
Pro Rege

Volume 24 | Number 3

Article 3

March 1996

Scripture and Theology: Doctrinal Facts, a Community's Narrative, or a Redemptive-Historical Fabric

Michael Williams
Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege

Recommended Citation

Williams, Michael (1996) "Scripture and Theology: Doctrinal Facts, a Community's Narrative, or a Redemptive-Historical Fabric," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 24: No. 3, 24 - 30.
Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol24/iss3/3

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Theology for the Community of God, by Stanley J. Grenz (Nashville: Broadman & Holman) 1994. 859 pages, hardback, \$40.00.

Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, by Wayne Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 1994. 1167 pages, hardback, \$40.

Scripture and Theology: Doctrinal facts, a community's narrative, or a redemptive-historical fabric

A Review Article
by Michael Williams

Over the last few years, the number of books bemoaning the theological shallowness of evangelical religion have become legion, and a number of them have been reviewed in these pages. Scholars as diverse as David Wells (a theologian), Os Guinness (a social theorist), and Mark Noll (a historian) have all claimed that evangelicalism has courted cultural influence at the expense of its doctrinal heritage and theological depth. While their arguments merit attention, even alarm, do they tell the whole story? If evangelicals are truly as doctrinally ignorant and confessionally shallow as the critics allege, how do we account for the raft of recent evangelical publication on theology? Not coffee table stuff, mind you, but big, imposing works on systematic theology? Maybe it's reactionary. Maybe it's guilt. I'm not sure anyone yet knows. But it is clear, criticisms aside, that theology is not dead yet in evangelical circles.

In fact, since the publication of Millard Erickson's *Systematic Theology* in 1983, the discipline of systematic theology has enjoyed something of a resurgence within evangelical circles. The amazing popularity of Erickson's book has opened up a lucrative market for systematics catering to evangelical readers. During the last three years a number of works

have appeared that treat either prolegomenal issues in theology or tackle the larger concern of producing encyclopedic treatments of systematic theology itself.

Grudem's *Systematic Theology*: Theology as naive summary of Scripture

Evangelicals are not only returning to the study of systematic theology, they are beginning to ask foundational questions about theology: its character, procedures, and intent. Actually, I should say that some evangelical scholars are asking foundational questions about theology. Wayne Grudem's book is an odd exception to evangelical theology's newly found self-critical and methodologically reflective ethos. Reading something like a theologian stuck out of time, Grudem treats theology not as a process or a method, but merely as a body of truth whose method of appropriation appears to be self-evident. At a time when evangelical theologians are turning to the question of theological method, Grudem is digging in his heels and saying that theology is merely a question of content.

Of the recent monographs in systematic theology, Grudem's is the most traditionalist, and because of that it also makes the least contribution to the discipline. The work certainly impresses one in its length, magnitude of execution, and clarity, and some individual passages are truly helpful. But that might be in spite of Grudem's methodological commitments. Those commitments hang upon two ideas. First, the Bible, at least as it serves as the resource for systematics, is a loose collection of isolated facts captured in propositional boxes, each one about one sentence long (Grudem calls them "verses"). Taking the Bible to be a disorganized batch of facts pressured in

Dr. Williams is Assistant Professor of Theology at Dordt College.

propositional statements, Grudem quite naturally sees the discipline of systematic theology as primarily one of organizing the biblical "data." And this is his second commitment: systematic theology collects and arranges the subjects of the biblical propositions (21-22). The Bible, he says, is like a "jigsaw puzzle," and systematic theology is the working of the puzzle (29). How does one work the puzzle? How does one do theology? Grudem's answer is that one brings all the "verses" relevant to a selected topic together by looking up "key words" in a concordance and then summarizing the "points made" in the verses (36).

Spending precious little time on prolegomenal matters, Grudem offers no rationale for his approach, and he entertains no options. It is all merely assumed, and casually even apodictically stated. Perhaps this is somewhat appropriate. After all, Grudem does stand within a long and honored theological tradition. Conceiving of Scripture as a storehouse of doctrinal assertions regulated by self-referential propositions, and understanding theology as the organization of biblical assertions into discrete subject areas or loci, may without any doubt be called the traditional or classical presuppositions for systematic theology. The Bible is taken, according to the traditionalist loci approach, as something of a quarry of doctrinal raw materials. The theologian mines the quarry looking for suitable bricks which can be trimmed to uniform size for building a theological cathedral. Whether the appropriate metaphor is that of the cathedral and the theological artifices of the medieval schoolmen, the gears and cogs of the Newtonian machine and the modern intelligible cosmos, or Grudem's own picture of the jigsaw puzzle, it matters little. What is clear is that the product—systematic theology—ends up being something very different from (and perhaps irreconcilable with) the raw material—Scripture.

Grudem understands the theological loci as being regulated by two principles. First is the principle of rational consistency (30ff). The operative stricture here is not interrelatedness of parts, for the rationalist loci method gives itself over to a kind of analytical compartmentalization. And indeed, Grudem puts forward the classical loci as self-contained, watertight compartments (32). He states that one can begin at any chapter and grasp it without having engaged prior material. There is thus, for example, no way to predict his approach toward eschatology from his understanding of sin and redemption. He is a historical premillennialist, but amillennialism or even dispensationalism would have fit with his forensic

approach to sin and redemption just as well. The stricture of consistency appears to be not thematic or historical continuity but something thoroughly negative, the law of non-contradiction. Thus, consistency does not mean that things fit together so much as that things cannot be shown not to fit together. The second principle is comprehensiveness, "everything the Bible teaches on a given topic" (24-25). The goal of the theological enterprise is the creation of a doctrinalist encyclopedia, a rational study of God and all his works (16).

Crudely naive? Yes, to say the least. The principle of consistency, being negative, gets you very little. And the principle of comprehensiveness is just short of humorous. While Grudem's book is a big one, it is not one percent of the book that would be needed for true theological comprehensiveness. In fact, his work is almost painfully parochial in its selection and treatment of material. Grudem is actually doing nothing more (or less) than mimic the evangelical tradition of refusing to reflect upon one's own theological bias. To the extent that evangelicals have not attended to issues of theological method, they have not only been oblivious to the historical and cultural contextualization of their own theologizing, but their theology has been taken captive by forces largely foreign to the biblical story.

Grudem all but ignores the historicity of the biblical text and the historical development of the theological and hermeneutical enterprise. He treats his theological conclusions as the product of simple engagement with the biblical text, as if he were skimming doctrine directly off the surface of decontextualized lists of texts. Yet, throughout the work, the discerning reader finds something different than what Grudem intends. His discussion of the Trinity is more Nicean than a simple reading of the biblical materials. His christology is Chalcedonian. His doctrine of sin and grace owes much to Augustine. His treatment of the atonement is thoroughly Anselmian. And the list goes on. Grudem would have his reader believe that he is merely reading and reciting the clear declarations of Scripture, unimpeded by history and tradition and context. His actual method, however, is clearly deductivist-scholastic. He begins by declaring the doctrine by means of an introductory statement or definition and then cites a series of texts that "prove" the assertion.

Why did Grudem offer no apologetic for his method? Criticisms of it are pushed aside with hardly a moment's notice (30-32). Narrative or redemp-

tive-historical approaches to theology are not mentioned at all. Is the rationalist loci method and the scholastic tradition so firmly established that they are self-evidently true?

In his recent book on theological method, *The Fabric of Theology*, Richard Lints provides us both an analysis of the rationalist loci method and a challenge to it:

It is important to ask whether the conception of doing theology by stringing together Christian doctrines like pearls in a necklace might not be undermining the essential unity of the biblical message. As it stands, evangelical theology tends to deal with each component part individually, at best stitching things together after the fashion of a patchwork quilt. There may be interesting patterns evident in each of the individual pieces, but there is no pattern that holds the quilt together overall, other than its diversity. (261)

Thus, the pieces of the puzzle are not asked to fit together at all, for there is no coherent overarching picture to be made. Henry Vander Goot puts the matter even more pointedly:

When we fail to notice the character of Scripture as dramatic narrative, we reduce the text of Scripture to abstractions of the mind. We tap the conflict out of the text and subsequently out of our view of human life as well....Rationalism and the narrative form of Scripture are incompatible. (*The Bible in the Church and Theology*, 69)

While Vander Goot puts the issue almost too strongly, I think that he is legitimately onto something when he suggests that the classical tendency to view the Bible as something of a doctrinal jigsaw puzzle disrespects the given order of the biblical text, and in fact seeks to deconstruct the text in terms of a rationalistic base. Ironically, the alleged objectivity of the traditional loci method actually hides a heightened subjectivism, for as the biblical text is freed from the regulative strictures of its own narrative structure, it is subjected to a purely anthropological base.

Following the redemptive-historical tradition of Geerhardus Vos, Lints wants to suggest that there may be better ways to "package theology" than the rationalist loci method of traditional systematics. The traditional approach does have the advantage of providing a more or less tight analytic field for looking at particulars. And from it we have all learned. But it also has disadvantages. Aside from the piecemeal, disjunctive tendency (hinted at by Lints above) which tends to lose the unitary inter-relatedness of the biblical revelation, the rationalist loci method has

also eclipses the biblical storyline. To the extent that a rationalist loci approach has tended to emphasize ideas or concepts rather than events, the speech of God over the acts of God, it has also tended to use the Scriptures as an abstract communication of propositions, a dehistoricized and decontextualized collection of timeless and eternal truths. Thus the historical referents of the biblical Word—the mighty acts of God in creation, preservation, and redemption—if not annulled, are rendered theologically irrelevant. Thus Lints appropriately comments:

Evangelicals have traditionally emphasized the *speech* of God by encapsulating it in doctrinal formulations. In doing so, they have neglected the *acts* of God. They have ably defended the historicity of these acts, but they have virtually ignored the centrality of their theological character. (*The Fabric of Theology*, 264, n.8)

The eclipse of historical reference sidelines the dramatic movement of story, and the Bible is—at the very least and at its most fundamental level—a story, the telling of God's historical relationship with man and creation. The Bible does not present itself as a theological dictionary or doctrinal treatise, and the content of scriptural revelation does not exist in isolated compartments, awaiting an external theological framework to provide some sort of order. The Bible has an order, the redemptive-historical story. Lints contends, and I agree, that the framework of the theological enterprise "ought to be linked to the actual *structure* of the biblical text itself and not merely to the *content* of the Bible" (271). While the topical question (What does the Bible teach?) is legitimate, the answer is always regulated and mediated by the redemptive-historical story. The biblical way is the way of the story. The biblical pattern of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation forms the pattern by which God has executed his purpose, and it ought to regulate the pattern or framework by which we theologize about his revelation. Let me put it in as homely a phrase as I can. If my theology does not tell the gospel story; if it does not lead me and my reader to the God who delivered his people through the waters of the sea, or to the man Jesus Christ who revealed the redemptive intent of and very character of God; it does not fulfill the theological calling.

As our theological framework moves away from the story, the historical proclamation of the mighty acts of God, it also moves toward analytic coldness, depersonalization, and irrelevance. I think I see more than a hint that Grudem recognizes that point, even if he does not want to fully affirm it. He thinks of the-

ology as a matter of getting one's doctrinal facts straight, thinking rightly about God and things related to God. (What is not related to God? Is all reflection then theology?) Theology is not about piety or ethics, according to Grudem. As he more than somewhat crudely puts it: theology is about thinking; ethics is about acting (64); and piety is about feeling (38). The appropriate response to the theological enterprise then is right cognition. Yet, to his credit, Grudem is finally unhappy with reducing the theological program to something as arid as factual precision. Scripture demands far more of us than this. And thus he finishes each chapter with, for lack of a better term, a devotional, an "application to life." What Grudem is implicitly but unintentionally saying is that his rationalist-scholastic theology lacks sufficient existential weight and must be artificially injected with doses of pietism. While I am glad that he is unsatisfied with the irrelevant coldness of his theological method, I wonder why that chill did not encourage him to rethink the method. Grudem's casual distinctions between theology, piety, and ethics, denigrate and impoverish each.

The crudity of Grudem's unexamined parroting of tradition is reason enough for concern. Yet his approach becomes downright reactionary when the reader begins to notice that Grudem invests so little of himself into the work. He does nothing to contextualize himself or situate his thought within a confessional tradition, a historical or national community, or even a time frame. This book could have been written in the late 1940s as easily as it was in the 90s. And by and large, it could have been written by a congregationalist, a Baptist, a Presbyterian, or a charismatic. The detachment from life and the artificial objectivism of this studied eclipse of the writer and his context only adds to the coldness of the work.

Finally, and this is a purely existential response, I got the feeling that Grudem really does not like theology at all. He is not challenging or rethinking the givens of the evangelical theological tradition in any way. He is not bothering to enter into dialogue with it at all. He is merely repeating, restating, rehashing. There is nothing here that one could call a contribution to the discipline or the calling of theology. The whole affair, like the method from which it springs, is rather lifeless. It's almost as if Grudem is merely going through the motions, filling in the blanks of a standard form letter. To be blunt, the book is boring and tedious. And that is a shame, because the gospel certainly is not. If Grudem's book gives one young

theological student the idea that the gospel is boring, then this book is also a crime.

Grenz's *Theology for the Community of God*: A Postmodern Evangelical Theology

In 1993 Grenz published his *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, a work intended to put forth and test new theological paradigms and set an agenda for future discussion within evangelical theology. Further, *Revisioning* was meant to be a "preliminary exploration" leading to the production of a major work in systematics. *Theology for the Community of God* is that systematic. It is in almost every way better than the preliminary work, but the major problem of the former still hampers Grenz's theological work and, I think, bodes ill for his projected future of evangelical theology.

Grenz wants to move away from the kind of theology typified by Grudem. Grenz refers to the rationalist loci method as a "concordist," a theological agenda that treats the Bible as a loosely organized or downright disorganized collection of propositional statements of timeless and universal relevance. The concordist model thus, to use David Wells' description of Louis Berkof's *Systematic Theology*, takes the Bible to be something "like a telephone directory for those needing to look up some divine information."

Dismissing the traditional evangelical understanding of revelation as a deposit of true propositions and of theology as the systematic presentation of revealed truth, Grenz opts for a narrative approach to theology and its attendant emphasis upon story over-against abstract teachings. The fact that at its most fundamental level the Bible tells a story leads Grenz to conclude that "we must view theology in terms of its relationship to the story of God's action in history" (7). The conceptual framework by which the church understands itself and experiences the world is not a rationalist treatment of religious ideas but the biblical narrative of God's redemptive activity in history (9,22-23,30). The theological enterprise then is one of coherently articulating and interpreting that framework.

Grenz tells the Christian story under the "integrative motif" of community. The biblical drama is the story of God establishing a community in which all creatures live in harmony with each other, their creational context, and God himself (147-48). Mankind's fall into sin is a breach of community, a "failure to live in community with God, each other, and the natural environment" (243). Shattering the

primordial community and its idyllic community, fallen man is now not only alienated from community, but enslaved to forces that seek ever further estrangement from the divinely intended harmony of creation. Alienated from God, we become his enemies, and thus stand under the divine condemnation, which is death, eternal separation from God and the community of creation (268-69).

Yet the good news of the Bible, Grenz writes, "is that death is not the last word. God's destiny for us lies beyond death in the new creation. We will receive eternal life in its fullness—which is our destiny—at the resurrection, when the mortal puts on immortality" (213). God's redemptive intent then is to restore community. The goal of the biblical story is God's repair of creation and our return to community.

Grenz's telling of the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation story of Scripture has much to commend it. He has, I think, successfully shown that a systematic theology can be sensitive to and carry forward the dynamic movement of the biblical storyline. And he has successfully broken through the dehistoricization and decontextualization that so often accompany the traditional topical approach to systematics.

This is not to say that Grenz has shelved the traditional loci of systematics. He has retained the classical subject divisions, but he quite rightly allows the storyline to regulate and mediate the topical questions of the loci. Bringing the traditional loci of systematic theology under the discipline of the narrative of Scripture pays huge dividends for Grenz in terms of the overall coherence of the work, and the relevance and interrelationship of subjects. No longer are the loci merely a collection of more or less watertight compartments strung together into a necklace which itself bears no similarity to the biblical revelation. Rather, themes are given the opportunity to exhibit their proper longitudinal relevance within the story. An example here is Grenz's fine treatment of the *imago dei*. Since man is the creature called to reflect the divine character and will within creation, the *imago* is relevant to, and a component element of, virtually every doctrinal issue (e.g. see 249, 259ff).

The rationalist loci method of classical systematic theology has the strong tendency to level the biblical materials into a series of equal analytic compartments. Thus the debate between anthropological creationism and traducianism is treated as being every bit as important as the question of the nature and intent of the resurrection. Grenz rejects this dehistor-

ical agenda, however, and appropriately lets the biblical narrative set the parameters of selection, arrangement, interpretation, and emphasis. The priority of the narrative allows crucial points of emphasis within the biblical story to play their proper role. I think here of Grenz's wonderful declaration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the center of the eschatological direction of Scripture. Thus the resurrection bridges sin and eschatology (e.g. 744, 758-75, 815), and dominates the redemptive theme. By seeing the resurrection as the centerpiece and goal of the redemptive drama, Grenz raises systematic eschatology above the usual tortured and speculative evangelical trivialization of the biblical hope.

One weakness in Grenz's narrative approach is that he has not given much time or space to the particular stories of Scripture. One might say that there simply is not room within a one-volume systematic for such things, or perhaps that the individual stories of the Bible do not make any significant contribution to a systematic theology. It seems to me, however, that it is the particular stories that really make the narrative case. The larger, cosmic story of the biblical drama is carried along by the individual stories within the drama, by the real people who live and breathe within the stories. It is the stories of God's dealing with Noah and the patriarchs, with David and Saul, with Amos and Hosea, and finally God working in Jesus, that give the biblical narrative its character as a story of and about God's activity with human beings. Do not misunderstand me, the stories of the biblical drama are not illustrative of something outside of themselves. Illustrative material is nonessential. Take the biblical stories away and there is no grand narrative of redemption. A narrative approach without actual narratives will end up being just as cold and impersonal as the rationalist approach to which it is intended to offer an alternative. If the Bible is concerned to tell the story of God's redemptive action and intent, and if it tells that story through a series of progressive historical encounters between God and man, then systematic theology must attend to the small story as well as the large. When our theology does not tell the story of the divine passion for creation, it loses all right to be called Christian theology. Grenz does this quite well at the meta-level, but that story fails to convince without the particular, the episodic, the human encounter and response.

I appreciate, and frankly agree with, much of what Grenz has written. I affirm his project in its broader strokes and would not hesitate to seriously consider

using his book as a text in systematics. Thus, while I am appreciative of Grenz's insistence that the discipline of systematic theology must be articulated in terms of the historical dynamic of the biblical narrative, I keep asking myself the nagging question of why does Grenz take this approach. And I find that I am not fully comfortable with his answer. Grenz's explicit answer to the question is that narrative is central to the nature of Scripture. For example, he defends his use of community as an organizing category thus:

"Community" is important as an integrative motif for theology not only because it fits with contemporary thinking, but more importantly because it is central to the message of the Bible. From the narratives of the primordial garden which open the curtain on the biblical story to the vision of white-robed multitudes inhabiting the new earth with which it concludes, the drama of the Scriptures speaks of community. Taken as a whole the Bible asserts that God's program is directed to the bringing into being of community in the highest sense--a reconciled people, living within a renewed creation, and enjoying the presence of their Redeemer. (30)

Such statements notwithstanding, and there are not many of them, my sense is that Grenz's attraction to narrative owes more to current trends within the sociology of knowledge and the postmodernist emphasis upon story than it does to the nature or character of revelation. The prolegomenon of the work is sprinkled with postmodernist references to story as the key to identity formation (8-9), traditions as the bearers of meaning and rationality (30), and the integrality of community to current trends in epistemology (29).

Why does Grenz choose the rather inelegant term "community" as a cipher around which he will tell the biblical story? It seems to me that Scripture itself employs a term that will do everything Grenz wants to do with "community," and more. That term, of course, is "covenant." After all, God does not seek mere community, being together with. He seeks a particular kind of community, a covenantal community. Reading through the book, I did not come across a single occurrence of the word "community" in which "covenant" would not have been a better choice. In fact, "covenant" usually would have opened up the discussion to larger biblical vistas. But "covenant" lacks the currency of "community" within the tribalistic context of postmodernist thinking.

Why does Grenz reject the concordist (propositionalist) approach? His claim is that concordism "does not give adequate attention to the contextual

nature of theology," that "theological reflection always occurs within and for a specific historical context" (8). This point by itself is insufficient, because it does not address the character of the text, only the situation in which theological reflection upon the text takes place. Grenz moves too easily from the context of the reader—or popular sociological declarations about the context of the reader—to the character of revelation. Yet he can reverse the two just as facilely. In *Revisioning* Grenz wrote, "We must view theology in terms of its proper context within the narrative of God's action in history." That is a statement about the nature of the biblical text, and it gets at the narrative approach toward theology based upon a textual concern. Yet in the very next sentence, he says, "This means that the theological task can be properly pursued only 'from within'—that is, only from the vantage point of the faith community in which the theologian stands" (72; cf. *Theology for the Community*, 8). Not only does the second sentence not follow from the first at all, but it also attempts to ground a narrative approach toward Scripture within the postmodernist insistence upon a communal rationality. Such statements leave me wondering if Grenz is not actually letting the interpretive-theological tail wag the revelation dog. His commitment to narrative may spring less from the character of the text than the epistemic context of postmodernist culture.

The postmodernist assumption may come to the fore most clearly in Grenz's articulation of Scripture as the primary norm for theology. As far as the theological task is concerned, or for that matter the Bible's role in forming identity and character, the question of the text's factual or historical reference is irrelevant. Any and all attempts to establish the role of Scripture in theology by way of historical reference, says Grenz:

... are ultimately unnecessary. In engaging in the theological task, we may simply assume the authority of the Bible on the basis of the integral relationship of theology to the faith community. Because the Bible is the universally-acknowledged foundational document of the Christian church, its message functions as the central norm for the systematic articulation of the faith of that community.

Consequently, the demonstration of the divine authorship of Scripture or its status as revelation need not constitute the prolegomenon to our theology. Sufficient for launching the systematic-theological enterprise is the nature of theology itself as reflection on community faith. And sufficient for

the employment of the Bible in this task is its status as the book of the community, the source of the *kerygma*—the gospel proclamation—in the early communities and consequently in the contemporary community. (22)

Notice that the truth project has been bracketed here. This bracketing is postmodernism in full regalia. One could take Grenz's statement and replace all reference to the Bible with the *Koran*, *Mein Kampf*, *The Book of Mormon*, or *Dianetics*, and the argument would not change. It is not important whether something is true; it is only important that a group of people, a community, finds it meaningful or decides it is expedient. This postmodernist reading of the relationship of Scripture to the believing community may be convenient in that it liberates the discipline of theology from having to offer any apologetic for its biblical foundation, but it is also, and exactly on that very score, completely wrongheaded. When a community negotiates revelation, apologetics becomes unnecessary, even a hinderance. But the classical, and I believe the biblical position, is that it is the Word that creates the community. Yes, the Word must be recognized by the people of God, but the Word came first. The Neo-Kantian elevation of the order of knowing over the order of being reverses the commitments of the biblical authors. And the postmodernist replacement of the order of being by the order of knowing calls the biblical commitment false.

Grenz's project is important. The thought of a Baptist theologian writing a systematic around the motif of community is striking enough, but there are more reasons than this novelty that commend Grenz's work. His expansive, even cosmic, vision of the gospel is truly a welcome step beyond the pietistic tradition from which he comes. And he makes a real contribution to the discipline of theology by insisting that the theological enterprise needs to be sensitive to the biblical storyline. He has amply demonstrated that the theological project can be packaged better than the classical loci model, and that we can do better justice to the biblical dynamic when we take the

Bible to be more than an encyclopedia of doctrinal facts. But I would like to see the narrative case made more convincingly than implicit references to the latest fad from sources alien to the biblical materials. Quite simply, the case can and should be made from Scripture. The Bible itself recommends a narrative approach to theology, and the biblical drama of redemption was there long before any of us ever heard of postmodernism.

Conclusion

Both Grudem and Grenz are committed evangelical theologians. This fact alone speaks of a diversity of approach within evangelical theology that goes beyond—at least down different tracks than—the classical distinctions between Calvinist and Arminian, covenantal and dispensationalist, amillennialist and premillennialist, within evangelical thought. And both are young men. There is time and, I trust, room for both to grow and develop and to influence other evangelical contributions to the discipline of systematics. Given the kind of commitment to the discipline that is needed to produce works of the magnitude of these two, we have reason to hope that the recent obituaries of evangelical theology are mistaken.

Clearly, from a redemptive-historical standpoint, Grenz's work is far superior to Grudem's. Grenz has provided us with a possible model of a post-rationalist systematic, and thus he explicitly answers the question "what would systematic theology look like if we were to step out of the traditional model and cast a systematic along narrative lines?" For that he is to be applauded, even if he choose to cast his theology in postmodernist hues. Now that evangelicals are finally asking themselves questions about theological method, it is time for a redemptive-historical voice to be heard alongside of the rationalist loci theology of Grudem and the postmodernist narrative theology of Grenz. Richard Lints has begun the work in his *Fabric of Theology*. It is time to take the next step.