

Do Pietists Need a Doctrine of Creation? God's World in the Baptist Tradition and Stanley J. Grenz

ABSTRACT

The importance of robust doctrines of creation at this moment in history cannot be overstated. This essay calls for a renewed attention to this aspect of theology. Stanley Grenz, standing in the pietist tradition, exhibits a characteristic tendency to underplay the theme. Although there are important hints in his work of 'creation as future' this eschatological framework is undeveloped. The essay calls for a more intentional 'Baptist catholicity' which bears witness to the God's redemption of creation.

Missing Creation

One of the most important tasks of theology in the 21st Century is the recovery of a robust, mature research program on the doctrine of creation. Many of the most pressing issues in the life and witness of the people of God are directly dependent on the doctrine of creation: the scope of salvation, the 'environmental crisis,' sexuality, gene therapy, justice, what it means to be human. All of these require a mature theological understanding of creation to underwrite and guide faithful life and witness. But at the same time that we need a mature theological conversation on the doctrine of creation, we discover that we have neglected that conversation for over 250 years. Since around the middle of the 18th Century, theologians have ceded to the natural sciences any accounts of what would be studied under the doctrine of creation.¹ Quite a bit later, the social sciences entered into contest with the natural sciences over this same ground.

¹ This 'ceding' of the world to the natural sciences results from two contrasting attitudes in theology. One attitude 'entrusts' accounts of creation to the sciences out of a confidence that 'empirical science' is the God-ordained means by which humans may come to understand and control this world. Another attitude 'retreats' from any theological account of the world of creation out of the conviction that theology cannot compete with the sciences. Both of these attitudes and consequent actions have their roots in the disconnection of creation from redemption, a theological mistake that parallels the errors chronicled by Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (Yale, 1987).

The church and its teachers have a lot of work to accomplish if we are going to recover a conversation about the doctrine of creation. When theology ceded ‘God’s world’ to the natural sciences, we retreated into the realms of Gefühl and Heilsgeschichte—the inner life of the believer and the realm of ‘salvation-history’ separate from critical history. This two-fold movement from any responsibility for giving an account of God’s world to piety and salvation-history, has resulted in some serious lacunae and even errors in the life and witness of the church.² In the church, we find an inability to address care for creation in terms other than pragmatic and survivalist, when we should be able to articulate and practice care for creation as participation in and witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. We also find difficulty in many parts of the church with embracing the arts as anything other than instrumental to salvation. And we find a doctrine of salvation that is proto-gnostic because it has been severed from the doctrine of creation or connected to a doctrine of creation that regards creation merely as the stage on which God works the salvation of humankind. This becomes fully Gnostic when it becomes a doctrine of salvation as rescue from creation. When the church’s proclamation and practice of salvation is lightly connected to or disconnected from life in this world, here and now, then the church becomes highly vulnerable to other ideologies and turns into a counter-witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.³

As a consequence of theological inattention to the doctrine of creation, theology has made itself marginal to the academy. It has simply absconded from the field of battle.⁴ Consequently, the academy also loses through the absence of any challenging teleological account of the world. Lacking this challenge, the academy becomes captured by ‘techne’ that was exposed years ago by Jacques Ellul but only recently given more thorough attention by theologians such as Timothy Gorringer, Michael Northcott, Amy Laura Hall, and philosopher Albert Borgmann.

²In my 2007 Grenz lectures, I discuss the consequences of ‘Missing Creation in the Church’ and ‘Missing Creation in the Academy.’ These lectures are available from the Regent College Bookstore (www.regentbookstore.com). These lectures and one additional lecture, ‘Missing Creation in Society,’ will be revised and incorporated in the book I am currently writing, tentatively titled, *God’s World: A Biblical, Theological, Practical Doctrine of Creation* (Baker Academic Press).

³ I am thinking here of the church in Nazi Germany, in Rwanda, and to a (so far) less destructive but more subtle way, the church in the U.S.A.

⁴ Here the eschewing of ‘false humility’ and the robustness of faith represented by radical orthodoxy represents a call of God as does the work of Alister McGrath. But we need many more voices joining theirs in this conversation.

In society, our neglect of the doctrine of creation contributes directly to the development of emotivism and expressivist morality. The development and failure of this morality has been brilliantly told by Alasdair MacIntyre.⁵ Without a doctrine of creation, we have only simulacra of morality because morality only makes sense in light of a *telos* that depends upon some doctrine of creation. If we humans are our own creators, free to be and become whatever we choose, then morality is merely a matter of self-expression.

This is devastating enough for human life in community, but it does not get at the heart of the problem for witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. If the good news of Jesus Christ is God's love for the world and the reconciliation of all things to God through Christ (surely the biblical references are obvious: John 3:16-17; Colossians 1:15-20; Revelation 21-22), then the absence or weakness of the doctrine of creation in theology entails the absence or weakness of the doctrine of redemption. Just as MacIntyre's narrative exposes the simulacra—the 'pretense' of our morality—so the absence of mature theological teaching on the doctrine of creation results in the proclamation of and participation in a pretense of God's redemption and reconciliation rather than its reality.

MacIntyre warns us that if his argument is correct, then we will have difficulty discerning the true nature of our circumstances.⁶ The very forces that produce the circumstances in which we find ourselves also conceal themselves in the circumstances. The same is true of our theological situation. We may be able to identify the practical issues that inexorably force themselves upon us—global warming, gene 'therapy,' and so on—but we may not be able to see past them to the dynamics that produce them and that conceal from us our proper response. In the circumstances that we find ourselves in, without a robust doctrine of creation, we think that these problems are technical problems to be solved by the application of human capacities. But this is to mistake our situation. More properly, it is to mistake who God is and our proper relationship to God. We need a doctrine of creation that is revealed fully in Jesus Christ and that in turn reveals Christ to us.⁷ Apart from this 'basic research' in the doctrine of

⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (University of Notre Dame Press, 3rd edition, 2007).

⁶ MacIntyre, 4.

⁷ There are happy exceptions to the claim that I am making generally about modern theology. Some exceptions are Karl Heim in the early 20th Century, Karl Barth mid-century, and Jürgen Moltmann late 20th Century. More recently, Catherine Keller has made a provocative contribution and Eastern Orthodox resources are increasingly entering the Western theological discussions. Many

creation the life and witness of God's people will flounder like medical doctors would flounder if they were trying to treat a bacterial or viral infection without the basic research that tells us how the human body lives.

Creation in the Baptist Tradition

I cannot begin to give a full treatment of this topic here: I do not have the learning, the temperament, or the space. But I can make some suggestions that may prove helpful and illuminating and that will provide us with a segue to a consideration of the doctrine of creation in the theology of Stanley J. Grenz.⁸

I have been tempted to develop a typology of Baptist theologies in order to locate various accounts of creation or the absence of such accounts in the Baptist tradition. Although such a typology is outside the scope of this essay, a brief consideration of the possibility will eventually help us better understand Grenz's doctrine of creation. One way to develop a typology of Baptist theologies would be through Lindbeck's scheme of cognitive-propositionalist, experiential-expressivist, and cultural-linguistic.⁹ In this scheme, one can easily find Baptist representatives: Carl Henry, E.Y. Mullins, and James Wm. McClendon, Jr., to restrict ourselves to the U.S. Or one could use Hans Frei's five-fold schema and again find Baptist representatives.¹⁰

But I am sufficiently leery of typologies and their restrictive power that I use them only to illuminate what is already there, not to determine what should or must be there. In the case of creation, one illuminating factor in much Baptist theology is the pietist influence in Baptist life and thought. Again, at the risk of making things overly complex, we must

entries into the controversy over science and religion edge toward the doctrine of creation but also typically reveal the need for the kind of 'basic research' in the doctrine of creation that I advocate.

⁸ I am aware that North America is the focus of the following discussion. This is so for two reasons. First, North America is largely the intellectual context for Grenz's work, though his influence is much wider. Second, I am no expert in the history of Baptist theology. I am conscious that we desperately need more work on Baptist theology around the world and long for more recognition of and learning from the work being done outside North America and other Anglo cultures.

⁹ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Westminster Press, 1984).

¹⁰ See 'Five Types of Theology' in Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Yale University Press, 1992), 28-55.

recognize that pietist and pietism are not monolithic realities. In the case of the doctrine of creation, and in Grenz's theology, our pietist heritage is directly and powerfully relevant.

By using pietist here, I am seeking to acknowledge the strong revivalist and inward, 'religion of the heart,' that marks a lot of Baptist life and thought. This is not the only mark of Baptist life and thought. We could again develop another potential typology of Baptist theology. We could identify some Baptists as 'confessional,' particularly in the light of a resurgent Calvinism among Southern Baptists. Other Baptists may be well-described as 'creedal,' especially those for whom Nicea is the touchstone for theology. Still others could be identified as 'Bible only' Baptists: 'No creed but the Bible.' Yet others might be predominantly identified by liberation themes in their theology. And on we could go. These and other identifiers are familiar to most of us who have had much experience in Baptist life.

Each of these identifiers creates a particular context within which or through which the doctrine of creation receives attention or suffers neglect. Some of them lead more directly to the development of a doctrine of creation, but none of them guarantees attention to the doctrine. There are ways to avoid or neglect the doctrine of creation within almost any practice of theology. At the same time, none of them necessarily leads to the neglect of creation.

If this essay were an attempt to represent various ways of treating the doctrine of creation in the history of Baptist thought, we could find relative neglect in E.Y. Mullins and A.H. Strong.¹¹ In D.C. Macintosh, we would find the doctrine of creation displaced by *Theology as an Empirical Science*.¹² In Dale Moody, we would find a more extensive and promising

¹¹ Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Judson Press, 1907), 371-464 (about 7%); Edgar Young Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Roger Williams Press, 1917), 251-301 (about 10%). Beyond the percentage, what is telling in these works is that the doctrine of creation plays no significant role in the theology. removing these passages would require very little change in the rest of the theology.

¹² Douglas Clyde Macintosh, *Theology as an Empirical Science* (Macmillan, 1919).

account of the doctrine.¹³ At the end of the 20th Century, we receive a brief but typically creative treatment from Jim McClendon.¹⁴

Because McClendon's doctrine of creation is a particularly illuminating treatment of the doctrine in the Baptist tradition, it is worth considering before we conclude this section and focus on Grenz's doctrine of creation. McClendon concludes his chapter on creation by acknowledging that

[The task of this chapter] was made harder by the three-hundred-year-old tendency to assign the full understanding of nature to natural sciences alone, to dissociate God from the world (the absence-of-God theme), and to focus creation thought only upon the human creature. These tendencies could not be defeated in this space, and they continue, powerful even though unspoken, in reader's minds and in today's churches.¹⁵

McClendon then specifies three ways that he has sought to resist these tendencies:

(1) 'by recalling the broad biblical view that they themselves replaced—God as creation's Alpha and Omega' (2) by unfolding 'more fully the concept of creation as work in progress, and to relate God's suffering and ours to that ongoing divine work' (3) by examining creation 'as an arena of promise whose destiny lies in its relation to what lasts and what comes last (Chapter Two) and to the new that comes in Christ (Chapter Three)'.¹⁶

McClendon concludes with a promise of further development of the doctrine of creation in Christ in Chapter Seven. Clearly, this is a doctrine of creation that is integral to the whole account of the gospel in McClendon's theology.

To this point I have suggested that the pietist strand of Baptist heritage may play a significant role in the lack of development of the doctrine of creation in Baptist theology. But I have taken a brief detour

¹³ Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth; A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Eerdmans, 1981), 127-270 (about 25%).

¹⁴ James Wm. McClendon, Jr. *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Volume II* (Abingdon, 1994), 146-189 (about 10%); but beyond the portion allotted to creation is the centrality of the doctrine in McClendon's theology.

¹⁵ McClendon 188.

¹⁶ McClendon 188-189.

from developing that claim to acknowledge that the pietist story is not the only story in Baptist theology. Other influences and strands of Baptist life and thought provide their own accounts of creation or neglect it.

In the pietist strand of Baptist heritage, neglect of the doctrine of creation is not a necessary logical consequence of pietism, but it is an easy and typical development. If the focus is on the individual's experience of salvation and if this focus develops into an exclusive field of vision, then everything drops away except what is necessary to bring the individual to a moment of decision and conversion. All doctrine becomes instrumental to this one purpose. So it would seem that pietists do not need a doctrine of creation. They only need a doctrine of salvation and a stage upon which that work of salvation takes place. Any account of that 'stage' may be left to other disciplines, other thinkers. Only salvation is important to theology and only theology can give an account of salvation. Leave lesser matters to other disciplines.

But as McClendon's theology suggests and guides us, and as we will see in our study of Grenz, a proper doctrine of salvation also requires a doctrine of creation. Any theology that develops a doctrine of salvation and neglects a doctrine of creation loses any reality to its witness to and participation in salvation. Moreover, in its account of salvation, it creates the kind of situation that Jesus describes in which the demon-possessed man is swept clean of demons, but given nothing in their place. And so the demons return in even greater number and influence. A doctrine of salvation without a doctrine of creation produces 'believers' who are prepared for ideological captivity and exploitation. Such was the case in Germany with the rise of National Socialism, such was the case in South Africa with apartheid, such is the case in many parts of the world today with the promise of health and prosperity through Christ. So, yes, a pietist needs a doctrine of creation.

Stanley Grenz as Pietist

To understand Grenz's theological project, it is essential to recognize the formative influence of pietism on him and the significance of his self-identification as a pietist. The North American Baptist Conference originates in German immigrants. It is rooted in German pietism and continues to be strongly influenced by the characteristics of pietism.¹⁷

¹⁷ The standard history of the North American Baptist Conference is Frank H. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry of the North American Baptist Conference* (North American Baptist Conference: Oakbrook, IL, 1977). This work and other

Grenz acknowledges his own identity as a pietist—with a Ph.D.¹⁸ His primary concern in this article is to work out the relationship between the ‘convertive piety’ of ‘awakening evangelicalism’ and the ‘right doctrine’ of ‘scholastic evangelicalism’ for ‘contemporary evangelicalism’. He is typically generous and irenic in his discussion, drawing out the best in each area and looking for commonality. But in the end, he sides with the concerns of ‘convertive piety’:

Rather than the quest for right doctrine, therefore, the commitment to convertive piety—which comprises the great contribution and lasting legacy of the eighteenth century awakening—must remain the integrative principle of the evangelical ethos. Whatever value evangelicals may (rightly) place on doctrinal orthodoxy, historically they have always been adamant that doctrine is never an end in itself, but is important insofar as it serves and nurtures the transformation of the heart and true Christian piety. Consequently, concern for biblical doctrine must always remain the handmaiden to commitment to the gospel of heartfelt piety.¹⁹

As we will consider below, Grenz’s identity as a pietist provides an important context for examining his doctrine of creation. But before we focus there. Two other topics are relevant.

First, this concern to properly relate convertive piety and right doctrine pervades Grenz’s work. It gives it much of its internal tension and contributes significantly to the external tensions between Grenz and other evangelical theologians. In short, Grenz’s willingness to live with this tension and allow it to be central to his work is a significant factor in his creativity and influence. Most evangelical theologians find ways to resolve, relieve or sequester this tension in the process of their education and professional lives.

Second, Grenz’s consideration of the tensions between convertive piety and right doctrine parallels Lindbeck’s analysis of *The Nature of Doctrine*. But Grenz seems to have only Lindbeck’s first two positions (cognitive-propositionalist and experiential-expressivist) and has to resolve the tension by granting privilege to one or the other. So Grenz argues for

reference articles on the NAB give little attention to its theological ethos. That is best identified in the actual life of its congregations and the testimony of its members, such as Stan Grenz.

¹⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, ‘Concerns of a Pietist with a Ph.D.,’ *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37/2 (Fall 2002): 58-76.

¹⁹ Grenz, ‘Concerns of a Pietist with a Ph.D’, 74.

the priority of convertive piety and doctrine as its handmaiden. What concerns me in this move is that the privileging of piety in one generation has led to the abandonment of orthodoxy in the next. Lindbeck's proposal of a third way, the cultural-linguistic, provides a resolution that preserves convertive piety and right doctrine, relates them properly, and provides the means (though not a guarantee) that both will be sustained by the disciple community from one generation to the next.²⁰

Grenz's Doctrine of Creation

After a long and winding road, we arrive finally at an examination of Grenz's doctrine of creation. In our examination we will think of Grenz as a theologian in the pietist Baptist tradition. This identity immediately presents Grenz with obstacles. As I have noted above, pietism—convertive piety, as Grenz names it—does not have a strong, internal need for a doctrine of creation. Other doctrines are essential and require significant development. Sin, humankind, atonement, sanctification—these areas of doctrine are central and others may be essential as supportive.²¹ For example, in much of convertive piety the doctrine of the Incarnation is largely instrumental to the atonement.

But in much of convertive piety, the doctrine of creation is almost entirely reduced to the doctrine of humankind, as McClendon notes above. Creation itself, then, is almost entirely instrumental to salvation and plays only the role as the stage upon which the drama of salvation is played out. Creation is not a part of the drama and when the drama has reached its end, the stage may be dismantled and set aside. Creation plays no role in the drama itself.

This description of the instrumental place of creation is largely true of popular, unreflective theology in the tradition of convertive piety, but it is also true in different ways in more reflective theology of much of convertive piety. Grenz himself exposes this when he describes the early years of 'awakening evangelicalism' and 'the influence of the new empiricist,

²⁰ The claims of this paragraph require further development and argument. I hope to return to them in my work for a future book on the gospel and theology. For now, see Jonathan R. Wilson, 'Theology and the Old Testament,' in Craig C. Broyles, *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (Baker Academic 2001), 245-264, esp. 249-254, where I exposit and revise Lindbeck's account and propose an 'imaginative-practical' understanding of doctrine.

²¹ One of the admirable qualities of Grenz and his work is that as he pursued some of these supportive doctrines, he recognized that they were central not peripheral. I am thinking here especially of the doctrine of the Trinity.

inductive, experiment-focused scientific method that had been mediated to Wesley and others by the Enlightenment thinkers, especially John Locke.²² This confidence in empirical science may have had two effects on pietism: first, providing a model for ‘experimental religion’ that trusted the human senses to grasp the experience of faith; second, to trust empirical science to provide a truthful account of God’s world. I do not mean by this to denigrate the role of the supernatural in much of pietism but to identify the dynamic of pietist life and thought in the context of its cultural origins. That original dynamic continues to be an influence in pietism and in the pietist Baptist tradition that shapes Grenz’s work.²³

In Grenz’s case, his pietist formation is complicated and partially transformed by his study with Wolfhart Pannenberg. Grenz was not only ‘a pietist with a Ph. D.,’ but a pietist with a Ph.D. completed under a German theologian who is far from being a pietist—perhaps about as far as one could get. These two streams—piety and Pannenberg—represent the creative tension and incompleteness of Grenz’s work that gives it some of its liveliness.

Grenz never published on the doctrine of creation at the same level as he did on the Trinity or the *imago dei*.²⁴ Moreover, in his list of topics for the planned but never completed *Matrix of Christian Theology*, he names ‘the central foci of the systematic theology corpus: theology (proper), anthropology, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology’. The doctrine of creation is not separately identified as a focus.

²² Grenz, ‘Concerns of a Pietist,’ 63, referencing David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A Survey from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Baker, 1992), 53; and George M. Marsden, ‘Evangelicals, History, and Modernity,’ in George M. Marsden, ed., *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Eerdmans, 1984), 98.

²³ As I was working on this article it also occurred to me that Grenz was formed in the same geographical part of North American Baptist life (the Dakotas and Manitoba) as D.C. Macintosh, who gave us *Theology as an Empirical Science*.

²⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Westminster John Knox, 2001), and *The Named God and the Question of Being* (Westminster John Knox, 2005); these are the first two volumes of a planned six-volume series titled *The Matrix of Christian Theology*. See my review essay on these volumes as well as *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Augsburg Fortress, 2004) and *Prayer: The Cry for the Kingdom* (Eerdmans, revised edition, 2005) in Jonathan R. Wilson, ‘Stanley J. Grenz: Generous Faith and Faithful Engagement,’ *Modern Theology* 23/1 (January 2007): 113-121.

If the main source that we have for Grenz's doctrine of creation is a reliable guide to any more mature treatment of the theme in Grenz's *Matrix*, then Grenz would treat creation under the doctrine of God. In *Theology for the Community of God*, Grenz devotes a separate chapter to 'The Creator God.'²⁵ This short chapter concludes 'Part 1' on the doctrine of God. It is followed by Part 2, Anthropology, Part 3, Christology, Part 4, Pneumatology, Part 5, Ecclesiology, and Part 6, Eschatology. In the brief section that Grenz devotes to the Creator God, and the lengthy section on anthropology, Grenz reflects the pietist tendency to place much more emphasis on the latter.

Nevertheless, he does treat the doctrine of creation in a stand-alone chapter. Moreover, although his discussion is brief and appropriate to its place in a textbook, it reflects a more sophisticated and significant doctrine of creation than a mere instrumental account. Grenz begins by characterizing God's act of creation as a free and loving act. He grounds both of these characterizations in the doctrine of the Trinity. Although he references Karl Barth only once, Grenz is clearly following Barth's account.²⁶ But Grenz makes minimal use of this teaching in reference to other portions of his theology and does not extend these insights in relation to other doctrines.

Grenz then moves on to consider directly the doctrine of the Trinity and gives an account of the roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Father is 'the ground of all that exists' and as such is 'the ultimate, direct agent in the creative act.' (102) The Son is 'the principle of creation' (103-105) and the Spirit is 'the divine power active in creating the universe.'²⁷ While Grenz is right to give an account of creation as the work of the triune God, the terms that he uses and the biblical references that he draws on raise some questions about the adequacy of his account. How is the direct agency of the Father related to the Spirit as 'the divine power active' in creation? Is 'principle' a sufficient description of the role of the Son in relation to Bible passages such as Proverbs 8, John 1, and Colossians 1, which Grenz references? Do not these passages force us beyond a discrete doctrine of

²⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Eerdmans 2000), 98-123.

²⁶ See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* 102, note 2. The account of creation in Barth's *CD* III follows from the account of the divine perfections of God's loving and God's freedom in *CD* II/1. This same treatment of freedom and love may be found to some degree also in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Eerdmans, 1994), 1-35.

²⁷ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 102-106.

creation to an account of creation that is more robust and directly integrated with redemption?

Following this account, Grenz covers the sovereignty of God, the time of creation, and God's providence. His treatments of God's sovereignty and providence demonstrate Grenz's sensitivity to our context and the challenges presented to us by our history while offering a faithful account of the tradition that provides a satisfactory response to contextual challenges.

In his treatment of the time of creation, Grenz offers his most creative and helpful thinking on the doctrine. For him, while we must acknowledge 'creation as past', the most important aspect is 'creation as future.' For Grenz, 'the understanding of creation as a divine future act lies at the heart of the biblical message.' Thus, 'only at the consummation of God's activity in history will the world take on its final shape and thereby reflect fully the destiny or design God intends for creation.'²⁸

These are critically important convictions that witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. Grenz rightly sees beyond the instrumental account of creation that is often present in pietist traditions. Regrettably, he does not develop these convictions in any significant way nor do they permeate the rest of his theology. Grenz asserts 'the eschatological consummation of history,' but this consummation is left dangling; it has no clear and explicit connection, no thick integration with God's redemptive work in Christ.²⁹ It is almost as if creation has its own eschatological destiny alongside the eschatological consummation of redemption. That is, creation and redemption are parallel works of God, each of which has its own proper destiny in an eschatological consummation.³⁰ When Grenz treats eschatology later in the text, his discussion is almost entirely concerned with the redemption of individuals in community. Only in a final few pages do we get some reflection on 'the new creation,' and even here the 'new creation' is instrumental to divine and human community.³¹

²⁸ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 109-112

²⁹ See Pannenberg's discussion of creation and eschatology, 136-161.

³⁰ For alternative accounts in the baptist tradition, see the suggestions of McClendon (above): Laura Ruth Yordy, *Green Witness: Ecology, Ethics, and the Kingdom of God* (Cascade 2008), especially chapter 2, 'God's Eschatological Creation'; and Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford 2008).

³¹ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 644-649. An examination of Grenz's other texts add nothing substantive to this account. He briefly grounds ethics in the doctrine of creation, but does not develop this theme or integrate it into

Pietist and Catholic Baptists?

The disparate sections of this essay do have a unifying concern. That concern is that theology has neglected the doctrine of creation for almost 300 years and now finds itself trying to serve the people of God in a time when a mature, robust doctrine of creation is most needed. In my own tradition and the one for which I am writing this essay, the renewal of theology around the doctrine of creation must be cognizant of the contributions and impediments to such a renewal in our Baptist tradition. One of the most prolific and influential Baptist theologians of the late 20th Century is Stanley J. Grenz. If we turn to him for guidance and assistance in renewing theological reflection on creation, we must be aware of his pietist heritage, which many of us share, and the impediments that it places in our way. In Grenz's own theology he shows some signs of moving past those impediments, but this movement is never developed or integrated with the more pietist elements of his thinking.

We must find more ways in our Baptist tradition and our cultural context, if we are to be faithful in our witness to the good news of Jesus Christ for all creation. One way is to overcome some of the limitations in our reading of Scripture placed on us by our tradition and simply to become more faithful readers of the biblical witness to the reconciliation of all things in Christ.³²

Another means by which we may become more faithful witnesses to Christ is by intentionally broadening our Baptist tradition. Our tradition has always been a work of *bricolage*, drawing from material at hand in service to the gospel.³³ So let us continue this practice of embodying through time the baptist tradition that bears witness to the gospel. One way in which we might do that is by following those who propose a 'baptist catholicity'.³⁴

the rest of his ethical work. See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics* (IVP 1997), 260-262.

³² The doctrine of creation is beginning to receive a great deal more attention from Bible scholars. One of those is Stephen Chapman, a Baptist OT scholar at Duke Divinity School.

³³ I learned the term *bricolage* from Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents* (Beacon Press 1988), 74-77; but I adopt the term to represent Paul's assertion that 'we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ' (2 Corinthians 10:5; TNIV).

³⁴ Barry Harvey, *Can These Bones Live? A Catholic Baptist Engagement with Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics, and Social Theory* (Brazos 2008); Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Wipf and Stock 2006); see also the symposium on this book in *Pro Ecclesia* XVIII/4 (Fall 2009):367-392.

Although these proposals have not explicitly promoted the renewal of a doctrine of creation, the ‘catholicity’ that they propose would lead naturally to an expansion and revision of the pietist Baptist tradition.

Whatever sources we draw on, we must begin the work of making our witness to the gospel more faithful to the good news that God is redeeming creation. We must maintain the pietist passion for the new birth and the Christian life, but we must set these within the context of the cosmic drama of salvation. This is not a matter of choosing between Christian traditions, convertive piety and right doctrine, or creation and redemption; it is a matter of participation in God’s work in the world and witness to that work, which is the hope of all creation.

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