the vague enemy against which they set their weapons (neopaganism), but this pithy collection packs a surprisingly heavy punch, raising issues which must be addressed if the church is to survive in a world come of age. James Crumley gives a positive encapsulation of the spirit of the collection, one which goes beyond the bombast, when he suggests that “[f]or the church to understand the society in which it ministers is not only desirable but essential. However, for the church to allow the society to set its agenda is disastrous” (120). Either...or.

J. M. Shields

McGill University

---

*Theology for the Community of God.* By Stanley J. Grenz. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994. ISBN 0-8054-2801-1. Pp. xi+890.

---

Stanley J. Grenz is known to those both outside and inside Protestant evangelical circles. His desire to link certain insights of the eminent German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg to his pietist (Baptist) heritage has earned Grenz the due respect of his colleagues (those outside) who do not share his dogmatic concerns. A rather voluminous roll of publications, given to wide-ranging topics in ethics and theology, has established him as a pillar of the North American evangelical community (those inside). *Theology for the Community of God* is Grenz's mature attempt to bridge in one large volume these intellectual (theology) and experiential (faith) dimensions of the Christian tradition which, evidently, have so profoundly influenced his own spiritual pilgrimage (x).

In addition to a modest Introduction, initiating the reader into the “mysteries” of the nature and task of theology (1–34), the book is divided into six parts (with four intervening chapters consistently separating each part) in accordance with the six prominent themes of Christian theological reflection: “Theology” (i.e., God/Trinity; 35–161); “Anthropology” (162–314); “Christology” (315–

464); "Pneumatology" (465–600); "Ecclesiology" (601–742); and "Eschatology" (743–859). As the title declares, the notion of *community*, as opposed to that of *individuality*, serves as the larger context within which Grenz seeks to develop his dogma-specific venture. (Grenz would be the first to admit that Karl Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* antecedes at least one facet of his communal accent, namely, the church.) At a time when the turn to the subject is being feverishly resisted, this emphasis will be doubtlessly received as a welcome change to the so-called oppressive and overwhelming presence of subjectivity in the human sciences.

Concerning the doctrine of God, Grenz follows Pannenberg, who follows Barth, in emphasizing the centrality (primary or prolegomenous significance) of the Trinity for Christian theology. Unlike Barth, though, and to the great delight of his *Doktorvater*, Grenz is not opposed to "the intellectual demonstration that the postulate of God best illumines our experience of our world and our own lives." Nevertheless, the reality of God is truly known on the plane of Christian living, "in fellowship with God, others, and creation" (67). As is to be expected, the eternal relationality of the *immanent* and *economic* Trinity (100–27), grounded in the agapeic essence of the divine (92–3; cf. 1 John 4:8, 16; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 422–32), is ideally suited to fit Grenz's theological and ethical theme of community.

Grenz's anthropology is rooted somewhat in the transcendental notion of "openness to the world" which he treats in line with the largely Reformed speculative view of "general revelation" (not to be confused with "natural theology"). More controversially, though not surprisingly, the historicity of "Adam" is affirmed despite all qualifications (246–51) which, in the end, do not really affect the "traditional view" (192). (On these two points Grenz and Pannenberg strongly disagree.) In keeping with his theme, Grenz takes the *imago Dei* concept to be socially rather than individually constituted. Sin is thus thought in part to be "the destruction of community" carried out in an angelically infested universe of varied "structures of existence"—a view which is bound to raise an eyebrow or two but which is nonetheless on the rise, even outside traditionalist ecclesial communities.

The negative undertow of Christian anthropology (the Fall of humankind) is, according to Grenz, but the bridge to the more affirmative doctrines of systematic theology, chiefly Christology, the reconciliatory basis of the *telos* of creation: "the establishment of the eschatological community" (316). In addition to his Chalcedonian reaffirmation of the person and work of Christ, Grenz mentions briefly the problem of Jesus' maleness as salvifically representative of both genders, the human community. (Here Grenz does not manifest Pannenberg's indifference to this issue in volume two of his *Systematic Theology*.) However, I suspect that few "radical feminists," as he calls them, will be happy with his rather reserved conclusion: "Jesus is the universal human. He is not merely the Savior of the privileged or the male. On the contrary, he is the paradigmatic human and the New Human. For this reason, in Christ we are indeed all one..." (380).

Grenz's pneumatology emphasizes the work rather than the person of the Holy Spirit, two dimensions of which he understands to be "bibliology" (the doctrine of the Bible) and soteriology. Touchy subjects, especially within North

American evangelical groups, such as inerrancy, infallibility, and biblical authority, are, in all fairness to Grenz, handled with care, even though those outside of the debate will doubtlessly find the logic of the involved parties to be somewhat constricting and passé. Grenz is most certainly correct when he states that notions like inerrancy and infallibility are ultimately affirmations of "the trustworthiness of the Spirit" (524), and yet all too often it is hard to distinguish between bibliology and bibliolatry. One of the more exciting parts of the work, at least phenomenologically, is its chapter on conversion, the divine aspect of which is emphasized in Calvinist traditions. Here one finds interesting and seemingly esoteric discussions of topics like "baptism of the Spirit" (i.e., Pentecostalism) and "church initiation rites" (i.e., water baptism).

Grenz refers to the church as "the eschatological covenant community" of God whose purpose is to walk together, reflecting the nature of the triune God: "God calls the church to mirror as far as possible in the midst of the brokenness of the present that eschatological ideal community of love which derives its meaning from the divine essence" (629). The mandate of the church is worship, edification, and outreach. Grenz restricts the church's "acts of commitment" (sacraments), as do most Reformational groups, to two: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Adult baptism by immersion and the merely symbolic nature of Communion are, not surprisingly, regarded as the norm for the Christian church. Needless to say, this portion of the book is the least ecumenically accommodating. Besides certain insightful comments regarding the communal significance of sacramental life, few non-Baptist, non-Radical Reformation groups will find it profitable, except perhaps for its phenomenological import.

Finally, Grenz gets to eschatology. He looks at three dimensions of the doctrine of the "last things" (understood in terms of *telos*): "personal eschatology" (the death and resurrection life of believers), "corporate eschatology" (God's intention for human history), and "cosmic eschatology" (God's intention for the entire cosmos). Death, of course, is an overriding theme in the face of which resurrection, the Judeo-Christian, non-dualist metaphor for eternal life—"a corporate or social event that will occur when our risen Lord returns in glory to bring human history to its climax" (778)—provides comfort and hope. Grenz also deals with the Reformed-specific concerns of competing eschatological chronologies (pre-, post-, and amillennial), gleaned various insights which are said to reside in each. "God's cosmic program" is understood in thoroughly 'traditionalist' evangelical fashion, a program which includes a literal second coming, a final judgment, a hell, and a new creation. This vision of (cosmic) history, Grenz concludes, "issues a call to action in the present [i.e., evangelism, holiness, and steadfastness]. And it indicates how we ought to live in the light of the end [i.e., hopeful involvement and realistic engagement]" (848).

*Theology for the Protestant Evangelical Community of God* would have been a more accurate title for this work, since Grenz's views hardly express those of the community. Indeed, one wonders whether such a theology is possible or even desirable. The book's community emphasis, as an alternative to the prevalent egocentrism of pop culture, is commendable. But one fails to see how this really affects the content of evangelical faith (except perhaps for broadening its scope)

in a way that is precluded by an individualist stance. In fact one could argue that Grenz's notion of community is simply individualism blown up, in that the distinction between the two is far from apparent, held together as they are by (Reformed) doctrine which undergoes little, if any, change. Further reflection on the problems of subjectivity, including its distinction from individualism and its relation to doctrine, may have cleared the air somewhat. Nonetheless, this reviewer wishes to echo Carl E. Braaten's remark that *Theology for the Community of God* "represents the 'coming of age' of American evangelicalism." Seminarians are likely to find it most profitable.

Jim Kanaris

McGill University

---

***God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams.* By David F. Wells. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994. ISBN 0-8028-3773-5. Pp. x+278.**

---

In this second book of a series of two, David Wells continues his critique of the North American evangelical movement for what he sees as a yielding to the ethos of modernity (urbanization, technology, and capitalism). Wells's main argument can be understood in the light of the comment that, "[t]his century has demonstrated with a kind of ruthless insistence that the effort to be both modern and Christian produces deep and perhaps insoluble problems" (16). One of the author's main critiques of the evangelical establishment is the way it has tried to become a kind of 'civil religion' in its efforts to be culturally adapted. Wells's contention is that before the 1960s North American evangelicalism was an outsider in the modern world, but after the 1960s, with the death of old liberal Protestantism, evangelicalism was propelled into what he terms the "same religious void" as liberalism.

Another contention of the book is that modernity has caused contemporary evangelicals to believe whatever they want, regarding any "confession of God's truth in the church and beyond [as] being simply a part of personal identity and psychological makeup" (27). Wells cannot accept any kind of faith that does not make public its tenets. "Modern culture grants me," he writes, "whatever I want to believe—so long as I keep those beliefs from infringing on the consciousness or behavior of anyone else, especially on points of controversy" (27).

This theological vacuum has prompted the evangelical movement in North America to be a kind of shapeless mass of institutions and entities, according to Wells. The practical implications of this "marriage" between modernity and evangelicalism are many. The first is that the church has become another kind of shopping mall. This has been witnessed by the rise of the megachurches, where Wells sees members attending for purely psychological reasons, not out of any commitment to Truth. He writes that "our culture of abundance has led the churches to refashion themselves into institutions better suited to satisfying consumers of things religious, and it has turned religious life into a field for entrepre-