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The Triune God and the Hermeneutics of Community:
Church, Gender, and Mission in Stanley J. Grenz with reference to Paul Ricoeur

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to undertake a study of the trinitarian ecclesiology of the North American evangelical theologian Stanley J. Grenz (d.2005), along with his *imago Dei* theology, revisioned social trinitarianism, narrative theology, incorporation of *theosis*, and theology of triune participation. This dissertation also utilizes the hermeneutical philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, in conjunction with Grenz's trinitarian ecclesiology, to propose a missional and hermeneutical ecclesiology. Chapter one begins with an overview of Grenz's theology and a discussion of the current state of Grenz scholarship. It then introduces Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self and theory of narrative identity. The chapter concludes with an overview of chapters two, three, and four.

Chapter two traces the manner in which Grenz's social trinitarianism and *imago Dei* theology yield a social *imago*. The first section overviews Grenz's *The Social God and the Relational Self*, the social *imago*, the ecclesial self, his notion of ecclesial eschatological prolepsis, and his theology of triune participation. The second section responds to key criticisms of social trinitarianism, discusses Grenz and Ricoeur on the relational self, and outlines the manner in which Grenz's theology of *theosis* and triune participation "in Christ" and through the Spirit yields an ecclesially oriented communal theo-anthropology. The final section takes up Grenz's social *imago* and triune participation in relation to female/male mutuality in ecclesial participation and community.

Chapter three discusses Grenz's narrative theology and the development of a narrative *imago*. The first section overviews Grenz's *The Named God and the Question of Being* and his development of the narrative of the divine name as the saga of the triune God, his further use of *theosis*, and the narrative *imago* arising within storied participation "in Christ" through the Spirit. The second section examines the continuity of *Named God* with *Social God* and argues that Grenz presents a revisioned social trinitarianism. The second section also considers Grenz and Ricoeur on the narrative self and proposes that Grenz's ecclesial theo-anthropology now becomes a cruciform Christo-anthropology. The third section takes up the narrative *imago* and female/male mutuality and cruciformity as it arises from the ecclesial relation of storied and communal theotic triune participation.

Chapter four treats the development of a Grenzian ecclesial *imago* and proposes a missional and hermeneutical ecclesiology. The first section presents Grenz's ecclesiology as it is oriented towards mission and the connection of *theosis*, triune participation, and ecclesia. This section then proposes a missional grammar for the church as God's ecclesial hermeneutics of community. The second section discusses potential charges of ecclesiological foundationalism, considers Grenz and Ricoeur on the summoned self, and extends Grenz's theo-anthropology and Christo-anthropology into a missio-anthropology. The third section considers the mutuality and cruciformity of ecclesial "male and female" relation "in Christ" and through the Spirit, manifest in ecclesial friendship and hospitality, as the coming-to-representation and hermeneutics of community of the triune God. The conclusion offers a summary and possible avenues for further investigation.

Declaration

I, Russell L. Almon, hereby declare that this dissertation has been composed by me and that it is my own work. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Russell L. Almon

Russell L. Almon

12 October 2017

Date

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For my girls...

Christie Cherie Almon
&
Damaris Mikaelia Almon

(Acts 2:17)

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May they, and their sisters in the faith, find their voices welcome in Christ's ecclesial body.

Soli Deo gloria.

New College
Edinburgh
Lent 2017

Abbreviations

- NGQB* Grenz, Stanley J. *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology*. The Matrix of Christian Theology, Volume 2. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.
- RTG* Grenz, Stanley J. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004.
- BF* Grenz, Stanley J. and John R. Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- SGRS* Grenz, Stanley J. *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*. The Matrix of Christian Theology, Volume 1. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- RTC* Grenz, Stanley J. *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*. Second edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.
- MQ* Grenz, Stanley J. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 1997.
- CFC* Grenz, Stanley J. and Jay T. Smith. *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*. Third edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.
- TCG* Grenz, Stanley J. *Theology for the Community of God*. Second edition. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- RET* Grenz, Stanley J. *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- SE* Grenz, Stanley J. *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*. Revised Edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- “Social God” Grenz, Stanley J. “The Social God and the Relational Self: Toward a Theology of the *Imago Dei* in the Postmodern Context.” In *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, edited by Richard Lints et al, 70–92. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006.
- JRA* Stanley Grenz Fonds in the Archives and Special Collections of the John Richard Allison Library, Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia. All materials used by permission.

INTRODUCTION

A Personal Journey

Stanley Grenz (1950–2005) was a pre-eminent, provocative, and prolific North American evangelical theologian at the time of his untimely death in March 2005. My first encounter with Grenz's theology was in 1996 as an undergraduate religion major at Wayland Baptist University (WBU) in Plainview, Texas. At this point in time, though, I did not engage his thought or theological vision deeply. This would change in dramatic fashion in the early 2000s. After spending two years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1998–2000) in Ft. Worth, my family and I returned to Plainview for me to complete my first theological Masters degree at WBU. This proved to be a critical season in my theological development in which, through the influence of my major theology professor at WBU, Fred Meeks, I rediscovered Grenz, in particular his *Theology for the Community of God* and *Primer on Postmodernism*, and shortly thereafter his *The Social God and the Relational Self*.¹

My own life situation contributed significantly to my investment in Grenz's theology. Upon returning to Plainview, my wife and I were grieving our first miscarriage, and would ultimately lose three babies total to miscarriage (1998, 2001, 2004) and suffer a failed adoption (2003). The theological propositionalism I was raised in proved to be ill-equipped to handle the grief I was experiencing. During this time, I found Grenz's writings marked by a definite pastoral quality as they acted as a balm in the midst of my grief. Grenz wrote as a theologian with the heart of a pastor, a quality extending from the ecclesial nature of his theology. Grenz's theology resonated not only academically, but also became spiritually and practically formative. For Grenz, theology is not only concerned with establishing proper and correct belief, but exists as a servant to the church as it pursues its mission and mutual life "in Christ" and through the Spirit within in its particular context. Not only this, but in Grenz's estimation, any kind of Christian theology must be properly trinitarian. Thus I was captured by a trio of themes: ecclesial participation in the divine triune life, the need for theology to be thoroughly trinitarian in

¹ TCG; SGRS; and Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).

shape, and a distinctly trinitarian spirituality. It is a testimony to his character and spirit that those sympathetic to and critical of Grenz will say he was their friend. This gives me hope that he would have called me a friend as well. Grenz's posture exhibited a generousness of which we are in dire need in these times of troubling tribalism. I regret that I was never able to meet him in person. Grenz has been not only my foremost theological influence but a mentor from afar.

In addition to the need for theology to be thoroughly and properly trinitarian, Grenz also proved a turning point for me in conceiving of theology as necessarily practical, ecclesial, constructive, and related to ethics at every turn. As well, in the midst of reconsidering the inherited naïve foundationalism uncritically accepted from my Southern Baptist roots, I discovered great promise in Grenz's proposal for doing theology in a postfoundationalist mode and his use of narrative theology.² I was aided further in my theological development with the discovery of Paul Ricoeur during my Master of Divinity studies at Logsdon Seminary in Abilene, Texas in 2007. My major theology professor at Logsdon, Dan Stiver, is a Ricoeur scholar and through him I was introduced to Ricoeur. The first Ricoeur book I ever read was *The Symbolism of Evil*³ while doing research for a course on theodicy. I found deep resonance here due to my previous (and even continuing) experience with grief. As I studied more of Ricoeur,⁴ I found as well that his hermeneutical philosophy and philosophical anthropology, with its emphasis on narrative and the social nature of the self, proved a natural complement to the ethos of Grenz's theology. I became convinced these Ricoeurian themes offered great promise in conjunction with Grenz's own emphasis on narrative, communal theological anthropology, and the ecclesial self.

² See for example Grenz's articulation in *BF*.

³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanann (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969).

⁴ At this stage I was reading Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans./ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995); and Dan R. Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

During this same time my wife and I were experiencing upheaval in our ecclesial situation as well. Despite growing up in a conservative Southern Baptist context, our view on “women in ministry” changed. Not only did we come to accept the place of women in all positions of ecclesial service alongside men and the legitimacy of women’s ordination, but my wife entered seminary and we were ordained together in a dual ceremony. In the wake, however, we not only felt the sharp disapproval that came from our former Southern Baptist ecclesial home, but the continued struggle of women called to ministry to find pastorates and places of service, even in Texas Baptist churches.⁵ As a result, I discerned a need to rethink not merely ordination, but the inherited theological structures which prevent the full participation of “male and female” in the church together as bearers of the *imago Dei*, with and alongside each other. I detail all this to hopefully provide the reader with an indication of my impetus in writing this particular dissertation, which takes up a study of the shape of Grenz’s trinitarian ecclesiology in conversation with the thought of Ricoeur.

Thesis Statement and Objectives

Grenz was an ecclesial theologian through and through. However, the bulk of Grenz secondary material has been focused on Grenz’s theological method. While strides have been made in recent years at more sensible evaluations of his method and reorienting the study of Grenz toward his trinitarian focus, no one has produced a full-length monograph on his ecclesiology.⁶ This dissertation exists then, to discern the shape of Grenz’s burgeoning trinitarian ecclesiology and the attendant implications for “male and female” as the *imago Dei* and a constructive missional theology for ecclesial witness in the contemporary context. This study will be structured by the overarching matrix of Trinity, narrative, and mission and will be carried out through an exploration of Grenz’s

⁵ On the state of women ministers in North American Baptist life, see the series of studies from 2005 to 2015 at www.bwim.info/state-of-women-in-baptist-life/ [Accessed: 28 February 2017]. As well, the *Review and Expositor* 110.1 (Winter 2013) issue was on the “current status of Baptist women in ministry.” See in particular Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, “Baptists in Tension: The Status of Women’s Leadership and Ministry, 2012,” 49–64 and Tracy Hartman, “Already but Not Yet: The Status of Women Baptist Pastors,” 65–76.

⁶ See the discussion on secondary Grenz scholarship in chapter one of this dissertation.

revised and strengthened social trinitarianism,⁷ narrative theology, and theological anthropology in conversation with Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy. All this is in pursuit of a constructive proposal for church, gender, and mission that stands in creative fidelity with Grenz which I am calling a "hermeneutical ecclesiology."

Toward the successful accomplishment of this purpose, this dissertation has these five stated objectives:

1. This dissertation aims to demonstrate the coherence and interdependence of Grenz's ecclesiology, revised social trinitarianism, narrative theology, and *imago Dei* theological anthropology, along with their connection to Grenz's notion of *theosis* and theology of triune participation.
2. This dissertation, in keeping with Grenz's own contextual theological method, aims to appropriate and resource in a critical manner Grenz's engagement with postmodernism, ecclesiology, and wider theology as a contemporary missional theology.⁸
3. This dissertation aims to present and study Grenz's "mutualist"⁹ views on gender relations as they are developed through his discussion of "male and female" in relation to the *imago Dei*, and the implications for church and mission. A major task of my proposal will be an explication and extension of Grenz's relational and narrative *imago Dei* theology, particularly with respect to gender.¹⁰ The subject of

⁷ Note however the view in Jason S. Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), in particular 87–120, that *RTG* and *NGQB* indicate a move "beyond" the social Trinity. This dissertation argues contrary to Sexton on this point.

⁸ See this done already in some measure in John R. Franke, "Faith Seeking Understanding in a Postmodern Context: Stanley Grenz and Nonfoundational Theology," *Princeton Theological Review* 12.1. (Spring 2006), 17–22; Franke, *The Character of Theology: An Introduction to Its Nature, Task, and Purpose – A Postconservative Evangelical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); and Franke's afterword to *RTC*, 361–9.

⁹ In the terms of the evangelical gender debate, Grenz would be more widely known as an "egalitarian." (Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995), 17–18) However, the descriptors "mutualist" or "complementarity without hierarchy" are similar and also resonate with his approach. See Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 158–61, 233–4 for his preference of "mutuality" rather than "egalitarian." See also the subtitle to Robert W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, Second edition (Downers Grove, IN: IVP Academic, 2005) of which Grenz contributed the essay, "Biblical Priesthood and Women in Ministry," 272–86.

¹⁰ Grenz states: "This [social/communal] understanding of the divine image constitutes a strong foundation for affirming the participation of men and women *in all areas of church life*. . . . Because men and

gender relations was contentious in Grenz's evangelical context when he was writing and remains contentious.¹¹ As well, the subject of "gender" could occupy a number of dissertations from a variety of vantage points on its own. However, while the approach taken needs some circumscription, a dissertation on Grenz's ecclesiology cannot rightly avoid Grenz's rendering of the relation of male and female, interwoven as this is with his revisioned social trinitarianism, *imago Dei* theology, and sexual ethics.¹² For this reason, this dissertation seeks to approach the subject of gender as it arises as an implicated subject under the wider scope of ecclesiology in Grenz's theology,¹³ indicated in the title of this study where gender is situated between church and mission.¹⁴

4. This dissertation aims to develop a hermeneutical ecclesiology in trinitarian, narrative, and missional perspectives that stands in creative fidelity with Grenz. The choice of the hermeneutical metaphor in relation to ecclesiology takes partial inspiration from a programmatic statement of Stanley Hauerwas concerning his political ecclesiology: "The church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic."¹⁵ Extending the logic of his maxim in relation to a missional ecclesiology, Hauerwas also states, "[T]he church does not have a mission, but

women have unique contributions to make, the church must value the contributions of both sexes to the fulfillment of its task." (*Women in Ministry*, 172, emphasis mine) See also *SE*, 253–4.

¹¹ For evidence the evangelical gender debate is currently live, see Bruce A. Ware and John Starke, eds., *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) as a recent collection of essays which argue for a male-female hierarchy. See also Michael F. Bird and Robert Shillaker, "Subordination in the Trinity and Gender Roles: A Response to Recent Discussion," in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*, eds. Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 288–310 and Emily Louise Zimbrick-Rogers, "A Question Mark Over My Head: Experiences of Women ETS Members at the 2014 ETS Annual Meeting," *A Question Mark Over My Head: The Experience of Women in the Evangelical Academy* (Christians for Biblical Equality, Special Edition, 2015), 4–13.

¹² The subject of gender relations comprised a longstanding interest for Grenz. He published *SE* originally in 1990. Eleven years later he published *SGRS*, which treats many of the same themes in relation to the social Trinity, *imago Dei*, and ecclesial self. See chapter seven in *SGRS* (267–303) for a particularly concentrated discussion.

¹³ See this approach in Stanley J. Grenz, "Anticipating God's New Community: Theological Foundations for Women in Ministry," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38.4 (December 1995), 595–611; Grenz, *Women in the Church*; and Grenz, "Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships," in *Christian Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality, and Community*, ed. Maxine Hancock (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 83–101.

¹⁴ In keeping with the delimitation of this study, while recognizing the importance of current debates surrounding same-sex marriage, sexual identity/orientation, various revisionist accounts of sexuality and gender theory in critical discourse, and theological discussions regarding intersex conditions, these matters will be bracketed to the side in order to maintain the focus on female/male mutuality.

¹⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 99.

rather *is* mission.”¹⁶ I propose that, in drawing linguistically from the field of hermeneutical theology, it can also be said that “the church does not simply have a hermeneutic; the church is God’s hermeneutic.” In brief, by this I mean the church is God’s way of being made known in the world, or what has elsewhere been called the “hermeneutics of peoplehood,”¹⁷ particularly as the “in Christ” and through the Spirit constituted ecclesial relation of “male and female” comprise alongside, with, and in relation to each other the *imago Dei* in ecclesial friendship, hospitality, and witness as an ecclesial hermeneutics of community.

5. This dissertation aims to utilize the hermeneutical philosophy of Paul Ricoeur as a companion to Grenz in support of this project.¹⁸ Ricoeur’s influence can be seen in the naming of my ecclesiological proposal as “hermeneutical.” I draw this description with inspiration from Ricoeur as a hermeneutical philosopher and the desire to utilize the promise of his hermeneutics for theology in general and ecclesiology in particular. Ricoeur’s influence is also seen in relation to the discussion of the *imago Dei* and a Grenzian theological anthropology, in critical interaction with Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the self, which he discusses as the narrative self and which is simultaneously an irreducibly relational self.¹⁹ The use of Ricoeur’s philosophical hermeneutics holds great promise as well as its own attendant peril. Ricoeur was a voluminous author and a seemingly indefinite number of theses from a variety of disciplines could be written on him. Due to the extensiveness of his writing, the number of subjects he touched upon (phenomenology, linguistics, psychoanalysis, structuralism, continental philosophy, analytic philosophy, biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, narrative identity, the self, ethics), and the substantiality of his philosophy generating application to multiple fields,²⁰ this study could easily become about Ricoeur and

¹⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, “Beyond the Boundaries: The Church Is Mission,” in *Walk Humbly with the Lord: Church and Mission Engaging Plurality*, eds. Viggo Mortensen and Andreas Østerlund Nielsen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 55. Emphasis original. See also David E. Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission: Towards an Evangelical Political Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 140–1.

¹⁷ John H. Yoder, “The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood: A Protestant Perspective of Practical Moral Reasoning,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 10.1 (Spring 1982), 40–67.

¹⁸ In light of Ted Peters’ observation that Grenz’s desire was to “build a bridge between evangelicalism and Continental hermeneutical theology,” the use of Ricoeur in this manner seems very “Grenzian” and resonant with his own method. See Peters, “Stanley J. Grenz, *In Memoriam*,” *Dialog* 44.2 (Summer 2005), 131.

¹⁹ See Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 160–187 on Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the self in *Oneself as Another*.

²⁰ See for instance Kenneth A. Reynhout, *Interdisciplinary Interpretation: Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Theology and Science* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013); Greg S. Johnson and Dan R. Stiver, eds., *Paul Ricoeur and the Task of Political Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013); Scott

not Grenz if effort is not made to ensure Ricoeur is properly circumscribed. For this reason, I have been intentionally selective about the number of Ricoeurian themes resourced in this study.

One last word in this introduction is warranted on the constructive aspect of this dissertation. I see my work as an extension of Grenz's project, not in an effort to speak for Grenz or contend that how I explicate things would be exactly how Grenz himself would have done so. Rather, my aim is to further theological reflection that takes its cues from a Grenzian theological orientation and is fitting to an overall Grenzian theological method. Because Grenz's early passing left his corpus unfinished, it is left to others who come after him to carry through on the intuitions of his work. In line with others who have completed their projects ahead of mine, I am honored, in creative fidelity to Grenz, to take my turn in carrying his project forward.

Davidson, ed., *Ricoeur Across the Disciplines* (London: Continuum, 2010); Dariusz Skórczewski, Andrezej Wierciński, and Edward Fiała, eds., *The Task of Interpretation: Hermeneutics, Psychoanalysis, and Literary Studies* (Lubin, PL: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2009); and Annemie Halsema, and Fernanda Henriques, eds., *Feminist Explorations of Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).

CHAPTER ONE

FROM GRENZ TO RICOEUR: THEOLOGICAL GRAMMAR, HERMENEUTICAL RHYTHM, AND THE CHURCH

The Current State of Grenz Scholarship

This first chapter gives an initial summary of Grenz and Ricoeur to set the stage for the remainder of the study. The first section discusses the wider scope of Grenz studies, traces briefly Grenz's identity as a trinitarian, Baptist, and evangelical theologian, and ends with a consideration of Grenz's trinitarian and narrative theological grammars. The second section provides an introduction to Ricoeur and a discussion of the peril, promise, and plot of Ricoeur's hermeneutics for the theological task. The third section briefly charts the course for the remainder of the study.

The Wider Scope of Grenz Studies

Beginning in the early 1980s Stanley J. Grenz enjoyed a very prodigious theological writing career up until his death in 2005, with his last book being published posthumously. This section takes up a survey of primary and secondary sources related to Grenz studies. Though the subjects of his writings tend to overlap considerably, there are nevertheless several categories into which they can be organized.

A Thematic Overview of Grenz's Corpus

Wolfhart Pannenberg – Grenz finished his PhD at the University of Munich in 1978 with Pannenberg as his *Doktorvater*.¹ Beginning in the 1980s Grenz produced a string of articles well into the 1990s on Pannenberg's theology.² In 1987–1988 Grenz did a year of

¹ Following Pannenberg's instructions to study something from his own tradition, Grenz wrote his dissertation on eighteenth century Baptist Isaac Backus. (Stanley J. Grenz, *Isaac Backus, Puritan and Baptist: His Place in History, His Thought and Their Implications for Modern Baptist Theology*, NABPR Dissertation Series 4, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983)

² See Stanley J. Grenz, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Quest for Ultimate Truth," *Christian Century* 105.26 (September 1988), 795–8; Grenz, "Pannenberg on Marxism: Insights and Generalizations," *Christian Century* 104.27 (September 1987), 824–6; Grenz, "The Appraisal of Pannenberg: A Survey of the Literature," in *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 19–52; Grenz, "Commitment and Dialogue: Pannenberg on Christianity and the Religions," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26.1 (Winter 1989), 196–210;

post-doctoral study with Pannenberg, the result of which was his major monograph on Pannenberg, *Reason for Hope*.³ Grenz would ultimately take a number of Pannenbergian themes such as postfoundationalism, the eschatological priority of the future, and the social Trinity and critically appropriate them into his own proposals.⁴

Ecclesia and ethics – The written corpus of Grenz also evidences sustained attention on ethical concerns with a particular focus; namely, that of equipping the church in its context for proper witness to the gospel. This can be effectively called ecclesial ethics, which are not ethics in simply broad generalized terms, but ethics in and for the church.⁵ In addition to smaller treatments, Grenz also produced a major one volume treatment of ethics titled *The Moral Quest*, which gave a standard overview of the history of ethics as well as tracing his proposal for trinitarian love as the basis for a comprehensive Christian ethic.⁶

Spirituality and piety – Grenz's German Baptist Pietist heritage also makes itself known in Grenz's writings through a number of articles and monographs that deal considerably with spirituality and piety, particularly as it is found in the life of the church

Grenz, "Pannenberg and Evangelical Theology: Sympathy and Caution," *Christian Scholar's Review* 20.3 (February 1991), 272–85; Grenz, "Sacramental Spirituality, Ecumenism, and Mission to the World: Foundational Motifs of Pannenberg's Ecclesiology," *Mid-Stream* 30.1 (January 1991), 20–34; Grenz, "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Reason, Hope, and Transcendence," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 46.2 (Fall 1991), 73–90; Grenz, "The Irrelevancy of Theology: Pannenberg and the Quest for Truth," *Calvin Theological Journal* 27.2 (November 1992), 307–11; Grenz, "'Scientific' Theology/'Theological' Science: Pannenberg and the Dialogue between Theology and Science," *Zygon* 34.1 (March 1999), 159–66; Grenz, "Why Do Theologians Need to be Scientists?" *Zygon* 35.2 (June 2000), 331–56; Grenz, "Pannenberg, Wolfhart," in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, eds. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pypier (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 509–10.

³ Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990); Revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

⁴ See also the section "The Influence of Pannenberg" in this chapter.

⁵ See for example Stanley J. Grenz and Wendell J. Hoffman, *AIDS: Ministry in the Midst of an Epidemic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990); Grenz, *Women in the Church*; Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998); Grenz and Roy D. Bell, *Betrayal of Trust: Confronting and Preventing Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, Second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001); Grenz, "Christian Integrity in a Postmodern World," in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought*, ed. David S. Dockery (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 394–410; and Grenz, "The Purpose of Sex: Toward a Theological Understanding of Human Sexuality," in *Readings in Christian Ethics*, Volume 2: Issues and Applications, eds. David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 166–72.

⁶ See *MQ*, 276–302 and Stanley J. Grenz, "Towards a Comprehensive Christian Ethic of Love," in *Christian Character, Virtue & Bioethics: Proceedings of the 1996 Clinical Bioethics Conference*, ed. Edwin C. Hui (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 1996), 179–98.

as the people of the triune God, evincing more of Grenz's Baptist roots with its focus on the local body of Christian believers. These writings are rooted in Grenz's Baptist inspired pietism even when written for a more general North American evangelical audience.⁷

Postmodernism and community – One of the most enduring themes in Grenz's writings from the early 1990s onward is that of community, which again reflects his basic Baptist ecclesial orientation. Around the same time, Grenz was a new professor at Carey Theological College and Regent College in Vancouver, BC. In his exposure to the new cultural environment of Vancouver, Grenz took an interest in postmodernism, about which he began to write extensively. Grenz already evinces a strong interdisciplinary quality in his ethical writings and this only continues in relation to his interest in postmodernism. Not only does Grenz bring postmodernism into contact with community as a theological theme,⁸ but these two themes together begin to permeate all his writings from his publishing of *A Primer on Postmodernism* in 1996 and thereafter.

Theological method and epistemology – Stemming from his engagement with postmodernism, Grenz developed strong critiques of the modern, foundationalist epistemology and theological method represented within the evangelical milieu in which he was writing.⁹ Grenz published a slender book called *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* in 1993, which set forth what was to become one of the central aims of his theological career.¹⁰ This was followed in 1994 with his one volume systematic, *Theology for the*

⁷ See for example Stanley J. Grenz, "Maintaining the Balanced Life: The Baptist Vision of Spirituality," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 18.1 (Spring 1991), 59–68; Grenz, "Belonging to God: The Quest for a Communal Spirituality in the Postmodern World," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 54.2 (Fall 1999), 41–52; Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist with a PhD," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37.2 (Fall 2002), 58–76; Grenz, "Christian Spirituality and the Quest for Identity: Toward a Spiritual-Theological Understanding of Life in Christ," *Baptist History and Heritage* 37.2 (Spring 2002), 87–105; and Grenz and Jay T. Smith, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, Third edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

⁸ See this in Stanley J. Grenz, "The Community of God: A Vision of the Church in the Postmodern Age," *Crux* 28.2 (June 1992), 19–26; Grenz, "Community as a Theological Motif for Evangelical Theology," *In die Skriflig* 28 (September 1994), 395–411; Grenz, "Star Trek and the Next Generation: Postmodernism and the Future of Evangelical Theology," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, Second edition, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 75–89; Grenz, "Social God," 70–92; *BF*; and *SGRS*.

⁹ See Grenz's disputations with classical foundationalist Wayne Grudem in *BF*, 14, 37, 50–1 and *RTC*, 85, 159, 165–7, 212–3, 224.

¹⁰ *RET*.

Community of God, which evidences Grenz's interest in narrative and provides intimations of his subsequent postfoundationalism.¹¹ In the development of his own constructive postfoundationalist method, Grenz focused on integrating his two primary triads: the focal motifs of Trinity, community, and eschatology, and the triologue of theological sources of Scripture, tradition, and culture. The resultant volume was the 2001 *Beyond Foundationalism*, co-authored with John R. Franke. As well, Grenz developed substantial use of narrative theology in his engagement with postmodernism and the revisioning of evangelical theological method, an emphasis which factors heavily in his corpus from the mid 1990s onward.¹²

Theological anthropology – The interdisciplinary nature of Grenz's approach to theology is showcased in his theological anthropology, in which the *imago Dei* is resourced widely in conversation with his other categories. During the course of his theological development of the *imago Dei*, Grenz produced a strong relational ontology in conversation with his social trinitarianism, in which the nature of personhood consists of mutuality and interdependence. Grenz's *imago Dei* theology, showing Pannenberg's influence, is also fundamentally eschatological in nature. It evinces as well a thick Christological character that intertwines with Grenz's use of narrative, as those "in Christ" are caught up into the story of Christ as the true *imago Dei*. Grenz's thorough development

¹¹ See *TCG*, 6–8. Interestingly, Wayne Grudem's one volume, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) was published the same year as *TCG*. Grudem represents the kind of foundationalist method Grenz found grievous.

¹² See for example *RET*, 71–7, 125–7, 136–9, 153–6; Stanley J. Grenz "Beyond Foundationalism: Is a Nonfoundationalist Evangelical Theology Possible?" *Christian Scholar's Review* 30.1 (Fall 2000), 57–82; Grenz, "Conversing in Christian Style: Toward a Baptist Theological Method for the Postmodern Context," *Baptist History and Heritage* 35.1 (Winter 2000), 82–103; Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic: Theological Method after the Demise of Foundationalism," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 107–36; Grenz, "The Universality of the 'Jesus-Story' and the 'Incredulity Toward Metanarratives,'" in *No Other Gods Before Me? Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions*, ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 85–111; Grenz and John R. Franke, "Theological Heritage as Hermeneutical Trajectory: Toward a Nonfoundationalist Understanding of the Role of Tradition in Theology," in *Ancient & Postmodern Christianity: Paleo-Orthodoxy in the 21st Century – Essays In Honor of Thomas C. Oden*, eds. Kenneth Tanner and Christopher A. Hall (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 215–39; Grenz, "Nurturing the Soul, Informing the Mind: The Genesis of the Evangelical Scripture Principle," in *Evangelicals and Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics*, eds. Vincent E. Bacote, Laura C. Miguez, and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 21–41; and Grenz, "Jesus as the *Imago Dei*: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linear Linearity of Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47.4 (December 2004), 617–28.

of the *imago Dei* as a theological resource factors heavily in this study, as can be seen in the chapter headings.¹³

Trinitarian theology – Grenz was dissatisfied with what he viewed as the lack of substantial trinitarian engagement in his North American Baptist and evangelical context.¹⁴ After his year of study with Pannenberg, Grenz began to work on ways to develop the social Trinity concept more fully. At the heart of his methodological proposal was the conviction that the Trinity ought to lie at the structural center of the whole theological enterprise, permeating all parts of it in the process.¹⁵ Grenz makes use of the language of “divine community” as a trinitarian descriptor as early as 1985 in *The Baptist Congregation*¹⁶ and it appears in regards to the social Trinity in his 1990 *Sexual Ethics*.¹⁷ Subsequently, the language of “social Trinity” and the triune God as a perichoretic “community of love” was present from his 1994 *Theology for the Community of God* onward.¹⁸ In this volume Grenz unveiled the burgeoning trinitarian theological method that would so shape the rest of his career. In this book Grenz did not begin with Scripture or the doctrine of revelation as was normal in evangelical systematics, choosing instead to foreground what he took to be theology proper – the Trinity.¹⁹

¹³ For how these themes come together in Grenz’s resourcing of the *imago Dei*, see Stanley J. Grenz, “The *Imago Dei* and the Dissipation of the Self,” *Dialog* 38.3 (Summer 1999), 182–7; Grenz, “Anticipating God’s New Community,” 595–611; Grenz, “Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships,” 83–101; Grenz, “The Social *Imago*: The Image of God and the Postmodern (Loss of) Self,” in *Papers of the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology*, Volume 6, ed. Christopher I. Wilkins (Pittsburgh, PA: Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, 2003), 49–78; Grenz, “The Social God and the Relational Self: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of the *Imago Dei*,” in *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 87–100; *SGRS*; and *NGQB*, 360–73.

¹⁴ See *BF*, 171; Stanley J. Grenz, “The Doctrine of the Trinity: Luxuriant Meadow or Theological Terminus?,” *Crux* 39.4 (December 2003), 15–18; and *RTC*, 220–1.

¹⁵ See *BF*, 169–202 and *RTC*, 220–2.

¹⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Baptist Congregation: A Guide to Baptist Belief and Practice* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985), 18.

¹⁷ *SE*, 48, 59, 65, 71, 84.

¹⁸ See *MQ*, 206, 238–39, 261–2, 277–8, 285; *TCG*, 72, 76, 78, 80, 101, 112, 142, 179, 187, 243, 245, 305, 350, 483, 489; *RTC*, 220–1; *BF*, 201; and *SGRS* for examples. See also Grenz’s February 2005 lecture, “Humanity: Personal Identity and the Quest for Home,” Session two of “Getting Back to Basics: Truth, Humanity, Church, and Scripture,” Critical Concerns Course, Emergent Conference, San Diego, CA (1 February 2005), 5–6, file ‘Session2.human.ccc.wpd’ at the JRA. Here the phrase “God as the social Trinity – the divine community characterized by love” is used approvingly along with his *imago Dei* theology to describe Grenz’s own theological position.

¹⁹ *TCG*, 24–5.

As indicated above, this trinitarian emphasis was evident in his theological methodology in *Beyond Foundationalism* as well as *The Social God and the Relational Self*, which showcases his development of the social Trinity in relation to his theological anthropology. The trinitarian focus continues on, finding its place in *The Named God and the Question of Being*, which was his contribution of a trinitarian theo-ontology. As well, his *Renewing the Center* should not be overlooked. This book generated some of the most strident critiques Grenz received, particularly in relation to the centrality Grenz gave to convertive piety within evangelical identity.²⁰ What critics missed however was the thoroughgoing trinitarianism of Grenz's theology. The confluence of Grenz's resourcing of the *imago Dei*, his Baptist pietism, and his forays into *theosis* indicate that one of Grenz's major contributions is a revisioned social trinitarianism, which entails nothing less than convertive piety also revisioned as participation in the triune God (or trinitarian participation).²¹ Grenz was a pioneer in North American evangelical theology and represents one of the most thoroughly trinitarian proposals in recent years.²²

Ecclesiology and gender – Flowing from the previous discussions is Grenz's focus on ecclesiology and gender. Grenz wrote widely on gender and sexuality, beginning with his *Sexual Ethics* book in 1990 onward. The portion of Grenz's writing here that pertains most specifically to this study concerns those parts of Grenz's corpus that examine women in ministry (a perennially contentious topic in Baptist and evangelical life in Grenz's milieu), gender roles in church and home, and Grenz's resourcing of a relational and communal conception of the *imago Dei* in regards to gender relations, sexuality, and community.²³ All this factors heavily in Grenz's development of his trinitarian theo-

²⁰ See for example the polemical review of D. A. Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Stanley J. Grenz's *Renewing the Center*," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6.4 (Winter 2002), 82–97.

²¹ See Jay T. Smith, "A Generous Theology: Reinterpreting Convertive Piety as Trinitarian Participation in the Work of Stanley J. Grenz" (PhD Diss., Trinity College, University of Bristol, 2013). See also Stanley J. Grenz, "Celebrating Eternity: Christian Worship as a Foretaste of Participation in the Triune God," in *Semper Reformandum: Studies in Honour of Clark H. Pinnock*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 378–91; *SGRS*, 323–5; and *NGQB*, 364–5 on Grenz's treatment of *theosis*.

²² See Jason S. Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 182–8 and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 216 for support of this assessment.

²³ See for example Stanley J. Grenz, "Theological Foundations for Male-Female Relationships," *Crux* 35.3 (September 1999), 2–14; Grenz, "Anticipating God's New Community"; Grenz, "Post-Feminism and a New

anthropology in his *Social God* volume and indicates an intimate link between his theological anthropology and ecclesiology. Taking my cues from Grenz at this point, it is under the larger focus of ecclesial personhood that I will treat the theme of gender in relation to Grenz's larger theological grammar.

As noted above, Grenz's theology has shown an ecclesial quality and concern from the beginning. Grenz's second full length manuscript, after the publishing of his dissertation, was the slender treatment of ecclesiology in *The Baptist Congregation*, which demonstrated his initial but still as yet undeveloped interest in community as a theological theme.²⁴ A significant interest for Grenz thereafter was the ecclesial community of God, and in a very real sense, all that Grenz wrote was for the church and its witness in the world. Grenz never produced another dedicated volume to ecclesiology, which was presumably to come as a later volume in his "Matrix" series.²⁵ But throughout his engagement with postmodernism, community, and his revisioning of evangelical theological method, Grenz showed development in his ecclesiology from the pertinent section in his one volume systematic to his later essay on ecclesiology²⁶ in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* in 2003 and in his development of the "ecclesial self"²⁷ in *Social God* in 2001.

Grenz's Evangelical Critics

Though his corpus was cut short, Grenz has received significant engagement as a contemporary and recent theologian. Several notable unpublished doctoral dissertations

Gender Covenant: A Response to Elizabeth Fox-Genovese," in *Women and the Future of the Family*, eds. James W. Skillen and Michelle N. Voll (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 46–56; Grenz, "Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships"; Grenz, "Biblical Priesthood and Women in Ministry," in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 272–86; Grenz, *Women in the Church*; *SE*, and *SGRS*.

²⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Baptist Congregation: A Guide to Baptist Belief and Practice* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985); Reprint edition (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1998).

²⁵ This series, called the "Matrix of Christian Theology," of which *SGRS* and *NGQB* were the only two volumes, was intended to be a six volume set when completed. See *SGRS*, xi and Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 88, 143, 182.

²⁶ *TCG*, 461–570 and Stanley J. Grenz, "Ecclesiology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 252–268. See also chapter four, footnote 3.

²⁷ See in particular *SGRS*, 312–334.

have been produced in which Grenz's work features prominently.²⁸ Some of these are quite critical treatments of Grenz's theology that were very typical of a significant portion of the North American evangelical reception of Grenz's critique of foundationalism and writings on gender. An example of this kind of response to Grenz's views on gender can be seen in Peter Schemm's "North American Evangelical Feminism and the Triune God," which features a substantial critique of Grenz and its own subordinationist proposal in contrast.²⁹ An example of an early considerably skeptical treatment of Grenz's theological method is "Revising Evangelical Theological Method in the Postmodern Context: Stanley J. Grenz and Kevin Vanhoozer as Test Cases" by Chauncey Everett Berry. In this study, while his presentation is more favorable toward Vanhoozer's approach, Berry ultimately still finds both Grenz and Vanhoozer problematic and mounts an attempt at "clearing the theological fog regarding postconservative evangelicalism."³⁰ However, the most prominent critique of Grenz's theological method and engagement with postmodernism is probably the collection of essays titled *Reclaiming the Center*. Filled with considerable harsh polemic, this book was a strident response to Grenz's *Renewing the Center* and postconservative theology. With the publication of this book, Grenz received the dubious

²⁸ See Jay T. Robertson, "Evangelicalism's Appropriation of Nonfoundational Epistemology as Reflected in the Theology of Stanley J. Grenz" (PhD Diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002); Evan C. Lenow, "Community in Ethics: A Comparative Analysis of the Work of Thomas Aquinas and Stanley J. Grenz" (PhD Diss., University of Liverpool, 2007); James D. Hoke, "Examining the Concept of Truth in Stanley Grenz's Theology: Assessing its Influence on Emerging Evangelicals" (PhD Diss., Trinity Theological Seminary, 2008); Darrell Richard Jackson, "The Discourse of 'Belonging' and Baptist Church Membership in Contemporary Britain: Historical, Theological and Demotic Elements of a Post-Foundational Theological Proposal" (PhD Diss., University of Birmingham, 2009); Daniel K. Magnuson, "Postconservative Evangelical Theology in a Postmodern Context: Three Proposals" (PhD Diss., Luther Seminary, 2010); Julia P. Langdal, "The Fellowship of the Self and Community: Applying Object Relations Theory and Trinitarian Theology in a Clinical Case Study" (DPsy Diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2011); Laurie A. Mellinger, "Teaching Theology as a Christian Spiritual Practice: The Example of Stanley J. Grenz" (PhD Diss., Catholic University of America, 2010); and Matthew Scott Wireman, "The Self-Attestation of Scripture as the Proper Ground for Systematic Theology" (PhD Diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012).

²⁹ Peter R. Schemm, "North American Evangelical Feminism and the Triune God: A Denial of Trinitarian Relational Order in the Works of Selected Theologians and an Alternative Proposal" (PhD Diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001).

³⁰ Chauncey Everett Berry, "Revising Evangelical Theological Method in the Postmodern Context: Stanley J. Grenz and Kevin J. Vanhoozer as Test Cases" (PhD Diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003). The quote comes from the major section heading on 234.

honor of having an ensemble cast of fourteen traditionalist North American evangelical scholars join forces to rebut his theology.³¹

Monographs on Grenz's Method

The two most recent volumes on Grenz's theological method, though, are of higher quality and offer more balanced and appreciative appraisals. Steven Knowles' *Beyond Evangelicalism* examines Grenz's theological method more thoroughly within the post-liberal matrix influenced by George Lindbeck, with reference to Grenz's epistemological dialogue of sources. Though claiming that Grenz's postfoundationalism moves Grenz "beyond evangelicalism" such that he has become "post-evangelical," Knowles nevertheless produces an appreciative treatment of Grenz and concludes Grenz has contributions he can make to traditional evangelicalism in a postmodern context.³² However, a key weakness of his study is that he is so intent on treating Grenz through the lens of the postmodern critique, and its attendant effects on Grenz's epistemological method, that he misses key theological themes. Perhaps most significantly, Knowles considers Grenz's most recent works minimally, and so fails to grasp adequately the thoroughly trinitarian nature of Grenz's project. One effect of this oversight is that he is ultimately unable to discern Grenz's intent to develop a trinitarian theo-epistemology.³³

Brian Harris' *The Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz* seeks to treat Grenz as a theologian more thoroughly. Harris offers immediate positives in his study both as a Baptist theologian himself and through his strong awareness and deep grasp of Grenz's evangelical context. Harris evaluates Grenz as to whether or not he has accomplished a legitimately postfoundational theological method that effectively revises evangelical theology. Harris remains a sympathetic critic of Grenz, but nevertheless concludes

³¹ Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjos Helseth, and Justin Taylor, eds., *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004). See the generous reply to Carson's polemic (cited in footnote 20 above) in Stanley J. Grenz, "Toward an Undomesticated Gospel: A Response to D. A. Carson," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30.4 (Winter 2003), 455–61.

³² Steven Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism: The Theological Methodology of Stanley J. Grenz*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010).

³³ See Smith, "A Generous Theology," 6, 111 for support. See also Jason S. Sexton, "Review of *Beyond Evangelicalism: The Theological Methodology of Stanley J. Grenz*," *Evangelical Quarterly* 83.1 (2011), 84–8 for a particularly trenchant review of Knowles.

(contrary to Knowles) that Grenz retains a “soft” or “chastened” foundationalism.³⁴ However, there are two main issues with Harris’ treatment. A curious feature is that Harris attempts to analyze the application of Grenz’s theological method most fully laid out in his 2001 *Beyond Foundationalism* by judging it against a book published *before* 2001 – Grenz’s 1998 *Welcoming but not Affirming* – rather than examining publications produced closer to or after *Beyond Foundationalism*. An analysis and critique of Grenz’s theological method as applied to his ethics is wholly legitimate and warranted by Grenz’s own approach to theology. The result of Harris’ approach, though, is that his study lacks substantial consideration of Grenz’s most mature theology.³⁵ Another weakness is that, similar to Knowles, the question remains whether Harris’ study shows sufficient grasp of Grenz’s trinitarian theological grammar and desire to develop a fully trinitarian the-epistemology in his revisioning of evangelical theology.³⁶ Both Harris and Knowles, it seems, underestimate the centrality of the Trinity in Grenz’s theology.

Recent Trinitarian Reorientations

Into this situation Jason Sexton offers his volume, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, which is the first full length monograph to take up the thoroughgoing trinitarian nature of Grenz’s theology.³⁷ Sexton’s book has several strengths, among them being tremendously comprehensive research, a clearly demonstrated and adequate understanding of Pannenberg’s influence on Grenz, and establishing Grenz as a pioneer in contemporary North American evangelical trinitarian theology. Despite these strengths

³⁴ See Brian S. Harris, *The Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz: Constructing Theology from Scripture, Tradition, and Culture* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011); Harris, “Stanley Grenz’s Theological Method: Revisioning Evangelical Theology or Business as Usual,” in *Gospel, Truth, and Interpretation: Evangelical Identity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds. Tim Meadowcroft and Myk Habets (Auckland, NZ: Archer Press, 2011), 241–65; and Harris, “Why Method Matters: Insights from the Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz,” *Crucible* 2.1 (November 2009), 1–14.

³⁵ The most obvious other choice from a theological ethics perspective would have been *SGRS* (like *BF*, published in 2001), or perhaps a more in depth and sustained comparison of the earlier *Welcoming but Not Affirming* with the later *SGRS*. Such an approach would seem to find support in the praise of *SGRS* offered in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 131.

³⁶ Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 111.

³⁷ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*. See also my review of Sexton’s monograph, Russell L. Almon, “Review of *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz* by Jason S. Sexton,” *Review and Expositor* 111.2 (May 2015), 344–5.

however, his work does show some weaknesses. These being, the neglect of the theme of convertive piety in Grenz's theology in relation to his trinitarianism, the lack of understanding of Grenz as a properly narrative theologian by treating him as a "systematic" "soft-foundationalist" without due attention to Grenz's own self-definition over against other classically foundationalist systematic proposals in his context,³⁸ and the curious contention that Grenz in his later career was moving "beyond" and away from the social Trinity.³⁹ Despite these weaknesses, Sexton's book has great value as the first to give Grenz's trinitarian theology the explicit attention it deserves.

The most recent study though, is perhaps the most significant and insightful into Grenz's theology thus far. Jay Smith, who was Grenz's teaching assistant for several years and at the time of his death, has produced his 2013 PhD dissertation on Grenz's reinterpretation of convertive piety as trinitarian participation called "A Generous Theology."⁴⁰ Smith's study is helpful in elucidating how Grenz positioned himself in relation to his evangelical critics, his evangelical context at large, and how he wanted to revision evangelical theology. Smith's work gives substantial analysis of Grenz's use of postmodernism, his critique of foundationalism, the influence of Pannenberg, and two substantial chapters on Grenz's thoroughgoing trinitarianism. Additionally though, Smith is also the first to elucidate the centrality of convertive piety, not only as a thread through the whole of Grenz's theology in general, but its specific reinterpretation and integration into Grenz's social trinitarianism as "trinitarian participation" as well.⁴¹ As such, Smith's study comprises a vital trinitarian reorientation to the current state of Grenz studies.

³⁸ For example, Grenz's defining of his own approach and theological method in *BF*, 14, 37, 50–51, 253 and *RTC*, 212–13 in specific contrast to the classically foundationalist systematics of Wayne Grudem, whose one volume textbook, *Systematic Theology*, still retains great popularity in the States.

³⁹ This contention is curious given Grenz's February 2005 lecture, "Humanity: Personal Identity and the Quest for Home," which Sexton himself cites. (*The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 103) Here, the phrase "God as the social Trinity – the divine community characterized by love" ("Humanity," 5–6) is used approvingly by Grenz. Sexton suggests this use of "social Trinity" is an "exception" to Grenz's purported move beyond the social Trinity, observing that elsewhere in his lecture notes Grenz refers to the Trinity as "the divine community of love." However, Sexton's claim neglects the fact that phrases such as "divine community" and "divine community of love" are themselves references to a Grenzian social trinitarianism.

⁴⁰ Jay T. Smith, "A Generous Theology: Reinterpreting Convertive Piety as Trinitarian Participation in the Work of Stanley J. Grenz."

⁴¹ See Smith, "A Generous Theology" and Jay T. Smith, "A Trinitarian Epistemology: Stanley J. Grenz and the Trajectory of Convertive Piety," *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 6.1 (April 2010), 44–64.

Though Grenz's corpus remained unfinished, his extant works offer theological wisdom for the church's witness in a number of areas: theological method, epistemology, engagement with postmodernism, spirituality and the Christian life, gender and sexuality in the church and home, and the centrality of the Trinity to the whole theological edifice. It can be seen that early critiques of Grenz maintained an excessive focus on what was considered to be his controversial views on gender roles, his engagement with postmodernism, and especially his revisioning of foundationalist evangelical theological method. The valuable studies by Knowles and Harris on Grenz's methodology are both more appreciative and balanced in their assessments, yet both also continue the neglect of the role of the Trinity in Grenz's theology. This state of affairs has received a crucial reorientation with the introduction of Sexton's recent treatment of Grenz's trinitarian theology, the first volume to do so, though with the aforementioned weaknesses. Jay Smith has offered an even more acute corrective to the burgeoning field of Grenz studies, which traces not only Grenz's relationship to his evangelical critics and social trinitarianism, but the threading of convertive piety all throughout Grenz's theology, and in particular the relationship of his pietism and trinitarian participation. Though the ecclesial focus of Grenz's theology has been noted by others, the above analysis indicates the need for a new appraisal of Grenz's views on gender relations as well as a more substantial and dedicated treatment of his ecclesiology.⁴² It is to these ends that I engage this study of Grenz in conversation with Paul Ricoeur.

Grenz: Trinitarian, Baptist . . . Evangelical?

It is prudent at this point, before going on to a consideration of Grenz's theological grammar, to draw brief attention to some of the essential features of Grenz's theological

⁴² Aside from recognitions that Grenz did theology for the sake of the church, the only *dedicated* treatment to Grenz's ecclesiology I can find is Jason S. Sexton, "Stanley Grenz's Ecclesiology: Telic and Trinitarian," *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 6.1 (April 2010), 20–43. The need for a fresh examination of Grenz's ecclesiology is also demonstrated by *Reclaiming the Center*. In its main sections, this collection of essays takes up "Truth, Foundationalism, and Language" (part 2), "Theological Method" (part 3), and "Evangelical Historiography" (part 4). In chapter nine of *RTC*, "Evangelical Theology and the Ecclesiological Center," Grenz critiques the "para-church" nature of evangelicalism and laments the lack of a substantial evangelical ecclesiology. The sparse mention of Grenz's ecclesiology in *Reclaiming the Center* is interesting, or perhaps telling, in contrast.

identity that are significant in relation to this study; namely, Grenz as a trinitarian, Baptist, and evangelical theologian. These features will be discussed through a consideration of the influence of Pannenberg for Grenz, the importance of Grenz's pietism, and the question of Grenz's status as an evangelical.

The Influence of Pannenberg

The influence Pannenberg had on Grenz cannot be overestimated. Grenz went on to adapt creatively and revision several Pannenbergian themes. There are three in particular with which we are concerned to introduce here that will be traced more fully throughout this study in relation to Grenz's ecclesiology: postfoundationalism, Pannenberg's priority of the future, and the social Trinity.⁴³ Firstly, Pannenberg through much of his career, due to his search for universal and verifiable truth, was considered an epistemological foundationalist.⁴⁴ However, F. LeRon Shults has vigorously challenged this assessment, arguing instead that Pannenberg's emphasis on coherence qualifies him as a postfoundationalist.⁴⁵ At the heart of Pannenberg's epistemological method is the notion of the coherence theory of truth, that all theological truth must cohere and that it must do so in the triune God. Grenz at this point critically adapts Pannenberg's notion of coherence into his own postfoundationalist epistemology and theological method.⁴⁶

Secondly, Grenz regarded Pannenberg as one of the key "theologians of hope" and critically engaged Pannenberg's eschatology and the notion of the ontological priority of the future.⁴⁷ From this engagement Grenz develops his own notions of eschatological realism, prolepsis, and eschatology as the orienting motif in his theology.⁴⁸ As well, Grenz combines the idea of eschatological prolepsis and community in relation to the church, such that the church is not simply "community" but becomes more fully the proleptic,

⁴³ On Pannenberg's influence, see the chapter length treatments in Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, chapters two and three, and Smith, "A Generous Theology," chapters three and four.

⁴⁴ This is the observation of Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 34.

⁴⁵ F. LeRon Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁴⁶ *BF*, 43–6, 50 and *RTC*, 203–7, 213, 218.

⁴⁷ Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 170–2.

⁴⁸ *RTC*, 28, 254–6.

eschatological community of God, anticipating the final consummation of God's program for creation.⁴⁹ Thirdly, what may be the most important Pannenbergian influence involves Grenz's critical adaption of Pannenberg's trinitarian theology, which Grenz saw as setting the stage for those who followed. Grenz himself states that Pannenberg's "elevation of the social Trinity to the center of theology provides the foundation for a move to community, but he leaves to others the challenge of developing the idea itself."⁵⁰ Grenz it seems took this challenge upon himself, as this is what he set about doing, creatively adapting the doctrine of the social Trinity and applying it to his theology of the *imago Dei*, relationality, community, and ultimately for our purposes, the church.⁵¹

The Importance of Pietism

If Pannenberg's influence in catapulting Grenz to his pursuit of a thoroughgoing, fully trinitarian theology is where we see a particular resonance between the two theologians, it is on the subject of pietism where we see a curious contrast. Pannenberg was highly critical of pietism and denounced it as harmful to theology and of the same vein as a Schleiermachiian subjectivism or even conservative experiential religion.⁵² Grenz in turn saw Pannenberg as favoring rationality and reason over religious piety in the church's public theology.⁵³ However, it is the critical convergence of Grenz's heritage of Baptist pietism, represented by the experiential category of convertive piety, and the

⁴⁹ See *RTC*, 255, 291, 324, 332 and *SGRS*, 19, 217, 235, 281, 324, 331, 336. See also Smith, "A Generous Theology," 135, 169, 175, 227 and Sexton, "Stanley Grenz's Ecclesiology: Telic and Trinitarian."

⁵⁰ Grenz, "The Irrelevancy of Theology," 311.

⁵¹ See especially *SGRS*.

⁵² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 1:42–8. See Grenz's take on Pannenberg's attitude toward pietism in Stanley J. Grenz and Edward L. Miller, *Fortress Introduction to Contemporary Theologies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 127–30. Grenz's evangelical critics were also fond of finding the shadow of Friedrich Schleiermacher in Grenz's pietism. Smith calls this the "Schleiermachean Shibboleth," which is used along with "postmodern" to mean "less than evangelical" and to establish a false equivalency between Grenz and Schleiermacher/liberalism. See Smith, "A Generous Theology," 68–70, 94. See also Glen G. Scorgie and Phil C. Zylla, "A Tale of Two Pietist Theologians: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Stanley Grenz," in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Grenz*, eds. Derek J. Tidball, Brian S. Harris, and Jason S. Sexton (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 283–302 for a comparison of the similarities and differences between Grenz and Schleiermacher and a defense of Grenz. For Grenz's own critique of Schleiermacher, see Grenz, *Twentieth-Century Theology*, 39–51; *RET*, 70, 138, 140, 149; and *BF*, 10, 33–4, 35, 37, 70, 107, 150, 171, 185–6, 188. Cf. Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 22–8.

⁵³ Grenz, *Twentieth-Century Theology*, 197–8.

trinitarianism he encountered and adapted from Pannenberg that creatively worked to influence Grenz's theology through to the end.

The importance of Grenz's pietism in relation to his trinitarian theology has not always been fully recognized in secondary Grenz scholarship. Indeed, in the most recent monographs on Grenz, a discernable progression is evident where only recently has the link between his pietism and trinitarian focus been brought out in full force. The treatments of Harris and Knowles both give minimal attention to Grenz's publications after *Beyond Foundationalism* and while both show an awareness of the importance of Pannenberg for Grenz, they nevertheless appear not to grasp the full impact of Pannenberg on the role of the Trinity in Grenz's theology. As a result, neither give the Trinity the place it deserves in Grenz's theology and while both make mention of Grenz's pietism, neither are able to make the connection to his trinitarian theology.⁵⁴

Into this situation, Sexton produced a much needed trinitarian reorientation to Grenz's theology that stands as a great service to Grenz scholarship. Sexton additionally provides an acknowledgement, through the words of Jonathan R. Wilson (who shares Grenz's Baptist heritage), of the role Grenz's pietism played in strengthening his work.⁵⁵ Wilson states:

Throughout Grenz's work his heritage in Pietism (as embodied in the North American Baptist tradition) shapes and strengthens his work. This may be seen in his articulation of a theological method that makes room for experience, in the centrality of "the community of God" for his exposition of doctrine, in the primacy of love in his theo-ontology, and in the very full account of the Spirit in his doctrine of the Trinity.⁵⁶

However, despite numerous mentions of "participation" in Sexton's treatment of Grenz's trinitarian theology, he ultimately treats Grenz's pietism only briefly in a section

⁵⁴ See Smith, "A Generous Theology," 136, 185, 189. The minimal treatment of Grenz's corpus after *BF* (*SGRS*, *RTG*, and *NGQB*) by Harris and Knowles is the legitimate result of the focused nature of their studies. Even so, it should be observed Grenz made the centrality of his trinitarian focus evident even before these later works in *TCG*, *BF*, and *RTC* (as well as many journal articles). But see also the more recent positive review of Sexton's case for the centrality of the Trinity for Grenz in Brian S. Harris, "Review of *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz* by Jason S. Sexton," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 9.4 (2015), 401–3.

⁵⁵ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 33.

⁵⁶ Jonathan R. Wilson, "Stanley J. Grenz: Generous Faith and Faithful Engagement," *Modern Theology* 23.1 (January 2007), 119. Cf. Roger E. Olson and Christian T. Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 114, 161, 171–6.

comparing it to Pannenberg's spirituality.⁵⁷ Because of this, Sexton is unable to bring together the confluence of Grenz's emphasis on convertive piety and the Trinity. It is at this point that Jay Smith has offered in his study a more fully realized reorientation of Grenz scholarship that recognizes not only the importance of Pannenberg and convertive piety for Grenz, but also the creative convergence of Grenz's pietism with his social trinitarianism, producing a revisioning and reinterpretation of convertive piety as itself "trinitarian participation."⁵⁸

Which Evangelical? Whose Evangelicalism?

Grenz admitted that he was a "pietist with a PhD"⁵⁹ and furthermore he believed that pietism constituted a legitimate aspect of evangelical identity, even if it does not exhaust it. It is at this point that we see a corollary consequence to Sexton's (lack of) treatment of Grenz's pietism. One of the auxiliary aims of Sexton's study seems to be that of convincing those who aren't sure about Grenz's theology that Grenz is a trustworthy evangelical.⁶⁰ However, given that it is precisely on the point of Grenz's pietism that some of the sharpest and most strident critiques have been made, to fail to bring Grenz's notion of convertive piety into contact with his trinitarianism threatens to elide one of the most distinctive ways that Grenz proposed to revision evangelical theology. This is why Smith's study is so important to Grenz scholarship.

⁵⁷ For the references to "participation," see Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 16, 32, 62–4, 99, 105, 108–10, 113–6, 131, 135, 151–2, 155 and for the treatment of Grenz's pietism, see 32–4. Sexton also mentions Grenz's use of *theosis* sparsely on 17, 73–4, and 107. My suggestion is that in light of the role of "participation" in Grenz, Smith's thesis of "trinitarian participation" in Grenz, and Grenz's own overtures in this direction, that *theosis* deserves a more substantial treatment in relation to Grenz's theology which I develop in this study as theotic "triune participation." For a brief account of Grenz's use of *theosis* (along with Clark Pinnock, Paul Fiddes, and Douglas Harink), see Mark S. Medley, "Participation in God: The Appropriation of *Theosis* by Contemporary Baptist Theologians," in *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology*, Volume 2, ed. Vladimir Kharlamov (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 205–46.

⁵⁸ See Smith, "A Generous Theology," 230–6 and Smith, "A Trinitarian Epistemology," 57–64. I suggest Smith's thesis at this point offers some relief to Harris' concern that Grenz lacks sufficient emphasis on "conversion." See Harris, *The Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz*, 220–1. It should also be noted that Grenz does not merely accept his pietistic heritage uncritically, but seeks to revision it in contact with his trinitarian theology.

⁵⁹ Grenz, "Concerns of a Pietist with a PhD."

⁶⁰ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 5–10, 177–88. It should be noted that Sexton admits the contested nature of evangelical identity. (8–9)

Beginning in *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, Grenz pulls his idea of convertive piety from evangelical historian Donald Dayton.⁶¹ While it is common for pietism to be denigrated as simply a product of modern individualism, Grenz saw something important in the pietist heritage for both evangelical identity and spirituality.⁶² Grenz followed this earlier treatment up some years later with an even more full exposition of convertive piety in evangelical historical identity in *Renewing the Center*,⁶³ tracing evangelical history as a hybrid movement birthed and formed out of the productive confluence of Puritanism and Pietism in the eighteenth century.⁶⁴ While his former work did not garner as much pushback, the latter volume generated vigorous and vociferous criticism. In addition to criticisms stemming from his reliance on Dayton, Grenz was also critiqued for his seeming adherence to the Rogers and McKim thesis,⁶⁵ in which he was purported to place the lamentable dogmatism of North American evangelical fundamentalism on the back of the “Old Princeton” school epitomized by B. B. Warfield, Charles Hodge, and A. A. Hodge.⁶⁶

While Grenz is more nuanced than critiques of his historiography suggest, it is noteworthy that the strident criticisms he received play out as one might expect if his

⁶¹ *RET*, 14, 23. See also Donald W. Dayton, “The Limits of Evangelicalism: The Pentecostal Tradition,” in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, eds. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991), 48.

⁶² *RET*, chapters one and two.

⁶³ *RTC*, chapters one and two.

⁶⁴ See *RTC*, 52–9 on this as well as on convertive and experimental piety. See also Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 18–36 on Baptist conversionist spirituality and convertive piety.

⁶⁵ See *RTC*, 65, 69, 77, 80, 84, 85. Grenz cites in this regard, Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 77, 200–23, 296–7, 304, 328–30, 333–4, 337–9, 347–8 and Jack B. Rogers, *Scripture in the Westminster Confession* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 425–6.

⁶⁶ See Paul Kjos Helseth, “Are Postconservative Evangelicals Fundamentalists? Postconservative Evangelicalism, Old Princeton, and the Rise of Neo-Fundamentalism,” in *Reclaiming the Center*, 223–50. Smith counters with more nuance that Grenz’s assertion is “that the evolving, modern understanding of inerrancy came to its *present form* at Princeton, and that, coupled with Darby’s dispensationalism and the threat of a growing theological liberalism, combined to form early twentieth century fundamentalism. The Princeton theologians’ piety was not at issue for Grenz, nor was their codification, necessarily, of inerrancy *per se*; what was at issue for Grenz was the juxtaposition of modern inductive scientific method, Scottish common sense philosophy, and a desire to staunch the flow of growth of liberal Christianity. Out of this causal matrix came a vigorous, though logically suspect, understanding of the Bible’s authority and more importantly, a shift in evangelical priorities. No longer were evangelicals necessarily identified by their spirituality (convertive piety); after the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, evangelicals were known by their affirmation of the inerrancy of Scripture and doctrinal orthodoxy.” See Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 52–3.

proposals are accurate.⁶⁷ The reactions against Grenz's revisioning and proposed renewing of evangelicalism demonstrate themselves the legacy of evangelicalism as a hybrid movement. Arguably the closest thing to a recognized taxonomy for evangelical identity is Bebbington's quadrilateral:⁶⁸ biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and activism.⁶⁹ There is however, no central evangelical magisterium to give a definitive discernment of how this taxonomy is to be interpreted. Thus when Grenz's evangelical credentials and identity are questioned, it becomes necessary to ask: "Which evangelical? Whose evangelicalism?"⁷⁰ The critiques of Grenz's evangelical critics do not place Grenz outside the evangelical camp,⁷¹ but rather only one expression of it and in the process give testimony to the fractured nature of contemporary evangelicalism.⁷² This is the very

⁶⁷ See the criticisms of Helseth, "Are Postconservative Evangelicals Fundamentalists?," 223–50; William G. Travis, "Pietism and the History of American Evangelicalism," 251–80; and Chad Owen Brand, "Defining Evangelicalism," 281–304 in *Reclaiming the Center*. These comprise chapters nine, ten, and eleven respectively of "Part 4," disputing Grenz's evangelical historiography. See also Smith, "A Generous Theology," 45–57 for Smith's delineation of evangelical history and identity and an able defense of Grenz's evangelical historiography.

⁶⁸ See W. R. Ward, "Evangelical Identity in the Eighteenth Century," in *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Donald M. Lewis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 11 who speaks of "the famous Bebbington Quadrilateral."

⁶⁹ See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989). Bebbington says, "There are the four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism." (2–3)

⁷⁰ See Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002) who distinguishes between "traditional evangelicals," "pragmatic evangelicals," and "younger evangelicals." Webber places Grenz as one of the younger evangelicals, but the importance here is not the age of these particular evangelicals *per se*, but their approach to evangelical identity. Webber describes their development as such in chapters four through seven respectively: "History: From Ahistorical to Tradition," "Theology: From Proposition to Narrative," "Apologetics: From Rationalism to Embodiment," and "Ecclesiology: From Invisible to Visible."

⁷¹ This is supported by Harris' detailing of the pluriform nature of evangelicalism and his observation that while Grenz's revisioning will likely not find favor among "traditionalists," it likely will be effective for three groups: "younger evangelicals," "postconservative evangelicals," and "Pentecostal evangelicals." See Harris, *The Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz*, 25–52 for his study of evangelicalism and 105, 128–9, 144, 160 for his comments regarding the effectiveness of Grenz's revisioning among different groupings of evangelicals. See also Grenz's own article, "Die Begrenzte Gemeinschaft ('The Bounded People') and the Character of Evangelical Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45.2 (June 2002), 301–16 which seeks to re-imagine evangelical identity through a "centered set" rather than a "bounded set" approach.

⁷² For instance, Smith states in response to criticisms of Grenz's historiography, "In that Grenz's understanding of the historical trajectory of evangelicalism has drawn both praise and criticism, it reflects the fractured nature of evangelical historiography as a whole. Where on one side, Ernest Sandeen, Jack

division that Grenz hoped his revisioning of evangelical theology, one that placed theological rigor and experiential piety in close contact, could heal.

Grenz's Grammar – Motifs and Sources

In *Beyond Foundationalism*, after two chapters setting the stage for shaping theology in a postmodern context in “Part One,” Grenz articulates a method for theology that he describes as moving “beyond foundationalism.” “Part Two” details his “trialogue”⁷³ of sources for theology: Scripture, tradition, and culture. “Part Three” outlines his triad of focal motifs for theology: the Trinity, community, and eschatology.⁷⁴ Taken together, these can be seen as forming Grenz's theological grammar, made up of what I am construing as his “narrative” sources and “trinitarian” motifs. This section will take up the question of Grenz's postfoundationalism⁷⁵ and then briefly introduce the sources and motifs.

Rogers, Donald McKim, Mark Noll, W. R. Ward and David Bebbington seek to cast an evangelical trajectory that has a larger role for Pietism and downplay the development of the concept of inerrancy until the late nineteenth century; the other side, consisting of John Woodbridge, Paul Kjos Helseth and Iain Murray seek to develop an evangelical trajectory that is much narrower, with the concept of inerrancy conceived both as the genesis of evangelicalism and the epistemological concept at the heart of evangelicalism.” See Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 46–7.

⁷³ *SGRS*, x.

⁷⁴ Both triads receive more condensed treatment in *RTC*, chapter six, 192–225.

⁷⁵ Sexton notes what he perceives as “Grenz's attempt to establish distance from the term “postfoundationalist” (*The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 35) in Grenz's “Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic.” Sexton, though, offers no defense of this, nor does he mention Grenz's other uses of “nonfoundationalism,” and fails to take note of Grenz's seeming positive use of “(post)foundational” (119) and “(post)foundationalist” (120) in the same article. A review of the relevant Grenzian source material (*BF*, *RTC*, “Beyond Foundationalism,” “Articulating the Belief Mosaic,” and “Theological Heritage as Hermeneutical Trajectory”) reveals ambiguity concerning whether Grenz's theology should be called “nonfoundationalist” or “postfoundationalist.” He sometimes uses “nonfoundationalist,” while at other times he uses both together in close proximity, at times seemingly interchangeably, as well as using “postfoundationalist” approvingly in section headings. (*RTC*, 208) This produced a protest from Archie J. Spencer who complained of Grenz's ambiguity in this regard. (“Culture, Community, and Commitments,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57.3 (August 2004), 338–360) Grenz responded by acknowledging the “ambiguity of nomenclature” but did not seek to alleviate this ambiguity. (“The Virtue of Ambiguity: A Response to Archie Spencer,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57.3 (August 2004), 361–5) My judgement is that in Grenz's view either term can legitimately be used of his theology. His main concern seemed to be that theological method and epistemology move “beyond foundationalism.” However, in line with most studies (critical and friendly) on Grenz, in sensitivity to concerns voiced in Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology*, 31–7 of an unhelpful relativism attached to nonfoundationalism, taking cues from Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 90, 106–126, and 223–6, and in line with Grenz's own section headings in chapter six of *RTC* and Grenz's articulation of an “eschatological realism,” (*BF*, 272 and *RTC*, 254–6) I will refer to Grenz as a “postfoundationalist” for the purposes of this study.

Grenz and the Question of (Post)Foundationalism

Another area of dispute is the question of foundationalism. Grenz quotes Nicholas Wolterstorff: “On all fronts foundationalism is in bad shape. It seems to me there is nothing left to do but give it up for mortally ill and learn to live in its absence.”⁷⁶ The proposal for a postfoundationalist evangelical theology has been controversial to say the least. Can evangelicalism move beyond its foundationalist inheritance? The criticisms in response to Grenz’s postmodern turn and critique of classical foundationalism⁷⁷ indicate that for many, a postfoundationalist *evangelical* theology is a category error.⁷⁸ F. LeRon Shults, though, offers an instructive summary of Pannenberg’s theological method wherein he describes an ideal postfoundationalist theological method. Four couplets of this summary offer a succinct description of postfoundationalism which “accurately, though not precisely, approximate Grenz’s epistemological position.”⁷⁹ They are as follows:

(PF1): interpreted experience engenders and nourishes all beliefs, and a network of beliefs informs the interpretation of experience.

(PF2): the objective unity of truth is a necessary condition for the intelligible search for knowledge, and the subjective multiplicity of knowledge indicates the fallibility of truth claims.

(PF3): rational judgment is an activity of socially situated individuals, and the cultural community indeterminately mediates the criteria of rationality.

(PF4): explanation aims for universal, transcontextual understanding, and understanding derives from particular contextualized explanations.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 52. But see also the call for more careful nuance in the critiques of foundationalism in Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, 128–31.

⁷⁷ *BF*, 38. Grenz states, “Foundationalist epistemological proposals routinely draw from the metaphor of a building to conceive how human knowledge arises. Like a physical edifice, knowledge must be built on a sure foundation,” and then counters on the basis of the demise of foundationalism and the nature of the theological task, “theology can no longer model itself after the foundationalist metaphor of constructing an edifice.” (“Articulating the Belief Mosaic,” 110, 123)

⁷⁸ For example, see Douglas Groothuis, “Truth Defined and Defended,” 59–80; J. P. Moreland and Garrett DeWeese, “The Premature Report of Foundationalism’s Demise,” 81–108; and R. Scott Smith, “Language, Theological Knowledge, and the Postmodern Paradigm,” 109–33 in *Reclaiming the Center*. It may also be D. A. Carson’s own modernist and foundationalist doctrine of Scriptural inerrancy that prompted him to protest Grenz’s rejection of propositionalism, to invoke the “Schleiermachiian Shibboleth,” and conclude: “With the best will in the world, I cannot see how Grenz’s approach to Scripture can be called ‘evangelical’ in any useful sense.” (*The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 481)

⁷⁹ Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 109.

⁸⁰ Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology*, 43. Important to remember is Grenz’s intention to develop a specifically *trinitarian* theo-epistemology. See Smith, “A Trinitarian Epistemology.”

Some recent treatments, though, contend Grenz did not successfully develop a postfoundationalist method, but instead remained a soft or chastened foundationalist.⁸¹ This dissertation takes a contrasting view to these and holds Grenz to have been successful in forming a postfoundationalist theology. All in all, with his full corpus in view, I suggest the perspective that Grenz remained a soft or chastened foundationalist potentially fails to understand adequately Grenz's theological method in one or more of the following four areas: 1) his refusal to entertain modernist and foundationalist conditions for the *legitimization* of theological claims,⁸² 2) the way he described his method *metaphorically* (for instance, as a mosaic or web⁸³), 3) the *narrative* and *communitarian* shape of his theology, and 4) flowing from these, the *grammar* with which he infused his theology.

*The Trinitarian Motifs*⁸⁴

According to Grenz, "All truly Christian local theologies are trinitarian in content, communitarian in focus, and eschatological in orientation."⁸⁵ With this summary of his motifs at the end of chapter five of *Beyond Foundationalism*, Grenz set the stage for the further explication of the Trinity as theology's structural motif in chapter six, community as the integrative motif of theology in chapter seven, and eschatology as the orienting motif of theology in chapter eight. The second motif reflects Grenz's long-standing concern for "community" as a theological category, and is visibly present as Grenz's integrative motif as early as *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*.⁸⁶ While the Trinity and eschatology were not present fully as motifs in *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, they were nevertheless present in nascent form. Grenz speaks of the Trinity as the "community of

⁸¹ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 35; Brian S. Harris, "Can Evangelical Theology Move Beyond Foundationalism: Some Insights from the Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz," *Crucible* 1.1 (May 2008), 1–17; and Harris, *The Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz*, 156–79. However, see also the contrasting views in Smith, "A Generous Theology," 90, 106–126, and 223–6 and Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 5, 83–4, 118.

⁸² For example, see Grenz's move away from the correspondence theory of truth in *RTC*, 177, 192–225 and his later critique of onto-theology and development of a theo-ontology in *NGQB*.

⁸³ See Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic." See also chapter three, footnote 13.

⁸⁴ See Harris, *The Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz*, 182–214, 258–66; Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 128–53; Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 15–17; and Smith, "A Generous Theology," 186–95 for their discussions of Grenz's motifs.

⁸⁵ *BF*, 166.

⁸⁶ *RET*, 137–62.

love” and connects this to the church as well as a “community of love.” Additionally, Grenz declares that while divine self-disclosure ultimately lies in the eschatological future, it is also a present reality and that the church is an eschatological community.⁸⁷ The Trinity motif, again, was not explicitly stated in *Theology for the Community of God* but was nevertheless on display within its trinitarian structuring. Community was, again, present visibly as the integrative motif, or more specifically as he stated in his introduction, the eschatological community of the triune God.⁸⁸ The trio of Trinity, community, and eschatology ultimately received their fullest explication in *Beyond Foundationalism*⁸⁹ and went on to find their fullest application in Grenz’s corpus within his *Social God and Named God* volumes. Grenz states, “theology is ‘church dogmatics,’ and the ‘dogmatics’ of the *Christian* church must by its very nature be trinitarian.”⁹⁰ As will be discussed further in chapter two, not only the Trinity motif, but the community and eschatological motifs as well are trinitarian in nature. For this reason, this triad of Grenz’s theological grammar will be treated as trinitarian motifs.

*The Narrative Sources*⁹¹

Chapters three, four, and five respectively of *Beyond Foundationalism* explicated Grenz’s sources for theology: Scripture as the “norming norm” of theology, tradition as the hermeneutical trajectory of theology, and culture as the embedding context of theology.⁹²

⁸⁷ *RET*, 58, 76, 126, 129, 132, 150, 158–9, 171, 181–8. See the “community of love” references in 181–8, “eschatological community” in 158–9, 182–4, and “eschatological orientation” on 182.

⁸⁸ *TCG*, 23–4. Note also Grenz’s study of the “kingdom of God” as an integrative motif in twentieth century theology. See *RET*, 139–47 and *TCG*, 20–4. Grenz finds the “kingdom” theme too generic and needful of more specific content, which he finds in the integrative motif of community. As well, showing Pannenberg’s influence, he keeps the eschatological dimension of the “kingdom” theme, which comes to fruition in Grenz’s eschatological motif and his use of eschatological prolepsis. Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 531–2. See also Russell D. Moore, “Leftward to Scofield: The Eclipse of the Kingdom in Post-Conservative Evangelical Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47:3 (September 2004), 429–30.

⁸⁹ See also Grenz’s more condensed treatment in *RTC*, 219–25

⁹⁰ *BF*, 188.

⁹¹ See Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 110–27 and Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 11–15 for discussions of Grenz’s sources. See also Harris, *The Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz*, 105–19, 149–70, 250–7 and his view that “tradition” and “culture” are more properly “resources” or “formative factors” due to the ordered nature of Grenz’s dialogue. (167, 174) See as well chapter three, footnote 13.

⁹² See also the treatment in *RTC*, 214–19. Note as well the discussion of the sources in Stanley J. Grenz, “How Do We Know What to Believe? Revelation and Authority,” in *Essential of Christian Theology*, ed.

Grenz first detailed these sources in a chapter length treatment in *Revisoning Evangelical Theology* which was followed up by a recap of the sources in the introduction to *Theology for the Community of God*.⁹³ Additionally, Grenz placed his section on Scripture under the auspices of pneumatology in his systematic theology, thus being consistent with his fully trinitarian approach.⁹⁴ Though he received some criticism, here an initial glimpse can be seen in how the written Word and Spirit are joined together for Grenz, indicating that it is the Spirit speaking through the Scriptures in a fully trinitarian sense that makes the Scriptures the “norming norm” and norming narrative of theology.⁹⁵

As well, Grenz was aware through his contact with the postmodern critique and his own postmodern turn that everyone interprets from particular contexts. For Grenz, the theological heritage of the church plays a key role in providing this interpretive theological context. However, Grenz does not reify church tradition, declaring it an “open” rather than a “closed” confessional tradition, allowing for further development along the hermeneutical trajectory set by the theological heritage of the church.⁹⁶ This openness is vital as the church’s tradition should never become a simple substitute for the norming narrative of Scripture and theological construction necessarily takes place in ever new contexts and cultures. It is in these various cultural milieus that the Spirit speaks to the church, that the gospel is proclaimed, and that provide thought forms the church can utilize in the theological task.⁹⁷ As will be discussed in chapter three, Grenz’s approach to his sources was deeply shaped by the influence of narrative theology. For this reason, this triad of Grenz’s theological grammar will be treated as narrative sources.⁹⁸

William C. Placher (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 20–33. In *SGRS*, x Grenz states regarding his triadology, that theological construction “arises out of the perichoretic dance of a particular, ordered set of sources of insight.”

⁹³ *RET*, 87–108 and *TCG*, 16–20.

⁹⁴ *TCG*, 379–404.

⁹⁵ *RTC*, 215 and *BF*, 64–6.

⁹⁶ *BF*, 124–5.

⁹⁷ *RTC*, 217–9 and *BF*, 158–66. See also Stanley J. Grenz, “What Does Hollywood Have to Do with Wheaton? The Place of (Pop) Culture in Theological Reflection,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43.2 (June 2000), 303–14.

⁹⁸ Grenz’s triadology is similar to the Anglican triad of “Scripture, tradition, and reason” and the Wesleyan quadrilateral of “Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.” Grenz expresses appreciation for the quadrilateral (*TCG*, 15) but has concerns regarding foundationalist applications of the quadrilateral where experience acts as the governing source for all the other sources. For Grenz, experience was not a

Ricoeur's Rhythm – Detour and Return

Before charting the course for the rest of the study, we now undertake an initial consideration of Ricoeurian hermeneutics, which will set the stage for subsequent engagements with Ricoeur. This section takes place in three parts: part one comprises a first moment that considers the perceived peril of Ricoeurian hermeneutics, part two comprises a second moment that uncovers the potential promise of Ricoeurian hermeneutics, and part three comprises a third moment that explores the productive plot of Ricoeurian hermeneutics.

Prefiguration: The Perceived Peril of Ricoeurian Hermeneutics

This first moment begins by noting that the notion of hermeneutics itself has tended to be seen as a problem in need of a solution. This observation provides the context for a consideration of charges of subjectivism leveled at Ricoeur by some scholars. After that, the manner in which Ricoeur sought to circumscribe his own philosophical project is discussed.

Hermeneutics as a Problem to Overcome

James K. A. Smith begins his book *The Fall of Interpretation*⁹⁹ with this quote from Dennis Schmidt's *The Ubiquity of the Finite*: "However one wants to characterize it – whether as finitude, limit, mortality, opinion, partiality, mutability, or immanence – the first topic of philosophy has generally been taken to be something to overcome."¹⁰⁰ Smith

source *per se*, but was in some measure the focus of the theological task. "Theology, then, is in some sense the critical reflection on Christian experience, for it seeks to account for and describe the encounter with God in accordance with specifically Christian categories." (16) In Grenz's revisioning, the category of experience can be seen in his use of convertive piety, triune participation, and narrative, and ultimately flows through both triads of his theological grammar. What then of the traditional "reason" source? Grenz criticized the decline of the Trinity under modern rationalism, as well as Hegel's treatment of the Trinity as available to human reason apart from Christian revelation. (*BF*, 183–6) But reason does not simply drop out after Grenz's critique of foundationalism, but gets revisioned and remains implicit in a postfoundationalist and narrative posture, taking on an eschatological character that Grenz referred to as "eschatological realism." (239–73)

⁹⁹ James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, Second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 13.

¹⁰⁰ Dennis J. Schmidt, *The Ubiquity of the Finite: Hegel, Heidegger and the Entitlements of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 1.

further notes that the hermeneutical condition has long been treated itself as a product of the Fall. Smith states,

[H]ermeneutics has traditionally been linked with the curse and banishment from the Garden. Interpretation, in short, is a result of the Fall, is itself a fall – from the intelligible to the sensible, from immediacy to mediation, from reading to hermeneutics. As the medieval poet Dante tells the story, the nature of the Fall itself was a transgression of the sign (*il trapassar del segno*), a lawless semiotic act that initiated the tragic history of interpretation and corrupted the previous immediacy Adam enjoyed in Eden. Hermeneutics is something to be overcome by redemption, whereby the curse of interpretation will be removed in a hermeneutical paradise where interpretation is absent . . . when paradise is regained it is hermeneutics itself that will be banished.”¹⁰¹

Such is often the disposition found when considering the history of hermeneutics, seen particularly in the legacy of Friedrich Schleiermacher. Ever since Schleiermacher “de-regionalized,” and thus universalized, hermeneutics, it has been common to speak in terms of “the problem of hermeneutics.”¹⁰² And on what many would see as the other side from Schleiermacher, from a conservative evangelical perspective, Graeme Goldsworthy displays a distinct lack of trust for philosophical hermeneutics. Goldsworthy briefly (and perhaps inadequately) weighs figures such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Ricoeur and concludes that philosophical hermeneutics has “eclipsed the gospel” and placed what he calls “evangelical hermeneutics” under “constant attack.”¹⁰³ Is this the fate of the

¹⁰¹ Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 13–15. See also Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3–39.

¹⁰² B. H. McClean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 37. Ricoeur himself takes up a study of the problem of hermeneutics in Paul Ricoeur, “The Task of Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 43–62 and Ricoeur, “The Problem of Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics: Writings and Lectures 2*, trans. David Pellauer, eds. Daniel Frey and Nicola Strickler (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 1–44. Although, as we shall see, Ricoeur does not simply see fit to problematize hermeneutics in terms of peril, but sees productive promise within the hermeneutical condition as well.

¹⁰³ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations* (Nottingham: APOLLOS, 2006), 130–8. There is some question whether Goldsworthy’s treatment of philosophical hermeneutics is adequate however, as he badly misrepresents a key figure like Hans-Georg Gadamer. For instance, he states, “Gadamer regards the distance between the reader and the text as something that inhibits understanding.” (136) He doesn’t seem to realize, though, that Gadamer contradicts this in *Truth and Method* saying, “Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged because it separates; it is actually the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted. Hence *temporal distance is not something that must be overcome. . . . the important thing is to recognize temporal distance as a positive and productive condition enabling understanding*. It is not a yawning abyss but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which everything handed down presents itself to us.”

hermeneutical condition, to be considered as a problem, as itself a product of the Fall, or as something that must be overcome? Or is it possible to perform a reversal at this point and problematize the posture that treats the hermeneutical condition as a problem?

When considering the peril that hermeneutics may pose to theology, it is best to admit there is legitimate reason for caution. Martin Heidegger perhaps serves as a prime example of what many theologians fear. On the one hand, Heidegger contends that theology need not be “led on the leash of philosophy” and that “what is revealed in faith can never be founded by autonomously functioning reason.” However, on the other hand, he seems to negate this sentiment when he declares the articulation of this same faith requires “the appropriate conceptual interpretation” which is “ontologically determined by a content that is pre-Christian and that can thus be grasped purely rationally,” and then further asserting the task of phenomenology is to “correct theology.”¹⁰⁴

The Great Debate: Chicago vs Yale

It is ostensibly this sort of philosophical hegemony that factored into the Chicago-Yale debate, in which post-liberal Yale theologians such as Hans Frei stridently criticized Ricoeur as he came to be associated with contributing to a subjectivist theological method. Frei and his post-liberal colleagues tended to lay three charges at the feet of Ricoeur: 1) that he is an example of “experiential-expressivism,” 2) such that he occludes the “literal sense” of the Scriptural narratives, 3) by subjecting them to a hermeneutical hegemony wherein they are subsumed into his account of general hermeneutics and meaning.¹⁰⁵ However, Ricoeur scholar Boyd Blundell observes that what stands out as odd

(*Truth and Method*, Second edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 1989), 297, emphasis mine)

¹⁰⁴ Martin Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology,” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 50–3. See also Merold Westphal, “The Kantian Tradition: The Danger of Philosophical Hegemony,” in *Theology and Philosophy: Faith and Reason*, eds. Oliver Crisp et al. (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 116.

¹⁰⁵ See Hans W. Frei, “Theology and the Interpretation of Narrative: Some Hermeneutical Considerations,” 94–116; Frei, “The ‘Literal Reading’ of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It Break?,” 117–52; and Frei, “Conflicts in Interpretation: Resolution, Armistice, or Co-existence?,” 153–166 in *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, eds. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) for examples. See also George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984), 136 for his attribution to Ricoeur of “experiential-expressivism”; William C. Placher, “Paul Ricoeur and Postliberal Theology: A Conflict of

is Ricoeur's own lack of participation in this debate.¹⁰⁶ It seems that the post-liberal reaction against Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics may well have been a case of mistaken identity and projection.

Instead, the criticisms of the post-liberals, which it must be said do have some merit, are better applied to the correlationist and revisionist theology of David Tracy, Ricoeur's colleague at the University of Chicago.¹⁰⁷ While we can perhaps agree with Tracy's assertion that theology can benefit from engagement with philosophical hermeneutics, the manner in which Tracy carried this out is problematic. Tracy's theological method distinguished between what he calls fundamental theology, whose proper public is the academy, and systematic theology, whose proper public is the church. The problem is that since Tracy's fundamental theology holds the power in his model, and that since it is here that he engages with philosophical hermeneutics, when the claims of theology and philosophy conflict he is forced to side with philosophy. Ironically, instead of fulfilling his aim of theology appropriating philosophical insights, a perhaps unintentional hermeneutical hegemony ensures.¹⁰⁸ Thus, Frei's fears do seem to be valid. What is not clear though, is whether these fears should be projected back onto Ricoeur.

Ricoeur's "Double Life"

It may then be a strange irony when Tracy remarks that Ricoeur's influence has always been intended as a "strictly philosophical contribution to theological self-

Interpretations?" *Modern Theology* 4.1 (1987), 35–52 and Placher, "Introduction," in *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, 3–25 for agreement with Frei; and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 141, 159, 181, 236, 251 for his subjectivist charge against Ricoeur. See also the contrary assessments in Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, x, 243–4 and Boyd Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy: Detour and Return* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 4, 43–7.

¹⁰⁶ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 46, 86, 218 and Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 40–53.

¹⁰⁸ See Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 16–21, 28–31, 40–2. In fairness to Tracy, he shifts from a more modernist stance in *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1979) and *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981) to a more postmodern one in *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1987). See also his later defense of himself against the post-liberals for evidence of his own gradual hermeneutical turn that muted his previous modernist sensibilities in David Tracy, "Lindbeck's New Program for Theology: A Reflection," *The Thomist* 49 (1985), 460–72. Cf. Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 86, 218.

understanding,” and that, “Unlike some of his admirers, Ricoeur himself never allows philosophy or theology to be confused or conflated.”¹⁰⁹ This statement by Tracy accords well with Ricoeur’s own admitted practice, which is illustrated nicely in the editing of the published version of his Gifford Lectures, *Oneself as Another*. In order to keep the promise he made to himself “not to mix the philosophical and the theological”¹¹⁰ he omitted the two studies from the Giffords dedicated specifically to “natural theology.”¹¹¹ We are confronted here with what may be the peril of inconsistency in what appears to be Ricoeur’s “double life,” which seems to sit in considerable tension with the grain of his dialogical and dialectical approach.¹¹² In fact, in reference to *Oneself as Another*, Merold Westphal issues a lament concerning “the discrepancy between the book written and the book we might claim to have a right to expect.”¹¹³ And Henry Venema wonders, “shouldn’t Ricoeur articulate how the particularity of his own religious tradition stimulates the production of an imaginative vision that affects what appears to him as philosophically necessary?”¹¹⁴ What are we to make of this? If Ricoeur himself did not see fit to mix theology and philosophy, what use is he to the overarching theological task?

We should keep in mind that Ricoeur himself confesses to “living a kind of double allegiance” and even refers to his separation of philosophy and theology as “controlled schizophrenia.”¹¹⁵ In a 2003 interview, he had these revealing words: “I might even concede here a point . . . that my thought is not so removed from certain religious and biblical issues as my standard policy of ‘conceptual asceticism’ might have been prepared to admit in the past . . . I no longer consider such conceptual asceticism tenable.”¹¹⁶ My suggestion is

¹⁰⁹ David Tracy, “Ricoeur’s Philosophical Journey: Its Import for Religion,” in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), 202.

¹¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with Francois Azouvi and Marc De Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998), 90–1.

¹¹¹ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 51. See also chapter four, footnote 100.

¹¹² Dan R. Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 16.

¹¹³ Merold Westphal, “Review of *Oneself as Another*,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 34.3 (September 1994), 285–6.

¹¹⁴ Henry Isaac Venema, *Identifying Selfhood: Imagination, Narrative and Hermeneutics in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), 162.

¹¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction*, 2, 6.

¹¹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, “On Stories and Mourning,” in *Traversing the Imaginary: Richard Kearney and the Postmodern Challenge*, ed. Peter Gratton and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 16. Ricoeur also speaks frankly about the French establishment: “[W]hen I was still

that Ricoeur's own later qualifications along these lines, being more consonant with the dialectical posture evinced throughout his career, provide relief to the tension caused by his "conceptual asceticism" and open up a substantial storehouse of promise to be found in Ricoeurian hermeneutics for theology.¹¹⁷

Configuration: The Potential Promise of Ricoeurian Hermeneutics

This second moment seeks to identify three areas of promise which flow from Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy. There is first a consideration of the manner in which Ricoeur proposes a self-dispossession in his philosophy. Next the benefit of Ricoeur's philosophical humility for theological ex-centricity is discussed. After that, the importance of Ricoeur's philosophical rhythm of "detour and return" is presented along with his hermeneutical and narrative arcs.

Ricoeur and Self-dispossession

One such area of promise is the posture of self-dispossession evidenced in Ricoeur's hermeneutics which is influenced in part by what Ricoeur calls his "post-Hegelian Kantianism."¹¹⁸ To be sure, the mentioning of Kant and Hegel together will cause

teaching, it was a permanent requirement to be recognized as a philosopher because I was under the pressure of the atheistic trend of French philosophy. I had permanently to justify my existence saying that I was not a 'crypto-theologian.' But the problem is whether I am not a 'crypto-philosopher' in theology; this is the other side of the coin. I put that aside because I am no longer part of the Establishment. I am beyond that. I do not have to justify myself, in order to remain in that position." ("Roundtable Discussion," in *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God: The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricoeur*, eds. Maureen Junker-Kenny and Peter Kenny (Munster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 203) See also Henry Isaac Venama, "The Source of Ricoeur's Double Allegiance," in *A Passion for the Possible: Thinking with Paul Ricoeur*, eds. Brian Treanor and Henry Isaac Venama (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2010), 62–76. Ricoeur also evinces a friendliness of sorts to theology by calling (with measured caution) his philosophy an "approximation" to theological reflection. See Paul Ricoeur, "Freedom in the Light of Hope," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, trans. Robert Sweeney, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 165 and Ricoeur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems," in *Figuring the Sacred*, 216. It is appropriate the latter essay comes in "Part 4" of *Figuring the Sacred* called "Theological Overtures." This dissertation is in part a response to this Ricoeurian overture.

¹¹⁷ Dan R. Stiver, "Systematic Theology After Ricoeur," *Journal of French Philosophy* 16.1–2 (2006), 157–168. See also Boyd Blundell, "At Arm's Length: Theology, Hermeneutics, and Ricoeur's Double Life," in *Between the Human and Divine: Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics*, ed. Andrezej Wierciński (Toronto, ON: The Hermeneutic Press, 2002), 440–55.

¹¹⁸ Paul Ricoeur, "Freedom in the Light of Hope," 166–7 and Ricoeur, "Practical Reason," in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 197–207.

considerable consternation for some theologians who worry about the freedom of theology from the strictures of modernity. But it is important to note the dialectic Ricoeur establishes which situates him at equal distance between the Kantian and Hegelian traditions. In brief, Westphal notes that with Kant, Ricoeur calls us to abandon Hegel's claim to certain and complete knowledge. Against Hegel, the hermeneutical circle never comes to completion in final, absolute knowledge. But with Hegel, Ricoeur calls us to abandon Kant's notion of the ahistorically universal and necessary *a priori*, in exchange for the recognition that our presuppositions, and that we ourselves as fragile *cogitos*, are embedded in historically located traditions.¹¹⁹

Here we see evidence that Ricoeur would be mystified by the post-liberals who wished to lump him in with those revisionist theologians who subordinate Scripture or theology to their own philosophical conceptions.¹²⁰ According to Ricoeur, "a critique of the illusions of the subject must be included in the very act of 'self-understanding in the face of the text.'"¹²¹ Blundell points out here that the Ricoeurian "hermeneutic of suspicion," rather than being used to discredit Scripture, is instead turned toward the readers of Scripture and their prejudgments, in order to enable the "world of the text" to maintain its own integrity.¹²² It turns out that "a mastering subject is not only bad theology, it's bad

¹¹⁹ Westphal, "The Kantian Tradition," 124–5. Cf. Robert Piercey, "What is a Post-Hegelian Kantian? The Case of Paul Ricoeur," *Philosophy Today* 51.1 (Spring 2007), 26–38.

¹²⁰ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 50. One of Blundell's arguments is that Ricoeur's hermeneutics better match a Barthian post-liberalism than the revisionist theologians post-liberals themselves have generally associated with Ricoeur. See Mark I. Wallace, *The Second Naiveté: Barth, Ricoeur, and the New Yale Theology*, Second edition (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995) for comparable agreement. Dan R. Stiver, "One Philosophy, Many Theologies: A Hermeneutical Spiral from Ricoeur to Theology," in *Paul Ricoeur: Poetics and Religion*, eds. J. Verheyden, T. L. Hettema, and P. Vandecasteele (Leuven, BE: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2011), 67–79 agrees Ricoeur is more congenial to a post-liberal Yale approach than is generally recognized, as well as proposing Ricoeur as a good fit with a post-conservative theologian such as Kevin Vanhoozer.

¹²¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics," *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 5.1 (1975), 32. This sort of statement seems overlooked when theologians like Frei and Goldsworthy make the subjectivist charge against Ricoeur mentioned above.

¹²² Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 50 pulling from Ricoeur, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics," 32. Ricoeur himself says, "Today a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is an integral part of all appropriation of meaning. And with it follows the 'de-construction' of prejudgments which impede our letting the world of the text be." (32) Thus rather than Frei's fears of a purported Ricoeurian subjectivism being realized, Ricoeur presents his hermeneutics as the *disciplining* of subjectivity. See Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 160–87 and Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology*, 21–9, 91–118 on the critique of the

hermeneutics.” Within such a Ricoeurian posture of self-dispossession, the “hermeneutic awareness of the fragility of a faith that is transmitted through history via a network of symbols restores a humility appropriate to recipients of a freely given gift.”¹²³

Ricoeur and Theological Ex-centricity

This notion of humility comes through not only in the dispossession of the “self” in Ricoeur, but in the sense of mutuality Ricoeur establishes between philosophy and theology. In his essay, “Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics,” Ricoeur states,

In one sense theological hermeneutics appears as a particular case of philosophical hermeneutics, to the extent that it contains the major categories of the latter: discourse, writing, explanation, interpretation, distancing, appropriation, etc. The relation, then, would be one between a general and a regional hermeneutics. *But in another sense theological hermeneutics displays specific traits which question the claim to universality of such a philosophical hermeneutics as that of H. G. Gadamer. The relation between the two hermeneutics thus seems to be inverted, philosophical hermeneutics becoming the organon [or instrument] of theological hermeneutics.*¹²⁴

Later in the same article, Ricoeur repeats these sentiments and then speaks of the relation between philosophical and theological hermeneutics as one “which can be expressed in terms of a mutual inclusion,” and describes theology as having its own “ex-centric” character.¹²⁵ What is clear is that, far from Heidegger’s totalizing phenomenology, or Frei’s fears of hermeneutical hegemony, Ricoeur establishes a relation between philosophy and theology in which each exists in a posture of self-dispossession towards the other. Ricoeur is careful that both should retain their own proper integrity and that neither should master the other.¹²⁶ Ricoeur does not accept any kind of imperialism from either philosophy or theology.

cogito and the notion of the “self” in Ricoeur. Cf. Alison Scott-Baumann, *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London: Continuum, 2009), 59–77.

¹²³ Quotes from Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 50, 51.

¹²⁴ Ricoeur, “Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics,” 14. Emphasis mine.

¹²⁵ Ricoeur, “Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics,” 17.

¹²⁶ Christina M. Gschwandtner, “Paul Ricoeur and the Relationship Between Philosophy and Religion in Contemporary French Phenomenology,” *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies* 3.2 (2012), 7–25.

“Detour and Return”

Further promise can be found in Ricoeur’s hermeneutical and narrative arcs developed in the 1970s and 1980s. In describing the central motif of his philosophy, Ricoeur has stated, “Detour/return is the rhythm of my philosophical respiration.”¹²⁷ Flowing from this “detour and return” rhythm the hermeneutical and narrative arcs have come to stand as the backbone to the body of Ricoeur’s thought. In brief, the hermeneutical, or critical, arc¹²⁸ is comprised of three moments: a first naïveté or naïve understanding, a second moment of critical testing and explanation, and a third return moment variously described as a postcritical naïveté, appropriation, or application. Later, in his three volume series, *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur further developed another arc known as the narrative arc. Like the hermeneutical arc, the narrative, or mimetic, arc is comprised of three moments in the process of “mimesis” or “figuration”: prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration.¹²⁹

It would be tempting to overlay the later narrative arc on top of the hermeneutical arc, establishing a one-to-one correspondence between them. But such a conflation would be a mistake in the end. Admittedly, the rhythm of “detour and return” is interwoven through both, such that they: begin on the “main road” of an initial moment of a first naïveté (hermeneutical arc) or prefiguration (narrative arc), detour through a second moment of critical testing and distanciation (hermeneutical arc) or configuration (narrative arc), resulting in a third return moment of a second naïveté (hermeneutical arc) or refiguration (narrative arc).¹³⁰ However, despite this similar methodological feature

¹²⁷ Charles Reagan, *Paul Ricoeur: His Life and Work* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 91. See also Scott-Baumann, *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, 118–19.

¹²⁸ See for example Paul Ricoeur, “The Problem of Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics: Writings and Lectures 2*, 9; Ricoeur, “What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 161, 164; and Ricoeur, “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 218.

¹²⁹ See especially Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 52–87 and Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 157–79. See also the discussions in Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 56–78, 89–94 and Boyd Blundell, “Paul Ricoeur’s Narrative Arc,” in *The Task of Interpretation*, 88–111.

¹³⁰ The confluence of Ricoeur’s insistence on the integrity of philosophy and theology, self-dispossession, and “detour and return” may help us grasp Ricoeur’s “conceptual asceticism.” Blundell, “A Good Story Well Told: Toward a Christian Narrative Identity,” in *Paul Ricoeur: Poetics and Religion*, 134–6

shared between them, a key difference is that the hermeneutical arc has as its main feature receptivity, a mode of understanding and appropriating texts that have already been created. The narrative arc though, has as its main feature productivity, a mode of producing texts that will be received by others, or in terms of Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity: emplotment, *phronesis*, and practical wisdom. As Ricoeur himself alludes, both of these arcs might also be called spirals,¹³¹ since one may return many times over to a text (as in the hermeneutical arc) and the task of emplotment bound up with *phronesis* remains an ongoing process (as in the narrative arc).¹³²

Refiguration: The Productive Plot of Ricoeurian Hermeneutics

Extending from the promise of Ricoeur's philosophy, this last moment takes up the manner in which Ricoeurian hermeneutics can be productive for theology. This moment begins with a consideration of Ricoeur in relation to ontological hermeneutics and his own development of a critical hermeneutics. This leads into a consideration of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self. And finally, this third moment culminates with a brief articulation of Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity.

Ricoeur and Ontological Hermeneutics

In Ricoeur's perspective one may say that "its hermeneutics all the way down" in that he is generally regarded as having an ontological hermeneutics. Ricoeur drew on figures such as Heidegger and Gadamer in the development of this hermeneutical perspective. While Schleiermacher was responsible for the "de-regionalization," or universalizing of hermeneutics in regards to written texts, Heidegger is chiefly responsible for inaugurating the turn to a fully ontological hermeneutics. Building upon the

proposes Ricoeur's philosophical project itself as a detour: "[Ricoeur's] philosophical work *as a whole* constitutes a detour . . . Ricoeur both acknowledges the Word as his unmastered source and explicitly refuses to include it in his philosophical reflection. He also voluntarily gives up the last word because to go further would be to stop doing philosophy. Thus Ricoeur's entire philosophical anthropology can be regarded as a detour that can neither master its origins nor fully articulate its conclusions."

¹³¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Central Problem of Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 171.

¹³² Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 84 and Blundell, "A Good Story Well Told," 128–34.

phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, Heidegger moved from the pure description of essences to the interpretation of *Dasein* (“Being-there”) against the backdrop of human existence, the horizon against which Being appears. In his discussion of the structure of human existence (*Dasein*) he stressed the importance of “understanding,” borrowing from Wilhelm Dilthey, implying that humans exist essentially in a hermeneutical structure.¹³³ Thus human existence subsists in a fundamental hermeneutical condition in which “*Dasein* finds itself ‘being-there,’ always inheriting a past, that is, ‘thrown’ into existence, and having to move towards the future.”¹³⁴ Stiver concludes, “What Heidegger did, was to take the model of interpreting a text – which involves the hermeneutical circle, and inherent dimension of judgement, and inexact methods – as the basic model for understanding and experiencing.”¹³⁵

Gadamer took Heidegger’s hermeneutical insight and extended it, critiquing the Enlightenment “prejudice against prejudice,” recognizing human entanglement in history through a “historically shaped consciousness,” and urging that preunderstandings (or traditioning) are not inherently obstacles but actually prepare one to know anything at all, and ultimately give way to the “clash” and subsequent “fusion” of horizons.¹³⁶ Gadamer’s aphorism, “*Being that can be understood is language*,”¹³⁷ implies that all understanding is linguistic and hermeneutical. Ricoeur picks up Gadamer’s ontological hermeneutics and extends it further. Ricoeur was not satisfied with what he viewed as Gadamer’s false splits between understanding and explanation and belonging and alienation. Ricoeur also took issue with Gadamer’s split between truth and method, remarking at one point that for Gadamer it was actually a matter of “truth or method.”¹³⁸ Ricoeur develops a “critical supplementation”¹³⁹ to Gadamer through his application of the paradigmatic model of the text to human persons and the development of his hermeneutical and narrative arcs. Thus

¹³³ Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 90–100 and Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 36–53. See also Paul Ricoeur, “Phenomenology and Hermeneutics,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 102–114.

¹³⁴ Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, 91.

¹³⁵ Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, 92.

¹³⁶ Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 40–53.

¹³⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 470.

¹³⁸ Paul Ricoeur, “Hermeneutical Logic?” in *Hermeneutics: Writings and Lectures 2*, 71–7.

¹³⁹ Paul Ricoeur, “Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology,” in *From Text to Action*, 298.

Ricoeur's ontological hermeneutics becomes a critical hermeneutics¹⁴⁰ and he lays the gauntlet of the hermeneutical challenge at our feet. This is evident in *Oneself as Another*, which functions well as a summing up of Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics,¹⁴¹ and displays his hermeneutics of the self and theory of narrative identity, introduced below.

Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of the Self

Attention to the hermeneutics of the self and what can be called the hermeneutical self brings one close into the center of Ricoeur's philosophy. While Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology appears in some sense as a "turn to the subject," upon close examination his hermeneutics of the self represents a turn away from the subject as well.¹⁴² That is, he represents a turn away from the mastering modern subject or *cogito*, instead positing a distinctly postmodern wounded *cogito* that cannot be neatly separated from the body, the world, language, or other persons.¹⁴³ Stiver notes four themes in Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self: the embodied self, the interpersonal self, the social self, and the narrative self.¹⁴⁴ Firstly, Ricoeur, in agreement with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, saw that it is through our bodies that persons engage with the world and rejects the idea of the *cogito* as an autonomous agent. In these ways Ricoeur emphasized the dispossession of the self and it is the embodied and embedded nature of human existence that gives rise to and supports the entire hermeneutical project. No longer is the self a fully transparent text, but selfhood is an ongoing task.¹⁴⁵ We not only interpret others, but we ourselves need interpretation as well. Embodiment means the freedom of our being-in-the-world, but also, it is our being-in-the-world that makes us fragile, fallible, and liable to fall.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology," 270–307. See also Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, 100–7.

¹⁴¹ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 94.

¹⁴² See Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 94–104 and Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology*, 98–103.

¹⁴³ For Ricoeur's reference to the wounded *cogito*, see Paul Ricoeur, "The Question of the Subject: The Challenge of Semiology," trans. Kathleen Blamey, in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 243.

¹⁴⁴ Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 168–87 and *Ricoeur and Theology*, 21–9, 91–118.

¹⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 327.

¹⁴⁶ See Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. Erazim Kohak (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966) and Ricoeur, *Fallible Man: The Philosophy of the Will*,

Secondly, particularly in *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur posits an interpersonal self. The ethical practices of one's narrative identity are unthinkable (and unliveable!) apart from others.¹⁴⁷ There is no conception in Ricoeur of the self apart from a turn to the "other."¹⁴⁸ For instance, Ricoeur draws on the idea of making a promise, the very act of which presupposes other persons. Ricoeur also invokes the idea of solicitude for the other, which involves relations of friendship marked by esteem and mutual recognition, participation in projects inconceivable without others, and the experience of shared suffering.¹⁴⁹ Thirdly, also in *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur posits the social self. Just as human persons are born into families, they also inherit the horizons and traditions of the communities in which they were formed and shaped, communities that have endured over time. Thus there is also a sense of receiving one's identity through social institutions. This raises the promise of fruitful collaboration as well as the suspicious peril of domination, violence, and misuse of power.¹⁵⁰ Where there are many human beings, there are issues related to institutions, and following from that, issues of justice. At the heart of the good life is the practical wisdom needed to live together well.¹⁵¹ In this way Ricoeur's hermeneutical challenge contains within it a phronetic, ethical challenge.¹⁵²

Ricoeur and Narrative Identity

Fourthly, Ricoeur posits the narrative self.¹⁵³ Both the receptivity of the hermeneutical arc and the productivity of the narrative arc discussed previously are interwoven and at play with each another in *Oneself as Another*. It is through these arcs that Ricoeur develops his theory of narrative identity, which extends from the observation

trans. Charles A. Kelbley (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1986). See also Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology*, 93–7 and Scott-Baumann, *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, 138.

¹⁴⁷ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 176.

¹⁴⁸ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 3, 352–5.

¹⁴⁹ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 181ff. See also Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 108.

¹⁵⁰ Thus, while pressing toward the positive productive goal of narrative (and social) identity formation below, we must also be attentive to the ways it can go wrong and/or suffer malformation.

¹⁵¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 172, 194.

¹⁵² Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, studies 7, 8, and 9. See also Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 175–7, 182–7 and Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 105–9.

¹⁵³ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, studies 4, 5, and 6 in particular. See also Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 167–78.

that one's existence in time and the world is not only embodied, interpersonal, and relational (or social), but is also narrational – a story. Ricoeur poses a distinction between the Latin terms for identity: *idem* and *ipse*.¹⁵⁴ *Idem* identity means “sameness,” and is marked by empirical perseverance or what might be called the bare facts of one's existence. *Ipse* identity is what Ricoeur terms as “selfhood,” and this form of identity is “characterized by self-constancy, reflexively implying others in its very constitution. The two types of identity are held together by *narrative* and overlap on the key aspect of *character*.”¹⁵⁵ In volume 3 of *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur states: “The difference between *idem* and *ipse* is nothing more than the difference between a substantial and formal identity and a narrative identity.”¹⁵⁶ Further, at the heart of the narrative configuration of the self is the idea that the self's dynamic identity is not threatened by the other, but in a very real sense narrative identity is constituted and validated by the other. We not only emplot ourselves through life, but we do so through an ongoing hermeneutical/narrative process of deconstruction and reconstruction within inextricable and irreducible relation to others.¹⁵⁷ Thus Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self is simultaneously a hermeneutics of language, a hermeneutics of embodiment and emplotment, and a hermeneutics of relationality and sociality, which issue forth into a hermeneutics of narrative identity.¹⁵⁸

The Church between Grenz and Ricoeur: Toward a Hermeneutical Ecclesiology

We can now chart the course for the rest of this study of Grenz's ecclesiology in conversation with Ricoeur. This first chapter began on the “main road” of Grenzian studies with a consideration of the wider scope of Grenz scholarship, an introduction to Pannenberg's formative influence on Grenz, Grenz's Baptist pietism, his wider evangelical context, and a brief introduction to Grenz as a postfoundationalist theologian and the

¹⁵⁴ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 2–3, 16, 18, 56, 85, 96, 116, 118–19, 121, 124, 127, 148–9, 167, 205, 241, 267, 318, 331–5.

¹⁵⁵ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 8.

¹⁵⁶ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 3, 246. See also Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation*, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 235–7.

¹⁵⁷ Thus, in a Ricoeurian frame, human persons can be thought of as “living texts” and/or “living hermeneutical/narrative arcs.”

¹⁵⁸ See Paul Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” in *Philosophical Anthropology: Writings and Lectures 3*, trans. David Pellauer, eds. Johann Michel and Jérôme Porée (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 229–42.

Grenzian grammar comprised of the triad of trinitarian motifs and dialogue of narrative sources. This chapter then presented an introductory discussion of Paul Ricoeur through the perceived peril, potential promise, and productive plot of Ricoeurian hermeneutics. We now return to the main subject of this study, Grenz's trinitarian ecclesiology, and briefly map the way forward.

Methodologically, the triadic theological matrixes of the Grenzian grammar are embedded into the fabric of the dissertation throughout. The trinitarian motifs (Trinity, community, eschatology) are connected thematically with chapter two, which takes up Grenz's use of social trinitarianism in relation to ecclesiology. Grenz's dialogue of theological sources, what I am referring to as the narrative sources (Scripture, tradition, and culture), have primary thematic connection with chapter three, which gives consideration to Grenz's narrative theology in relation to ecclesiology.¹⁵⁹ Finally, as a part of the constructive proposal of this dissertation, chapter four proposes my own third missional matrix, informed by its own corresponding grammar of church, gospel/atonement, and kingdom.

In conjunction with the Grenzian grammar, Ricoeur makes a significant methodological contribution in the embedding of the hermeneutical and narrative arcs into the structure of the study. Thus each chapter contains three sections corresponding to the "detour and return" rhythm discussed previously. The first section of each chapter begins on the "main road" of a summarization of Grenz's theology. The second section of each chapter then "detours" through a moment of critical analysis. The third section of each chapter indicates a "return" moment, seeking implications and appropriation. Not only is the "detour and return" present within the individual chapters, but chapters two (Trinity), three (narrative), and four (mission) evince their own "detour and return" rhythm.¹⁶⁰ Chapter two takes up Grenz's social trinitarianism, which detours through his

¹⁵⁹ Note that while the triadic theological matrixes are thematically connected to chapters two and three respectively, due to the interconnected nature of Grenz's grammar, the other set remains present even when not considered explicitly.

¹⁶⁰ There is a similarity between Ricoeur's hermeneutical and narrative arcs and Grenz's triadic theological matrixes in that both exhibit a fundamental interwovenness. Thus Stiver reminds us that Ricoeur's "three stages are sharply distinguished more in analysis than reality." (*Theology After Ricoeur*, 57) However, Ricoeur's concern to avoid "cryptotheology" (*Oneself as Another*, 24) mean that his arcs come from

narrative theology in chapter three, which then culminates in a missional moment in chapter four. The hope and wager is that this will ensure this study exhibits the receptivity and productivity of Ricoeur's hermeneutical and narrative arcs in reference to Grenz's theological grammar and ecclesiology. In this way I propose this study can serve as ecclesiological Grenzian grammar lessons.

The remainder of this study is outlined as follows, governed by the overarching matrix of Trinity, narrative, and mission.¹⁶¹ Each chapter invokes the same sort of "From...to..." structure Grenz used in the chapter headings found within *Social God* and *Named God*. Chapter two is titled "From Social God to Social *Imago*: The Trinitarian Shape of the Hermeneutical Community," and proceeds in conversation with the trinitarian grammatical matrix of Trinity, community, and eschatology. This chapter thus begins where Grenz begins, with the Trinity as the structural motif of the entire theological edifice. Chapter two will also take as its thematic center Grenz's *Social God* volume in the elucidation of Grenz's *imago Dei* theology, the "social *imago*," trinitarian the anthropology, non-hierarchical gender relations ("male and female" as the *imago Dei*), his theology of triune participation (particularly Grenz's use of *theosis* in a proleptic, eschatological frame), and the ecclesial self along with Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the relational self.

Chapter three is titled, "From Named God to Narrative *Imago*: The Narrative Shape of the Hermeneutical Community," and proceeds with the grammatical matrix of the narrative sources (Scripture, tradition, and culture). This chapter thus features a second important aspect of Grenz's theological grammar, his use of narrative theology. This chapter will take as its thematic center Grenz's *Named God* volume, which forms an important critical supplementation to Grenz's social doctrine of the Trinity in relation to Grenz's narrative of the saga of the divine name. Again, in conversation with Ricoeur's

his philosophical imagination. Grenz, though, is free to credit his triadic matrixes to a trinitarian imagination as they comprise their own "perichoretic dance." (*SGRS*, x) While due caution is needed regarding the "perichoretic" metaphor, I intend my matrix of Trinity, narrative, and mission to utilize Ricoeur's philosophical imagination as well as flow from a trinitarian theological imagination.

¹⁶¹ See also my treatment of Grenz's trinitarian ecclesiology in conversation with Ricoeur in a more condensed form in Russell L. Almon, "The Postmodern Self in *Theological Perspective*: A Communal, Narrative, and Ecclesial Approach," *Ecclesiology* 13.2 (May 2017), 179–96.

theory of narrative identity and hermeneutics of the self, Grenz's *imago Dei* theology, the "narrative *imago*," Christo-anthropology, non-hierarchical gender relations ("male and female" as the *imago Dei* "in Christ" and through the Spirit as they participate in the Jesus narrative), and storied participation (proleptic, eschatological sharing in the narrative of Christ) fill out in more fullness Grenz's ecclesiological offerings.

Chapter four is titled, "From Missional God to Ecclesial *Imago*: The Missional Shape of the Hermeneutical Community," and proceeds in conversation with the missional matrix of church, gospel/atonement, and kingdom. Trinity, narrative, and mission here enjoy an interwoven relationship. The aim is to develop a productive proposal for a "hermeneutical ecclesiology" in which "male and female" live into their status as the *imago Dei* alongside each other in non-hierarchical relation and together in mission. In conversation with Ricoeurian narrative identity and his notion of the "summoned self," Grenz's *imago Dei* theology will be developed in terms of the ecclesial *imago* (a proleptic, perichoretic, and participatory reality embodied in the church as a hermeneutical community with the vocational calling to be the foretaste of the *imago Dei*). The ecclesial *imago* will then be connected to a missio-anthropology, non-hierarchical gender relations ("male and female" alongside each other in the *missio Dei*), and missional participation (*theosis* as proleptic triune participation and narrative participation and therefore ecclesial participation in the *missio Dei*). The full inclusion of "male and female," "in Christ" and through the Spirit, in missional mutuality, ecclesial friendship, and ecclesial hospitality is an integral aspect of gospel witness and the triune God's ecclesial hermeneutics of community. The conclusion will present a summary and suggest avenues of further research generated by this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM SOCIAL GOD TO SOCIAL *IMAGO*: THE TRINITARIAN SHAPE OF THE HERMENEUTICAL COMMUNITY

This second chapter discusses Grenz's social doctrine of the Trinity and its interfacing with the *imago Dei* as a theological, ecclesiological, and eschatological concept.¹ Thus it seeks to go "from social God to social *imago*." This chapter begins with Grenz's development of his social trinitarianism as the "main road." However, with awareness of recent criticisms of social trinitarian thought, the second section offers a critical moment aimed at assessing Grenz's social trinitarianism. While the social trinitarian critiques are found to be significant and serious, Grenz's communal anthropology is proposed as offering a strong response. Flowing from this discussion, the third section makes some initial constructive proposals concerning the intersection of the social *imago*, gender, and ecclesial triune participation.

The Social God and the *Imago Dei*

Christian theology is an ongoing, second-order, contextual discipline that engages in critical and constructive reflection on the faith, life, and practices of the Christian community. Its task is the articulation of the biblically normed, historically informed, and culturally relevant models of the Christian belief-mosaic for the purpose of assisting the community of Christ's followers in their vocation to live as the people of God in the particular social-historical context in which they are situated.²

[T]heology is "church dogmatics," and the "dogmatics" of the Christian church must by its very nature be trinitarian. . . . Given the social nature of God, a theology that is truly trinitarian will find coherence, or its integrative motif, in the concept of community, which is reflective of the nature of God and God's intention for creation. Thus, the trinitarian content of theology points to the concept of community as providing the integrative motif for theology and eventually to eschatology as its orienting motif.³

This first section presents Grenz's social trinitarian theology and theological anthropology, particularly as it is presented in *Social God*. First, there is a consideration of

¹ *SGRS*, xi.

² *BF*, 16.

³ *BF*, 188, 202.

Grenz's take on the trinitarian theological task and theological language. Second, a primer on Grenz's social trinitarianism is given leading into a summary of chapter one in *Social God*. Third, a brief study of the postmodern self overviews chapters two and three, finishing out "Part 1 – The Context: Trinitarian Theology and the Self." Fourth, a summary of Grenz's exegesis of the *imago Dei* in chapters four, five, and six ("Part Two – The Texts: The *Imago Dei* in Trinitarian Perspective") is presented. Fifth, Grenz's suggestions in chapters seven and eight ("Part Three – The Application: The *Social Imago* and the Postmodern (Loss of) Self") regarding the social *imago* and ecclesial self are discussed.

The Nature of the Task of Trinitarian Theology and Theological Language

Before introducing Grenz's social doctrine of the Trinity, it is appropriate to consider his treatment of the nature of the theological task and the question of theological language in the context of trinitarian considerations. The immediately preceding quotes are programmatic statements from Grenz regarding the task of theology. These form a connection in Grenz's thought with the final chapter of *Rediscovering the Triune God* regarding the nature of theology. In *Rediscovering the Triune God* Grenz discusses eleven theologians who have made lasting contributions to the twentieth century trinitarian renaissance.⁴ The golden thread presented by this century of trinitarian theological renewal according to Grenz is the question of how theology can envision "the relationship between God-in-eternity and God-in-salvation in a manner that both takes seriously the importance of the latter to the former and avoids collapsing the former into the latter or compromises the freedom of the eternal God."⁵

Grenz answers with what Jason Sexton dubs the Grenz *Grundaxiom*:⁶ that "any truly helpful explication of the doctrine of the Trinity must give epistemological priority to

⁴ These eleven theologians appear in *RTG*: chapter two, "Restoring the Triune Center" discusses Karl Barth and Karl Rahner; chapter three, "The Trinity as the Fullness of History" discusses Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Robert W. Jenson; chapter four, "The Triumph of Relationality" discusses Leonardo Boff, John Zizioulas, and Catherine Mowry LaCugna; and chapter five, "The Return of the Immanent Trinity" discusses Elizabeth Johnson, Hans Urs Balthasar, and Thomas F. Torrance. Grenz also notes *RTG* constitutes a book length expansion of the discussion of the twentieth century trinitarian renaissance found in chapter one of *SGRS*. (*RTG*, x)

⁵ *RTG*, 222.

⁶ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 81, 100.

the presence of the trinitarian persons in the divine economy but reserve ontological primacy for the dynamic of their relationality within the triune life.⁷ This raises the question regarding what kind of trinitarian ontology is up to the task. Demonstrating his continuity from *Beyond Foundationalism* to *Rediscovering the Triune God*, Grenz determines that such a trinitarian ontology must be both communal and eschatological. And the task of developing such an ontology is described in true Grenzian form as provisional and ongoing.⁸ The provisional nature of theology is a longstanding feature of Grenz's. In his words: "Christian theology is pilgrim theology."⁹ As well, the task of theology has a "proleptic character" due to its anticipatory and eschatological nature, resulting in doctrinal formulae that "always have a provisionality to them."¹⁰ For Grenz, the story of the triune God continues on through participation in the ecclesial community and its practices, one of which is theological discernment under the presence of the Holy Spirit.¹¹

In addition to the progressive and ongoing nature of ecclesial contemplation of the trinitarian belief mosaic, Grenz also shows himself to be committed to the indirect nature of theological language and God-talk. The importance of the indirect nature of theological language for Grenz is underscored in the introduction to *Social God*.¹² There Grenz notes that not only has the twentieth century trinitarian renaissance brought renewed interest in the doctrine of the Trinity, but the "revival of interest in one *particular model* of the Trinity, the social analogy which has its roots in the patristic era."¹³ The social model's tendency to posit God as subsisting in three centers of action has met with both

⁷ *RTG*, 222. See also the resonance of this statement with Grenz's own summation of the trinitarian theological methodology of T. F. Torrance in *RTG*, when he states, "Although [Torrance's] methodological understanding invests the economic Trinity with a kind of epistemological priority, it clearly views the immanent Trinity as possessing ontological primacy." (212)

⁸ *RTG*, 221–2.

⁹ *BF*, 17. Grenz states, "the theological task will never be completed this side of the eschaton" and therefore, "the task of theology is ongoing and best characterized by the metaphor of pilgrimage." (17) Similarly, in *RET* Grenz describes theology as always "*in transitu*" and the theologian as a "pilgrim thinker working on behalf of a pilgrim people." (83) Grenz describes the task of theology in *TCG* as always "*in via* – on the way. And the theologian is a pilgrim thinker ministering on behalf of a pilgrim people." (12–13) In *SGRS* Grenz identifies the theological enterprise as an "ongoing conversation among the various topic of systematic theology, viewed as a coherent mosaic model of Christian belief." (9)

¹⁰ *RTC*, 351.

¹¹ *RTG*, 222–3.

¹² *SGRS*, 3–9.

¹³ *SGRS*, 4. Emphasis original.

wide acclaim and trenchant critique, but its revival combined with its criticism has generated a rethinking of the idea of “person” seen in the relational turn in both theology and philosophy.¹⁴ However, the relational turn has also acutely accentuated the question of the validity of use of the word “person” for both humans and the trinitarian members. Specifically at issue is drawing too close to the error of tritheism when social trinitarians give the impression they speak univocally rather than analogically, thus highlighting the question of theological language.¹⁵ Grenz has already invoked analogy in the theological task at large, describing theological systems themselves as “analogue models.”¹⁶ And he is known for his own social analogy of the Trinity¹⁷ which receives even further development in *Social God*.

However, Grenz now moves his discussion to the linguistic turn in philosophy and theology, focusing on theological language as metaphorical.¹⁸ He begins by citing George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s treatment of metaphors as central to our experience of the world at large.¹⁹ He then draws on Sallie McFague²⁰ with four basic points. First, metaphorical language functions with an “is”-and-“is not” character and so cannot be

¹⁴ Grenz (*SGRS*, 5, 6) quotes Ted Peters, “The idea of person-in-relationship seems to be nearly universally assumed,” (*God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 37) and John L. Gresham Jr., “This provides the strange sight, in the pluralistic world of contemporary theology, of Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, liberation, feminist, evangelical and process theologians agreeing on a particular model of God!” (“The Social Model of the Trinity and Its Critics,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46.3 (1993), 327)

¹⁵ *SGRS*, 6.

¹⁶ *RET*, 64, 78–9, 82–3 and Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 79. Grenz (*SGRS*, 6–7) directs the reader to James B. Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in Our Contemporary Situation,” in *The Forgotten Trinity*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: BCC/CCBI, 1989) 4–5 for a positive take on analogy and W. Norris Clarke, *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Person* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 123–49 on criticisms of the Thomistic concept of analogy. Cf. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, 23–9.

¹⁷ See the discussions in Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 67–86 and Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 185–218 for their (mostly complementary) descriptions of Grenz’s development of the social Trinity.

¹⁸ For a rich philosophical take on metaphor, see Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny et al. (London: Routledge, 2003). Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, 228 notes the original French title for *The Rule of Metaphor*, *La Métaphore vive*, can be rendered as “living metaphor.”

¹⁹ *SGRS*, 6. See also George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

²⁰ *SGRS*, 7–9. Here Grenz cites Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 33–5 and McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), 12–13, 23–8.

taken literally in every respect.²¹ Second, theology can no longer function under the medieval *analogia entis* (or analogy of being) due to the post-Reformational demise of the sacramental conception of the universe that supported it.²² Third, the goal of theology is to offer a “synoptic vision” of ourselves and the world organized according to a “root metaphor,” which for Grenz involves the coherent articulation of the specifically trinitarian Christian belief mosaic. Fourth, Grenz declares the acknowledgement of metaphorical God-talk further facilitates the understanding of the theological task as an ongoing conversation in which the Christian conception of God emerges from a dialectal movement of thought involving theology proper and anthropology. In this ongoing conversation anthropological language is used in reference to God, but only with a metaphorical function.²³ Grenz concludes:

Nevertheless, anthropological conceptions and articulations are themselves dependent on a transcendent ground that stands in judgement over both anthropological theology and our theological anthropology. Hence, this aspect of the theological conversation may be viewed as a double – or reciprocal – movement from the divine to the human and from the human to the divine.²⁴

²¹ Stiver notes in *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, 112–33 that scholars are widely disagreed concerning the relationship between analogy and metaphor. Stiver mentions McFague as one who generally disparages analogy in relation to metaphor whereas David Burrell likens analogy to recent understandings of metaphor and David Tracy seems to use analogy, metaphor, and symbol interchangeably. Stiver concludes, “At this juncture in the discussion, we can probably not overcome the disparity of definition. It is arguable that metaphor, analogy, and symbol can be seen as very similar, and it is arguable that they are very different.” (127)

²² McFague’s contention regarding the demise of the medieval sacramental universe finds some support in Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012). James R. Peters, *The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 16 suggests it was the late medieval nominalists who, having forged a “divide between the truths of reason and the truths of faith” form the genesis of the separation of the sacred and secular, which was then reinforced by early modern philosophers. However, McFague’s contention stands in need of nuance in that the sacramental has never been wholly displaced by the secular. Rather, after the medieval period, Western modernity became contested space situated between the forces of both secularization and sacralization. In his discussion of Charles Taylor, James K. A. Smith observes that the secular age continues to be “haunted” by the sacramental past (*How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 79–91). Taylor himself states, “the hegemony of the mainstream master narrative of secularization will be more and more challenged. This I think is now happening.” (*A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 534–5)

²³ *SGRS*, 8–9. Additionally, note that while Grenz accepts the classical theological language of “generation” and “procession” in regards to the Father, Son, and Spirit, he also declares these terms are “metaphors” which “attempt to put into human words the ineffable essence of God.” (*TCG*, 66–8)

²⁴ *SGRS*, 9. Thus, while Grenz’s theology has a distinct “from above” and “from below” quality, this quotation is an illustration of the pervasive feature of divine transcendence in Grenz’s theology (also evident

Subsequently, Grenz suggests the near consensus that “person” is a relational concept indicates the next major task in trinitarian theology perhaps rests in the area of theological anthropology.²⁵ This connects well with Grenz’s characteristic emphasis on community as he notes that “‘person’ has more to do with relationality than with substantiality and that the term stands closer to the idea of communion or community than to the conception of the individual in isolation or abstracted from communal embeddedness.”²⁶ Grenz surveys the social personalism that has dislodged modern individualistic notions of what it means to be a person in Martin Buber, Michael Polyani, and John MacMurray and offers brief sketches of Alistair McFadyen²⁷ and Katherine Keller²⁸ on relational personhood.²⁹ However, in Grenz’s estimation, even though McFadyen and Keller engage theological insights, neither of them offer “a thoroughgoing *theological* reconceptualizing of the self or human personhood.”³⁰ Grenz wants to go further and develop a specifically trinitarian theological anthropology of the self and *imago Dei*.³¹ We will see how Grenz develops this aim, and how it impacts church, gender, and mission as this chapter unfolds. At this point, I offer a brief statement of Grenz’s trinitarian theology before turning to the postmodern condition of the self.

A Primer on Grenzian Social Trinitarian Theology

In *Theology for the Community of God*, Grenz offers a summary of the content of trinitarian doctrine in four statements.³² *First, the triune God is one.* The God Christians

in *TCG*) in which it is the “from above” that makes the “from below” possible at all. One should also note the intimation of the Grenz *Grundaxiom* (also evident in *TCG*) even before Grenz’s more explicit articulation in *RTG*.

²⁵ Grenz cites David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), ix and Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in Our Contemporary Situation,” 15 for support.

²⁶ *SGRS*, 4. Grenz also states the self is “not ultimately merely a ‘what,’ an essence, but a ‘who,’” whose identity is established as “person-in-relationships.” (*SGRS*, 12)

²⁷ Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 7, 9, 59, 100–1.

²⁸ Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1986), 166–7, 228.

²⁹ *SGRS*, 9–14.

³⁰ *SGRS*, 14. Emphasis original.

³¹ *SGRS*, 10, 14–20.

³² This paragraph follows *TCG*, 66–9.

know is the one God confessed by the biblical faith community who is of one divine essence. Christians are not polytheists or tritheists but (trinitarian) monotheists.³³ *Second, the triune God is three.* The Christian God is not an undifferentiated, solitary oneness and the tri-personal distinctions are internal, and not simply external to the divine reality. Because the threeness of the divine persons is an ontological reality it is also functional and economic. The three both comprise the one God in eternity and are jointly at work in the divine program in the world. *Third, the triune God is a diversity.* The differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit as an ontological threeness form an eternal reality internal to God's nature and essence. Further, these differentiations – whereby the Father generates the Son and the Spirit proceeds from the Father (and the Son) – constitute an ontological as well as economic diversity as each trinitarian person completes a specific work in the divine economy.³⁴ *Fourth, the triune God is a unity.* The Christian God entails diversity within unity as well as unity in diversity – a diversity that is also ontological and economic. Despite their varying work, the operations of the trinitarian persons are never divided. All are involved in every area and aspect of the divine program for creation. The divine persons present an ontological, eternal unity in diversity and so together comprise the divine essence through their perichoretic (or mutually indwelling and interpenetrating) relations.³⁵

Grenz next suggests that the mutual relations of the Father, Son, and Spirit help us to understand the insight in 1 John 4:8, 16 that “God is love.” Declaring the unity of God to be the love and reciprocal self-dedication of the trinitarian persons to each other, Grenz says: “Indeed, God is love – the divine essence is the love that binds together the Trinity.”³⁶

³³ See Christoph Schwöbel, “Radical Monotheism and the Trinity,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 43.1 (2001), 74 for his development of a trinitarian monotheism “in which the economic relations of God to world” are “grounded in God’s everlasting relationality” (which has resonance with Grenz) and his insistence that “only a radically monotheistic theology can be a proper trinitarian theology, and only a proper trinitarian theology can be a radically monotheistic theology.”

³⁴ Grenz depicts the Father as ground of the world and divine program for creation, the Son as revealer and redeemer; and the Spirit as the active personal divine power in creation and completer of the divine program. (*TCG*, 67) In *CFC* Grenz lists these in bullet points: “the Father is *Originator*,” “the Son is *Revealer*,” and “the Spirit is *Completer*.” (20)

³⁵ *TCG*, 68. See also *SGRS*, 10, 14, 16, 19, 43–4, 49, 50, 292, 310, 316–7, 332, 335–6.

³⁶ *TCG*, 69. Note also the connection Grenz establishes between the divine essence of love and *perichoresis* where he speaks of “God as love” and *perichoresis* very similarly. Kurt Anders Richardson,

In this manner, “God is love” becomes Grenz’s most basic assertion regarding the social Trinity. In *Theology for the Community of God* Grenz develops his trinitarian theology with a basically Augustinian posture.³⁷ However, Grenz also critiqued what he saw as an Augustinian individualism (that looks to the inner soul as an image of the Trinity) with the help of Richard of St. Victor (who is said to hold a more fully personal Trinity and more substantial idea of persons-in-relation)³⁸ and cites Colin Gunton approvingly concerning Richard’s promise for a “theological understanding of humans as the *imago Dei*.”³⁹ Grenz’s trinitarian theological interpretation of 1 John 4:7–21 provides an indication that “God is love” could well serve as a fifth statement concerning the essential content of a Grenzian doctrine of God as the divine community of love, or social Trinity. Thus Grenz summarizes: “The statement ‘God is love’ refers primarily to the eternal, relational, intratrinitarian fellowship among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who together are the one God. In this way, God is love within the divine reality, and in this sense, through all eternity God is the social Trinity, the community of love.”⁴⁰

We now move from this articulation of Grenz’s social trinitarianism which immediately precedes and informs *Social God* to his chapter one discussion of the twentieth century trinitarian renewal.⁴¹ In this chapter – titled: “From the One Subject to

“Uncreated and Created Relations,” in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center*, 92 draws a similar connection saying, “‘God is love’ is the perichoretic relations, as Augustine so well perceives.”

³⁷ See *TCG*, 69–72, *RET*, 186–7, and *SGRS*, 315–16, 327 for his dependence on Augustine in conceiving the Spirit as the bond of love, communion, or mutual love between the Father and the Son. See Augustine, *The Trinity*, The Works of Saint Augustine, I/5, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York, NY: New City Press, 1991), 5-11; 6.5-7; 6.10; 15.17.27–9, 31; 15.17.26; and 15.19.37 for the sections Grenz cites. Cf. Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 63–4, 77–86, 99–111. See also chapter three, footnote 180.

³⁸ *BF*, 181–2.

³⁹ *BF*, 182. See Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 89–91. Gunton states that Richard provides “an approach to the doctrine of the Trinity that contains possibilities for the development of a relational view of the person.” (91) Grenz provides a similar critique with the help of Richard in *SGRS*, 31. Cf. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, 237–8.

⁴⁰ *BF*, 195. In *MQ* the “social Trinity” is “the eternal community of Father, Son, and Spirit.” (238) Grenz also states, “God is love within himself: The Father loves the Son; the Son reciprocates that love; and this love between the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. In short, through all eternity God is the social Trinity, the community of love.” (*TCG*, 72) This statement of Grenz’s social trinitarianism evinces the Augustinian posture present in both *SGRS* and *NGQB* (along with influence from key Eastern figures). On this same page Grenz refers to triune love as the “inner dynamic of God” and as “the fundamental divine attribute.” See chapter eight of *SGRS* (in particular 313–22) for a similar treatment.

⁴¹ Not only does Grenz expand chapter one of *SGRS* into *RTG*, but the chapter on the Trinity in *BF*, 169–202 presents similar research in an earlier form (see especially 183–192) and intimates much of the

the Three Persons” – Grenz surveys the landscape of contemporary trinitarian theology in search for resources to facilitate his theological anthropological aims of developing a trinitarian theology of the *imago Dei*. He moves from Hegel setting the stage for trinitarian renewal; to Karl Barth’s revelational trinitarianism reasserting the centrality of the Trinity; to Karl Rahner’s assertion that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa (Rahner’s Rule), setting the terms for subsequent theological discussion; to Jürgen Moltmann’s trinitarian eschatological panentheism.⁴² However, while recognizing the contributions of these figures, it is the reciprocal relational trinitarianism of Pannenberg,⁴³ John Zizioulas’ notion of “being as communion,”⁴⁴ and Catherine LaCugna’s identification of “personhood as communion”⁴⁵ which hold the most promise for Grenz’s aims.⁴⁶

Grenz notes that “the development of a trinitarian theology rooted in a connection between God and history to which Barth gave impetus and which Moltmann fosters, finds its most systematic expression in Pannenberg’s work.”⁴⁷ Pannenberg sought to give priority to the three divine persons over that of the divine unity as in much of classical theology. In pursuit of this goal he focused on God’s self-revelation in Christ. For Pannenberg this involves the full trinitarian revelation of Father, Son, and Spirit as they relate to each other

content of *SGRS*. Thus, a strong continuity of thought exists from *TCG* to *BF* to *SGRS* in Grenz’s development of a social and relational trinitarianism.

⁴² *SGRS*, 23–46.

⁴³ *SGRS*, 46–50. See also Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 57–102 and *RTG*, 88–106.

⁴⁴ *SGRS*, 50–3. See also *RTG*, 131–47.

⁴⁵ *SGRS*, 53–7. See also *RTG*, 147–162.

⁴⁶ *SGRS*, 46–57. Regarding Zizioulas and LaCugna, Grenz says: “Insofar as this emergent trinitarianism elevates the perichoretic life of the three persons as comprising the one God, the renewal of trinitarian theology entails a more profound understanding of God as inherently relational and dynamic.” (16) See also Jay Smith’s two-chapter discussion “Prolepsis and Perichoresis, Part I” (129–184) and “Prolepsis and Perichoresis: Part II” (185–218) in “A Generous Theology.” Smith indicates Grenz was likely substantively exposed to the notion of perichoretic relationality through Pannenberg. Smith notes *perichoresis* first appeared in Cappadocian Christology and was later applied to the Trinity by John of Damascus. Smith observes Zizioulas and LaCugna use the term frequently and he covers their impact on Grenz in a subsection, “Perichoresis: Grenz and the Social Trinitarians” (207–217). For a treatment that urges caution in applying *perichoresis* to created relations, see Charles Twombly, *Perichoresis and Personhood: God, Christ, and Salvation in John of Damascus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015). For a careful but more positive assessment of applying *perichoresis* in this manner, see Richardson, “Uncreated and Created Perichoretic Relations,” 79–94.

⁴⁷ *SGRS*, 46. For discussions of Pannenberg’s trinitarian theology, see Roger E. Olson, “Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36.2 (May 1983), 213–27 and Olson, “Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Doctrine of Trinity,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43.2 (May 1990), 175–206.

in the outworking of salvation-history and by which they show themselves to be mutually dependent on each other through their reciprocal relational self-differentiation in their mutual self-giving. Furthermore, Pannenberg's Principle declares that God's being, his very deity, is linked with his rulership over the world.⁴⁸ The Son not only receives all things from the Father in the Spirit, but the Father's kingdom and deity are as well ontologically dependent on the Son in the Spirit, meaning that the Son and the Father are also reciprocally dependent on the Spirit for their respective triune personhood.⁴⁹ For Pannenberg, the Father, Son, and Spirit each receive their being or divinity as a "person-in-representation" with the other two. In this way, Grenz notes that Pannenberg located the divine unity of the triune God in the mutual relations of the three divine persons as they are revealed in salvation-history, and established that the category of relation is not merely external but constitutive of the divine essence.⁵⁰

Grenz presents Zizioulas and LaCugna as important voices, one Eastern and the other Western, who have fostered the Eastern trinitarian insights of the Cappadocian Fathers⁵¹ in the contemporary theological discussion. Zizioulas' main insight extends from what he has called the "Cappadocian Contribution"⁵² and has been so influential as to give the title of his book, *Being as Communion*,⁵³ the status of a methodological axiom Grenz dubbed the "Zizioulas Dictum."⁵⁴ In moving communion to the center of trinitarian

⁴⁸ "Pannenberg's Principle" was so named in Olson, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity," 199.

⁴⁹ Grenz echoes this in *TCG*, 68.

⁵⁰ See Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:259–336 (volume one, chapter five) for his discussion of the "The Trinitarian God" and 1:337–448 (volume one, chapter six) on "The Unity and Attributes of the Divine Essence." Grenz also notes that while he does not reject *perichoresis per se*, "Pannenberg notes (contra Moltmann's use of the term) that it was never intended to account for the unity of the divine essence (the use to which Moltmann puts it) but presupposes that unity on the basis of the origin of the Son and the Spirit in the Father." (*SGRS*, 49) For a more positive take on Moltmann's use of *perichoresis*, see Kurt Anders Richardson, "Moltmann's Communitarian Trinity," in *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology: A Critical Engagement*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 17–39.

⁵¹ In *SGRS*, 51 Grenz cites Gunton, "We have seen that the achievement of the Cappadocians . . . was to create a new conception of the being of God, in which God's being was seen to consist in personal communion." (*The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 53)

⁵² See John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 155–177.

⁵³ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

⁵⁴ *RTG*, 134–5, 141–3, 148, 219.

theology as a fully ontological category, Zizioulas credits the Cappadocians with introducing a far reaching insight. In a Greek and Roman context in which relation was something additional to one's nature (or *hypostasis*), these Greek Fathers identified for the first time the Greek term *hypostasis*, which until this point was synonymous with *ousia*, with the term *prosopon*. By making this connection, Zizioulas declares they effectively transformed "person" into the constitutive aspect of being, making being itself relational. The result in Zizioulas' words is, "to be and to be in relation become identical."⁵⁵ Zizioulas pairs the notion of *hypostasis* (personhood as relation) with that of *ekstasis*, that is, a movement of self-giving towards self-transcendence in a movement of communion with the other, to develop a fully formed view of personhood.⁵⁶ Grenz notes the connection of *ekstasis* to love, in which "love is the expression of communion, for in love persons exist in *ekstatic* relationship." Thus Grenz finds Zizioulas concluding from the Johannine declaration "God is love," that "love does not emerge out of the divine substance, but constitutes that substance; love is what 'makes God what he is, the one God.'"⁵⁷ Within the dynamic interplay of *hypostasis* and *ekstasis*, personhood is comprised of the co-inherence of communion and otherness in which "the being of the divine persons is constituted by the communion or relationality they enjoy."⁵⁸ Zizioulas has elevated love and communion to ontological status, such that there can be no true being or personhood without constitutive, self-giving, *ekstatic* communion.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 88. Emphasis original. *SGRS*, 52; *RTG*, 136; *NGQB*, 299–303.

⁵⁶ *SGRS*, 52 and *RTG* 141–2. Cf. Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2006), 86–8, 142–6.

⁵⁷ Quotes from *RTG*, 141 where Grenz cites Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 46. See also *SGRS*, 52–3.

⁵⁸ *SGRS*, 52. Kurt Anders Richardson comments in Grenzian fashion: "In God's eternally interpenetrating, mutually containing 'persons' we are given to know the richness of being in eternal relations of the one God. The normativity of the term 'perichoresis' is such because it appropriately conveys the knowledge of God, not only as God's eternal sociality or having a capacity for relationship, but because God, who is love, is ontologically the basis for relationality itself." ("Uncreated and Created Perichoretic Relations," 83)

⁵⁹ See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 15–26, 27–49, 83–9; Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28.5 (October 1975), 401–48; Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution," in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 44–60; and Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 88–9. While borrowing widely from Zizioulas concerning personhood and communion, Grenz ultimately demurs from Zizioulas' central notion of the "Father-caused communion of the three persons" and the divine monarchy. (*RTG*, 142–7) See also Sexton,

Moving to LaCugna, Grenz notes: “Zizioulas' dictum – namely, that the divine being is constituted by the communion of the three trinitarian persons – lies at the heart of LaCugna's work.”⁶⁰ She combines Zizioulas' dictum with aspects of Barth's revelational insights, Rahner's Rule, trinitarian history in Moltmann and Pannenberg, and her own methodological principle of the inseparability of theology proper and soteriology. In formulating her principle, LaCugna held that God *in se* or *ad intra* comprises a mystery since all that can be known of God is based on the economy of salvation, meaning all theology is therefore defined by its relation to salvation-history.⁶¹ This principle then, the “LaCugna Corollary,”⁶² holds that God-in-salvation (reworked as *oikonomia*) and God-in-eternity (reworked as *theologia*) are inseparable and intertwined.⁶³ However, trinitarian doctrine for LaCugna is not ultimately about the mysterious inner divine life but about “God-for-us.” Therefore, this maxim serves to recover the Trinity as a teaching about “*God's life with us and our life with each other.*”⁶⁴ Important for Grenz here is what lies behind this *oikonomic* trinitarianism; namely, the ontology of personhood as communion LaCugna adapted from Zizioulas. Grenz observes, along with Mark Medley, that LaCugna found person and not substance to be the “cause, origin, and end” of God and all that exists. Thus, the ultimate source of everything that exists is not a “by-itself” or “in-itself,” but a “toward another.”⁶⁵ So when LaCugna issues her declaration that “*Trinitarian life is also our*

The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz, 94 and Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Community: An Essay on Human Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 289–94 which Grenz cites.

⁶⁰ *SGRS*, 53. See also Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1991), 1–8, 13, 21–44, 70, 196, 209–228, 250, 290–3, 300–5, 390–1, 400 and LaCugna, “God in Communion with Us: The Trinity,” in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Catherine M. LaCugna (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1993), 83–114.

⁶¹ *SGRS*, 53–4.

⁶² Peters, *God as Trinity*, 124.

⁶³ *RTG*, 152–5. However, note Grenz's ultimate objection to LaCugna's proposal to dismiss talk of the “economic” and “immanent” Trinity in favor of *theologia* (God *in se*) and *oikonomia* (soteriology). He judges this effectively subsumes *theologia* under *oikonomia*, collapsing the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity – seemingly making our experience in salvation (*oikonomia*) the end and perhaps even substance for the doctrine of the Trinity (*theologia*), rather than simply the epistemological starting point for the knowledge of God (*a la* the Grenz *Grundaxion*). (*SGRS*, 53–7 and *RTG*, 158–162, 220) Cf. Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 94–5 and Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*, 178–93.

⁶⁴ *SGRS*, 55 citing LaCugna, *God for Us*, 228. Emphasis original. *RTG*, 157.

⁶⁵ *RTG*, 157–8 and Mark S. Medley, *Imago Trinitatis: Toward a Relational Understanding of Becoming Human* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 27, 40. Grenz characterizes Medley's study as a more postmodern articulation of LaCugna's *God for Us*.

life,”⁶⁶ personhood (human or divine) comes to mean “to be for and from another.”⁶⁷ Grenz notes that while she, unlike Zizioulas, problematically moves from human personhood to the divine persons, the result is still “an ontology that elevates person-in-communion” which is “reminiscent of Zizioulas’ language of *ekstasis* and *hypostasis*.”⁶⁸ With what Grenz heralds as the “triumph of the divine persons”⁶⁹ and the “triumph of relationality,”⁷⁰ the stage is set for Grenz’s recasting of a trinitarian theology of the *imago Dei*. Grenz declares,

[T]he rebirth of trinitarian theology has opened the door for the doctrine of God, understood now as the delineation of the relationality of the trinitarian persons, to take its rightful role within anthropology, which role it had abdicated to the human sciences. In short, the retrieval of the doctrine of the Trinity has paved the way for a fully theological anthropology.”⁷¹

The Postmodern Condition of the Self

The task of theology is bound up with the conversational nature of Grenz’s triologue of sources⁷² that represents a critical, constructive reflection on the “faith, life, and practices of the Christian community” as well as the prevailing thought forms of the social-historical culture and context in which the church is embedded.⁷³ The purpose for this is the setting forth of a coherent articulation of the Christian belief mosaic “indicative of the [postmodern] context in which the contemporary church is called to live and minister today.”⁷⁴ After setting the trinitarian theological stage, Grenz now seeks an understanding of the narrative represented by the turn to the (individual) subject. Here we trace some of the prominent ideas within Grenz’s study of the rise (chapter two) and the demise (chapter three) of the self from modernity to postmodernity.

⁶⁶ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 228. Emphasis original.

⁶⁷ *SGRS*, 55.

⁶⁸ *SGRS*, 55–7 (55). Note that LaCugna’s method of moving from human personhood to divine personhood ultimately runs counter to Grenz’s *theo*-anthropology and trinitarian *theo*-ontology.

⁶⁹ *SGRS*, 57.

⁷⁰ *RTG*, chapter four.

⁷¹ *SGRS*, 16 (see also 57). This will ultimately take the form of a *theo*-anthropology in which divine, triune being is constitutive of human being ecclesially “in Christ” and “through the Spirit.”

⁷² See *RTC*, 214–25; *SG*, ix–x.

⁷³ *BF*, 17–18.

⁷⁴ *SGRS*, ix–x. From his desire for an articulation of the Christian belief mosaic in the postmodern context, Grenz gleans the series title “The Matrix of Christian Theology” of which *SGRS* and *NGQB* were the only two instalments. Grenz also refers to these volumes as “a delineation of the matrix of *postmodern* Christian theology.” (x)

Chapter two is titled “From Interiority to Psychotherapy: An Archeology of the Self.”⁷⁵ Grenz notes the term “self” is part of the standard grammar of contemporary culture. More particularly, the self is a modern construct with a distinctive focus on interiority.⁷⁶ However, the self does not appear out of vacuum, but has itself a story. Grenz begins this story with Augustine’s turn inward and Boethius’ introduction of the individual. While motivated by the Greek dictum “know thyself,” Augustine also proceeded with the assumption of “faith seeking understanding” and conviction that turning inward leads to knowledge of God.⁷⁷ Augustine’s appeal to the *cogito* paves the way for what Charles Taylor calls “the stance of radical reflexivity or adopting the first-person standpoint.”⁷⁸ Grenz summarizes, “Augustine viewed the inward call as none other than God’s own voice inviting him to cling to the divine unity and thereby to find the unity of his own life restored in God. In short, he was convinced that the inward journey marks the pathway to God.”⁷⁹ Boethius’ contribution comes from his attempt to defend against Nestorianism and Eutychianism. Both of these seemingly opposite Christological positions mistakenly linked “person” and “nature” too closely for Boethius. To combat these errors, he distinguished between nature and person in which a person (*hypostasis*) represents the *individual* substance of a rational nature.⁸⁰ “By connecting *person* with unique identity – that is, with being an individual – Boethius paved the way for the expressivist concept of the self that eventually came to full flower in the Romantic movement.”⁸¹

Before the Romantics however, came the Enlightenment conception of the self as an abiding, stable, rational reality that is essentially constitutive of the individual – the “world-mastering self”⁸² and the “self-mastering self.” The world-mastering self finds its genesis in René Descartes, who in his quest for ultimate certitude for rational knowledge,

⁷⁵ SGRS, 58–97. See also Grenz’s summary of this chapter in “Social God,” 71–4.

⁷⁶ SGRS, 58–60. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 111–3.

⁷⁷ SGRS, 60–4.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 130–31.

⁷⁹ Grenz, “Social God,” 72. Grenz also states: “Gunton goes so far as to claim that the development of the individualistic concept of person which emerged out of Augustine’s approach ‘has had . . . disastrous effects on modern Western thought.’” (Quoting Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 95)

⁸⁰ SGRS, 65–7.

⁸¹ SGRS, 67.

⁸² SGRS, 67–77.

invoked his famous *cogito, ergo sum*.⁸³ Descartes' notion of the rational subject was further refined by John Locke's "disengaged self" in which the self is comprised of one's inner consciousness constructed by the passive mind, as well as Immanuel Kant's "universal self" in which the search for ultimate rationality elevates the autonomous individual to transcendental proportions thus inaugurating "the advent of radical individualism."⁸⁴ In Grenz's telling, the Enlightenment world-mastering self is the inner, active, rational agent in world-mastery established through instrumental reason, which takes charge of its world so as to be self-constitutive and self-determining. This is paralleled in the Puritans, Pietists, and subsequent revivalists by the advent of the self-mastering religious self.⁸⁵ Grenz contends that in these post-Reformation theological movements the Enlightenment instrumental stance toward the world also realized a spiritual purpose; namely, the assurance of true conversion, elect status, and salvation.⁸⁶ In pursuit of this assurance, the task of self-mastery became a religious vocation.⁸⁷

In the wake of the world-mastering and self-mastering self comes the "self-sufficient"⁸⁸ and "self-constructing" self as modern psychology takes up its role as the instrumental science of the psyche. Grenz begins this portion of the narrative with the first American psychologist, William James,⁸⁹ who rejected substantialist ideas such as the soul or ego, instead favoring a functionalist psychology of the mind as a "stream of consciousness." James postulated a distinction between the "me" (the objective, empirical self) and the "I" (the passing, subjective self, conscious of itself) such that the "I" becomes a

⁸³ *SGRS*, 77–86. While acknowledging Augustine and Descartes (unintentionally) had a hand in the trajectory that leads to the modern self, both assumed a theistic context in which the turn inward was nevertheless oriented toward "faith seeking understanding" and knowledge of God. On Descartes' relation to Augustine, see Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 170–206 concerning "Descartes' Path to Truth."

⁸⁴ *SGRS*, 76. See also Grenz, "Social God," 71–2.

⁸⁵ *SGRS*, 78–82. See *RTC*, 55–60 and 298–303 for Grenz's sketch of these themes in relation to convertive piety, experimental piety, and ecclesiology.

⁸⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 231.

⁸⁷ *SGRS*, 82–6. Grenz, "Social God," 73. The religious aspect had never faded fully from view, though in the contested space of Western culture the influence of "secular" paradigms on even religious selfhood is evident here.

⁸⁸ *SGRS*, 86–97.

⁸⁹ Michael Wetheimer, *A Brief History of Psychology* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), 45.

transient, fleeting sense of self-consciousness. The self then is self-creating as the successive “I’s” give shape to the stream of consciousness. Grenz notes that while Jamesian functionalism threatened to eclipse the self, his emphasis on individuality instead brought about its reemergence and set the stage for what can be called “self-psychology.”⁹⁰ Following James came Gordon Allport, Erik Erikson, and Erich Fromm,⁹¹ each of whom contributed to what Robert Bellah calls “the therapeutic self.”⁹² Maybe the most well known in this trajectory is Abraham Maslow, who declared the human ideal to be “self-actualization,”⁹³ at the heart of which is his famous “hierarchy of needs.”⁹⁴ Any sort of thwarting of the actualization of the inner self is to be deemed pathological.⁹⁵ The rise of psychology as the queen of the sciences marks the move from self-mastery as a religious vocation aided by divine grace, to one of secularized self-mastery aided by psychological therapy. The result is the ascendancy of the therapeutic self and “the triumph of the therapeutic”⁹⁶ in which the highest value is freedom to actualize or mold oneself.⁹⁷

The modern notion of the self emerged from the 1,500-year journey from Augustine to Maslow. The result was a self-sufficient, self-constructing, and centered (as well as self-centering) self, thought to constitute a stable identity in a chaotic world. Grenz notes, however, that this kingdom of the (individual) self would be short lived as the “centered self of the modern era appears to be one of the casualties of the post-modern dethroning of all ruling monarchs.”⁹⁸ Grenz narrates the sabotaging of the self in chapter three, “From Autobiography to Preference: The Undermining of the Self.”⁹⁹ Grenz notes an alternative trajectory developed which fixed attention on a particular rather than universal self, a self-focused self which emerges not through self-mastery but self-

⁹⁰ *SGRS*, 88–92.

⁹¹ *SGRS*, 93–5.

⁹² Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1986), 127.

⁹³ Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Second edition (New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand, 1968), vi–vii and 189–90.

⁹⁴ Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1954), 80–92.

⁹⁵ *SGRS*, 93–6.

⁹⁶ *SGRS*, 96–7. See also Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1966), 5.

⁹⁷ Grenz, “Social God,” 74.

⁹⁸ *SGRS*, 97.

⁹⁹ *SGRS*, 98–137. See also Grenz’s summary of this chapter in “Social God,” 74–77.

expression. The process of self-completion through self-expression, self-exploration, and inner self-awareness yields what can be called “the autobiographical self” created by Michel de Montaigne.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau began writing autobiography to uncover the particular nature that made him a unique self, which at the same time he regarded as the intrinsically good soul of humanity. Moving further toward the goal of self-expression though were the Romantic expressivists, who stood as the heirs to Montaigne and Rousseau.¹⁰¹ In Grenz’s words, “The Romantic vision was driven by the belief that ultimate reality, viewed as the cosmic self, is intricately connected with the individual self and that the world is in some profound sense the creation of the self.”¹⁰²

Though highly centered, the Romantic self-expressive and self-reliant self, built on the pre-reflective plane of “feeling,” lacked stability.¹⁰³ Having rejected Enlightenment reason as constitutive of the human essence, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century German idealists looked to the willful self as the world-constructing self. The result was a crisis of the self as Arthur Schopenhauer concluded the universal will was irrational and impersonal and Friedrich Nietzsche declared that human culture was underwritten by the will to power. The Vienna modernists amplified this crisis, illustrated in the way Freudian psychoanalysis undercut the idea of a permanent, unitary self marked by continuity and cohesion. The modernists still sought an inner depth, but the casting aside of the centered self and the disintegration of the willful self yielded a frustrated free-floating self.¹⁰⁴ The tools for further demolition were provided by Ferdinand de Saussure’s structural linguistics and structuralist anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss,¹⁰⁵ who “dissolved the self into the structures of the social realm without and the brain within.”¹⁰⁶

Structuralism though was merely the death gurgle of modernism. Grenz credits the completion of the postmodern turn to Michel Foucault’s injunction to leave behind

¹⁰⁰ *SGRS*, 100–4. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 181.

¹⁰¹ *SGRS*, 104–9.

¹⁰² Grenz, “Social God,” 75.

¹⁰³ *SGRS*, 109–17. In fact, the stable modern self seems to have never been anything more than a chimera, and in some ways we have a revisiting of Augustine’s fragmentation of the self.

¹⁰⁴ *SGRS*, 117–28.

¹⁰⁵ *SGRS*, 128–30.

¹⁰⁶ Grenz, “Social God,” 76.

any pretense of neutrality and the contention that subjectivity comes from the internalization of a myriad of social determinants that govern how people live, think, and speak, thus extending Nietzsche's "death of God" metaphor to the death of the self.¹⁰⁷ The postmodern ethos is thus characterized by the demise, dissolution, deconstruction, and perhaps even the destruction of the (modern) self. Nevertheless, the postmodern condition is not left in a state of pure self-lessness. A narrative "self" yet remains who receives its "plot" from the social location, cultural context, and community of reference in which it is embedded. There remains as well the socially constructed "self" which exists in a nexus¹⁰⁸ and "web of interlocution"¹⁰⁹ that looks to possibly ephemeral relationality for the creation of identity. This situation presents peril, at least potentially, in that the postmodern moment nets a highly unstable and "chaotic self" prone to psychic fragmentation.¹¹⁰ However, in Grenz's perspective, the postmodern condition of the self presents opportunity and promise as it also opens the door to the suitable occasion for the development of a fully theological anthropology.¹¹¹

Revising the *Imago Dei*¹¹²

Grenz now works toward the development of his *imago Dei* theology with a consideration in *Social God* of the divine image in relation to the church's theological

¹⁰⁷ SGRS, 130–3. Grenz, "Social God," 76. See also David Couzens Hoy, "Foucault: Modern or Postmodern?" in *After Foucault: Humanist Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges*, ed. Jonathan Arac (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 27 and Edward W. Said, "Michel Foucault, 1926–1984," in *After Foucault*, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 15.

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 36.

¹¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 90. See also Grenz, "The *Imago Dei* and the Dissipation of the Self," 182–3.

¹¹¹ SGRS, 133–7. Additionally, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Second edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 203–4. It is here that some have spoken, counter to the secularization thesis, of "re-enchantment" and "desecularization." See Peter Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview" in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter Berger (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 1–18 and Christopher Partridge, "The Disenchantment and Re-enchantment of the West: The Religio-Cultural Context of Contemporary Western Christianity," *Evangelical Quarterly* 74.3 (2002), 235–56.

¹¹² See Grenz's prior and similar treatments of the *imago Dei* in *SE*, 44–52; *MQ*, 146–7, 238, 277, 261, 268, 275, 294–5, 298–9; Grenz, "The *Imago Dei* and the Dissipation of the Self," 182–7; *RTC*, 104, 221, 290, 330–1; and *BF*, 180–2, 192–3, 197–202, 228, 238. *TCG*, 168–80 prefigures his treatment here and presents the *imago Dei* as a special standing, a special fellowship, an eschatological reality, and a special community.

deposit (chapter four),¹¹³ Christology (chapter five),¹¹⁴ and eschatology (chapter six).¹¹⁵ This section presents an overview of the major themes in these chapters.¹¹⁶ Having traced the inward centering of the self in the trajectory from Augustine to Maslow, and its decentering from Montaigne to Foucault, Grenz now seek to revision the *imago Dei* in light of the “postmodern anthropological problematic”¹¹⁷ in order to foster “the reconstruction of the self in the wake of its dissipation.”¹¹⁸ Chapter four, “From Structure to Destiny: The *Imago Dei* in Christian Theology,” surveys the theological tradition, which has historically looked to the divine image as the locus for human identity. Though exegetes have disagreed about the particulars, one common feature encountered as the theological tradition came into contact with Western philosophical trends is the regarding of the divine image in a highly individualized fashion. Thus the divine image has come to be understood as either a structure of rational human nature or the individual’s relational standing before God.¹¹⁹

Grenz locates the genesis of the structural *imago* in the Aristotelian view of the human as a “rational animal,” so influential that the church fathers took for granted the divine image was a rational capacity involving the exercise of reason and the will.¹²⁰ Grenz develops this in a study of Irenaeus, regarded as the origin of the patristic distinction between the “image” and “likeness” of God from Genesis 1:26, wherein while the “likeness” was lost, the “image” (inclusive of human reason and will) remains after the fall. However, Grenz also notes Irenaeus’ multifaceted and eschatologically orientated view of the image as *similitudo Dei* focused on Christ himself as the true *imago*.¹²¹ Grenz then briefly traces Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Cyril of Alexandria who differed in details but were widely influenced by Irenaeus, also casting the *imago Dei* as a rational

¹¹³ *SGRS*, 141–82.

¹¹⁴ *SGRS*, 183–222.

¹¹⁵ *SGRS*, 223–264.

¹¹⁶ See Grenz’s own summarization in “Social God,” 77–85.

¹¹⁷ *SGRS*, 142.

¹¹⁸ Grenz, “Social God,” 78.

¹¹⁹ *SGRS*, 142.

¹²⁰ *SGRS*, 143–4.

¹²¹ *SGRS*, 144–8.

capacity.¹²² The structural *imago*, though, found its solidification in Augustine (who posited a unitary view of the rational soul as the image of God oriented toward love of, knowledge of, and communion with the triune God),¹²³ and flowered in medieval theology under Aquinas (who more fully individualized and intellectualized the divine image).¹²⁴

The structural view, however, came under attack from the Protestant Reformers. This yielded a relational understanding which shifted the focus from noun to verb, and in which humans “image” God as an act versus possessing the image as a structure. Luther and Calvin both disparaged the distinction between image and likeness as well as held that the divine image was lost through sin. Luther held that restoration was found in relationship to God through the Word and Spirit. Calvin constructed a dynamic view of the divine image as the mirror of the divine, dependent on one’s relation to God, and restored through divine grace.¹²⁵ Despite the introduction of relational themes in the Reformation, the structural view still remained dominant in modern theology, with the relational view offering only a minority report (and remaining highly individualized).¹²⁶ Grenz though suggests a third view, that of the divine image as goal and destiny, or an eschatological, telic *imago*,¹²⁷ stating, “The concept of the *imago Dei* as destiny, which views humans as a history or a narrative, provides the hermeneutical perspective for constructive theological engagement with the contemporary context.”¹²⁸

Chapter five, “From Humankind to the True Human: The *Imago Dei* and Biblical Christo-Anthropology,” is the middle chapter in the middle portion of the book, acting as a Christological fulcrum for *Social God*. Thus, Grenz does not move to develop his suggestion of an eschatological *imago* immediately. Instead, while noting Claus Westermann’s observation that the “most striking statement” of the first Genesis creation

¹²² *SGRS*, 149–52. Though the patristics tended to also share Irenaeus’ Christological *imago Dei* focus, Grenz notes the theme of the divine image as rational capacity became increasingly prominent.

¹²³ *SGRS*, 152–7. Grenz notes Augustine as well began with the theme of Christ as the true image but that in his later writings this was overshadowed by the view of the divine image as a rational structure of the soul.

¹²⁴ *SGRS*, 157–61.

¹²⁵ *SGRS*, 161–70.

¹²⁶ *SGRS*, 170–7.

¹²⁷ *SGRS*, 177–82.

¹²⁸ Grenz, “Social God,” 78.

narrative “is that God created human beings in his image,”¹²⁹ Grenz nevertheless chooses what for him is the requisite path that extends beyond creation and leads through a biblical, New Testament Christology. Therefore, Grenz presents a survey of biblical texts that trace salvation-history from creation, through Christ, and then on to the eschatological horizon of the new creation.¹³⁰ Through this survey, we discover that though effaced, the creational divine image is filled with and points toward Christological as well as proleptic eschatological hope.

Grenz begins with an exegetical survey of Genesis 1:26–27. Contrary to patristic and medieval voices, Grenz notes the contemporary exegetical consensus that *selem* (image) and *demut* (likeness) are synonymous, parallel terms. The Hebrew *imago Dei* is likely borrowed from the royal, kingship ideology of Israel’s Near Eastern neighbors.¹³¹ Grenz surveys possibilities for the content of the concept; namely, the *imago Dei* as similarity, counterpart, dominion, and representation.¹³² Grenz cautions against a one-dimensional view, but still regards representation as the likely heart of the concept, wherein an image was thought to represent or even mediate the presence of a physically absent god or king.¹³³ By extension, the divine image herein indicates that humankind in some way represents and “mediates within creation the immanence of the transcendent Creator.”¹³⁴ Moreover, as a counter-myth, the *imago Dei* undermined the exclusive individuality of the royal image. Instead, the divine image references humankind (evidenced by the corporate term *adam* in Genesis 1:26–27) and “humans-in-relationship” (suggested by creation as “male and female”). “Rather than embodying a ‘democratization’ of the royal ideology, therefore, the first creation narrative effects a universalizing of the divine image.”¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis: An Introduction*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 111.

¹³⁰ Grenz, “Social God,” 79.

¹³¹ *SGRS*, 184–92.

¹³² *SGRS*, 192–9.

¹³³ *SGRS*, 200–3. Grenz cites, Phyllis A. Bird, “‘Male and Female He Created Them’: Genesis 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981), 137–8, 141, 157, 159 in his discussion.

¹³⁴ Grenz, “Social God,” 79.

¹³⁵ Grenz, “Social God,” 80. *SGRS*, 201.

The full meaning of the divine image though moves “from a creatio-centric to a christocentric anthropology.”¹³⁶ Drawing on the pervading New Testament “glory-christology,”¹³⁷ Grenz looks to 2 Corinthians 4:4–6 in which Christ as the image of God radiates the glory of God. Herein, Grenz identifies a narrative focus displayed within an allusion to humankind as the divine image in Genesis, understood only in light of Christ, the second Adam. The narrative focus gets stronger in Colossians 1:15–20 where Christ, as *eikon theou*, is the “firstborn of all creation” (v. 15) and “firstborn from the dead” (v. 18) oriented toward reconciling all creation (v. 20). Thus only within the narrative of Jesus as the true *imago* can salvation history and humankind created in the divine image be properly understood. As well, Hebrews 1:1–4 declares the final superiority of Christ. Specifically, Hebrews 1:3 fashions Jesus as the reflection of God’s glory and imprint of God’s being thereby fusing glory and image language. Moreover, Christ himself is the impress according to whom those stamped with the divine image are conformed.¹³⁸ Within New Testament narrative Christology, it is through his embodied work in salvation history “that Jesus Christ fully reveals God, and thereby is the *imago Dei* in fulfillment of Genesis 1:26–27, as he redeems humankind.”¹³⁹

According to the Christocentric perspective of the New Testament, the Genesis narrative points to the revelation of the nature and glory of God in Jesus Christ as the image of God. In addition to this reality, Jesus is the head of a new humanity destined to be conformed to his image. Thus chapter six is titled, “From Eschatological Hope to Ongoing Task: The *Imago Dei* and the New Humanity.” Grenz continues his exegetical survey, now in relation to the image of God and the eschatological hope. First, Grenz’s exegesis finds that Romans 8:29 contains an eschatological orientation found in the certainty of being “in Christ” and imprinted with “the image of the Son” for the purpose of achieving the divinely given goal from the beginning – that Christ will become the preeminent head of the new (ecclesial) humanity conformed to and participating in the

¹³⁶ Grenz, “Social God,” 80.

¹³⁷ *SGRS*, 203–12.

¹³⁸ *SGRS*, 212–22. Grenz also highlights these three scriptures in “Social God,” 80–1.

¹³⁹ This quote appears in *SGRS*, 222 and Grenz, “Social God,” 82.

imago Christi.¹⁴⁰ Next, 1 Corinthians 15:49 as Romans 8:29's "essential commentary"¹⁴¹ connects the *imago Christi* with the resurrected new humanity via an Adam-Christ typology and a correlate last-Adam Christology. Thus Grenz explains that the first-Adam was not God's final intention for humankind created *imago Dei*. Rather the divine destiny finds completion in the advent of the new humanity who shares in the resurrection of the last-Adam, thus bearing the image of Christ as the true image of God.¹⁴²

The image of God thus conceived, however, is not only a future goal within the glorified new humanity, but in a proleptic fashion comprises a present reality as the new humanity already shares in the *imago Dei* through being "in Christ," which Grenz sees as explicit in 2 Corinthians 3:18. Moreover, Grenz notes the participation which is marked by the present sharing is also a process of progressive transformation. Further, this takes place not through an individualistic process but within the constituting of a new community of those who share in the Spirit, thus realizing the original design of creation in God's image as persons-in-community.¹⁴³ Finally, those sharing in the divine image as a process in the present also carry the *imago Dei* as an ethical imperative or task in the present. Colossians 3:9–11 presents being "in Adam" and "in Christ" as two distinct narrative realities and ways of living, with "in Christ" representing the communal life appropriate to the new humanity. Similarly, Ephesians 4:17–24 forms an echo of this passage as those redeemed "in Christ" through the Spirit are exhorted to put on the "new human,"¹⁴⁴ revealing a corporate focus in which the new ecclesial community comprises a "life patterned after God's"¹⁴⁵ life of righteousness and holiness.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ SGRS, 224–33.

¹⁴¹ Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina, Volume 6, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 268.

¹⁴² SGRS, 233–40. Grenz also highlights these scriptures in "Social God," 82–3. Grenz notes as well that an antithesis is introduced between the *psychikon soma* and *pneumatikon soma* in this context with a corresponding contrast drawn between Adam and Christ as the representations of these as *corporate* realities.

¹⁴³ SGRS, 240–51.

¹⁴⁴ SGRS, 262–3.

¹⁴⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 42, eds. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph P. Martin (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 287.

¹⁴⁶ SGRS, 252–64. Grenz also highlights these scriptures in "Social God," 84–5.

The Social *Imago*, Community, and Eschatological Prolepsis

The preceding overview summarized Grenz's narrative of the journey from the postmodern context marked by the loss of the centered self, through the history of the individualized *imago* in theological anthropology as a rational structural possession and relational capacity, to a survey of biblical texts from the Old Testament creation of humanity as the *imago Dei* to the goal of the New Testament interpretation of this idea in the new humanity of the new creation. A Christocentric, eschatologically oriented presentation of humankind destined to be the *imago Dei* emerged, achieving its *telos* in the new humanity headed by Christ as the true *imago*. Grenz now moves toward a reconstruction of the "self-in-community" by means of a trinitarian ontology of the "person-in-relationship" through a consideration of embodied human sexuality in chapter seven¹⁴⁷ and the ecclesial self in chapter eight.¹⁴⁸

Chapter seven, "From the Eternal City to Primordial Garden: The *Imago Dei* and Human Sexuality,"¹⁴⁹ takes a hermeneutical journey from new creation back to the Genesis creation narratives.¹⁵⁰ Genesis 1:26–27 announces two anthropological themes – "the creation of humankind in the divine image and the creation of humans as sexually differentiated and hence relational creatures."¹⁵¹ Grenz connects these with a reading of the two creation narratives together and in light of the biblical narrative as a whole. The second creation story, Genesis 2:18–25, reaches its high point with Adam's declaration of "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (v. 23) as the creation of the woman rescues him from his solitude. The sexual character of Adam's isolation is revealed in that only as he looks upon his female counterpart, *ishshah*, is he referred to as *ish* ("man" or "male") and

¹⁴⁷ *SGRS*, 267–303. See also Grenz, *SE*, 15–54.

¹⁴⁸ *SGRS*, 304–36.

¹⁴⁹ See Grenz's own summarization in "Social God," 86–9.

¹⁵⁰ *SGRS*, 269–76.

¹⁵¹ Grenz, "Social God," 86. See also Janet Martin Soskice, who comments: "The as yet unsung glory of Genesis 1:26–27 is that the fullness of divine [triune] life and creativity is reflected by humankind as male and female, which encompasses if not an ontological, then a primal difference. And this difference is not by default or for pragmatic reasons, but by divine plan." ("Imago Dei," *The Other Journal: An Intersection of Theology and Culture* (2 April 2006) <http://theotherjournal.com/2006/04/02/imago-dei/> [Accessed: 28 February 2017])

not simply as *adam* (v. 18) or “earth creature.”¹⁵² Thus individual existence subsists in a sense of fundamental incompleteness or rather, to state it positively, an innate longing for relational completeness.¹⁵³ Extending this further, Grenz states, “*Sexuality* is the sense of incompleteness *together with* the quest for wholeness that provides the impulse – the drive toward bonding.”¹⁵⁴ In Genesis this dynamic finds its primal expression in the community of male and female in marriage, but only as the genesis toward broader human community. Read canonically, the goal of embodied sexuality and the bonding impulse is the eschatological new humanity in relationship to God and all creation (the eternal city), of which the proleptic, penultimate foretaste is the ecclesial community.¹⁵⁵

Drawing on this insight, Grenz now declares that the relational self is sexual in that it consists of the “person-in-bonded-community.”¹⁵⁶ Yet the question remains of how embodied human sexuality (creation as “male and female”) and the relational self relate to a trinitarian conception of the *imago Dei*. Grenz turns to the divine self address, “Let us make humankind in our image,” in Genesis 1:26.¹⁵⁷ Grenz notes authorial intent is not proto-trinitarian, nor did the New Testament writers themselves draw a trinitarian inference. Nevertheless, following patristic through Reformational theological impulses, Grenz observes that the “vantage point of the post-Cappadocian hermeneutical trajectory facilitates Christians in seeing the triune God at work in the creation of humankind as male and female.”¹⁵⁸ Grenz specifies that God remains beyond sexual distinctions, even as

¹⁵² *SGRS*, 276. Grenz cites Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978), 76 for this rendering of the Hebrew *adam* in Genesis 2:18. This is not to imply Grenz accepts a theory of primal androgyny though. While not present here, Grenz elsewhere discusses various theories of androgyny – ancient Greek notions, exegesis on the Genesis creation narratives, and contemporary views stemming from some feminist sources and Jungian depth psychology – and dissents from them. See Grenz, *SE*, 23–4, 37–8, 261–3; Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming*, 85, 178; and Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 158, 230, 256–7. Grenz also cites Gregory of Nyssa as having “declar[ed] the original creation sexless and that sexuality was a result of the fall.” (*SE*, 18) See also Marc Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 42 for the observation Nyssa viewed the indefinite noun *adam* in Genesis 1:26–27 to refer corporately to all humanity. Cf. *SGRS*, 201. See as well chapter two, footnotes 265 and 307 and chapter four, footnote 154.

¹⁵³ *SGRS*, 276–82.

¹⁵⁴ *SGRS*, 283. Emphasis original.

¹⁵⁵ Grenz, “Social God,” 86–7.

¹⁵⁶ *SGRS*, 283.

¹⁵⁷ *SGRS*, 283–7.

¹⁵⁸ *SGRS*, 287; Grenz, “Social God,” 87.

the triune community acts as the transcendent ground of human community and *imago Dei* relationality.¹⁵⁹ Thus the door opens to the suggestion that the interplay between creation in the divine (triune) image and the relationality endemic to human sexual differentiation reflects something about the triune Creator; namely, divine relationality.¹⁶⁰

Grenz now turns his attention toward Barth and expresses his appreciation of Barth's I-Thou relationality and perception that the "sameness and difference" of male and female is present in a prior way in the triune God. He likewise credits Barth with ushering in the wide influence of the *analogia relationis*¹⁶¹ in contemporary theology. However, Grenz also avers from Barth, charging that Barth ultimately exchanges human sexuality as a mere symbol for the I-Thou, such that sexuality is eventually left behind. Grenz emphasizes that while marriage and genital sexual expression are limited to this age, embodied sexuality and the bonding dynamic are operative beyond eschatological culmination in constituting the new communal humanity of the new creation. Grenz also finds that Barth moves too quickly from male-female relationality to the divine prototype.¹⁶² Grenz contends that reading the creation narratives in light of the *telos* of the *imago Dei* indicates an intermediate step is needed which leads through "the church as the prolepsis of the new humanity, and the relational self as ultimately the ecclesial self."¹⁶³

Grenz's suggestions thus far yield the insight that the divine image does not reside in the individual *per se*, but rather in the relationality of persons-in-bonded-community. Chapter eight, "From the Many to the One: The Reconstruction of the Self-In-Community,"¹⁶⁴ sets forth "an ecclesial ontology of persons-in-community for the sake of the construction of the relational self as the ecclesial self" in which the ecclesial self is "the eschatological outworking of the divine love."¹⁶⁵ To facilitate his aim, Grenz begins with an

¹⁵⁹ *SGRS*, 287–94, 321. See also Stanley J. Grenz, "Is God Sexual? Human Embodiment and the Christian Conception of God," in *This is My Name Forever: The Trinity and Gender Language for God*, ed. Alvin F. Kimel Jr. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 190–212.

¹⁶⁰ Grenz, "Social God," 88.

¹⁶¹ Grenz notes Dietrich Bonhoeffer may have been the first contemporary theologian to invoke an analogy of relation, as Barth quotes Bonhoeffer, but Barth is the one who popularized the idea. (*SGRS*, 294)

¹⁶² *SGRS*, 294–303.

¹⁶³ *SGRS*, 303. Grenz, "Social God," 89.

¹⁶⁴ See Grenz's own summarization in "Social God," 89–92.

¹⁶⁵ *SGRS*, 305.

overview of the return of the concept of the social self. The philosophical genesis for the social self was William James' distinction between the "me" and the "I". However, Grenz finds that James' proposal was marked by a lingering individualism. More promising in Grenz's view is the social psychologist George Herbert Mead, who proposed that individual experience comes indirectly by means of one's social group in which the "me" emerges from a dialog between the "I" and the social context. Thus, rather than a given prior to sociality, Mead pushed in the direction of viewing the self as an ongoing process, with a past and future that together forms a narrative.¹⁶⁶

Grenz now moves to a consideration of the ecclesial self, beginning with a discussion of the triune relationality standard for his social trinitarianism, in which perichoretic love expresses the dynamic of the divine life.¹⁶⁷ God is love¹⁶⁸ in that the divine essence is the *agape* that characterizes the divine life¹⁶⁹ and in which "the triune God comprehends lover, beloved, and the shared love."¹⁷⁰ And *perichoresis*, stemming from the patristic appropriation of the idea as a Christological concept, speaks of the trinitarian relations as they "mutually inhere in one another, draw life from one another, 'are' what they are by relation to one another."¹⁷¹ Thus the personhood of the divine three is relationally constituted as person-in-relationship to the other two, thus preserving the "otherness-in-relation"¹⁷² manifest in the unity of the one God and the particularity of the divine persons.¹⁷³ The human goal to reflect the divine communal dynamic as the *imago Dei* forms the link connecting triune love and the ecclesial self.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁶ *SGRS*, 305–12 and Grenz, "Social God," 90.

¹⁶⁷ See *SGRS*, 312–22.

¹⁶⁸ Grenz specifies: "[A] *gape* serves both as the description of the triune God in all eternity and the fundamental characteristic of God in relationship to creation. *Agape*, therefore, is predicated of both the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity." (*SGRS*, 317).

¹⁶⁹ Grenz (*SGRS*, 316–17) quotes Zizioulas: "love 'is constitutive of [God's] substance, i.e., it is that which makes God what He is, the one God. Thus love ceases to be a qualifying – i.e., secondary – property of being and becomes the supreme ontological predicate," (*Beings as Communion*, 46) and, "communion does not threaten personal particularity, it is constitutive of it." ("Human Capacity and Incapacity," 409)

¹⁷⁰ *SGRS*, 316.

¹⁷¹ *SGRS*, 317 and Grenz, "Social God," 90–1 quoting LaCugna, *God for Us*, 270–1.

¹⁷² *SGRS*, 317 citing Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 163–4. See also *BF*, 201.

¹⁷³ *SGRS*, 317.

¹⁷⁴ *SGRS*, 321.

Grenz invokes Panayiotis Nellas' insight that humans are "characterized fundamentally by the mystery of love" which impels them toward "communion."¹⁷⁵ From here Grenz draws on the Eastern theological tradition of deification (or *theosis*) as participation in the triune divine life.¹⁷⁶ This participation occurs specifically *extra se in Christo* as the Spirit incorporates those "in Christ" into the Jesus story, which acts as the communal, identity producing narrative and "emplotment"¹⁷⁷ of the ecclesial community.¹⁷⁸ By means of (ecclesial) being "in Christ" through the "Person-love" and "Person-Gift" of the Spirit,¹⁷⁹ members of the ecclesial community are brought into creaturely participation in the eternal relationship of the Father and Son, and thus triune participation in "the very perichoretic dynamic that characterizes the eternal divine life."¹⁸⁰ Thus ecclesial existence is marked by trinitarian love as the mutual life of redeemed persons-in-community, "in Christ" and through the Spirit, is brought into being through participation in the "eternal reciprocal glorification" of the triune life.¹⁸¹

Grenz's refiguring of the *imago Dei* therefore yields a social *imago* in which personhood emerges not from an inward turn of the individual but is bound up with relationality.¹⁸² As the personhood of the triune members is constituted in their reciprocal relations, so the divine intent is that *imago Dei* relationality also be marked by an ontology of persons-in-community and ecclesial relation grounded in the divine life disclosed in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. Such a communal ontology yields an understanding of identity which leads to the ecclesial self marked by participation in the triune life.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁵ SGRS, 321. Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, trans. Norman Russell (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 27, 30, 39–40.

¹⁷⁶ SGRS, 322–8. Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 49–65.

¹⁷⁷ Grenz (SGRS, 329) cites Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 91–9. He also quotes Henry Isaac Venema: "Seeing oneself as that proposed by the text becomes, by means of choice and action, being oneself as that proposed by the text." ("Am I the Text? A Reflection on Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic of Selfhood," *Dialogue: A Canadian Philosophical Review* 38.4 (Fall 1999), 768)

¹⁷⁸ SGRS, 328–31.

¹⁷⁹ See SGRS, 328 for these depictions of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸⁰ Grenz, "Social God," 92.

¹⁸¹ SGRS, 327.

¹⁸² SGRS, 331–2 and BF, 200–2. Grenz's notion of "relationality" includes general human community, but also insistently points beyond this to the more distinct reality of ecclesial community constituted "in Christ" and through the Spirit as the divine intent.

¹⁸³ Grenz, "Social God," 91–2. Note that Grenz's move from the category of "substance" to "relationality" does not necessitate the undoing of metaphysics, but rather its revisioning and reorientation.

Though “ultimately eschatological, the deification that constitutes the self-in-community is proleptically present in the here and now” as a foretaste of the new humanity.¹⁸⁴ As the Spirit constitutes the “self” of those “in Christ” (the ecclesial self) and thereby shapes the ecclesial community in the pattern of triune love, this Spirit generated inclusion in the perichoretic life marks a human “coming-to-representation” of triune relationality. This in turn constitutes the church ontologically to be the prolepsis of the divine image¹⁸⁵ and sign of God’s way of being in creation as well as the dynamic of divine love. “In short, the indwelling Spirit leads and empowers the church to fulfill its divinely mandated calling to be a sacrament of trinitarian communion, a temporal, visible sign of the eternal, dynamic life of the triune God.”¹⁸⁶

Critical Detour: The Relational Self, Theo-Anthropology, and the *Imago Dei*

Having now completed the “main road” of a summary of Grenz’s social trinitarian theology and the elucidation of his *imago Dei* theology leading to the social *imago* and ecclesial self, we can see the threefold grammar of Trinity, community, and eschatology at work all throughout Grenz’s theological anthropology and ecclesiology in *Social God*. We are working towards a consideration of Grenz’s social *imago* in relation to gender in the third section of this chapter. However, before doing that, we now embark on a critical detour in three parts. The first part details a series of recent critiques of the social Trinity. The second considers Ricoeur’s notion of the relational self as a critical supplementation to Grenz’s delineation of the postmodern self. The third presents Grenz’s communal *theo*-anthropology, both as an answer to aforementioned social trinitarian critiques and to chart the path into our discussion of the social *imago* and gender.

Is God (Still) Social?

The twentieth century trinitarian resurgence and its subsequent aftermath can in many respects be called the rise and demise of the social Trinity. Nuances vary, but the

Grenz is clear he is proposing a communal and eschatological *ontology*, which he will refine further as a “theo-ontology” in *NGQB*.

¹⁸⁴ *SGRS*, 334.

¹⁸⁵ *SGRS*, 331–6.

¹⁸⁶ *SGRS*, 336.

story generally holds that at some point, usually in the medieval period, trinitarian dogma was suppressed in Western Christianity.¹⁸⁷ Aquinas is often offered as a paradigmatic figure who, following in the trajectory left by Augustine, first speaks of *De Deo uno*, the one God, and only thereafter elucidates *De Deo trino*, the three-personed God. Subsequently, the Enlightenment saw the Trinity not simply obscured but as an outright embarrassment. The decline was so great that Ted Peters lamented that “trinitarian thinking has proved to be one of the best-kept secrets in theology during the last half of the twentieth century.”¹⁸⁸ However, Barth arrived on the scene and his determined Christocentric approach brought the Trinity back as a top priority. And while talk of God as a “divine society” appears earlier¹⁸⁹ than Jürgen Moltmann’s¹⁹⁰ popularizing of a social approach, after Barth he and others set about developing what became known as social trinitarianism. The paucity of trinitarian engagement soon shifted, such that David Cunningham quipped in 1998: “the phenomenon look[s] not so much like a renaissance as a bandwagon.”¹⁹¹ As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Grenz would offer his *Social God* volume (2001) three years after this statement by Cunningham and go on to produce his own full length treatment of the trinitarian resurgence in *Rediscovering the Triune God* (2004). Twentieth century social trinitarianism has its critics however.¹⁹² Stephen Holmes, for instance, writes: “I argue that the explosion of theological work claiming to recapture the doctrine of the Trinity that we have witnessed in recent decades in fact misunderstands and distorts the traditional

¹⁸⁷ See for example Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber, “Introduction,” in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church*, eds. Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 7–9 for their recounting of “the standard narrative.”

¹⁸⁸ Peters, *God as Trinity*, 7.

¹⁸⁹ For a representative example, see J. R. Illingworth, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Macmillan, 1907), 142–3. See also Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (New York, NY: Scribner’s Sons, 1952), 133–51 for a study of the revival of the social analogy before 1952.

¹⁹⁰ See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 198–9.

¹⁹¹ Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, 19.

¹⁹² For an earlier more sympathetic critique than more recent ones, see Gresham, “The Social Model of the Trinity and Its Critics,” 325–43. See also the overview provided by Christoph Schwöbel, “The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology: Reasons, Problems, and Tasks,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 1–30 and Schwöbel, “Where Do We Stand in Trinitarian Theology? Resources, Revisions, and Reappraisals,” in *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*, eds. Christophe Chalamet and Marc Vial (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 9–71 for his follow-up report.

doctrine so badly that it is unrecognizable.”¹⁹³ To put it mildly, at least in academic circles, the social Trinity has been in sharp retreat. Interestingly, the recent critiques of the social Trinity have focused on scholars such as Moltmann¹⁹⁴ and Miroslav Volf,¹⁹⁵ and tend to bypass Grenz altogether. Nevertheless, these critiques also provide important criticisms of social trinitarian approaches at large. Thus the need exists to lay them out to determine the manner in which they may implicate Grenz as well.

From the summary of Grenz’s social trinitarian theology and discussion of *Social God* already presented, we can identify three Grenzian concerns: trinitarian and ecclesial personhood, perichoretic relationality, and practical consequence. However, in the recent critiques, issues related to social trinitarian developments of personhood and the use of *perichoresis* lead to charges of anthropological projection instead of practical advantage. Consternation over divine personhood stem largely from concerns related to divine simplicity where there is a perceived danger of “person” being reduced to individual. The danger lurking is the dreaded lapse into tritheism, which Grenz himself notes as a perpetual critique against social trinitarians.¹⁹⁶ The particular concern is probably voiced no better than Karl Barth, who states: “The meaning of the doctrine [of the Trinity] is not, then, that there are three personalities in God. This would be the most extreme expression of tritheism, against which we must be on our guard. . . . We are speaking not of three divine ‘T’s,’ but thrice of the one divine I.”¹⁹⁷ Barth was aware the concept of person had a complex history and the concern he voices here is a legitimate one. As we’ve seen in

¹⁹³ Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History, and Modernity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), xv.

¹⁹⁴ See for example Karen Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity,” *New Blackfriars* 81.957 (2000), 432–45. Cf. Randall Otto, “The Use and Abuse of *Perichoresis* in Recent Theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54.3 (August 2001), 366–84.

¹⁹⁵ See for example Kathryn Tanner, “Trinity,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, eds. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 319–332; Tanner, “Social Trinitarianism and its Critics,” in *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology: Disputed Questions and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology*, eds. Robert J. Wozniak and Giulio Maspero (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 368–86; and Karen Kilby, “The Trinity and Politics: An Apophatic Approach,” in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, eds. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 75–93.

¹⁹⁶ *SGRS*, 6.

¹⁹⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I / 1*, eds. G. W. Bromily and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 358.

Grenz's study of the self in *Social God*, that the idea of person in modernity became attached to self-hood and self-consciousness such that "person" came to mean individual, it thus becomes easy to see why some are squeamish at this point.¹⁹⁸

Karen Kilby cuts even deeper regarding the social trinitarian use of perichoretic relationality and is relentless in her charge of projection and circularity. Kilby claims regarding the use of *perichoresis* that from an examination of "social theories of the Trinity one can form the impression that much of the detail is derived from either the individual author's or the larger society's latest ideals of how human beings should live in community."¹⁹⁹ Thus, in her view, social trinitarian approaches merely project human wishes onto God, only to turn around and use that as the blueprint for human community. Beyond even this, Kilby avers that social trinitarians "*have to be* projectionist."²⁰⁰ What she means by this is that those who use *perichoresis* in relation to both divine and human community, by necessity, must first fill the content of *perichoresis* with human notions of love and community only then to present this concept as a resource from Christian theology on relationality and community.²⁰¹ What ensues then is theological sleight of hand or a social trinitarian "rabbit-from-a-hat-trick."²⁰² However, Kilby's concerns are not only limited to the projection which occurs when theologians purportedly seek wisdom

¹⁹⁸ Barth of course, famously used "mode of being" over "person" in reference to the trinitarian members. This caused another set of problems in relation to charges of modalism. Gijsbert van den Brink makes a suggestion that strongly mirrors Grenz's approach: "It would have been much more in line with the overall tenor of Barth's theology not to let the concept of person be defined by extra-Christian (or mixed) sources, but rather to start from its specific Christian connotations as emerging in the doctrine of Trinity, in order then to draw out its ontological implications and use it to evaluate critically any current alternative understandings of the person. In fact, this is exactly what proponents of social trinitarianism usually do: rather than uncritically adopting standard modern accounts of personhood, they criticize these from the insight, derived from trinitarian doctrine, that to be a person does not mean to be an autonomous self-centered individual in the Cartesian sense but to find one's very identity in mutual relations with others." ("Social Trinitarianism: A Discussion of Some Recent Theological Criticisms," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16.3 (July 2014), 347) See also Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 10–13, 86–103 and Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, 229ff.

¹⁹⁹ Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection," 441.

²⁰⁰ Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection," 441. Emphasis original.

²⁰¹ Kilby states: "First, a concept, perichoresis, is used to name what is not understood, to name whatever it is that makes the three Persons one. Secondly, the concept is filled out rather suggestively with notions borrowed from our own experiences of relationships and relatedness. And then, finally, it is presented as an exciting resource Christian theology has to offer the wider world in its reflections upon relationships and relatedness." ("Perichoresis and Projection," 442)

²⁰² This is the description of Kilby's claim in van den Brink, "Social Trinitarianism," 338.

concerning human or ecclesial community by looking to divine relationality. She also voices misgivings about looking for “insight” into the inner triune life of which the social doctrine of the Trinity is meant to be the “picture of the divine.”²⁰³ She in essence is claiming that social trinitarian proposals get themselves into trouble by trying to say too much. As an alternative to social and “political” approaches to the Trinity, she advocates for an apophatic approach.²⁰⁴ In this view, trinitarian doctrine is not considered a first order teaching, but is rather a second order grammatical proposition, rule, or set of rules about how to read Scripture, approach Christian spirituality and prayer, and speak the vocabulary of Christianity properly.²⁰⁵

Mark Husbands is also concerned with the regulative function of trinitarian doctrine and protests that social trinitarian proposals subvert the necessary ontological distinction between God and creation.²⁰⁶ In his essay “The Trinity is *Not* Our Social Program,” he takes particular aim at Catherine LaCugna and Miroslav Volf. Husbands claims that when LaCugna states, “Trinitarian life is also our life . . . To conceive trinitarian life as something belonging only to God, or belonging to God apart from the creature, is to

²⁰³ Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection,” 443.

²⁰⁴ See this in Karen Kilby, “Trinity, Tradition, and Politics,” in *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology*, 73–86. See also Kilby’s earlier essay, “Is an Apophatic Trinitarianism Possible?,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12.1 (January 2010), 65–77. Herein, Kilby warns against the presence of idolatry in social trinitarian uses of *perichoresis* which contain the “possibility of being so robust, so confident that we know what we are talking about when we talk about the Trinity, that we are in fact projecting our most pleasing ideas onto God and making those the object of worship.” (66) However, later in the same essay she states, “to accept the doctrine of the Trinity is to hold a range of beliefs about the immanent Trinity, about how God really is” but nevertheless still maintains, “[this] is not therefore to have any *insight* into the immanent Trinity.” (66, emphasis original)

²⁰⁵ Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection,” 443. But see also van den Brink’s reply, “[T]his argument can be applied to any Christian theological doctrine, as has famously been done by George Lindbeck . . . But then the real issue seems to be one of religious epistemology: namely, what kind of ontological status we should assign to our doctrinal claims. Even when this question might be particularly pertinent with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, as Kilby suggests, it seems confusing to burden the discussion about the propriety (or not) of social trinitarianism with it, since so many other doctrinal affirmations are equally at stake.” (“Social Trinitarianism,” 344)

²⁰⁶ Mark Husbands, “The Trinity is *Not* Our Social Program: Volf, Gregory of Nyssa, and Barth,” in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church*, 120–41. His title is a protest of Miroslav Volf, “The Trinity is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,” *Modern Theology* 14.3 (July 1998), 403–423 which also appeared as “‘The Trinity is Our Social Programme’: The Doctrine of the Trinity and Social Engagement,” in *The Doctrine of God and Theological Ethics*, eds. Alan J. Torrance and Michael Banner (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 105–24.

miss the point entirely,²⁰⁷ the distinction between God and humanity has been undone and collapsed because the triune God has been too “closely tied to the social existence and well-being of the community.”²⁰⁸ Husbands acknowledges the extent that Volf goes through to delimit his proposal concerning human imaging of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the very mention of perichoretic personhood proves to be an improper theological strategy for Husbands. No matter how nuanced the proposal Volf submits, he remains guilty in Husbands’ estimation of both an ecclesial idealism extending from an over-realized eschatology and of undercutting the God/humanity distinction by “offering us an account of ecclesial or social existence in which trinitarian life is now offered as a model for creaturely imitation or echo.”²⁰⁹

Kathryn Tanner intensifies the critique of approaches of social trinitarian modeling with her claim that the inherent projection and circularity mean no significant theological or anthropological contribution is gained. For this reason, Tanner asserts that social trinitarian doctrine is not merely bad theological speculation, but it fails to do any real work at all.²¹⁰ Holmes further claims that social trinitarian offerings flounder in this way because the doctrine of the Trinity is being put to an improper use. He reminds us that the free church egalitarian ecclesiology Volf derives from trinitarian claims is widely different from the hierarchical Eastern Orthodox proposal of Zizioulas, also based on trinitarian dogma. Holmes therefore states, “the claim that a social doctrine of the Trinity is generative for ecclesiology and ethics is in danger of being cast into doubt if such wildly

²⁰⁷ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 228. In response to this and similar statements by LaCugna, Paul Molnar offers a terse critique that mirrors Kilby’s concern of projection: “Unwilling and unable to distinguish between God *in se* [in himself] from God acting *ad extra* [in relation to the world], this thinking invites pantheism and dualism. God is no longer the subject acting toward us and for us from within history but becomes little more than our experiences of love and communion.” (*Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 128) See also Grenz’s critique of LaCugna in footnote 63 of this chapter.

²⁰⁸ Husbands, 121.

²⁰⁹ See Husbands, 122–6. Interestingly, regarding the charge of ecclesial idealism, Husbands fails to note Volf’s statements that the church’s “creaturely and historical nature” means that “[t]he church reflects in a broken fashion the eschatological consummation of the entire people of God with the triune God in God’s new creation.” (*After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 191)

²¹⁰ Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 230 and Tanner, “Trinity,” 324–8.

divergent implications can be drawn from the same doctrine.”²¹¹ In Holmes’ judgment, this is largely the result of improper instrumental uses of the Trinity to answer questions more adequately addressed with Christology.²¹² Very much in line with this, Tanner suggests as an alternative to “modeling the Trinity,” a turn towards participation.²¹³ She states, “humans do not attain the heights of trinitarian relations by reproducing them, but by being [Christologically] incorporated into them as the very creatures they are.”²¹⁴ The critiques raised by critics of social trinitarianism are substantial and it is important to give an account of what resources Grenz may have for a response. Such will occupy the last part of this section. Before moving to that though, we make a brief Ricoeurian detour.

Grenz, Ricoeur, and the Relational Self

We begin this portion of our detour at the end of Grenz’s deconstruction of the postmodern self in the first section of this chapter. This is Grenz’s jumping off point for his own theological construction of the relational *imago Dei* and ecclesial self. In many respects we may judge that Grenz was perhaps too successful in his deconstruction of the self. While the modern stable and unencumbered self may have been nothing more than an illusion, the postmodern self is no better off it seems.²¹⁵ What perhaps seems different is

²¹¹ Stephen R. Holmes, “Three Versus One? Some Problems of Social Trinitarianism,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 3.1 (2009), 82–4 (82). Van den Brink responds, “If pointing to two theologians who disagree about the implications of a certain claim is enough to falsify that claim, then certainly not a single piece of Christian doctrine (or of any other doctrine for that matter) will stand. So Holmes’ strategy simply proves too much.” (“Social Trinitarianism,” 338)

²¹² Holmes, “Three Versus One?,” 88. See also Stephen R. Holmes, “Classical Trinity: Evangelical Perspective,” in *Two Views on The Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 47–8 for Holmes’ contention the doctrine of the trinity is “useless” in that “it is of the essence of a highest end that it has no use.”

²¹³ See Kathryn Tanner, “Trinity, Christology, and Community,” in *Christology and Ethics*, eds. F. LeRon Shults and Brent Waters (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 70–4; Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 237–8; and Tanner, “Trinity,” 328–31. It is interesting that, in their critique of Volf on trinitarian modeling, neither Tanner nor Husbands mention Volf’s own explicit statements concerning Christologically mediated triune participation in *After Our Likeness*. For instance, “[H]uman beings move from being individuals to be persons through participation in the personhood of Christ, and are thereby integrated into the trinitarian life.” (123) And also, “Present participation in the trinitarian *communio* through faith in Jesus Christ anticipates in history the eschatological communion of the church with the triune God.” (129)

²¹⁴ Tanner, “Trinity,” 329.

²¹⁵ See Linda Woodhead, “Theology and the Fragmentation of the Self,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1.1 (March 1999), 53–72 for a description of the fragmented modern self as the “bestowed self,” “rational self,” “boundless self,” and “effective self.” Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 23–31 also gives a good overview of the decentered postmodern self. Commenting on the fragmentary nature of the

that postmoderns have taken to heart Foucault's advice to cease pretending the self is anything other than fragmented. Grenz, however, remains hopeful that the self in postmodernity doesn't have to succumb completely to demise. Grenz mentions specifically a narrative self and even cites Ricoeur on this score in the last chapter of *Social God*.²¹⁶ This will serve as a bridge between Grenz and Ricoeur in chapter three. In this section though, we instead pick up on Grenz's suggestion of a postmodern self that looks to possibly ephemeral relationality for the creation of identity. The question at this point is: does Grenz have sufficient warrant for his optimism? It is here that a Ricoeurian pause, extending the prior discussion of the relational and social self,²¹⁷ can confirm the hopefulness of Grenz which leads to his subsequent revisioning of the *imago Dei*.

As a reminder, Ricoeur agrees with the emphasis of the postmodern deconstruction of the self that the self is not an autonomous agent which is somehow fully transparent to itself. In this Ricoeur underscores his emphasis on the dispossession of the self. As well, in a Ricoeurian frame, selfhood becomes a task and even a goal, rather than a given.²¹⁸ Furthermore, the idea of a completed subject prior to and apart from social bonds is an illusion. Thus the identity of the self is always already in some sense traditioned and entangled with others, with the "other" (whether the human or Divine Other!).²¹⁹ While we can never start from the beginning, there is also a sense that we don't have to. The upshot here is that while much, but not all, of postmodern thought tends toward the dissolution of the self, Ricoeur stands as a mediating figure between modernity and radical postmodern deconstruction.²²⁰ As Dan Stiver states, "Postmodern thought in general

postmodern self, Anthony Thiselton states the postmodern self "faces life with suspicion rather than trust." (*Interpreting God and Postmodern Self* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 11–12) Woodhead counters Thiselton's view on postmodern fragmentation, contending some varieties of the postmodern self can actually offer stable identities. ("Theology and the Fragmentation of the Self," 68–70)

²¹⁶ SGRS, 329.

²¹⁷ See the discussion in chapter one. Ricoeur's fullest development of the social self appears in *Oneself as Another*, which in many respects serves as his *magnum opus*. See also the reflections in Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

²¹⁸ Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 161–78.

²¹⁹ See for example Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 3, 176–81, 352–5.

²²⁰ On Ricoeur's resistance to more radical notions of the dissolution of the self, Johann Michel states, "[I]t is necessary to distinguish between, on the one side, the *radical finitude* envisioned by Heidegger and Derrida, which does not leave room for any recomposition of the subject, and on the other side, the *relative finitude* conceived by Ricoeur, which leaves room for hope and the quest for the self." (*Ricoeur and*

rejects a disconnected and atomistic view of the self but sometimes goes so far as to lose the self in its sociality. Ricoeur offers a view of the self who is inherently intersubjective but who nonetheless maintains responsibility.²²¹ David Ford likewise intones that in Ricoeur's thought, the self "is neither autonomous and centered (as in some modern conceptions) nor fragmented and dispersed (as in some postmodernism), but has its being 'as another.'²²² What Ricoeur does in *Oneself for Another* (for example) is to doggedly call our attention, front and center, to a social embeddedness which does not dissolve us, but rather constitutes us in essential and irreducible relation in the face of the other (again, whether the human or Divine Other).²²³ Here is a version of the self after modernity with a surplus that gestures toward the deeply relational and communal nature of Grenz's ecclesial self.

Ricoeur engaged in a deep discussion with Emmanuel Lévinas in developing his idea that we ought to understand "oneself as another."²²⁴ He agrees that personal (or relationally constituted) identity is shaped by the encounter with the other, but he avers that it should be so starkly rooted in obligation.²²⁵ In Ricoeur's judgment, Lévinas did not give adequate attention to the ability of the self to respond to the other with a "capacity of discernment and recognition."²²⁶ Ricoeur's worry seems to be that Lévinas' foregrounding of passivity before the accusation of the other hinders the necessary reciprocity involved in a relationship like friendship. In an especially moving quote Ricoeur connects the emphasis on companionship in friendship with the idea of solicitude (or relational solidarity with an other), particularly the solicitude involved in mutual suffering:

the Post-Structuralists: Bourdieu, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Castoriadis, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 40–1)

²²¹ Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 179.

²²² David Ford, "Holy Spirit and Christian Spirituality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, 284. See also Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32, 42, 73, 78, 82–104, 134–6, 152–7, 167–9, 177, 180, 218–21.

²²³ Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology*, 104–5.

²²⁴ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 22, 168, 183, 188–91, 202, 332, 335–41, 349, 354–5. For Ricoeur's engagement with Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingus (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic, 1991) see *Oneself as Another*, 189, 337–40 and for his engagement with Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingus (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979) see *Oneself as Another*, 189–90, 338–40.

²²⁵ Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology*, 104–5.

²²⁶ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 338–9.

For from the suffering other there comes a giving that is no longer drawn from the power of acting and existing but precisely from weakness itself. This is perhaps the supreme test of solicitude, when unequal power finds compensation in an authentic reciprocity in exchange, which, in the hour of agony, finds refuge in the shared whisper of voice or the feeble embrace of clasped hands.²²⁷

What Ricoeur presents is a relational self that is also an ethical self, which has even attracted the attention of feminist scholars such as Pamela Sue Anderson. Feminist scholars often voice concerns that modern views of the self are not adequately open to otherness, while postmodern views can thin the self so much there remains little left as the basis for an empowered self.²²⁸ Anderson herself is representative when she queries whether it would make sense for feminists to seek the power to act only to turn around and relinquish the agency necessary to act.²²⁹ Even so, in regards to Ricoeur's philosophy of the capable self with the power to act, she discerns that Ricoeur presents great promise.²³⁰

In what has been called Ricoeur's "little ethics,"²³¹ the relational, social self ultimately becomes an ethical self with the goal of "aiming at the 'good life' with and for others, in just institutions."²³² Even so, while giving a rich philosophical description of the *structure* and goal of a good life over the course of three studies in *Oneself as Another*, Boyd Blundell remarks that Ricoeur offers a thin account of the *content* of this life. Blundell

²²⁷ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 191. See also Patrick L. Bourgeois, "Ricoeur and Lévinas: Solicitude in Reciprocity and Solitude in Existence," in *Ricoeur as Another: The Ethics of Subjectivity*, eds. Richard A. Cohen and James L. Marsh (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 109–26.

²²⁸ Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology*, 105–6. For a sympathetic critique and assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Ricoeur in relation to feminist theory, see Annemie Halsema, "The Subject of Critique: Ricoeur in Dialogue with Feminist Philosophers," *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies* 4.1 (2013), 21–39 and Louise D. Derksen and Annemie Halsema, "Understanding the Body: The Relevance of Gadamer's and Ricoeur's View of the Body for Feminist Theory," in *Gadamer and Ricoeur: Critical Horizons for Contemporary Hermeneutics*, eds. Francis J. Mootz III and George H. Taylor (London: Continuum, 2011), 203–25.

²²⁹ Pamela Sue Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 55. See chapters four and five for her use of Ricoeurian mimesis to reconfigure philosophy of religion. See also Pamela Sue Anderson, "Ricoeur in Dialogue with Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Hermeneutical Hospitality in Contemporary Practice," in *Feminist Explorations of Paul Ricoeur's Philosophy*, 199–220.

²³⁰ Pamela Sue Anderson, "Ricoeur and Woman's Studies: On the Affirmation of Life and a Confidence in the Power to Act," in *Ricoeur Across the Disciplines*, ed. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2010), 145–6. See also Paul Ricoeur, "Introduction," in *Reflections on The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1–41 where he speaks of the "capable human being."

²³¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, studies 7–9, "The Self and the Ethical Aim," 169–202; "The Self and the Moral Norm," 203–39; and "The Self and Practical Wisdom: Conviction," 240–96. See also Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 9, 55, 80, 105–28, 174.

²³² Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 172.

questions how we might judge such a life and proffers that the most we might be able to claim is a “well done,” in the same way one might have done well in a career without any indication if the career itself was a good one.²³³ Nevertheless, Blundell extolls this as a good thing for the theologian. He states, “The thinness of Ricoeur’s account of the good life is a strength rather than a weakness, a humble admission that the ‘good life’ cannot be defined with greater specificity without going further than philosophy can go.”²³⁴ This is in line with Ricoeur’s approach in the introduction to *Oneself as Another* where he states he intends a philosophy that is open to biblical faith, but that avoids being “cryptotheological.”²³⁵ And Ricoeur states in his closing words, “With this aporia of the Other, philosophical discourse comes to an end.”²³⁶ By saying this he is making good on his earlier contention that “hermeneutics has neither the first nor the last word.”²³⁷ It is this very unwillingness of Ricoeur to go further than he ought as a philosopher that makes his philosophical hermeneutics productive for theology.²³⁸ Nevertheless, while Ricoeur can go no further, Grenz has no such limitation. This portion of our Ricoeurian detour comes to a close having indeed given credence to Grenz’s hopefulness for the postmodern self, that while decentered, it need not give way to destruction. We now return to Grenz with a consideration how his communal *imago Dei* theo-anthropology and proposal of the ecclesial self may be subsequently developed and can answer the charges of the social trinitarian critics.

Grenzian Theo-Anthropology and (Ecclesial) Community

We have seen that Grenz sought to resource a social doctrine of the Trinity and relational notion of perichoretic personhood in his revisioning of a communal version of

²³³ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 151. See also Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 158, 160, 171–80 for his discussion of the “good life.”

²³⁴ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 151. See also the discussion of theological “ex-centricity” in chapter one.

²³⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 25. See also Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 85.

²³⁶ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 355.

²³⁷ Paul Ricoeur, “Philosophical and Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *From Text to Action*, 99.

²³⁸ See Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, “Part Three: Return,” composed of chapter six, “Chalcedonian Hermeneutics” and chapter seven, “Theological Anthropology: Removing Brackets” for his demonstration of how Ricoeur can be a complementary and productive resource for Barth’s theological anthropology.

the *imago Dei* in the form of the social *imago* and ecclesial self. However, as was outlined earlier, social doctrines of the Trinity have come under sharp attack. Concerns are present regarding fears over the reduction of person to individual and the presence of circularity and anthropological projection that threatens to reduce God to a “predicate of human experience”²³⁹ and blur the distinction between Creator and the created. What answers might Grenz have to misgivings regarding personhood, *perichoresis*, and projection in social trinitarian proposals?

We get some initial help from Khaled Anatolios in reference to John Zizioulas’ “personalist” theology of “being as communion.” Anatolios concedes that “person” in its ancient usage is not simply identical to contemporary usages, but he disagrees that we should presume a simple blanket disjunction. He says rather a middle way is needed between the assumption of continuity between patristic and modern notions of “person” and “communion,” and total discontinuity. He proposes a move to the “dialectics of analogical predication” in which “difference does not negate likeness, and likeness does not cancel out difference.”²⁴⁰ Such an analogous approach, Anatolios contends, is even recommended to us by Scripture in the words of Jesus: “that they may be one, as we are one.” (John 17:11 NRSV)²⁴¹

Grenz is aware of the problems of speaking too univocally about God,²⁴² and employs such a method of analogy, an analogy of relation or communion, in the development of his social trinitarian vision which drew on the rethinking of the idea of the “person,” the perichoretic unity and distinction of the divine persons, and Zizioulas’ ontology of personhood applied to the church. Grenz states:

²³⁹ Spencer, “Culture, Community, and Commitments,” 352. Spencer also worries a social approach will reduce God to a “predicate of human social experience” (340, 349) and a “predicate of our language and experience” (350).

²⁴⁰ Khaled Anatolios, “Personhood, Communion, and the Trinity in Some Patristic Texts,” in *The Holy Trinity in the Life of the Church*, ed. Khaled Anatolios (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 147–51 (150). Anatolios’ comments are a partial counter to Michel Barnes’ terse contention, “If the word [person] disappeared entirely from English and other modern languages our reading of the patristic trinitarian writings would be greatly improved.” (“Review of *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* by Lucian Turcescu,” *Modern Theology* 23.4 (October 2007), 642) We should also not overlook the similarity of Anatolios’ description of analogy with Grenz’s description of analogy/metaphor earlier in this chapter.

²⁴¹ Anatolios, “Personhood, Communion, and the Trinity in Some Patristic Texts,” 151.

²⁴² *SGRS*, 6.

The ingenious use of *perichoresis* to describe the manner in which the trinitarian persons are constituted by the mutuality of relationships within the life of the triune God opened the way for the development of a dynamic ontology of persons-in-relationship or persons-in-communion. This ontology characterizes the essential nature of personhood as consisting of mutuality and interdependence. According to this understanding, “communion does not threaten personal particularity,” as John Zizioulas notes, “it is constitutive of it.”²⁴³

This, of course, builds to what Grenz calls the “ecclesial self,” which denies that personal identity is formed primarily from an “inward turn” but instead is constituted by relationality and communion. The ecclesial self is “constructed *extra se in Christo* by the Holy Spirit,” finding “identity through participation in the divine dynamic of love.”²⁴⁴

Grenz’s exposition of the ecclesial self may indeed seem to some like anthropological projection. Gerald Bray voices his concern about Grenz’s supposed improper use of the *imago Dei* and states that Grenz’s *Social God* volume is about social anthropology and not at all about the Trinity.²⁴⁵ Anthony Thiselton takes a starkly different view, saying that Grenz works in a “different direction” than “fashionable projections” and concludes that for Grenz, “a carefully defined ‘social’ approach to the Trinity lays out the ground for a relational understanding of human selfhood.”²⁴⁶ Despite Bray’s contention, Grenz indeed devotes the first chapter of his *Social God* volume to the Trinity. What follows then is not simply an anthropology but rather a thoroughly trinitarian *theo*-anthropology.²⁴⁷ For Grenz, while theology in its *epistemological* dimension moves both

²⁴³ *SGRS*, 317.

²⁴⁴ *SGRS*, 332.

²⁴⁵ Gerald Bray, “Review of *The Social God and the Relational Self* by Stanley J. Grenz,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 76.3 (2004), 280–1.

²⁴⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton, “Review of *The Social God and the Relational Self* by Stanley J. Grenz,” *Theology* 106.830 (March 2003), 134–6.

²⁴⁷ There is resonance here in Grenz’s approach with how T. F. Torrance works out his notion of “onto-relations” in relation to divine and human personhood (see *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons*, Revised edition (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 102–4, 126–9, 133, 157, 160–8, 171–4, 193–4, 197). Building from the theological idea of the divine *perichoresis*, Torrance applies “onto-relations” to personhood (see in particular 103, 157, 160, 163 and 219–21 on the analogy of relation) such that they are “being-constituting relations” which operate with an “understanding of the three divine persons in the one God in which the ontic relations between them belong to what they essentially are in themselves in their distinctive *hypostaseis*.” (Myk Habets, “Getting Beyond the *Filioque* with Third Article Theology,” in *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century*, ed. Myk Habets (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 224) Regarding divine and human personhood, Torrance evinces resonance with Grenz when he states, “We must think of God, rather as ‘*personalising Person*,’ and of ourselves as ‘*personalised persons*,’

‘from above’ and ‘from below’ in a sort of dialectical manner, in the *ontological* dimension it gives primacy to the nature of the eternal God who is triune.²⁴⁸

As well, in chapters two and three of *Social God*, Grenz takes measures to deftly and skillfully critique and deconstruct not only the modern Cartesian self, but the postmodern loss of self, and the ascendancy of what might be called a most-modern therapeutic self in order to clear the necessary ground for his own theological explication of the ecclesial self. Thus, there is for Grenz then, no equivocation regarding personhood or reducing “person” to contemporary notions of the individual. This is in fact what Grenz specifically denies when he invokes the notion of relationally constituted persons-in-communion.²⁴⁹ He does not decide what persons are ahead of time from either philosophical or cultural sources and apply it back onto the trinitarian persons. Thus, in making the Trinity his structural motif and community his integrative motif, rather than projecting anthropology backwards into the divine life, Grenz works in the other direction in his *imago Dei* theology, viewing the triune God as the transcendent basis for all of creation, and grounding human and ecclesial personhood in a determinedly trinitarian communion ontology.²⁵⁰

people who are personal primarily through onto-relations to him as the creative Source of our personal being, and secondarily through onto-relations to one another within the subject-subject structures of our creaturely being as they have come from him,” (*Christian Doctrine of God*, 160, emphasis original) and “This onto-relational concept of ‘person,’ generated through the doctrines of Christ and the Holy Trinity, is one that is also applicable to inter-human relations, but *in a created way* reflecting the uncreated way in which it applies to the trinitarian relations in God.” (*Christian Doctrine of God*, 103, emphasis mine) See also *RTC*, 208–10.

²⁴⁸ This is methodologically consistent with the Grenz *Grundaxiom*. See footnote 63 in this chapter for Grenz’s critique of where LaCugna goes wrong in her theological method in this regard.

²⁴⁹ See the unfortunate attribution of Husbands to Grenz that the triune persons are “individual realities.” (“The Trinity is *Not* Our Social Program,” 134) Grenz denies this on the very page cited by Husbands. While speaking of the “concrete particularity of Father, Son, and Spirit,” Grenz then states, “In this rendering the three are not to be viewed simply as individuals but rather as *persons* whose reality can only be understood in terms of their relations to each other. By virtue of these relations they together constitute the being or *ousia* of God.” (*BF*, 179, emphasis mine) For an account of the Father, Son, and Spirit as “speaking persons,” “willing and acting agents,” and “persons in communion,” see Anatolios, “Personhood, Communion, and the Trinity in Some Patristic Texts,” 151–64. Cf. Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 236–41.

²⁵⁰ Grenz develops this approach in response to theologians who, for reasons regarding divine mystery or to avoid unwarranted speculation, treat the Trinity as a “theological terminus.” This would include Paul Helm (his colleague at Regent College in Vancouver, BC) who argues for a “cautious trinitarianism” that is “reluctant to employ trinitarianism for non-soteriological purposes – for example . . . as

We also saw that a central concern of the critiques leveled by Kathryn Tanner was the emphasis on modeling the Trinity, to which she proposes a turn to participation. Tanner's concern here is shared by Paul Fiddes, who also suggests his own turn toward participation in God. In the process he has critiqued advocates of the social view of the triune persons as "persons-in-relation" for only proposing an imitation versus a full participation in the triune God.²⁵¹ Fiddes expresses concern this approach only allows for "modeling" and drawing "parallels" with the Trinity.²⁵² His proposal is that we speak of the trinitarian persons as "persons-as-relations" and aims to complement imitation of God with participation in God. Fiddes contends that identifying the divine persons as relations provides a way to hold being (ontology) and knowing (epistemology) together. The being of the divine persons as relations can only be known through an epistemology of participation; "each only makes sense in the context of the other," says Fiddes.²⁵³

Grenz's early advocacy of a social view of the Trinity may sound like he is ripe for such a criticism. He not only describes the triune God in *The Moral Quest* as the "eternal community of Father, Son, and Spirit," but explicitly promotes a mirroring of the communal relations of the divine persons in relationship to others. Grenz states:

The Christian vision speaks of humankind, in turn, as "created in God's image." The divine design is that we mirror within creation what God is like in God's own eternal reality. The Christian vision of God as the social Trinity and our creation to

a paradigm of human community." ("Cautious Trinitarianism," *Crux* 39.4 (December 2003), 19–23) Grenz states counter to this, "Is the Christian confession that God is triune the end of our inquiry into the being of God? Or does the doctrine of the Trinity provide a fruitful starting-point for theological and ethical reflection? I would argue the latter. The doctrine of the Trinity both provides a central motif that gives shape or structure to theology and forms the transcendent grounding for the ordering of human relationships." ("The Doctrine of the Trinity: Luxuriant Meadow or Theological Terminus," 17)

²⁵¹ Some of the scholars he has critiqued for focusing too narrowly on imitation are Miroslav Volf, Jürgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCunga, and David Cunningham. See Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 28–56.

²⁵² See Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, 166–90 for the section that Fiddes cites in his critique. Fiddes says Cunningham "lays stress on the nature of the divine persons as subsistent relations . . . yet he deals with 'participation' almost entirely as a *parallel* between the participation that occurs within God's own communion and that within human society; he does not dwell on human participation *in* God." (*Participating in God*, 39, emphasis in original) However, Cunningham does say that by participation he means taking part, "not in something, but in someone – an other" and that he is speaking of "not merely of working alongside others in a common activity, but of dwelling in, and being indwelt by, one another." (*These Three Are One*, 166)

²⁵³ Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 29, 38. See also Paul S. Fiddes, "Relational Trinity: Radical Perspective," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 159–85.

be the *imago Dei* provides the transcendent basis for the human ethical ideal as life-in-community.²⁵⁴

Even so, Grenz is not only concerned about mirroring, but speaks plainly of participation in the divine triune life as well, saying: “The Father [has] sent the Son in order to realize God’s eternal design to draw humankind . . . to participate in his own life.”²⁵⁵ He further notes that participation in the divine life is not a matter of mere “external imitation” which only involves “ethical improvement”²⁵⁶ and that it calls for more than simply a shared experience or narrative. In Grenz’s words, “The fellowship we share with each other is not merely that of a common experience or a common narrative . . . [but] is nothing less than our common participation in the divine communion between the Father and the Son mediated by the Holy Spirit.”²⁵⁷ Here we already see in *Theology for the Community of God* an emphasis on triune participation which will ultimately be woven into a threefold cord of the *imago Dei*, relational personhood, and ecclesia.

Grenz’s own turn towards triune participation becomes as well an emphasis on *theosis* as early as his *Social God* volume.²⁵⁸ It can be seen that Grenz even matches Tanner’s emphasis on the Christological mediation of triune participation in his construction of the social *imago* and ultimately the ecclesial self.²⁵⁹ True to the orienting third motif of his theological grammar, he insists that the ecclesial relation and existence marked by triune love is, in fact, the eschatological *participation* in the divine life (i.e., *theosis*) of redeemed persons-in-community effected “in Christ” and through the Spirit.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ Grenz, *MQ*, 238. Grenz further states, “At the heart of the concept of the divine image is God’s ultimate intention that humankind show forth God’s own character.” (*TCG*, 187)

²⁵⁵ *TCG*, 484. See also *SGRS*, 323–8 and *NGQB*, 360–73 for Grenz’s link between the *imago Dei* and our being “in Christ” as participation in God which will be discussed in chapter three.

²⁵⁶ *SGRS*, 324 and *NGQB*, 365.

²⁵⁷ *TCG*, 484–5. The context for this statement is his understanding of the church as the ecclesial image of God.

²⁵⁸ *SGRS*, 322–8.

²⁵⁹ Grenz’s frequent refrain is some variation of “in Christ’ and through the Spirit,” a theme at the heart of Grenz’s notion of triune participation/*theosis*. (Medley, “Participation in God,” 212) Notice also chapter five of *SGRS* promotes a “biblical Christo-anthropology” that posits Jesus as the “true human” and true *imago*. Thus Grenz’s trinitarian and communal *theo*-anthropology comes intertwined with a *Christo*-anthropology which is given more depth in chapter three of this dissertation.

²⁶⁰ Thus Grenz’s view of the *imago Dei* points beyond the creational horizon, seeing its primary location in Jesus as the true *imago* and its ultimate fulfillment in human ecclesial community participating in the triune Divine Community and oriented toward the eschatological horizon. David Kelsey, though, has

Furthermore, this very same theotic triune participation that constitutes the ecclesial self-in-community is proleptically present in the here and now, which in turn constitutes the ecclesial community “in Christ” and through the Spirit as the prolepsis of the divine image and a sacrament of divine communion.²⁶¹

The Social *Imago*, Gender, and Triune Participation

We now come to the first of three dedicated sections which seek to work towards an account of the interrelation in Grenz’s thought between the *imago Dei*, gender, and triune participation. The goal through these sections is to establish something of a cumulative case approach. Thus the remarks in this section will seek to establish insights and threads that will be extended more fully in the later sections. This section progresses through three moments. There is first a consideration of the relation of the social *imago* and female/male mutuality in Grenz. Second, a detour introduces insights from Sarah Coakley and Miroslav Volf on gender and the Trinity. Finally, this section concludes with a consideration of female/male mutuality in relation to triune and ecclesial participation in an effort to point the way towards a constructive account of a hermeneutical ecclesiology.

The Social *Imago* and Female/Male Mutuality in Grenz

For Grenz, the triune God is the “Divine Community” who, while standing as the source of human relationality and communion, is nevertheless beyond all sexual

questioned Grenz’s eschatological orientation of the *imago Dei*, saying: “must not human beings be said to be actually human beings and truly in the image of God only at the end of the story of their eschatological consummation? Is the entirety of human history, then, not in fact a history of actual human beings, in actual human communities, actually in the image of God? If so, why treat them as having the dignity, and deserving the respect, of the ends in themselves, and not merely as means to our own ends?” (*Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, Volume two (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 904) While a thorough treatment is not possible in this space, a twofold response is warranted. First, we must see Grenz’s rendering of the *imago Dei* as located within his specifically *theo*-anthropology. It can be asked, then, if Kelsey’s concerns would misunderstand Grenz and implicitly place the *imago Dei* under the demands of a foundationalist, onto-theological political theory, potentially netting an anthropological theology rather than a theological anthropology, thus fulfilling the worries of the social trinitarian critics? Second, we should note while Grenz’s treatment of the *imago Dei* looks beyond creation toward its eschatological orientation, Grenz does not simply bypass creation either. Grenz’s treatment of the *imago Dei* is necessarily pluriform. In addition to his proposal in *SGRS*, Grenz develops a complementary understanding of the *imago Dei* as a “special standing” in the present, a “special fellowship” with God, an “eschatological reality” and “divine destiny,” and a “special community” in *TCG*, 168–80.

²⁶¹ *SGRS*, 335–6.

distinction. As well, Grenz holds that the embodied creation of “male and female” in the image of the triune God means that the relational self is also sexual, signifying the sense of individual human incompleteness, the drive and desire toward bonding, and consisting of “persons-in-bonded-community.”²⁶² The interplay between creation in the divine (triune) image and human sexual differentiation point toward the divine relationality of the triune Creator. Thus the triune God who is beyond all sexual distinction is still yet the ground and constitution of the relationality and communion endemic to human sexuality and the *imago Dei* relationality expressed in the social *imago*.²⁶³ Grenz as well holds that the sexually differentiated nature of humanity will persist into the eschatological age. Though the marriage of “male and female” is a high calling and ought to be taken seriously, it is still only one expression of the *imago Dei*.²⁶⁴ Marriage and genital sexual expression are penultimate and limited to this age, yet the reality of embodied sexual differentiation and the bonding dynamic persist into the new age and point toward the eschatological new humanity of the new creation.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, a trinitarian reading of the Genesis creation

²⁶² *SGRS*, 272, 283. See as well *SE*, chapter one – Male and Female: The Nature of Human Sexuality, 15–30 and chapter two – Male and Female: Humankind as a Sexual Creation, 31–54. Note also Grenz’s emphasis that the dynamic of sexuality is far more than having or gratifying erotic desires and/or genital sexual expression. (“Is God Sexual?,” 192) See also the discussion in Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, 239–40, 250–1.

²⁶³ See Grenz, “Is God Sexual?,” 208–9. For an exegetical perspective which denies human sexual differentiation has anything to do with the *imago Dei*, see Phyllis Bird, “Male and Female He Created Them,” 147–55. However, Phyllis Trible states in contrast, “Clearly, ‘male and female’ correspond structurally to ‘the image of God,’ and this formal parallelism indicates a semantic correspondence.” (*God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1978), 17) See *SGRS*, 273 for Grenz’s agreement with Trible. See also Grenz’s statement that, contrary to the substantialist concept, the *imago Dei* is “not the possession of the individual qua individual but rather is a relational or community concept.” (“Response to Terry Muck, ‘After Selfhood: Constructing the Religious Self,’” *Insights* 113.1 (Fall 1997), 31–2) In line with this, a Grenzian perspective rules out any rendering of the divine image in terms of a tripartite structure located in individual human persons. Joel B. Green, *Salvation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), 19–20 appeals to an understanding of *imago Dei* relationality very much like Grenz’s and states, “It would be easy to imagine that the community of the Godhead is replicated in a tripartite understanding of the human person – body, soul, and spirit. This would be a mistake in category.” (19) A Grenzian perspective rules out a tripartite understanding both because of its individualism and the univocity of its internal grammar that causes the divine image to be interpreted improperly according to numerical sameness.

²⁶⁴ Thus, in *SE*, Part 2 discusses marriage and Part 3 discusses singleness.

²⁶⁵ Gregory of Nyssa is often cited in favor of an androgynous eschatological state which is sexless and/or genderless. But Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective*, 31–55 argues that while Gregory holds “biological sexuality” will fade away, having been transcended in Christ, eschatological gender difference may still yet persist. (49–55) Cortez cites Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 163 to say for Gregory “it is possible that

narratives²⁶⁶ according to the goal and destiny of the *imago Dei* points forward toward the realization of the ecclesial *imago*, the ecclesial self, ecclesial relation, and thus the church as the prolepsis of the new humanity.

Before going further, it is necessary to field a recent critique from Megan DeFranza regarding Grenz's understanding of sexuality.²⁶⁷ DeFranza's concerns extend from what she considers to be Grenz's conflation of sex, gender, and sexuality.²⁶⁸ The result for DeFranza is that Grenz reads his whole anthropology through an ill-conceived "lens of the sexual" and notion of "sexual incompleteness," yielding a "sexual *imago*" which Grenz cannot get past and that stunts his whole project.²⁶⁹ Perhaps most concerning is the determination that, according to DeFranza's telling at least, because the lens of the sexual

eschatological humanity is 'de-genitalized' but not de-gendered." (52) Grenz differs somewhat, stating: "marriage and genital sexual *expression* are linked to this penultimate age." (*SGRS*, 301, emphasis mine) Cortez mentions Kari Elisabeth Børresen, "God's Image, Man's Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen. 1.27 and 1 Cor. 11.7," in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991), 199–205, who accepts Augustine's eschatological inclusion of biological sexuality while resisting his gender hierarchicalism, which seems generally descriptive of Grenz's approach.

²⁶⁶ Grenz (*SGRS*, 284) cites Irenaeus as "probably the first" to offer a trinitarian reading of Genesis 1.26.

²⁶⁷ See Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 147, 149, 154–7, 162–4, 166–8, 172, 175–7, 181, 184, 187–9, 195–9, 215–21, 224–6, 230, 234–7, 239–42, 244–5, 280, 285 for her discussions and critiques of Grenz.

²⁶⁸ DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 197–8, 216. However, we might ask if DeFranza merely assumes the separation of sex and gender, as well as her critique of binaries, from contemporary critical discourse without adequately interrogating such discourse for theological purposes. See *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 166 where she castigates Grenz for disregarding the "normal definitions" of sex/sexuality as an indication of this. However, there are concerns about such an approach. I agree with Beth Felker Jones that a sex/gender distinction can be potentially helpful for rooting out malformed social constructions of gender, particularly as they impact women. However, Jones continues: "What is less helpful about the distinction between sex and gender, nature and nurture, is that – in practice – the two are often impossible to split apart. The two categories slip into one another, and sometimes that slippage tempts us to give up on maleness and femaleness altogether," and "To be 'saved' by destroying women cannot be good for women. This is the fundamental reason that I don't buy arguments that would do away with so-called 'binary sexuality' – the understanding that humans exist in two sexes, male and female. Scripture teaches that we were created male and female and that God loves us as such. A sinful world may hate and despise female bodies, but God loves them and plans to redeem them." (*Faithful: A Theology of Sex* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 31–2) As well, Elaine Storkey warns the "gender baggage" from the social sciences (as well as some interpretations of Scripture) needs to be "unpacked and examined before the concept can be accorded new [theological] citizenship." ("Evangelical Theology and Gender," in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, eds. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 161) See also Sarah Coakley's dissatisfaction with the critique of gender binaries in critical discourse (while still being attentive to the concerns of such discourse) and her proposal for a "theological approach to gender" in which the gendered "twoness is ambushed by [divine] threeness." (*God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 53–8 (53, 58))

²⁶⁹ DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 186–9.

looms so large in Grenz's project, in the end he is not even shy about describing God as "sexual."²⁷⁰ In response, we should first underscore that what DeFranza interprets from Grenz as a totalizing "sexual incompleteness" is actually in Grenz's own terms sexuality "understood as *the sense of incompleteness and the corresponding drive for wholeness . . . [which] forms the dynamic that not only seeks human relationships but also motivates the quest for God.*"²⁷¹ What is in view here is not that sexuality as a whole should be identified in simple fashion with human incompleteness totally on its own. DeFranza at this point magnifies one side of the sexual dynamic to the diminishment of the other and thus only gives half of Grenz's definition. "Incompleteness" for Grenz is not itself the sum-total of sexuality. Grenz's view is more dynamic than that. For him embodied human sexuality encompasses the whole relational dynamic of the recognition (or sense, or realization) of incompleteness *together with* the corresponding desire for social bonding and community which ultimately points toward the ecclesial and eschatological horizons.²⁷²

In addition, while DeFranza reads Grenz as collapsing sex, gender, and sexuality into each other, she fails here to be a patient reader of Grenz that allows him to define his own terms.²⁷³ As a result, while Grenz is clear to note that the dynamic surplus of sexuality far exceeds sexual intercourse or genital sexual expression,²⁷⁴ DeFranza still imports her own more restrictive definitions into her analysis. This causes her to seemingly reduce Grenz's vision of sexuality in some instances to "sexual need," "sexual desire," and even the "sex drive."²⁷⁵ In the end, she (mis)construes Grenz's multi-layered vision of sexuality in

²⁷⁰ DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 197.

²⁷¹ *SGRS*, 280. Emphasis mine.

²⁷² *SGRS*, 283. Cf. Grenz, "Social God," 87 and Grenz, "Is God Sexual?," 191–2.

²⁷³ See this judgement as well in Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 160–1. See also DeFranza's claim that Grenz has "imbibed too much of the Freudian spirit of the age." (*Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 189) Sexton responds that DeFranza "seems too driven by her own argument to fairly read [Grenz's] work without convoluted, doing more robust eisegesis on Grenz's corpus than exegesis, creating a more Freudian Grenz than his writings actually allow, meanwhile ignoring his theological descriptions and definitions of terms." (164)

²⁷⁴ See Grenz, "Is God Sexual?," 192 and *SGRS*, 277.

²⁷⁵ See this in Megan K. DeFranza, "Sexuality and the Image of God: Dangers in Evangelical and Roman Catholic Theologies of the Body," *Africanus Journal* 3.1 (April 2011), 19; DeFranza, "Review of *Singled Out: Why Celibacy Must Be Reinvented in Today's Church* by Christine A. Colón and Bonnie E. Field," *Africanus Journal* 2.2 (November 2010), 59; and DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 189, 198. We also note DeFranza's attempt to articulate a theology of intersexuality is needful and highly commendable in its aim. Nevertheless, in addition to this reductionism, there are some methodological problems with her project.

ways that not only gloss over his own distinctions but attributes to Grenz that which he specifically denies.²⁷⁶ Such is the case when DeFranza places Grenz in the position of having described God as sexual. She cites Grenz's essay, "Is God Sexual?," in support, but her conclusion here is both overstated and overreached. Grenz's position here is more nuanced. As Jason Sexton points out, Grenz's concerns here surround concepts of God as radically non-sexual in such a way as to disconnect human sexuality from what it means to be created in the divine image.²⁷⁷ This, for Grenz, would serve to undercut *imago Dei* relationality. But Grenz states his position carefully: "[A]lthough God is *neither strictly male nor female . . . God somehow encompasses what to us are the sexual distinctions of male and female.*"²⁷⁸ However, if any doubt remains, Grenz specifies even more clearly in *Social God* that the church has acted wisely in rejecting "the idea of a God who is literally sexual. God is neither male nor female, nor a duality of male and female."²⁷⁹ Grenz is clear that sexual embodiment is a human distinctive and not a feature of the transcendent, triune God. Even so, the God who is beyond all sexual distinction remains the transcendent ground of human *imago Dei* relationality, a reality that Grenz specifies as pointing beyond itself to the ecclesial community and eschatological horizon.²⁸⁰

The first part of DeFranza's study comprises her own culture source, setting the context of the thought forms of current science and critical discourse, and the second gives her own theological proposal. While this may, at first, appear similar to Grenz's own engagement with culture in *SGRS*, there is a large difference. Whereas Grenz has substantial methodological resources to safeguard his project from cultural projectionism, DeFranza's study does not seem so well equipped in this regard. DeFranza may simply assume the binary critique and separation of sex and gender from contemporary critical discourse such that her *theological* project is rendered susceptible to over-determination by her *culture* source, and thus vulnerable to charges of cultural foundationalism, projectionism, and onto-theology. This is further reflected in that, while she aims to "restore the social Trinity to the social *imago*" (*Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 230–8), she fails to engage any of the prominent critiques of social trinitarianism previously discussed in this chapter from Kilby, Tanner, Holmes, etc.

²⁷⁶ In addition to his clear distinguishing between biological sexuality and his deeper, more expansive definition (*SGRS*, 267–303), see also his careful use of phrases such as "sexual differentiation" (*SGRS*, 269–76) and "genital sexual expression" (*SGRS*, 300–2) which add further nuance to his discussion.

²⁷⁷ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 160.

²⁷⁸ Grenz, "Is God Sexual?," 208. Emphasis mine. Grenz also states: "[T]he foundational connection between the triune God and human sexuality *does not occur* because God is either male or female or because God is both male and female." ("Is God Sexual?," 211–12, emphasis mine)

²⁷⁹ *SGRS*, 293.

²⁸⁰ DeFranza does note Grenz's emphasis on the ecclesial self, the eschatological horizon, and his Christological focus in *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 240, 280. Perhaps ironically, she states: "The social *imago* as the ecclesial/eschatological community is the proper image of the social Trinity." (237) DeFranza seems to suggest she is correcting Grenz at this point, but I would contend this is the very thing

Moving forward from these considerations, we now observe that Grenz as well holds determinedly onto the mutuality of “male and female” in all spheres of life.²⁸¹ For example, he quotes Bonhoeffer on the mutual dependence inherent in the creation of humans as “male and female.”²⁸² Bonhoeffer states:

The creature is free in that one creature exists in relation to another creature. And God created them man and woman. The human being is not alone. Human beings exist in duality, and it is in this *dependence on the other that their creatureliness consists*. The creatureliness of human beings is no more a quality or something at hand or an existing entity than human freedom is. It can be defined in simply no other way than in terms of the existence of human beings over-against-one-another, with-one-another, and in-dependence-upon-one-another.²⁸³

Grenz holds that the God who is the unity-in-diversity of the Father, Son, and Spirit is “fundamentally relational” and therefore it is no surprise that at “the pinnacle of creation, a unity-in-diversity – humankind as male and female – emerges.”²⁸⁴ Extending from this, and true to the thrust of his trinitarian *imago Dei* theology, Grenz locates the grammar of godly human relationships and female/male mutuality in the triune relations.²⁸⁵ Not only

Grenz was explicitly doing in his theological project. Unfortunately, DeFranza’s own reductive rendering of what she terms Grenz’s “sexual *imago*” obscures from her view the full development and significance of these Grenzian features.

²⁸¹ See Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 151–7; Grenz, “Anticipating God’s New Community,” 595–611; and Grenz, “Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationships,” 83–101. See also *SGRS*, 273–6 for his exegesis of the women as an *ezer kenegdo* from a “mutualist” perspective.

²⁸² See *SGRS*, 295. See also Lisa Dahill’s description of Adam’s dependence on the bodily otherness of Eve as the “person-forming limit to his original loneliness and dominance.” (“Con-Formation with Jesus Christ: Bonhoeffer, Social Location, and Embodiment,” in *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, eds. Jens Zimmermann and Brian Gregor (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 180, 183) Dahill is commenting on Bonhoeffer’s idea of Eve as “limit” to Adam in *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 3, trans. Douglas Stephen Bax, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 98–9.

²⁸³ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 64. Emphasis original. This statement occurs in the context of Bonhoeffer’s development of the *analogia relationis* (or analogy of relation) in *Creation and Fall*, 60–7. The quote provided here represents a more recent translation versus the older version Grenz utilized in *SGRS*, 295.

²⁸⁴ Grenz, “Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships,” 85.

²⁸⁵ We should register, however, the shared and similar skepticism of Bird and Shillaker, “Subordination in the Trinity and Gender Roles,” 305–6 and Kevin Giles regarding any correlation of the Trinity and the man/woman relationship. Giles states: “The Trinity is a threefold relationship; the man/woman relationship is twofold. If God’s threefoldness were stressed, and it was agreed the Trinity was prescriptive of human relations, then threesomes would be the ideal! Furthermore, the Father/Son relationship is a picture of a male/male relationship. Most of us would not want to build on this observation! Finally, if the divine Father/Son relationship prescribes human relationships, we would think it first applied to the human father/son relationship or the parent/child relationship.” (“CBE and the Doctrine of the

is the economic manifestation of Jesus' obedience to the Father an exemplar for all human beings (female *and* male and not just women), calling us to mutual submission to one another, but this mutuality is evidenced in the immanent divine relations as well.²⁸⁶

Grenz mentions that some theologians look to the eternal movement of generation in which the Father begets the Son to construct an asymmetrical model of the Trinity of authority and subordination, where authority flows from the Father to the Son and then to the Spirit, as the basis for a linear and one-sided conception of male authority and female subordination and submission.²⁸⁷ However, Grenz avers strongly:

Such a conclusion fails to see that the dynamic Origen referred to as "the eternal generation of the Son" moves in two directions. As the church father Athanasius realized, not only does this dynamic generate the Son, it also constitutes the Father. In that the Son is none other than the eternal Son of the eternal Father, the Son is not the Son without the Father. But in the same way, the Father – being the eternal Father of the eternal Son – is not the Father without the Son.²⁸⁸

Along with this, Grenz presses forward to assert a dynamic of mutual dependence within the Trinity.²⁸⁹ Perhaps surprisingly, he offers a stipulation that "the Son is subordinate to

Trinity," *Priscilla Papers* 25.4 (Autumn 2011), 21 and see similar worries in Kevin Giles, "The Trinity Argument," in *Raising Women Leaders: Perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Contexts*, eds. Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey (Sydney, AU: Australasian Pentecostal Studies, 2009), 141) While we should be aware of the limits of analogy, such interpretations as these applied to Grenz would effectively (mis)read his *analogy* of relation according to a grammar of numerical sameness and *univocity* that would misrepresent his approach.

²⁸⁶ Grenz, "Theological Foundations for Male-Female Relationships," 616–9.

²⁸⁷ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 154; Grenz, "Anticipating God's New Community," 597–8; and Grenz, "Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships," 87–8. For a recent overview of the full range of positions regarding the evangelical "subordination" debate, see Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House, eds., *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*. For a strong critique of "eternal functional subordination," see McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism?*, 175–88.

²⁸⁸ Grenz, "Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships," 87. Grenz states similarly in reference to Irenaeus, "As Irenaeus pointed out in the second century, without the Son the Father is not the Father of the Son." (*Women in the Church*, 154) See also Thomas G. Weinandy, "The *Filioque*: Beyond Athanasius and Thomas Aquinas: An Ecumenical Proposal," in *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century*, 185–97 concerning the reciprocal "personing" of the Father, Son, and Spirit in their triune relations and the manner in which the divine persons as subsistent relations are also mutually dependent on the action of the Spirit. Weinandy states: "As subsistent relations fully in act they define and are simultaneously being defined by their mutual and reciprocal fully in act relations." (196) See as well *NGQB*, 283–90, 339–41 on the reciprocally constituting triune "personal relations."

²⁸⁹ In the context of his discussion of triune mutuality Grenz evinces what is later called his *Grundaxiom* of the ontological primacy of the immanent Trinity and the epistemic priority of the economic Trinity, stating: "What is true within the eternal divine dynamic (. . . the 'immanent Trinity') is in turn visible

the Father within the eternal Trinity.” However, in a very similar way as above, he continues by saying that the Father, having entrusted the Son with his reign, is mutually dependent on the Son for his deity.²⁹⁰ Here Grenz displays the influence of the “reciprocal relational trinitarianism” of Pannenberg which moves him to conclude, “the subordination of the Son to the Father must be balanced by the subordination of the Father to the Son.”²⁹¹ Grenz thus refuses any sort of unilateral gender essentialism which works with an inner logic that assigns to men the roles of authority, leadership, and protection and to women the roles of subordination and submission.²⁹² Instead, Grenz beckons us to the high calling of mutuality “in Christ” and through the Spirit which best reflects the eternal dynamic within the triune God.²⁹³

Sarah Coakley and Miroslav Volf on Gender and the Trinity

Is the line that Grenz draws here from the mutuality of the triune relations to the mutuality of “male and female” in human creation too straight? At first glance, the recent volume *God, Sexuality, and Self* by Sarah Coakley may serve as a verification that Grenz indeed confirms the suspicions of the social trinitarian critics. While I cannot hope to do justice to Coakley’s whole work in this space, there is what initially seems an apparent

within salvation history (. . . the ‘economic Trinity’).” (“Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationships,” 87)

²⁹⁰ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 153–4.

²⁹¹ Grenz, “Anticipating God’s New Community,” 598.

²⁹² While recognizing creational female/male sexual differentiation (“Anticipating God’s New Community, 599), Grenz refuses to reify gender role constructs, saying: “I acknowledge the basic difference between males and females. But what is more difficult to determine is what that difference entails and how such a difference ought to find expression in the roles that men and women fulfill in their various relationships, including within marriage.” (“Post-feminism and a New Gender Covenant,” 52) This statement runs counter to a recent assertion from Megan du Toit. Though urging care regarding the distinction between sex and gender, she then seems to conflate these in regards to Grenz, and thus mistakes Grenz’s insistence on fundamental female/male sexual differentiation for a gendered essentialism. (“Gender: Counter-Cultural Practice? Cultural Construct? New Creation?,” in *The Gender Conversation: Evangelical Perspectives in Gender, Scripture, and the Christian Life*, eds. Edwina Murphy and David Starling (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 161, 165)

²⁹³ See Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 159–64, 169–71. For other defenses of full female/male mutuality, see Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009) and I. Howard Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3.18–19 and Ephesians 5.21–33,” 186–204; Gordon D. Fee, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 241–54; and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role’: Exploring the Logic of Women’s Subordination,” 301–33 in *Discovering Biblical Equality*.

dissonance with Grenz's trinitarian project. Coakley undertakes her own sort of "*théologie totale*" in a trinitarian mode,²⁹⁴ but it should be noted that she gives voice to a similar kind of distrust of social trinitarian claims as those voiced by Kilby, Tanner, and Holmes. She in particular has feminist theologians in mind who posit the Trinity as the "imitable prototype for ecclesial and social relations." And while she is concerned to overturn the same sort of hierarchies, she states insistently, "When humans come, in contrast, into *authentic* relation with God as Trinity through the Spirit, their values and orders of 'hierarchy' change; they are not *imitating* God thereby, but rather being radically transformed by ecstatic participation in the Spirit."²⁹⁵

Coakley states any attempt to answer the contemporary question of the trinitarian God must go the route of the inherent entanglements of human sexuality and spirituality. Thus she takes up basically an extended discussion of a trinitarian theology of desire in which the Spirit becomes the fulcrum of her project. In the course of her discussion Coakley locates contemplative and ascetic practices as the context in which "silence in the Spirit" fosters the potential response to the Word and where reason is stretched beyond its secularity in the contemporary world.²⁹⁶ Regarding gender, though she seeks to overturn hierarchies, she nevertheless rejects any sense of dualism and insists that sexuality and gender matter and that gender is a "potential vehicle of embodied salvation" that even "has an eschatological hope."²⁹⁷ For Coakley, "desire is an ontological category belonging primarily to God, and only secondarily to humans." And she further specifies, "In God,

²⁹⁴ See Coakley's explanations in *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 27, 33–65, 66–9. But see also Wesley Hill's dissent with "Coakley's rejection of Johannine trinitarianism in favor of an allegedly incompatible Pauline theology." ("Faith's Desire: Review of *God, Sexuality, and the Self* by Sarah Coakley," *First Things* 244 (Jun–Jul 2014), 57)

²⁹⁵ Quotes from Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 270, 321–2. Emphasis original. She also states, "God qua God cannot be cut down to size to fit a false feminist fear of divine transcendence." (322)

²⁹⁶ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 1–2, 25.

²⁹⁷ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 54. Though Coakley distances herself from some accounts of gender fluidity, even suggesting gender is "ineradicable," see the cautions of Beth Felker Jones concerning Coakley's "imagined transformation" of gender if such "isn't tethered to the goodness of creation and goodness of real men and women here and now" and Jones' desire for a "sustained account of continuity between creation and consummation." ("The Spirit Helps Us in Our Weakness: A Review of *God, Sexuality, and the Self*," *The Other Journal: An Intersection of Theology and Culture* (9 June 2014) <http://theotherjournal.com/2014/06/09/the-spirit-helps-us-in-our-weakness-a-review-of-god-sexuality-and-the-self/> [Accessed: 28 February 2017]) Cf. Beth Felker Jones, *Marks of His Wounds: Gender Politics and Bodily Resurrection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 87–114.

‘desire’ of course signifies no lack” but rather contains “the plenitude of longing love that God has for God’s own creation and for its full and ecstatic participation in the divine, trinitarian life.”²⁹⁸ Thus Coakley seeks a Spirit leading, prayer-based, and incorporative approach to the Trinity. Suggestively, the link Grenz maintains between human sexuality and the drive for bonding on the one hand, and Coakley’s connection between human sexuality and desire (divine and human) on the other, are both oriented toward (trine) participation in the divine life. Ultimately, this works to overcome the initial apparent dissonance and signifies a major resonance between their respective projects.²⁹⁹

Given the wariness of approaches that model the Trinity as projectionist by social trinitarian critics, it is perhaps surprising to find that one of the theologians most sharply criticized for trinitarian imitation, Miroslav Volf, shares the same critique in regards to female/male relations and gender.³⁰⁰ For instance, in *Exclusion and Embrace* Volf issues a charge of projection against both Barth and Luce Irigaray.³⁰¹ Regarding Barth, he recounts Barth’s insistence that we do not know what it means for God to be Father from human fathers. Rather we know what it means to be a human father from God as Father. Thus we should refuse the “analogy from below” and proceed with an “analogy from above.” Yet Barth draws from the Father’s begetting of the Son the idea that human males image God as Father by leading and being superordinate, leaving women with the subordinate role. Volf contends that Barth follows his analogy from above, but only after “project[ing] a patriarchal construction of masculinity onto God and tacitly declar[ing] it was there from

²⁹⁸ Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 10. See *SGRS*, 313–20 for Grenz’s nuanced discussion of the four loves (*agape, philia, storge*, and even *eros*) in relation to God.

²⁹⁹ This resonance is present even despite the ultimate divergence between Coakley’s acceptance of same-sex marriage and Grenz’s dissent. See Stanley J. Grenz, “Homosexuality and the Christian Sex Ethic,” in *Christian Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality, and Community*, 127–50 and Sarah Coakley, *The New Asceticism: Sexuality, Gender and the Quest for God* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2015), 38, 52–3, 129–43 for their differing positions. See also Wesley Hill’s charge, “One doesn’t get the sense [Coakley] is aware or cares to discuss, the ways her project could wind up reinforcing – and deepening – traditional Christian accounts of sex, gender, and divine naming.” (“Faith’s Desire,” 57)

³⁰⁰ See Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 167–90 and Volf, “The Trinity and Gender Identity,” in *Gospel and Gender: A Trinitarian Engagement with being Male and Female in Christ*, ed. Douglas A. Campbell (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 155–78. See also Myk Habets, “Prologue – Gender: Divine or Human?,” in *Reconsidering Gender: Evangelical Perspectives*, eds. Myk Habets and Beulah Wood (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 5–19 which provides a sympathetic discussion of Volf’s treatment in *Exclusion and Embrace*.

³⁰¹ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 171–4. For Grenz’s critique of Barth, see *SGRS*, 299–303.

the beginning.³⁰² Irigaray, however, fully affirms the need for a projected God, since on her reckoning, the Father, Son, and Spirit offer no feminine horizon. The woman is suppressed by “masculine transcendence.” Irigaray then is unapologetic about creating a feminine Trinity constructed according to her feminist conceptions of gender.

The problem from Volf’s point of view is that since God is beyond sexual difference (as Grenz also affirmed), the approach of both Barth and Irigaray effectively serve as the “ontologization of gender,”³⁰³ an approach that as well cuts against Grenz’s development of a *theo*-anthropology. So is there any hope of developing a constructive *trinitarian* theology of gender relations? While Volf declines any sort of essential biblical “manhood” or “womanhood,” he thinks there is a way to proceed on two fronts. First, he states that “gender identity is rooted in the sexed body and negotiated in the social exchange between men and women within a given cultural context,”³⁰⁴ and second, he proposes a focus on trinitarian relational personhood.

In his proposal, Volf affirms (along with Grenz) that embodied sexuality is an inalienable feature of human existence. There are, in line with Genesis 1 and 2, no generic human beings.³⁰⁵ What does this mean for Galatians 3:28 according to Volf? He is ultimately not convinced by claims for an eschatological androgynous ideal. Paul does not wish to cancel out distinctiveness (sexual or otherwise), but bring all into harmony with Christ. Neither does Paul rend “spirit” and “body” apart in a dualistic fashion that would undermine “gender dimorphism.”³⁰⁶ Volf states:

What has been erased in Christ is not the sexed [male or female] body, but some important culturally coded norms attached to sexed bodies. The oneness in Christ is a community of people with sexed bodies and distinct gender identities, not some abstract unity of pure spirits or de-gendered ‘persons.’³⁰⁷

³⁰² Volf, “The Trinity and Gender Identity,” 159.

³⁰³ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 173. See Grenz’s agreement with Volf on the “ontologization of gender” in *SGRS*, 293–4. While they align on this point, the two nevertheless part ways when Volf holds that human sexual differentiation is not exegetically linked to the divine image in Genesis 1:27. (*Exclusion and Embrace*, 173–4) See *SGRS*, 272 where Grenz notes this nuanced divergence between him and Volf.

³⁰⁴ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 181.

³⁰⁵ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 183.

³⁰⁶ Volf, “The Trinity and Gender Identity,” 172.

³⁰⁷ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 184. He further states: “[J]ust as the Hebrew Scripture knows of no primal androgynous, no sexually undifferentiated humanity from which ‘male and female’ have emerged, so also Paul’s claim that there is “no longer ‘male and female’” entails no eschatological denial of gender

Drawing on 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, Volf suggests that man and woman are “not without” the other and find identity in mutual relation. Regarding trinitarian personhood, Volf observes that the triune persons are reciprocally and internally constituted by the perichoretic indwelling of the other divine persons. This means the distinctive personhood of each is literally unthinkable without the others. In an analogous manner, male and female are also relationally constituted and neither can be thought without the other. Therefore, “to be a woman means to be a human being of the female sex who is ‘not without man’; to be a man means to be a human being of the male sex who is ‘not without woman’.”³⁰⁸

Female/Male Mutuality and Triune (Ecclesial) Participation

The project of Volf to construct a theology of female/male relation from “trinitarian identities”³⁰⁹ holds much resonance with Grenz; who, following what has been called his *Grundaxiom*, seeks to give primacy to the Divine Community of Father, Son, and Spirit as the ontological ground of human relationality and community (in what has been described in this chapter as a *theo*-anthropology). Similarly, in the words of Myk Habets, what Volf’s approach yields for us “is a thoroughly trinitarian account of *personhood*, applied to humans as male and female.”³¹⁰ From this, rather than and contrary to the idea

dimorphism.” (184) See also Jones, *Marks of His Wounds*, 93 who notes that, while proposed as way to fight misogyny, “the tradition of gender dissolution” has often not yielded an actual “dissolution into androgyny, though this would entail its own problems, but as a resolution of all humanity into normative maleness.” For agreement that Galatians 3:28 does not imply the abolition of sexual differentiation, see N. T. Wright, “The Biblical Case for Ordaining Women,” in *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2014), 64–8 and Judith Gundry-Volf, “Beyond Difference? Paul’s Vision of a New Humanity in Galatians 3:28,” in *Gospel and Gender*, 8–36.

³⁰⁸ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 187. Volf proposes this Pauline “not without” “suggests precisely such a complex and dynamic understanding of gender identity that corresponds to the nature of identity . . . in the doctrine of the Trinity.” (“The Trinity and Gender Identity,” 174–5) Grenz makes a shorter but similar argument regarding 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 linked to the mutual empowerment of women and men together and alongside each other in “Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationships,” 88, 94–9.

³⁰⁹ Volf, “The Trinity and Gender Identity,” 164–9.

³¹⁰ Habets, “Gender: Divine or Human?,” 15–19 (8). Emphasis original. Grenz states in accordance, “While Genesis 2 indicates that God created humans for community, Genesis 1 suggests that the human social reality finds its source in the divine [triune] social dynamic. The bridge between creature and Creator lies in the creation of humankind to be the bearer of the *imago Dei* as male and female.” (“Is God Sexual?,” 209) We should note additionally the emphasis on *personhood*, rather than reading gender back into God or rendering the *imago Dei* in some sort of numerical sameness with the Trinity. Thus when Paul Helm dissents from Grenz’s trinitarian *imago Dei* theology by saying, “one might have expected that mankind should have been established not as a single person, or even as a couple, man and wife, but as a triple, a triad, or a troika. If God is a triune community of persons, and if this is what gives God his identity, above all things, then

of a “neither-one-nor-the-other” which neuters by erasing female/male distinction, or a “both-the-one-and-the-other” which neuters by synthesizing female/male difference, Volf posits the idea of a “not-without-the-other” which “affirms gender differences while at the same time positing one gender is always internal to the other. The irreducible duality is preserved and made part of a complex identity in which each, in its own way, always already contain the other.”³¹ Much like Grenz, Volf rests his theology of gender relations on a trinitarian ontology of persons-in-communion which resists any notion of hierarchy,³² and in which the relation of male and female manifests the grammar of the relations of the triune persons. This is in accord with Grenz’s relational *imago Dei* theology, constructed from his overarching theological grammar composed of the motifs of Trinity, community, and eschatology, and from which emerges not simply community in general terms but “male and female” as a community of mutuality.

The community of “male and female” in the *imago Dei* is not where Grenz leaves off however. I noted previously how Grenz’s connection between human sexuality and the drive for bonding which finds its transcendent ground in the triune God who is love, and Coakley’s trinitarian theology of desire which forges a link between human sexuality and desire (whether divine and human), gesture toward a resonance in which both projects are oriented toward (triune) participation in the divine life. Pressing this further, in Grenz’s telling, this participation has a particular, and indeed, ecclesial shape and character. While this emphasis comes out strongly in Grenz’s conception of ecclesial *theosis* and triune participation in the later pages of *Social God*,³³ we also catch a glimpse of it in an earlier essay where Grenz states,

Although the Old Testament elevates marriage as the primal bond uniting man and woman, in the New Testament we discover an even more theologically important relationship. Drawing from the words of Jesus himself, the New Testament writers present as the primary relationship into which humans can enter the covenant with God in Christ which in turn leads to membership in the

humankind, made in the image of God, ought to be triune,” (“Cautious Trinitarianism, 23) he ironically (mis)reads Grenz’s social *analogy* in a *univocal* manner and thus misrepresents Grenz’s position.

³¹ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 187.

³² Miroslav Volf, “Being as God Is: Trinity and Generosity,” in *God’s Life in Trinity*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 10–12 and Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 180.

³³ *SGRS*, 325–6.

covenant community, the fellowship of Christ's disciples. Consequently, within this relationship we become most completely the *imago Dei*.³⁴

Because of this, the creational female/male community as well as marriage take on penultimate status as they point beyond themselves to the ecclesial and eschatological horizon.³⁵ Therefore, in *Social God*, Grenz makes the move from the relational self and social *imago* to the ecclesial self.³⁶ Thus the path Grenz charts leads to ecclesial personhood brought about by theotic triune participation. For this reason, triune participation is necessarily an ecclesial participation, one in which the ecclesial community of "male and female" is incorporated "in Christ" and through the Spirit into the perichoretic life of the triune God. Therefore, triune mutuality forms the heart of ecclesial community. Having been drawn into the divine life, the ecclesial relation and community of "male and female" – constituted "in Christ" and through the Spirit as the prolepsis of the divine image and a sacrament of divine communion – should also, within its ecclesial existence, manifest the mutuality which characterizes the triune relations. We are not yet ready to articulate a thickly conceived hermeneutical ecclesiology, but we have gleaned two important aspects toward that direction; namely, the trinitarian shape of the ecclesial community and the corresponding grammar of mutuality. Both are vital to the ecclesial existence by which the triune God is made known in the world.

³⁴ Grenz, "Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationships," 93–4. See as well Grenz, "Anticipating the New Community," 601–2.

³⁵ Thus we might also say the community expressed in both marriage and in singleness are mutually implicated ways of living out our mutual ecclesial life "in Christ" and through the Spirit. Grenz states: "God's loving character becomes visible as we love one another, whether as partners who share the exclusive love relationship of marriage or as participants in the more inclusive non-marital bonds that bring persons – both male and female – together within the context of Christ's fellowship. Within this fellowship, our task is to help others, in the words of Jean Vanier, to 'grow toward wholeness and to discover their place, and eventually exercise their gifts, in a network of friendship.' This requires, he adds, 'the integration of one's sexuality in a vision of fellowship and [ecclesial] friendship.'" ("Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationships," 94 quoting Jean Vanier, *Man and Woman He Made Them* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), 97–8)

³⁶ *SGRS*, 313–25.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM NAMED GOD TO NARRATIVE *IMAGO*: THE NARRATIVE SHAPE OF THE HERMENEUTICAL COMMUNITY

This third chapter treats the development of the dynamic of triune narrative identity which arises from the eternal trinitarian divine self-naming in Grenz's *Named God* volume, and its implications for the *imago Dei*. Thus while the previous chapter moved "from social God to social *imago*," this chapter goes "from named God to narrative *imago*." In this manner, the examination of Grenz's social trinitarianism in chapter two now meets an important critical narrative moment, which then leads into the ecclesial return moment in chapter four. This chapter opens with a descriptive summary of *Named God* as its "main road." This is followed by a critical moment which assesses the continuity and/or discontinuity of *Named God* with Grenz's prior social trinitarian theology and then presents the refinement of Grenz's theo-anthropology into a Christo-anthropology. This chapter then concludes with some constructive proposals concerning the intersection of the narrative *imago*, gender, and storied triune participation.

The Named God and the *Imago Dei*

[T]he Spirit places humans "in Christ" and thereby bestows on them personal identity *extra se in Christo* insofar as the Spirit incorporates them into the Jesus story. . . . The sense of self for those who are "in Christ," therefore, emerges from a particular "emplotment," to cite Ricoeur's term. Being "in Christ" entails participating in the narrative of Jesus, with its focus on the cross and the resurrection. It involves retelling one's own narrative, and hence making sense out of one's life, by means of the plot of the Jesus narrative.¹

[T]he saga of the I AM is ultimately the narrative of "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." The saga of the divine name, in other words, is the saga of the relationships among the three persons of the Trinity. . . . The pathway to God proceeds by means of our being caught up into the narrative of the relationality of the trinitarian persons, which narrative is eternal yet temporal, for it transpires in the history of Jesus' relationship with his Father through the Holy Spirit. We participate in this dynamic as the Holy Spirit places us "in Christ" and thereby constitutes us together as co-heirs with Christ of the treasure – the love and the

¹ *SGRS*, 329.

name – that the Father eternally lavishes on his Son. In this manner, the Spirit who is the personal concretization of the divine love leads us to love the Other in the other.²

This first section presents Grenz's development of triune narrative identity through what can be termed conversely the "saga of the I AM" or the "saga of the triune name," in his constructive push to develop a thoroughgoing trinitarian theo-ontology in *Named God*. There is first a brief primer on Grenz's approach to narrative theology generally in relationship to his trinitarian theology. Second, a summary of "Part One: The Saga of Being" presents Grenz's telling of the rise and demise of being in the first three chapters of *Named God*. Third, a synopsis of Grenz's narrating of the divine name in "Part Two: The Saga of the I AM" (chapters three, four, and five) is given. Fourth, a summation of Grenz's conclusions in "Part Three: The Saga of the Triune Name" (chapters seven, eight, and nine) regarding a trinitarian theo-ontology of the divine name and its implications for the narrative *imago* is offered.

Grenz and the Saga of the Triune God

In the previous chapter we noted Karen Kilby's proposal for an apophatic approach to trinitarian doctrine as a guard against projectionism.³ What may be unexpected is the remarkable resonance here between Kilby's articulation of this suggestion in response to the perceived errors of social trinitarianism and Grenz's overall narrative approach to theology. Both appeal to the nature of theology as a second order discipline and both reference George Lindbeck for support.⁴ Grenz presents his main engagement with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach⁵ in *Beyond Foundationalism* and

² *NGQB*, 270, 338.

³ See Scott Harrower's similar worry that "strict realist" readings of Rahner's Rule univocally read the economy of salvation back into the being of God (*Trinitarian Self and Salvation: An Evangelical Engagement with Rahner's Rule* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 2, 124) Grenz's admission that nothing is totally analogous to God as Trinity (*TCG*, 71) and the discussion on the nature of theological language, analogy, metaphor, and engagement with social trinitarian critiques in chapter two provides a Grenzian response to Harrower's concern.

⁴ See Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection," 443–5 for her appeal to Lindbeck.

⁵ The classic volume on this is Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*. For a discussion of Lindbeck in relation to MacIntyre and church tradition, see David Trener, *Alasdair MacIntyre, George Lindbeck, and The Nature of Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 140–70.

*Renewing the Center*⁶ to develop what he calls the “Christian belief-mosaic.” The choice of “mosaic” as a descriptive metaphor is explored in conjunction with Grenz’s postfoundationalist refiguring of the theological task in a postmodern context.⁷ Peter Leithart, though, insists Grenz’s use of this metaphor betrays a latent modern Cartesianism insofar as a mosaic is a static object one does not look *through* but looks *at*.⁸ Mark Medley, however, rightly insists Leithart misreads Grenz at this point. Grenz refers to the Christian belief-mosaic in order to “stress the coherency and interconnectedness of theological doctrine . . . to capture the circularity, or perichoretic character, of the proposed theological methodology.”⁹

Medley’s mention of “coherency” gives a clue as to what Grenz’s productive engagement with Lindbeck is attempting. Lindbeck distinguished between two modes of doing theology under the conditions of modern foundationalism. The “cognitive-propositionalist” approach claims too much in the assumed ability to make one-to-one first-order truth claims on a rationalist foundation. The “experiential-expressivist” approach conversely sees doctrine as arising from inward feelings and existential states and thus makes experience the foundation, even going so far at times as to see a supposed universal core experience common to all religions. Drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s language game theory, Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic approach forges a coherentist proposal in which doctrines take on a role akin to the rules of grammar.¹⁰ As a “grammar” they take on a regulative function as theological rules of discourse for a believing community of reference. “Christian doctrines establish the ground rules for the ‘game’ of Christian thinking, speaking, and living.”¹¹ Grenz puts this Lindbeckian emphasis¹² to use

⁶ For Grenz’s engagement with Lindbeck, see *BF*, 6, 10, 20, 45–9, 51, 89, 107 and *RTC*, 206–7, 210–11, 253, 276, 279, 284, 352.

⁷ See *BF*, 3–26, 49–51, 54, 120, 165–6, 170, 187, 202, 204, 231, 233–4, 249, 273 and *RTC*, 187–9, 213, 255, 351, 353.

⁸ Peter J. Leithart, “Review Essay: Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center and Beyond Foundationalism*,” *Pro Ecclesia* 11.3 (Summer 2002), 361.

⁹ Mark S. Medley, “An Evangelical Theology for a Postmodern Age: Stanley J. Grenz’s Current Theological Project,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30.1 (Spring 2003), 82.

¹⁰ On Wittgenstein’s influence on Lindbeck, see Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 33–47.

¹¹ *RTC*, 206.

¹² Extending from his adaption of Lindbeck’s post-liberalism, some have dubbed Grenz a “post-conservative.” For a pejorative view of post-conservatives, see Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Left*:

toward the articulation of the particular interconnected and coherent trinitarian “web of significance,”¹³ “matrix of meaning,” or “mosaic of beliefs” which serves to animate the community of Christ for the sake of mission within its situated context.¹⁴

The intimate relation between the church as a particular community of reference and the belief-mosaic point towards the narrative and communitarian character of Grenz’s theology.¹⁵ As a theological grammar the mosaic functions as an interpretive grid for the narrative production of identity. But this does not occur simply on an individual level. Rather narrative identity formation necessarily requires a narrative community. Theology for this reason is not only constructive but an ecclesial activity as well. Here Grenz recognizes the dangers of the enshrining of experience as the unassailable

Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997). For a positive take, see Medley, “An Evangelical Theology for a Postmodern Age,” 76, 86, 92. Roger Olson contends that while Grenz was reluctant to take up the label (perhaps because of its pejorative use from critics!), he is nevertheless the epitome of post-conservatism (*Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 15). Olson outlines six “family resemblances” for the post-conservative style of theology: 1) divine revelation aims for transformation rather than simply information and narrative before propositions, 2) the theological task is a pilgrimage marked by provisionality and the need for faithful improvisation, 3) a postmodern impulse dissatisfied with captivity to Enlightenment modes of thought, 4) evangelicalism as a centered-set rather than bounded-set movement, 5) the importance of spirituality as well as doctrine to evangelical faith, and 6) a recovery of the Great Tradition even while holding Scripture as the norming norm. (51–65) All in all, these seem reflective of Grenz. For a resonant self-described postpropositionalist, post-conservative, and postfoundationalist approach, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 265–305. See also Steven B. Sherman, *Revitalizing Theological Epistemology: Holistic Evangelical Approaches to the Knowledge of God* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), chapters one (1–15), two (16–127), and three (128–202) and Roger E. Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 640–8, which treat Grenz as a representative post-conservative.

¹³ On Grenz’s use of the “web” metaphor in addition to “mosaic,” see Grenz, “Articulating the Belief-Mosaic,” 113, 123–4; Grenz, “Conversing in Christian Style,” 87; *BF*, 25, 39, 82, 117, 136, 144, 165, 197, 204, 210, 216, 231; and *RTC*, 189, 199, 213, 284. Grenz admits some pieces are more central in the mosaic than others (*CFC*, xxiv–xxvi and *RTC*, 213), thus his trinitarian motifs and narrative sources do appear as ordered sets. Are these conditions enough to cast Grenz as a soft-foundationalist? (Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 35–6, 180 and Harris, “Why Method Matters,” 10–11) The addition of the web metaphor helps show this need not be the case. Dan Stiver (“Theological Method,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, 172–3), referencing W. V. O. Quine, notes that in a web, while some features are more central and others peripheral, “unlike a foundational structure the logic relations do not proceed in just one way.” (172) See W. V. O. Quine and J. S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief* (New York, NY: Random House, 1970) which Grenz cites. (*BF*, 39 and *RTC*, 199) Cf. Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 84, 104–5 and Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 118. For an additional metaphor for theological knowledge as a map, see Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 294–301.

¹⁴ *BF*, 165 and Grenz, “Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic,” 123. See also Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 85–6, 120, 158, 177, 180; Harris, *The Theological Method of Stanley J. Grenz*, 92–9, 170, 200, 211; and Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 45, 126, 132, 187.

¹⁵ *BF*, 48–51, 203–38.

foundation on the experientialist side and the complete eschewing of experience on the side of propositionalist rationalism. The ubiquity of communal human experience, though, would seem to imply that it would be unwise, and indeed impossible, to somehow ignore in wholesale fashion. There is never a time when we are not “storied” in some manner or way.¹⁶ Yet Grenz observes that experience does not simply precede interpretation in a foundationalist manner. “Rather, experiences are always filtered by an interpretive framework – a grid – that facilitates their occurrence.”¹⁷ Grenz presses this further, however, to contend that there are no essentially generic religious or theological experiences. There are only identity forming experiences generated in connection to specific communities and traditions. All identity in this sense is not only communitarian in nature but in a very real sense traditioned and storied.¹⁸

Grenz draws on Peter Berger to explicate the nature of “socially constructed reality”¹⁹ in connection to narrative identity. Social communities mediate the symbols, metaphors, and linguistic resources which generate shared meaning and identity. “Theology, we might conclude, explores the world-constructing, knowledge-forming, identity-forming ‘language’ of the Christian community.”²⁰ The particular Christian identity producing belief-mosaic takes its own shape from the activity of the triune God in the world as the norming biblical narrative takes on the role of what Grenz calls a “paradigmatic narrative.”²¹ Scripture narrates to us the stories or paradigmatic events that give shape to the identity of the Christian community. As a “people of the book”²² then,

¹⁶ Stanley Hauerwas (“No Enemy, No Christianity: Preaching Between ‘Worlds’,” in *Sanctify Them in Truth: Holiness Exemplified*, Second edition (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 211) states regarding the modernist impulse: “[T]he project of modernity was to produce people who believe they should have no story except the story they choose when they had no story.”

¹⁷ *BF*, 49.

¹⁸ For the connection of narrative, ecclesial community, and tradition, see Grenz, “Theological Heritage as Hermeneutical Trajectory,” 215–39 and *BF*, 93–129. See also the storied, relational epistemology of N. T. Wright in *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 31–46 which Wright notes has resonance with Ricoeur’s hermeneutical and narrative arcs (44).

¹⁹ See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luchman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), 13, 99–104 and Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 3–51.

²⁰ *BF*, 53.

²¹ *BF*, 80.

²² Grenz, “Nurturing the Soul, Informing the Mind: The Genesis of the Evangelical Scripture Principle,” 21–41.

Christians form a narrative community gathered around the story of Jesus Christ. In *Social God*, Grenz explains that the storied identity of those who are placed “in Christ” through the Spirit takes its shape from the plot of the Jesus narrative.²³ “By looking to the biblical story as constituting our own identity, we become the contemporary embodiment of Jesus’ narrative, and hence we are called ‘the body of Christ.’”²⁴

The combination of the communitarian turn and the second order nature of theological construction would seem to enable both the space for the development of a distinctly Christian doctrine of the Trinity as well as ensuring the appropriate apophatic space that Kilby desires. Grenz notes a potential problem however. Does the forsaking of foundationalism undercut metaphysical realism? Or, what can be said about a world beyond our doctrinal formulations?²⁵ The path toward answering these questions leads Grenz to what he terms “eschatological realism” in which the future becomes a proleptic narrative reality in the present through the agency of the Spirit.²⁶ The means of accomplishing this goal or *telos* runs through the Bible as the norming narrative of the ecclesial community insofar as Scripture is the “instrumentality of the Spirit.”²⁷ Grenz appeals to speech-act theory to explain how this can occur in a postfoundationalist theology.²⁸ The biblical text itself forms the locutionary act or that which is enunciated. It

²³ *SGRS*, 329.

²⁴ *BF*, 80 and Stanley J. Grenz, “Community, Interpretive,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 129. See also *BF*, 46 and the reference to Lindbeck’s “intratextual theology” that “re-describes reality within a scriptural framework” which is directed toward “imaginatively incorporating all being into a Christ-centered world.” (*The Nature of Doctrine*, 118)

²⁵ See Jeffrey Hensley, “Are Postliberals Necessarily Antirealists? Reexamining the Metaphysics of Lindbeck’s Postliberal Theology,” in *The Nature of Confession: Evangelical and Postliberals in Conversation*, eds. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 69–80 for the view Lindbeck does not succumb to antirealism or relativism. For a positive case for a “conservative relativism” which engages Wittgenstein, Richard Rorty, and Robert Brandom, see James K. A. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Relativism? Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

²⁶ *BF*, 271–3 and *RTC*, 254–6. Cf. Stanley J. Grenz, “Eschatological Theology: Contours of a Postmodern Theology of Hope,” *Review and Expositor* 97.3 (2000), 339–54.

²⁷ *RTC*, 215. In line with the Grenzian grammar then, Grenz’s ontology of Scripture is fully trinitarian and accordingly he locates his discussion of Scripture within the section on pneumatology in *TCG*, 379–404. See also John R. Franke, “Christian Faith and Postmodern Theory: Theology and the Nonfoundationalist Turn,” in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*, ed. Myron B. Penner (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 116.

²⁸ *BF*, 24, 72–83 and *RTC*, 214–5. On speech act theory, see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). See also the sympathetic critique of Grenz’s

is then through Scripture that the Spirit performs the illocutionary act of divine address and action.²⁹ These features are situated within and oriented toward the goal or *telos* of the Spirit's speaking in which the Spirit accomplishes a particular perlocutionary act – namely, the Spirit's construction of the eschatological “world” of the new humanity of the new creation.³⁰ At work here is Grenz's adaption of the ontological priority of the eschatological future which can thus be described as an eschatological realism.³¹

We have already seen the identity producing belief-mosaic at work in *Social God* as Grenz worked out his grammar of Trinity, community, and eschatology. And though not emphasized in the previous chapter, the grammar of Scripture as norming narrative,³² the church's tradition as hermeneutical trajectory,³³ and culture as embedding context³⁴ is also present throughout Grenz's first *Matrix* volume. At work within the belief-mosaic of the Grenzian grammar of the trinitarian motifs and the narrative sources is the Spirit who brings those destined to be the *imago Dei* “in Christ” (as the true *imago*) to fulfil their divine mandate as narrative and “linguistic” co-participants in the eschatological “world” formation of the Spirit's making.³⁵ Consistent with his thoroughgoing trinitarianism, the authority of both Scripture and tradition is dependent on the activity of the Spirit for the church's mission in its context as the eschatological realm manifests proleptically in the

application of speech act theory in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and the Discourse of the Covenant,” in *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 197–9.

²⁹ Grenz suggests the examples of the teaching, reproving, correcting, and instructing in 2 Timothy 3:16 and various Psalms that instruct how we may voice our thoughts and emotions to God. (*RTC*, 215)

³⁰ See Stanley J. Grenz, “The Spirit and the Word: The World-Creating Function of the Text,” *Theology Today* 57.3 (Oct 2000), 357–74 and *BF*, 75–8. Cf. Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 63–77, 92–3, 114, 124, 139–40, 213 for discussions of the “world behind the text,” “world of the text,” and “world in front of the text” in Ricoeur.

³¹ Grenz states: “Where does [the created universe's] givenness lie? Where is its actuality? . . . the ‘objectivity of the world’ about which we can truly speak is an objectivity of a *future*, eschatological world. The ‘actual’ universe is the universe as it one day will be. And this eschatological universe is nothing short of a *new* creation. Because this future reality is God's determined will for creation, as that which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:26–28), it is far more real – and hence far more objective, far more actual – than the present world, which is now passing away (1 Cor. 7:31) . . . This eschatological realm breaks into the here and now as the Holy Spirit fashions our present in the light of God's future.” (*BF*, 271–2) See also Franke, *The Character of Theology*, 78–9 for a similar approach.

³² See in particular *SGRS*, chapters five and six.

³³ *SGRS*, chapter four.

³⁴ *SGRS*, chapters two and three.

³⁵ *BF*, 53.

present. Grenz specifies that setting Scripture against tradition or tradition over Scripture is to misconstrue the “eschatological directedness” of the Spirit in guiding the community of faith towards the truth of its divinely given *telos*.³⁶ His postfoundationalist narrative construing of the Grenzian grammar locates ultimate authority in the triune God. If we must speak of a “foundation,” Grenz insists it can only be the triune God “who is disclosed in polyphonic fashion through Scripture, the church, and even the world, albeit always in accordance with the normative divine self-disclosure through Scripture.”³⁷

This very same impulse finds its expression in *Social God* as Grenz works in the wake of the demise of the self within the postmodern milieu to develop in constructive fashion “a trinitarian theology of the *imago Dei*.”³⁸ The result is what I positioned in the previous chapter as a trinitarian theo-anthropology leading to Grenz’s construction of the ecclesial self. The driving Grenzian trinitarian impulse likewise finds expression in *Named God* and thus, in line with the trinitarian motifs, it is fitting that the themes of community and eschatology play their respective integrative and orienting functions in Grenz’s argument and conclusions regarding an ontology of the triune divine name. However, though Grenz conducts a study of a trinitarian theo-ontology in *Named God*, he is clear in the introduction that his study of ontology will be conducted through a narrative lens – namely, that story which constitutes the saga of trinitarian narrative identity disclosed in the saga of the triune divine name. Grenz selects the term “saga” with intent saying, “the word ‘saga’ was deliberately chosen as the heading for each of the three parts of the book because of the narrative overtones that it conveys.”³⁹ Because of this, the trialogue of narrative sources are also interwoven within the second *Matrix* volume just like the first.⁴⁰ Thus “the saga of being” forms a narration of the embedding contextual milieu of Western philosophical ontology and onto-theology. “The saga of the I AM” presents a scriptural exegesis of the divine name. And, in a significant move as a free church and Baptist

³⁶ Grenz, “Theological Heritage as Hermeneutical Trajectory,” 237.

³⁷ Grenz, “Theological Heritage as Hermeneutical Trajectory,” 227.

³⁸ The subtitle for *SGRS*.

³⁹ *NGQB*, 7.

⁴⁰ Grenz was specific that the trialogue of “canonical Scripture, the theological heritage of the church, and the intellectual currents of the wider culture” would be present throughout the *Matrix* series. (*SGRS*, x) Thus the narrative Grenzian grammar is active in both *SGRS* and *NGQB*.

theologian, Grenz conducts a deep engagement with the church's (trinitarian) theological tradition in "the saga of the triune name."⁴¹ Each of these narrates a certain story or drama in Grenz's theo-ontological argument and together they narrate an overarching story: "the saga of the intended interplay of the named character of God and the question of Being, and hence the intended interplay of theology and ontology."⁴² With this we now turn to a descriptive summary of Grenz's presentation of the saga of the triune God in *Named God*.

The Rise and Demise of Being

In Part One of *Named God* – titled "The Saga of Being" – Grenz begins with a narrative genealogy of the rise and demise of Being.⁴³ Forming the first act in the saga of Being, chapter one – "From *To On* to the *Ipsum Esse*: The Christianization of Being"⁴⁴ – begins with the pre-Socratic philosophers. Prior to the sixth century BC, "ultimate questions" were answered with an appeal to a pantheon of gods. Those who would come to be known as philosophers sought to shift explanations concerning the diversity of things in the cosmos, the changeability of these things, and the resemblance of certain things to each other toward some sort of underlying logic (*logos*) which provided cosmic order. Thales of Miletus (625–547) posited the first principle as water. Anaximander (611–546), however, held that the first principle was not directly observable by the natural senses. The constancy of change prompted Heraclitus (544–484) to propose fire as the first principle (though Grenz observes this may have been metaphorical). Parmenides (540–470), however, concluded from his consideration of "what is" (*to on*) that a changeable cosmic unity is a contradiction. He averred that fundamental reality is static. Being was thus born, but the most that could be said about "what is," was that "it is."⁴⁵

⁴¹ See Steven R. Harmon, "Catholic Baptists' and the New Horizon of Tradition in Baptist Theology," in *Toward Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2006), 1–21, who notes the suspicion with which tradition is sometimes regarded in free church, Baptist theology and then offers his own constructive response.

⁴² *NGQB*, 7.

⁴³ Throughout this survey it should be recognized that Grenz provides more depth and texture in his historical discussions than can be duplicated here. For Grenz's own summary of Part One see the introduction to *NGQB* (7–8) and follow the footnotes provided here for direction to Grenz's discussions in the main text.

⁴⁴ *NGQB*, 15–50.

⁴⁵ *NGQB*, 17–23.

Most important for Grenz's consideration of the promotion of Being to the center of philosophical inquiry in this chapter are Plato (428–348) and Aristotle (384–322) and their subsequent link to Augustine (354–430) and Aquinas (1225–1274) respectively. Plato's enormous impact on the story of ontology and Being flows primarily through his theory of the Forms.⁴⁶ Plato distinguished between the sensible realm of changeability, appearance, and sense experience, and the intelligible realm of the unchangeable Forms. In addition, Plato held that these two realms are connected, with the objects in the sensible realm participating in their corresponding and proper Forms. This participation means that rational human knowledge of an ontological nature is possible, while the participation of the Forms in each other yields a hierarchy with the "Form of the Good" at the apex. In the quest to know the "Form of the Good," Being achieves an "eternal reality that gives meaning to everything else."⁴⁷

Concerning Aristotle's first philosophy, or "metaphysics" as the study of Being as Being, we can summarize thusly.⁴⁸ First, the substance of a thing contains both essential and accidental characteristics. Second, rather than forms existing in a separate realm, they instead reside in the individual things themselves. "Form is never without matter, and matter is never without form."⁴⁹ Third, things in the world exist as ongoing acts from potentiality to actuality. In reference to the changeability of substances Aristotle lists four causes: formal (what it is), material (from what it is made), efficient (by what or whom it is made), and final (the goal or *telos* for which it is made). Lastly, the movement of things from potentiality to teleological actuality presumes an unchangeable "purely actual" or an *actus purus* that is the fullness of being, the object of desire that draws the universe towards its natural end. This is Aristotle's distant Unmoved Mover which exists in an eternal state of divine self-reflection. In Grenz's terms, the *to on* of the pre-Socratic philosophers became the "Self-absorbed Intellect."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *NGQB*, 23–7.

⁴⁷ *NGQB*, 27.

⁴⁸ *NGQB*, 27–33.

⁴⁹ *NGQB*, 30.

⁵⁰ *NGQB*, 33.

Some early Christian leaders were suspect of the Platonic heritage (Tertullian) while others were more positive (Clement of Alexandria and Origen). Grenz notes the most influential brand of Platonism came through the Neoplatonism of Plotinus (204–270) in which all that is emanates (in the form of Intelligence, Soul, and corrupted Matter) in a cyclical movement from “the One” and back to “the One” through the interiority of the soul.⁵¹ While Augustine’s view of reality was determined by his Christian faith, Grenz notes the influence of Neoplatonism in Augustine’s emphasis on the soul and the Augustinian inward turn.⁵² Augustine’s inward turn has cognitive, affective, and volitional aspects which are ordered toward one proper goal; namely, real and intimate knowledge (love) of the true and triune God. In adapting Neoplatonic ontology to his own uses, Augustine replaces the impersonal “One” with the Christian God who is love, the highest good, eternal and all-knowing Being, and the source of all being. Thus “the Being of Greek philosophy became the God who is the soul’s desire. As such, the biblical God – the one disclosed as the great I AM – is Being itself.”⁵³

Aquinas viewed theology as the completion of philosophy and it is he who is responsible for the medieval synthesis of Christian theology with Aristotelian Greek philosophy.⁵⁴ Aquinas emphasized that things have being insofar as they have “essence” and “existence.” This raises the inherent contingency of these things and that there is a Being who exists as the author of all things, a Being with existence as its essence and thus a necessary Being. In a move similar to Augustine, Aquinas linked this idea with the God of the Bible. Thus Being belongs to God’s own nature and God is the one who bestows being on everything that is. In doing this Aquinas transformed the Unmoved Mover as final cause of the world into the Creator God of Scripture, as not only final cause but also efficient cause. The triune “God is therefore the *ipsum esse* from whom all things derive their *esse*”⁵⁵ and who knows all about every created thing and exercises providential care.

⁵¹ *NGQB*, 34–8.

⁵² *NGQB*, 38–44. Grenz concentrates on Augustine’s adaption of Neoplatonism. However, see also 41–3 where he discusses how Augustine drew on Aristotle as well.

⁵³ *NGQB*, 44.

⁵⁴ *NGQB*, 44–50. Grenz concentrates on Aquinas’ appropriation of Aristotle. However, see also 45–7 where he mentions Aquinas in relation to Augustine as well.

⁵⁵ *NGQB*, 48.

“As the *ipsum esse*, God has become the self-existent First Cause of the world, as well as Being qua Being.”⁵⁶

Grenz notes Aquinas’ genius was his synthesis of theology and philosophy, with natural theology as the point of overlap, that presented God as the “scientific God” and first principle necessary for both.⁵⁷ The legacies of Augustine and Aquinas would cast long shadows but the story of Being is complicated. Grenz summarizes thusly:

Some thinkers would pursue a pathway similar to the one that Aquinas, following Aristotle, had trod and offer variations and permutations of the idea of God as the First Cause of the world. Others, in contrast, would opt in a direction that was more in keeping with Plato and Augustine and appeal instead to the concept of the Infinite.”⁵⁸

But Grenz notes the story of Being would move to a much different place in the wake of the medieval synthesis, one which ultimately leads to the demise of Being. Thus, the subtitle of chapter two – “From the First Cause to the Infinite” – casts this second act of the saga of Being as “the secularization of Being.”⁵⁹

Two figures begin Grenz’s narration of the demise of the scientific God. The first is John Duns Scotus (1266–1308)⁶⁰ who is well known for opposing Aquinas’ emphasis on analogical language in favor of his own theory of univocal language. However, Scotus also dissented from Aquinas’ distinction between existence and essence. He thus extended his disagreement into ontology with a defense of what would come to be called voluntarism. Scotus declared that God is characterized by complete liberty not contingent on anything beyond the divine will. This marked a first step away from God as the rational First Cause toward God as the “volitional Infinite.”⁶¹ The second figure is William of Ockham (1285–1349)⁶² who followed the same voluntaristic trajectory and ultimately extended it. God in Ockham’s conception, rather than being the epitome of rationality, was simply inscrutable will. Thus Ockham embraced what would come to be known as nominalism in which the

⁵⁶ *NGQB*, 50.

⁵⁷ *NGQB*, 51–2.

⁵⁸ *NGQB*, 52.

⁵⁹ *NGQB*, 51–89.

⁶⁰ *NGQB*, 53–57.

⁶¹ *NGQB*, 57.

⁶² *NGQB*, 57–64.

elevation of the divine will above the divine intellect would eventually lead to his disjoining of theology and philosophy and even revelation and reason. In this way he extended the dissolution of the scholastic synthesis.

Next on the stage was Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464)⁶³ who agreed with the nominalist assertion that reason cannot lead to knowledge of God. He disagreed about the way forward though. Nicholas presented mathematics itself as the science of the infinite in a way that provided a foretaste of thinkers such as René Descartes (1596–1650). Where Being is concerned Nicholas advanced the idea of the “unfolding of the infinite in the finite and the enfolding of the finite in the infinite”⁶⁴ which prefigured later developments in Romantic philosophy. The rise of mathematics led to the focus in the Renaissance on the mechanistic universe. It is true that someone like Isaac Newton (1643–1727)⁶⁵ did not yet see philosophy/theology and the natural sciences as radically separate, and even viewed his work as providing evidence for the existence of God. Yet his work, fostering as it did the idea of the mechanistic universe, did serve – even if unwittingly – to undermine the scholastic synthesis and conception of Being.

Having reduced God to an inference from mechanical causes, Grenz notes that the stage was set for the purging of God from the reigning scientific cosmology.⁶⁶ Thus the question became: would there be a place for God in this new cosmology at all? In the American colonies, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)⁶⁷ did the most to reconceive the Being of God. Edwards spoke of God as “Being-in-General” and asserted that creation arises continuously out of the divine infinity. Furthermore, Edwards staunchly insisted that the God who is Being-in-General is also none other than the God who is triune love. On the British and European side, though, the understanding of God was drastically different and more generic.⁶⁸ John Locke (1632–1704), despite his own personal religious beliefs, stands as one for whom God was superfluous for his epistemology. David Hume (1711–1776)

⁶³ *NGQB*, 65–7.

⁶⁴ *NGQB*, 67.

⁶⁵ *NGQB*, 68–71.

⁶⁶ *NGQB*, 72.

⁶⁷ *NGQB*, 72–8.

⁶⁸ See *NGQB*, 78–83 for Grenz’s discussions of Locke, Hume, and Kant.

extended this dynamic to a full blown agnostic skepticism which served to awaken Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) from his famous dogmatic slumber. Distinguishing between things available to human experience (phenomena) and things beyond human experience (noumena) he stated we can have no knowledge of a thing in itself. In so doing, Kant also admitted to his stance of denying “knowledge” in order to provide space for faith.

Ultimately Grenz judges that the God of Kant’s metaphysics is simply the “regulative principle of theoretical or ‘pure’ reason and the one whom practical reason demands as the guarantor that happiness will eventually be distributed in accordance with virtue.”⁶⁹ However, this seems a far cry from the personal God of Edwards and the Christian tradition. The post-Kantian philosophers responsible for solidifying the Romantic Infinite are Johan Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860).⁷⁰ Fichte viewed the transcendental self as characterized by the will, which was the connection between the finite self and the Infinite Will, and the human conscience as the access point to the Infinite Will. Both thinkers accepted the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms but rejected Kant’s conclusion that we have no access to the latter. Schopenhauer however extended the concept of the will to the universe as a whole. Just as the self is an instance of a “will to exist” so the universe is a cosmic “will to exist” that forms the fundamental existential cosmic unity and comprises the thing-in-itself. But the Infinite Will proposed by the Romantics indicates that the medieval synthesis of the Christian God and Being has been severed. “In Schopenhauer’s proposal, the triumph of the Infinite was complete, and with this triumph Being was completely secularized.”⁷¹

Chapter three – “From Onto-Theology to Theo-Ontology: The Demise of Being” – forms the third and final act in Grenz’s narration of the saga of Being.⁷² Though the Cartesian substance tradition is often thought to be the epitome of modernity, Grenz notes that already in the Enlightenment this tradition was under critique. Descartes had

⁶⁹ *NGQB*, 82–3.

⁷⁰ *NGQB*, 83–9.

⁷¹ *NGQB*, 89.

⁷² *NGQB*, 90–130.

retained the classic principles of substance and causality and went on to posit three basic types of substance: mind, matter, and God. However, the dualism between mind and matter and the epistemological mind/body problem regarding knowledge of the external world led to sharp criticism. Moreover, Descartes' successors in the rationalist tradition proposed that two of the three substances should be discarded, but could not agree which one should be kept. The subsequent critique by Hume of Cartesianism was the most intense, to which Kant attempted to respond. But Kant was not enough to stave off the Romantic Infinite and the demise of Being.⁷³ The full demise of Being was not immediate however. For a time, there were attempts to reconceive God as dynamic Being.

Grenz details the efforts of Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831)⁷⁴ to outline an “ontology of the unfolding absolute.”⁷⁵ Hegel transformed Fichte’s subjective idealism into his own thoroughgoing objective or absolute idealism and along the way he pursued his own synthesis of theology and philosophy, and thus of God and Being. Hegel is famous for his emphasis on dialectic in which thought moves through a double negation: “the negating that posits the opposite (antithesis) and the negating of the opposition (synthesis).”⁷⁶ Extending from this is the notion that the coming into being of truth is ultimately historical. That which brings all reality into a unified whole (the Absolute) he terms *Geist*. In Hegel’s dialectical sense, *Geist* is the (triune) God who necessarily reveals and actualizes himself in both rational thought and human history. Another example of the attempt to develop a dynamic metaphysic are the process philosophers who attempted to develop an ontology of “Being in the process of becoming,”⁷⁷ most prominently represented by Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947).⁷⁸ Whitehead represented a forceful attempt to revise the substance ontology of a static Cartesianism. But Whitehead posited God as a supremely immanent “society of occasions” and principle of creativity bound to the world out of ontological necessity very different from traditional trinitarian theology.

⁷³ *NGQB*, 91.

⁷⁴ *NGQB*, 92–101.

⁷⁵ *NGQB*, 92.

⁷⁶ *NGQB*, 95.

⁷⁷ *NGQB*, 101.

⁷⁸ *NGQB*, 102–10.

Grenz judges that Hegel and Whitehead both “forestalled and facilitated Being’s eventual demise.”⁷⁹ But nevertheless, by introducing becoming into Being their dynamic ontologies “changed the rules of the metaphysical game.”⁸⁰ But the story does not stop with them. Thinkers such as Martin Heidegger (1884–1976) and Jacques Derrida sought to revision the flawed Western metaphysical tradition through the “de(con)struction of onto-theology.”⁸¹ We can briefly summarize Heidegger’s⁸² contribution in three main ways. First, his location of fundamental ontology in the existential concept of *Dasein* (“Being-there” or “being-in-the-world”) through which human existence is thrown into existence, being the heir to a past and oriented toward the future. Second, Heidegger makes a move beyond conceptual discourse to the aesthetic as the vehicle for the revelation of truth in which art in a sense creates its own world. Joining up with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), however, he moves to language as even more powerful in world-creation than art. But beyond Nietzsche, Heidegger then posits that we do not simply create language but exist within it. Thus language itself constructs human existence and “our ‘being-in’ language allows us to discover that language gives itself to us, and hence is reality or Being.”⁸³ Third, these moves are aimed at critiquing and correcting the story of concealment and forgetfulness that lay at the heart of the Western onto-theological tradition. Under the conditions of onto-theology God exists at the behest of a philosophical system. The God of onto-theology remains a servant pressed into service at the direction and dictates of a philosophically constructed metaphysics. Such a critique was not meant as the suppression of all God-talk, but rather its truly authentic re-awakening.

While Heidegger purportedly sought a new beginning for the religious, it is doubtful the same can be said for Derrida.⁸⁴ Grenz focuses his discussion of Derrida on

⁷⁹ *NGQB*, 101, 110.

⁸⁰ *NGQB*, 110.

⁸¹ *NGQB*, 110–30 (110). This phrase combines Heidegger’s “destruction” of the history of ontology and Derrida’s focus on deconstruction. See Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 103–8, 138–50 for similar sketches of Heidegger and Derrida. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, Second edition, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 199–236 for his critique of onto-theology.

⁸² *NGQB*, 110–20.

⁸³ *NGQB*, 118.

⁸⁴ *NGQB*, 120–30. Important for Grenz here is Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), in particular 10–18, 27–65.

three main features. The first is Derrida's questioning of "logocentrism" (in which the word or language as *logos* is thought to be the carrier of meaning) aimed at undermining Being altogether. Derrida attacks not only all realist epistemologies, but also the "metaphysics of presence" (whereby a domain of things exists to which there is direct epistemological access) as essentially foundationalist. Derrida suggests instead that language or systems of thought lack any ultimate grounding. The second feature is Derrida's shift of emphasis from "difference" to *différance* which playfully exposes the instability inherent in language and even writing. Not only is the outward form of the word changeable but it suggests an indeterminate dual meaning of "to differ" and "to defer." Because language derives meaning within the full context and relation of signifiers that defer to the others, meaning itself can be said to depend on difference.

Accordingly, the drive to attribute final, determinate meaning must be tempered. This in turn functions as a radical critique of a stable self apart from its context. "There is no self that stands beneath or precedes linguistic activity. . . . Through language and concepts we impose the sense of objective meaning on the flux of experience."⁸⁵ The final feature is Derrida's deconstruction. Grenz states that, unlike Heidegger, Derrida does not seek to become yet another mythmaker. This facet of Derrida's approach is evident in the way he places obstacles in way of defining deconstruction itself. The closest we may come is to say deconstruction is an all-out assault on anything remotely logocentric – whether thought, writing, presence, or the whole of the Western metaphysical tradition itself – without any attempt to leave something substantive in its place. There only remains the free play of meaning and the play of the world.⁸⁶ In Grenz's words, "Derrida's

⁸⁵ *NGQB*, 126.

⁸⁶ Grenz's concerns regarding Derrida are appropriate for his ultimate theo-ontological purposes, but he also notes the connection between Derridean deconstruction and Derrida's concern for "ethical responsibility." (*NGQB*, 121). James K. A. Smith echoes this by noting Derrida's turn to justice, stating, "[D]econstruction is interested in interpretations that have been marginalized and sidelined, activating voices that have been silenced. This is the constructive, yea prophetic, aspect of Derrida's deconstruction, a concern for justice." (*Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 51) Nevertheless, there remains some question as to the extent Derrida's version justice may also undermine itself if his deconstruction remains unabated. See the helpful dialogue of Derrida and Ricoeur concerning their respective approaches to justice in Michel, *Ricoeur and the Post-Structuralists*, 51–66. Michel concludes, "[Ricoeur's] hermeneutics can enter into dialogue with, but not fuse with, Derridean deconstruction." (66)

deconstruction of the Western philosophical tradition marks the demise of Being, at least as Being has been understood throughout much of history.”⁸⁷

Narrating the “I AM”

Grenz states in his introduction: “‘The Saga of Being’ raises the crucial ontological question: Was the invention of ‘Being’ a mistake? And if so, what are the implications for its demise? This question forms, at least initially, the central problem [*Named God*] sets itself to address.”⁸⁸ We may further ask whether Derrida has laid waste to theology as well, particularly any theology which “draws its vision of God from the image of the originating Father who speaks his Logos in creation and incarnation.”⁸⁹ Yet there is hope that the death of onto-theology and the victory of Derridean indeterminacy is itself the occasion for the rebirth of a theology which looks to the self-naming triune God, rather than a philosophically determined conception of Being, for the formation of a theo-ontology. In Grenz’s estimation “the quest for such a theo-ontology is the task that the demise of Being bequeaths to theology.”⁹⁰ And in a manner similar to other Christian theologians from Augustine to Aquinas, Grenz suggests the theo-ontological path must go through the biblical assertion that the triune God of Scripture is the great I AM. Thus, in Part Two of *Named God* – titled “The Saga of the I AM” – Grenz, drawing on the biblical narrative themes of intertextuality and the structure of promise and fulfillment, begins his pursuit of a trinitarian theo-ontology through an exegetical narration of the divine name.⁹¹

Chapter four – “From Exodus to Exile: The Covenanted I AM”⁹² – forms the first act of the central section of *Named God* and moves through three scenes. The first scene presents a detailed exegesis of Exodus 3:14–15 and concentrates on the revelation of

⁸⁷ *NGQB*, 130.

⁸⁸ *NGQB*, 8.

⁸⁹ *NGQB*, 130.

⁹⁰ *NGQB*, 130.

⁹¹ Throughout this survey it should be recognized that Grenz provides more depth and texture in his exegetical discussions than can be duplicated here. For Grenz’s own summary of Part Two see the introduction to *NGQB* (8–10) and follow the footnotes provided here for direction to Grenz’s discussions in the main text.

⁹² *NGQB*, 133–73.

Yahweh as the great I AM.⁹³ In response to the query of Moses of what to say to Pharaoh when asked who sent him, Grenz notes Yahweh offers three self-designations: I AM WHO I AM (*'ehyeh 'aser 'ehyeh*), I AM (*'ehyeh*), and “Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Grenz notes a sense of evasiveness and even indeterminateness related to the essential incomprehensibility of Yahweh in this response. Yahweh does not receive his name from anyone else but remains sovereign in self-naming and self-revealing. Furthermore, Grenz presses beyond philosophically oriented views of the Hebrew root (*'hyh*) for the I AM as indicating static existence (“I am the one who is”), toward a view of the divine name as revealing active and dynamic existence in the sense of a purposeful and faithful “being there,” a “being present,” and a “being with.”⁹⁴ Because of this, the act of giving the divine name is bound up in relationship and covenant in which Yahweh as the I AM becomes known narratively. The drama of Israel in exodus from Egypt and entrance to Canaan “becomes the theater in which the name – and hence the character – of Yahweh unfolds . . . Yahweh links himself to his people and to their story.”⁹⁵

The joyous first scene, in which the great I AM is disclosed through compassionate covenantal revelation and relation in deliverance and exodus, soon gives way to tragedy in exile and the revocation of the divine name in scene two. Here Grenz turns his attention to Hosea 1:2–9.⁹⁶ This passage is part of a recapitulation of the exodus narrative and contains an explicit invocation of Exodus 3:14. Yet the recollection of the divine name occurs in the context of the infidelity of Israel and is “invoked so that it might be revoked.”⁹⁷ In Hosea the nation of Israel finds itself having capitulated to the syncretistic allure of Baal worship and therefore unfaithful to Yahweh. The marriage of Hosea to the prostitute Gomer served as a living parable for the narrating of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The disloyalty of Israel comes through tragically in the names of Hosea and Gomer’s children: the first being named Jezreel (or “God will sow”), the second “Not

⁹³ *NGQB*, 135–51.

⁹⁴ *NGQB*, 143–44. Cf. *TCG*, 87.

⁹⁵ *NGQB*, 150–1.

⁹⁶ *NGQB*, 151–61.

⁹⁷ *NGQB*, 152.

Pitied” or “No Compassion” (*lo’ ruhamah*), and the third “Not my people” (*lo’ ammi*). The third, most poignantly, is attached to the last clause of verse 9 which declares quite literally “I (am) not I am to you,” or more strongly, “I am not your I AM.”⁹⁸ Thus with Hosea 1:9 we see the negation of the divine name which leads to exile.

The book of Hosea is not only concerned with judgement however. Within the revocation of the divine name a message of hope still yet resides wherein the names of Hosea’s children will be reversed (2:21–23). Yahweh will sow Israel in the land, will have compassion on “Not Compassion,” and will say to “Not my people” that “you are my people.” Grenz terms this the “negation of the negation.”⁹⁹ The final scene then moves to a survey of Isaiah 40–55 (also known as Second Isaiah) with particular focus on passages related to deliverance in which Yahweh declares “I am he” and “I am the first and I am the last.”¹⁰⁰ Grenz exegetes six instances of the “I am he” sayings (43:10, 13, 25; 46:4; 48:12; 51:12) concluding that these contain an echo of Deuteronomy 32:39 (“I, I am he; there is no God besides me”) and form a revocation of the revocation of the covenant and a reconstituting of the divine name.¹⁰¹ Moving on to a consideration of three “first and last” sayings (Isaiah 41:4; 44:6–8; 48:12)¹⁰² Grenz finds that these references are not concerned primarily with a philosophically weighted sense of God’s eternity. Rather, these as well are concerned with the reassertion of the divine name in which Yahweh, as the eternal I AM and the dynamic “Be-ing One,”¹⁰³ is present in all creation (and thus the human story as a whole) from beginning to end. More particularly though, as the God “who is with,” Yahweh encloses the entire story of Israel (exodus, exile, and new exodus) with faithful divine presence. “In this sense, God’s be-ing involves being ‘first’ and ‘last.’”¹⁰⁴

Chapter five – “From Jacob’s Well to Calvary’s Cross: The Incarnate I AM”¹⁰⁵ – forms the central chapter in *Named God* as a whole and comprises the second act in “the

⁹⁸ *NGQB*, 158.

⁹⁹ *NGQB*, 160.

¹⁰⁰ *NGQB*, 161–73.

¹⁰¹ *NGQB*, 164–8.

¹⁰² *NGQB*, 168–73.

¹⁰³ *NGQB*, 172.

¹⁰⁴ *NGQB*, 9.

¹⁰⁵ *NGQB*, 174–206.

saga of the I AM.” In this chapter, Grenz moves from the covenanted I AM in the Old Testament to the incarnate I AM as concentrated in the person of Christ with a focus on the *ego eimi* sayings in the Gospel of John. While recognizing the exegetical difficulties of connecting the incarnate Christ to the Old Testament mentions of the I AM, Grenz notes the tendency of patristic witnesses such as Ambrose to view the “burning bush” event with Moses as a Christophany. Additionally, the phrase *ego eimi* in the Greek Septuagint was the usual rendering for both the Hebrew *'ehyeh* (I AM) and for the “I am he” sayings in Isaiah 40–55. Grenz suggests that the *ego eimi* then becomes a useful device for the New Testament writers to connect the incarnate Jesus to the Hebrew expressions of the divine self-designation. Concerning John’s gospel, Grenz states, “The *ego eimi*, replete with its Old Testament overtones, is found repeatedly in John.”¹⁰⁶

In John’s telling, the *ego eimi* sayings do not simply form a way for Jesus to identify who he is in the normal everyday usage of the phrase, but for Jesus to boldly associate himself with the God of Israel. The *ego eimi* utterances are often referred to as the “I AM sayings of Jesus” and occur in two grammatical forms: those followed by a predicate and those without a predicate. The second form can also be subdivided into occurrences with and without an implied predicate (the latter being referred to as “the absolute sense”). There are a great many *ego eimi*-plus-predicate instances in which Jesus claims “I am the bread of life,” “the light of the world,” “the resurrection and the life,” “the true vine,” etc.¹⁰⁷ These references represent a copulative use of the *ego eimi* which Grenz judges to not be primarily ontological but soteriological, and therefore not calling to mind the divine name directly. Nevertheless, they do still communicate Jesus’ claim to be the Father’s agent of salvation for his people and the one who dispenses true life, giving some insight into his connection to the I AM.¹⁰⁸

At first, the *ego eimi*-without-a-predicate occurrences do not seem to have much to offer. If these can be held to “everyday use” there is likely no reference to the divine

¹⁰⁶ *NGQB*, 175.

¹⁰⁷ See John 6:35, 41, 48, 51 (the bread of life); 8:12 (the light of the world); 10:7, 9 (the gate for the sheep); 10:11, 14 (the good shepherd); 11:25 (the resurrection and the life); 15:1, 2 (the true vine); 14:6 (the way, the truth, and the life).

¹⁰⁸ *NGQB*, 176–7.

name (especially in 9:9 when someone other than Jesus utters it). Yet some of these references seem to fall into the “implied predicate” category in which they come to carry a double meaning only the eyes of faith can see (which is common for John’s Gospel). Grenz discusses three such passages: “the I AM in Samaria” (4:26), “the I AM on the Sea of Galilee” (6:20), and “the I AM in the garden” (18:5, 8).¹⁰⁹ Grenz detects a connection to Second Isaiah in 4:26, the presence of a divine epiphany or theophany in 6:20, and he identifies a revelatory event that functions as an “epiphany of Deity” and an “acted parable” of who Jesus is in 18:5 and 18:8.¹¹⁰ As such these may constitute instances of double entendre which express a deeper identity in regards to the incarnate Christ.

Other *ego eimi* references in John seem to function without an implied predicate, though there is some ambiguity whether they can be taken in the absolute sense. Two of these are found in 8:24 and 8:28 in the midst of Jesus’ interrogation by the Pharisees and a third is found in 13:19 in the context of the Last Supper.¹¹¹ These references are discussed under the heading “The I AM Lifted Up” in which Grenz finds exegetical warrant to connect them to the “I am he” sayings of Second Isaiah. These *ego eimi* occurrences (and their surrounding context) then give expression to not only the close relation of the Father and Jesus, but Jesus as the bringer of life and salvation to Israel and humankind. Beyond this however, these appear to have a specific revelatory function as a connection is established between the crucifixion of Jesus as the fulfilment of prophecy and Jesus as the I AM incarnate. “[Christ] is linking himself with the saving God of Israel in the closest possible way. In short, that he is the I AM will be most fully disclosed in his death on the cross, by which he makes salvation available to all who believe in him.”¹¹²

The final *ego eimi* saying discussed in this chapter is John 8:58: “Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am,” which has no possible implied predicate. This *ego eimi* is therefore a clear example of the absolute sense. This “Absolute I AM” is thus definitive for understanding the manner in which Jesus takes on the divine name.¹¹³ According to Grenz,

¹⁰⁹ *NGQB*, 177–84.

¹¹⁰ *NGQB*, 183–4.

¹¹¹ *NGQB*, 184–91.

¹¹² *NGQB*, 191.

¹¹³ *NGQB*, 191–206

John 8:58 gathers all the other *ego eimi* sayings into the narrative of the incarnate I AM. The bold claim of the “Absolute I AM” is that Jesus is the incarnation of the sovereign, salvific, and active be-ing present of Yahweh which stretches back even before Abraham.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, central to Jesus’ I AM declaration is his claim to possess and participate in God’s divine life. Having the unique authority to mediate that life to others, the mission of Jesus is the disclosing of the divine name that he bears.¹¹⁵ The famous “high priestly prayer” of John 17 contains four instances (17:6, 11, 12, 26) where Jesus speaks of his “name” (*onoma*) along with the “name” of the Father, and in which Jesus is gifted with the divine name by the Father.¹¹⁶ Grenz finds this name to be none other than the name of the covenanting God of the Old Testament – the tetragrammaton (YHWH), the divine I AM. Yet the Father and Son are not simply identical. Jesus reveals the divine name precisely in his distinctive Sonship, wherein the Father is the Father of the Son and the Son is the Son of the Father. Evident here is the intimate unity, mutual indwelling (10:30, 38), and reciprocity shared between the Father and Jesus as his Son (and which ultimately is theirs in the Spirit). This dynamic relation suggests to Grenz the presence of pre-trinitarian echoes as “distinct ‘persons’ exist in mutual interrelatedness within the godhead.”¹¹⁷

Chapter six – “From the Future to the Eternal: The Exalted I AM”¹¹⁸ – comprises the third and final act of “the saga of the I AM.” Grenz presents his discussion in three main sections wherein the I AM takes on an eschatological character. The first section – “The I AM of the Future” – treats the rare appearance of the *ego eimi* in the Synoptic Gospels.¹¹⁹ If Acts is included the phrase with an explicit predicate occurs only five times. Without a predicate the phrase occurs six times, two of which are the Synoptic parallels (Mark 6:50, Matthew 14:27) to Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee in John 6:20 which carries strong theophanic associations. More important for Grenz’s purposes, though, are a group of three verses which contain the *ego eimi*: Mark 13:6, Luke 21:8, and Matthew 24:5. The

¹¹⁴ *NGQB*, 194–9.

¹¹⁵ *NGQB*, 9–10.

¹¹⁶ *NGQB*, 199–206.

¹¹⁷ *NGQB*, 206.

¹¹⁸ *NGQB*, 207–46.

¹¹⁹ *NGQB*, 209–18.

Matthew text adds an explicit predicate (to read: “I am the Messiah”) while the Mark and Luke texts are without a predicate. Grenz posits that by the time of the writing of Mark’s gospel, the *ego eimi* had already taken on the status of a technical formula. Furthermore, these texts, which warn of imposters who will attempt to usurp the “name” of the Messiah, form an indirect claim by Jesus to the *ego eimi*/I AM self-designation for which the disciples were to wait “for his own decisive, eschatological reiteration of the divine name.”¹²⁰ Most significant, however, is the *ego eimi*-without-predicate which occurs in the context of Jesus’ trial before the Sanhedrin in Luke 22:70 and Mark 14:62. Grenz judges the Luke passage in this case not to be a direct allusion to the divine name. In the context of the Mark passage though, Grenz finds that Jesus comes to associate himself with the eschatological vindication of the Son of Man.¹²¹ According to Grenz, the three instances of the *ego eimi* in Mark (6:50; 13:6, 14:62) read together indicate that “our gaze rests on a future time when the divine name will be fully known, because all will see the enthroned Jesus who as such is the *ego eimi*.”¹²²

The second section covers the eschatological “I AM for All Time” as it culminates in the *ego eimi* sayings of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus in the book of Revelation.¹²³ The first two instances in Grenz’s discussion (22:16 and 2:23) do not by themselves make obvious reference to the divine name. They do however, yield an implicit claim of the exalted Lord Jesus to a close eschatological identification with the divine prerogative of Yahweh in the Old Testament. More explicit is the *ego eimi* associated with three similar phrases in the Apocalypse in which the risen Jesus exclaims: I am “the first and the last, and the living one” (1:17–18), “the Alpha and Omega” (22:13), and “the beginning and the end” (21:6). Grenz finds within these references more direct lines of connection to the “I am he” sayings of Second Isaiah. He likewise discerns a resonance between Jesus as the “living one” who possesses and bestows life eternal on others and Yahweh as the true “Living God.” Christ therefore wields divine creative power and is identified with the

¹²⁰ *NGQB*, 213.

¹²¹ *NGQB*, 215–18. See also 187–91 for Grenz’s discussion of the connection of Jesus and the Son of Man embedded within the *ego eimi* saying of John 8:28.

¹²² *NGQB*, 218.

¹²³ *NGQB*, 218–28.

Creator God as the “ground and goal of all that is,”¹²⁴ the one whose eschatological vindication confirms him as the cosmic sovereign I AM over all history.

Grenz culminates this section by exploring the three-fold divine source of grace and peace in the greeting of Revelation 1:4–5. Noting the exegetical difficulties involved, Grenz judges this to be another pre-trinitarian resonance – a “trinitarian I AM.”¹²⁵ The third reference in the greeting explicitly names Christ as the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of all kings. The middle reference to the seven spirits is more complicated. This could refer to seven angels, though Grenz notes the unlikelihood of non-divine agents being referenced between two divine references. Highlighting that the number seven functions symbolically for wholeness and fullness in the Apocalypse, Grenz connects this to the prophecy in Isaiah 11:1–2 where the Spirit will come to rest on the “shoot . . . from the stump of Jesse.” Additionally, the activity of the “seven spirits” in Revelation 1:4, 3:1, and 5:6 reveals an intimate relationship with Jesus. Grenz determines this cryptic designation thus refers to the presence and fullness of the Holy Spirit. The first reference in 1:4 to “him who is and who was and who is to come” is then linked to the following *ego eimi* “Alpha and Omega” saying in 1:8, which repeats the three-tense designation from 1:4 and adds “the Almighty” – all of which is attributed to the Lord God.¹²⁶ The allusion here is to the divine name of Exodus 3:14 and Yahweh as eschatologically sovereign over history and everywhere present in time, thus transcending time itself. Viewed as a whole, the threefold divine designation found in Revelation 1:4–5 resembles the triune benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:13 and presents the Spirit and Christ as co-participants “in the eternity of the one who is and who was and who is to come.”¹²⁷

The threefold source of blessing in John’s greeting to the Apocalypse contains the seeds for a trinitarian approach to the I AM divine self-designation, which Grenz pursues in Part Three. Before that however, Grenz’s closes with a consideration of “the bestowal of the divine name.”¹²⁸ In Revelation 19:11–13, 16 the exalted Jesus appears with three names:

¹²⁴ *NGQB*, 227.

¹²⁵ *NGQB*, 228–36

¹²⁶ The *ego eimi* “Alpha and Omega” saying in 21:6 is also attributed to the Lord God.

¹²⁷ *NGQB*, 236.

¹²⁸ *NGQB*, 237–46.

“Faithful and True,” “the Word of God,” and “King of kings and Lord of lords.” These names apply the covenant faithfulness and sovereign being present of Yahweh to Christ. However, Christ is also inscribed with a fourth name only he knows. This secret name suggests to Grenz that Christ’s full vindication of his followers awaits the eschatological future as “its full content can only become evident as history comes to its culmination in the completion of that mission.”¹²⁹ Regarding the content of this name, Grenz returns to the climactic *ego eimi* saying where the exalted Christ appropriates for himself the “Alpha and Omega” designation as well as the I AM itself (22:13). Grenz thus posits the unknown name is nothing other than the divine name itself. Yet it is not simply the exalted Lamb who is bestowed with the (triune) divine name. As the very embodiment of the living Word of God, Christ will prove faithful to the promises of Yahweh, an act which the Apocalypse pictures as the sharing of the eschatological divine name with those who have overcome.¹³⁰ “In this way, the promise of a never-ending presence of the covenanting God with the covenant people emerges in the Apocalypse as the central significance of the divine eternity disclosed in the *ego eimi*.”¹³¹ The Scriptural saga of the I AM thus reveals an overarching story where the Old Testament divine name comes to be Christologically narrated as it comes to rest on Christ and as it is eschatologically shared with those “in Christ,” as well as gesturing in anticipation toward its ultimate trinitarian character.

The Triune Name, Storied Divine Identity, and the Narrative *Imago*

We now move to Part Three of *Named God* – “The Saga of the Triune Name” – in which Grenz narrates a three-part theological saga.¹³² Chapter seven – “From the I AM to the Trinity: The Meaning of the Divine Name” – begins the constructive moment in the quest for a thoroughly trinitarian theo-ontology of the divine name.¹³³ Grenz begins by

¹²⁹ *NGQB* 240.

¹³⁰ Grenz arrives at this conclusion through a discussion of Revelation 3:12, 7:3, 14:1, 20:6 and 22:4 in conjunction with Isaiah 56:4–5, 62:1–2, 65:15; Ezekiel 48:35; and Jeremiah 23:3–6.

¹³¹ *NGQB*, 246.

¹³² Throughout this survey it should be recognized that Grenz provides more depth and texture in his theological discussions than can be duplicated here. For Grenz’s own summary of Part Three see the introduction to *NGQB* (10–12) and follow the footnotes provided here for direction to Grenz’s discussions in the main text.

¹³³ *NGQB*, 249–90.

highlighting the subdued interest in explicating the divine name as it is unveiled in Scripture, revealed in the tendency of theologians to succumb to philosophical categories of Being. Grenz also notes a modern trend to assert the Old Testament divine name has been superseded in the New Testament.¹³⁴ Grenz contests this with his own study of the tetragrammaton in the New Testament evidenced in the use of *kyrios* as a circumlocution of *adonai* (the reverential Old Testament stand in for Yahweh), the presence of the divine passive, and the numerous *ego eimi*/I AM sayings of Jesus.¹³⁵ As the incarnate Son, Christ reveals the Father, with whom he enjoys intimate unity as the embodiment of the divine name. But as well, Grenz interprets the triadic formula, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” in Matthew 28:19 as a single proper name in support of his contention that the divine name is triune.¹³⁶ The divine name is therefore a shared name among all three trinitarian persons. “The saga of the I AM is ultimately the narrative of ‘the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.’ The saga of the divine name, in other words, is the saga of the relationship among the three persons of the Trinity.”¹³⁷

For Grenz, the biblical trajectory of the divine name and the incarnation of the I AM in Christ open up into a trinitarian conception of the divine name. He now focuses on what it might mean for the biblical God to have a name that is triune. To address this, Grenz first turns to the philosophical debate over the significance of naming, beginning with John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). Mill proposed a theory of direct reference in which proper names directly refer to their bearers but are nevertheless mere identification tags and carry no actual meaning. Others such as Gottlob Frege (1848–1925) and Bertrand Russell developed a descriptivist theory of naming whereby a “proper name refers to its referent by means of descriptions associated with the referent.”¹³⁸ However, advocates of these two theories of naming found themselves at an impasse. The most significant attempt to address this divide in Grenz’s view was the proposal by Gareth Evans who held that proper name-using practice is a shared activity between “producers” and “consumers”

¹³⁴ *NGQB*, 251–8.

¹³⁵ *NGQB*, 258–66.

¹³⁶ *NGQB*, 266–70.

¹³⁷ *NGQB*, 270.

¹³⁸ *NGQB*, 276.

of a name. Thus Evans opens up a communal focus as certain information becomes associated with a given proper name within the community of name-users.¹³⁹

Grenz moves on from the debate over naming by observing that in each theory surveyed proper names are not self-given but passively received. Figures such as Dionysius the Areopagite and Aquinas were correct to assert our names for God will always only be inadequate. Yet that human attempts to name God are frustrated does not mean that God is therefore nameless.¹⁴⁰ “The import of the biblical witness is not that the God of the Bible is *unnamed*, but that God is *self-named*.”¹⁴¹ Yet the divine name given to Moses was still yet anticipatory and awaited connotative definition. The divine self-naming consequently took the form of a narrative in which the divine name gathered content in a history of relationships within the be-ing present of Yahweh in the history of Israel, Jesus as the incarnate bearer of the divine name, and the eschatological bestowal of the name on the redeemed. Yet the story of the divine name is most fundamentally revealed to be the narrative of the communion of Father, Son, and Spirit in which God is both passive and active recipient of the divine self-naming. This “saga of God naming God”¹⁴² is comprised of the relationship of the Father and the Son whereby the Father shares his very own deity, inheritance, and name with the Son in the love of the Spirit, which the Son then returns to the Father in the love of the Spirit, who then becomes the Spirit of love shared by the Father and the Son.¹⁴³ In this manner, the giving, receiving, and returning of the glorified divine name proceeds in the triune act of “Naming, Being Named, and Name Sharing”¹⁴⁴ in which all three trinitarian persons are reciprocally constituted.¹⁴⁵

Chapter eight – “From the Trinity to Being: The Ontology of the Divine Name” – addresses the question of what kind of theo-ontology arises from divine triune name.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ *NGQB*, 271–80.

¹⁴⁰ *NGQB*, 280–3.

¹⁴¹ *NGQB*, 281.

¹⁴² *NGQB*, 283.

¹⁴³ Grenz develops this through a theological exegesis and interpretation of Jesus’ baptism in Mark 1:9–11. See *NGQB*, 283–90.

¹⁴⁴ *NGQB*, 290.

¹⁴⁵ *NGQB*, 288–90. See also 339–41.

¹⁴⁶ *NGQB*, 291–341.

Grenz begins with a summary of the historical development of orthodox trinitarianism.¹⁴⁷ The New Testament writers were theologically concerned to integrate the doctrine of the one God with the distinctive revelation of this God in Jesus and the giving of the Spirit to the church. The subsequent development of the doctrine of the Trinity, however, took place within the embedding Neoplatonic context of the patristic era.¹⁴⁸ The Cappadocian Fathers' connection of *hypostasis* and *prosopon*, thus meaning "to be" and "to be in relation" are identical, thereby making Being itself relational, was a watershed moment. They likewise provided language facilitating the orthodox distinction of the triune *hypostases* (the divine persons or "whoness") and the divine *ousia* (the shared essence or "whatness").¹⁴⁹ The Western high water mark culminates in Augustine with his noetic triad (*memoria, intelligentia, and voluntus*) and purported "psychological" analogy of the Trinity, his inward turn to the soul as the path to knowledge of God, and his conception of the Holy Spirit as the consubstantial bond and mutual love of the Father and Son.¹⁵⁰ As well, Western theologians tended to view God as *actus purus*, in which essence and activity are not sharply distinguished. However, the Eastern trajectory extending through the Cappadocians, John of Damascus, and Gregory Palamas developed a distinction between the essence and energies. God is unknowable in the divine essence but indwells creation actively in the divine energies. Thus, God is known not in the ineffable supraessence of the inner divine being (the immanent Trinity), but rather within the activity of God within the divine economy (the economic Trinity).¹⁵¹

The doctrine of the "essence and energies" is connected to the rise of apophaticism in the East. While the cataphatic way contemplates God's activity in creation, the apophatic extends from the incomprehensibility of the divine essence and seeks to say what God is not. In the East the apophatic is primary, with the cataphatic only a prelude. Yet the West also displays an apophatic thread, seen in Augustine and Aquinas, though it

¹⁴⁷ *NGQB*, 292–319.

¹⁴⁸ See *NGQB*, 293–9 where Grenz covers Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.

¹⁴⁹ *NGQB*, 299–303.

¹⁵⁰ *NGQB*, 303–16. In this section, Grenz also discusses the manner in which Marius Victorinus (280–365) anticipates Augustine as well the ways in which Augustine departed from Victorinus

¹⁵¹ *NGQB*, 316–19.

has a second place in the Western tradition. In the wake of Derrida, Grenz notes the apophatic way can take on a radical stance which could lead to absolute silence. Yet it need not. An apophatic approach can instead produce a reverential silence in the face of divine mystery which anticipates divine revelational self-naming and thus undercuts onto-theology.¹⁵² Moreover, the concern for divine “Otherness” (which Grenz develops in conversation with Lévinas’ concern for the Other) which ontologically distinguishes the one God from all creatures need not be seen merely as a “mysticism of the One.”¹⁵³ The one God, who is not merely a being among all other beings, is Other even within the divine transcendence, an Otherness that is eternal and triune. “While God remains always incomprehensible, there is no God ‘above’ the unity-in-multiplicity or the multiplicity-in-unity disclosed in the revelational saga of the divine name.”¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the divine Oneness and Otherness are not in competition but reciprocally related – to contemplate the One is to be illumined by the Three, envisioning the Three leads to the One.¹⁵⁵

The final portion of this chapter delineates the character of Grenz’s trinitarian theo-ontology.¹⁵⁶ Grenz concludes that the triune self-naming is a narrational, communal, and eschatological reality. The narrative “act of self-naming is both communal and eschatological, for it involves the dynamic of the relationality of the three trinitarian persons.”¹⁵⁷ Scripture narrates a trinitarian story whereby the story of God disclosed in the saga of the I AM provides an icon revealing “an eternal self-naming within the immanent dynamic of the triune life.”¹⁵⁸ Thus the communal and eschatological aspects of the divine self-naming are present already in the eternal triune relationality even as they become visible in the narrative of Father, Son, and Spirit within history. The narrative of divine self-naming is therefore a noetic act of the coming to be known of the eternal Trinity specifically disclosed to us in the incarnate Christ and Holy Spirit. The ethos of this triune dynamic is best captured with the biblical term *agape*.

¹⁵² *NGQB*, 320–6.

¹⁵³ *NGQB*, 330.

¹⁵⁴ *NGQB*, 331.

¹⁵⁵ *NGQB*, 327–31.

¹⁵⁶ *NGQB*, 331–35.

¹⁵⁷ *NGQB*, 334.

¹⁵⁸ *NGQB*, 332.

Grenz now returns to Augustine to develop the theme of triune love.¹⁵⁹ The supposed Augustinian psychological analogy of the Trinity, in Grenz's view, should instead be viewed as noetic.¹⁶⁰ The coming to know the Trinity centered on love yields the triad: Lover, Beloved, and (the) Love (that is shared).¹⁶¹ The path to knowledge of God thus traverses the *via amoris* which "goes beyond the apophatic method, [but] does not bypass that method."¹⁶² In this, the noetic movement from exterior to interior (creation to the soul) and inferior to superior (through the soul to God) is servant of the agapaic, and the *via amoris* comes to complete the apophatic moment. Grenz once again, though, critiques Augustine's inward turn, saying: "God is not primarily found in the interiority of the soul, but in the exteriority of the other . . . It is in our relationality that we find the *imago Dei* and thus come to know the triune God who is love."¹⁶³ The *telos* of Grenz's theo-ontology then is nothing short of triune love, such that "knowing" subjects are transformed into participants within the dynamic of trinitarian naming by being placed "in Christ" through the eschatological shared "Gift" of the Spirit. The self-naming God who is wholly Other in the divine relationality constitutes the "to be" of a community of others. "Viewed from this theo-ontological perspective, Being itself takes on the connotations of gift, and as a consequence becomes the Gift of Being."¹⁶⁴

In Chapter nine – "From God's Triune Be-ing to Human Being: Our Inclusion into the Divine Name" – Grenz now turns to the final chapter in the saga of the triune name.¹⁶⁵ This chapter begins with an exegesis of Paul's Areopagus "unknown God" speech in Acts 17:22–31.¹⁶⁶ Grenz focuses on three phrases: God as the giver of "life and breath and all things" (25), that in God "we live and move and have our being" (28a), and "we too are his offspring" (28b). While Luke presents Paul as a new Socrates, Grenz suggests the speech

¹⁵⁹ *NGQB*, 335–41. Grenz explores a resonance between Augustine and Gregory Palamas (317–20, 336–40) regarding triune love, particularly focused on the Spirit as the Spirit of Love, in his development of the *via amoris*.

¹⁶⁰ *NGQB*, 314–15.

¹⁶¹ *NGQB*, 336.

¹⁶² *NGQB*, 337.

¹⁶³ *NGQB*, 338.

¹⁶⁴ *NGQB*, 339–41 (341).

¹⁶⁵ *NGQB*, 342–73.

¹⁶⁶ *NGQB*, 343–60.

still has an essentially Jewish flavor couched in Hellenistic language. Grenz explores a possible resonance between the “life, breath, all things” triad and Isaiah 42:5. He concludes that Paul’s designation of God as the giver of these things marks the God of Israel as the maker of all that exists. The second and third phrases then do not evoke Stoic pantheism but God as the ultimate Creator. Grenz also connects humans as God’s offspring to the phrase in 17:26, “From one (*ex honos*) . . . he made all.” A likely candidate for the unnamed one here is Adam with reference to Luke 3:38 and the second Genesis creation narrative. But also in view is the first Genesis creation narrative which focuses not simply on a single, first progeny but the creation of humanity in the divine image (Genesis 1:26–27). Having been made *ex honos* as God’s offspring then “is connected to our status as the *imago Dei*.”¹⁶⁷ Combined with the anti-idolatry injunction, there is a strong message against any natural or philosophical theology (i.e., onto-theology) which purports to find God through human striving alone. Yet the Creator God is not far off. In 17:30–31 Paul calls his hearers to repentance in light of the one who has been resurrected from the dead. The no-longer-unknown God is thus unveiled in Christ – the just judge and our true progenitor. In this manner, Paul presents a “christologically centered” and “eschatologically oriented”¹⁶⁸ notion of our being in God¹⁶⁹

This Pauline insight forms the bridge to Grenz’s capstone discussion of “God’s Being as the basis for our being.”¹⁷⁰ Here he picks up his prior discussion of the divine image in *Social God* in order to explore the manner in which his theo-ontology supports a theo-anthropology.¹⁷¹ Grenz begins his discussion in this portion of *Named God* by connecting our being “in God” to our being “in Christ.”¹⁷² The creation of humankind as the *imago Dei* indicates that in some manner humanity “mediates within creation the immanence of the transcendent Creator.”¹⁷³ The human vocation of the first Adam to image God, however, points beyond itself to Jesus himself as the true *imago*. The *imago Dei* then is ultimately

¹⁶⁷ *NGQB*, 358.

¹⁶⁸ *NGQB*, 359.

¹⁶⁹ *NGQB*, 353–60.

¹⁷⁰ *NGQB*, 360–73.

¹⁷¹ See *NGQB*, 361 where Grenz links *SGRS* and *NGQB* in this manner.

¹⁷² *NGQB*, 360–7.

¹⁷³ *NGQB*, 361.

our vocation to be “in Christ.”¹⁷⁴ This vocation comprises a storied reality definitive of our very being thus constituting what I term the “narrative *imago*” by being eschatologically conformed to the image of Christ, who is the Second Adam and the true narrative *imago*. “God desires that we find our being as we are caught up in the narrative of the Son. In this manner, the *imago Dei* [or narrative *imago*] emerges as the christologically focused and eschatologically oriented human vocation.”¹⁷⁵ That the narrative *imago* is eschatological gestures as well to the cosmic role of Christ in establishing new creation. In view here is the fulfilment of the divine goal of human being “in Christ” as nothing less than triune participation in God – i.e., *theosis* or deification (2 Peter 1:4).¹⁷⁶ In an ontological sense deification should be understood as Christification in which “the company of humans who by the Spirit are in the Son participate in the reciprocal dynamic [of triune love] that characterizes the eternal divine life,” thus constituting the narrative *imago* as well as the new humanity of the new creation.¹⁷⁷

The intimate connection between human being “in Christ” and the activity of the Spirit leads to a concluding discussion of the “gift of the Spirit and being named ‘in God.’”¹⁷⁸ Grenz delineates the Spirit as the “gift of life.”¹⁷⁹ In general, all that possesses life does so because of God’s *ruach* or *pneuma*. But more specifically, Grenz presses further toward the reciprocal self-giving of the Father, Son, and Spirit. “This relationship between the Father and the Son is constituted by the Holy Spirit, who as the gift of life shared between the Father and the Son is the [personal] concretization of the essence of the triune God, namely, life.”¹⁸⁰ The narrative *imago* then receives being by sharing in the Spirit who bestows the gift of the triune name.¹⁸¹ The story of Jesus as the true narrative *imago* and

¹⁷⁴ *NGQB*, 361–4.

¹⁷⁵ *NGQB*, 364.

¹⁷⁶ *NGQB*, 364–7.

¹⁷⁷ *NGQB*, 365–6 (366). “Christification” comes from Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 39–40.

¹⁷⁸ *NGQB*, 367–73.

¹⁷⁹ *NGQB* 367–9.

¹⁸⁰ *NGQB*, 369. See also *RET*, 186–7, *TCG*, 69–72; *SGRS*, 315–16, 327; and *NGQB*, 288, 290, 338, 340, 367 for Grenz’s understanding of the Spirit as the “personal concretization” of the divine essence of triune love and life and the mutual love between the Father and the Son. Emphasis mine. See also Augustine, *The Trinity*, 15.17.27–9, 31 and 15.19.37. See as well chapter two, footnotes 37, 249, and 288.

¹⁸¹ *NGQB*, 369–73.

bearer of the divine name culminates in the eschatological pouring out of the Spirit, who shares the triune name and will share that same name with the new humanity of the new creation. The eschatological gift of the Spirit, which is a present storied reality “in Christ,” is also the goal or *telos* by which the narrative *imago* and human being itself is constituted by being brought into participation in the dynamic of the triune Name-sharing, and thus theotic triune participation in God. Thus named by the self-naming God, the narrative *imago* finds its true (ecclesial) be-ing in receiving the Gift of Being, that is, “the gift of the be-ing present of the Spirit who, together with the Father and the Son, is the I AM.”¹⁸² We echo along with Grenz: “Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Critical Detour: The Narrative Self, Christo-Anthropology, and the *Imago Dei*

We have now charted in the first section the “main road” of a primer on Grenz’s narrative theology and a summary of his argument for a trinitarian theo-ontology. At work throughout *Named God* is the triologue of narrative sources (Scripture, tradition, and culture) and the trio of trinitarian motifs (Trinity, community, and eschatology). In this manner, Grenz’s final volume becomes the culminating application of the Grenzian grammar. In keeping with the narrative theme of this chapter, we are working toward a consideration of the narrative *imago* (gleaned from the discussion of the last chapter of *Named God*) in relation to gender in the third section of this chapter. Before arriving there though, we take a critical detour in three parts. The first considers where *Named God* stands in continuity with Grenz’s prior work. The second treats the Ricoeurian narrative self as a critical supplementation of the Grenzian narrative *imago*. And the third presses the previously developed theo-anthropology into a cruciform Christo-anthropology to chart the path into the discussion of the narrative *imago* in relation to gender.

Named God and the Question of Continuity

We consider first two questions in relation to the continuity or discontinuity of *Named God*, specifically in relation to foundationalism and Grenz’s social trinitarianism. In regards to foundationalism, we ask whether there is a tension between his earlier

¹⁸² *NGQB*, 373.

naming of the Christian story as a metanarrative and his claim to have developed a theo-ontology? Does the earlier claim leave Grenz susceptible to the charge of foundationalism or is there something in his theo-ontology which alleviates such a concern? Regarding Grenz's development of the social Trinity, we place under consideration Jason Sexton's thesis that Grenz had moved beyond the social Trinity by the end of *Named God*. In short: is Grenz's God still social?

Grenz and the Question of Metanarratives

In Grenz's judgement, the postmodern cultural phenomenon holds not simply peril but also offers promise out of which can emerge meaningful constructive theology. In *Beyond Foundationalism* the demise of Enlightenment foundationalism presents the opportunity for a postfoundationalist theological method. In *Social God* the postmodern condition of the self in the wake of Foucault offers the occasion for the articulation of the ecclesial self and a trinitarian *imago Dei* theo-anthropology. In *Named God* the deconstruction of onto-theology and demise of Being after Derrida produces the crisis out of which a trinitarian theo-ontology can be developed. In accordance with the importance he gave to engaging postmodern thought Grenz also conducts a discussion of Jean-François Lyotard's now (in)famous declaration, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives."¹⁸³ Grenz begins with a juxtaposition of the Enlightenment focus on universal scientific laws and the quest for objective knowledge of the world, along with the subsequent twentieth century anthropological focus on the foundational importance of myths for social cohesion. Myths are not merely primitive stories but become a means of sustaining social relations.¹⁸⁴

Lyotard points out that in the drive of Enlightenment science to dispel all myths, the architects of this venture failed to notice their own captivating myths. Lyotard names specifically the modernist myth of progress,¹⁸⁵ which is that metanarrative that legitimates

¹⁸³ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiv. Emphasis original. See Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 39, 45–9, 164; *RTC*, 27, 179–82, 225, 257, 291; *BF*, 19, 197, 239, 260; and Grenz, "The Universality of the 'Jesus Story'," 85–111 for Grenz's interaction with Lyotard and metanarratives.

¹⁸⁴ *RTC*, 180.

¹⁸⁵ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 29, 31–6.

scientific advancement for the betterment of all and “which served to unite the smaller stories of the sciences into one, unified history.”¹⁸⁶ However, losing their credibility and power, the legitimizing metanarratives of progress aren’t what they once were and no longer hold their former dominant sway. A fragmentation evidenced by the splintering apart of the scientific enterprise itself is underway.¹⁸⁷ And while earlier epochs have seen older mythic narratives lose favor only to be replaced by another, Grenz notes that for Lyotard, “the postmodern ethos entails the end of the appeal to any central legitimating myth whatsoever.”¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, in the awareness of the proliferation of competing narratives and “language games”¹⁸⁹ vying for our allegiance, the metanarrative as that grand story which produces legitimating universal claims has suffered its demise under the postmodern “war on totality.”¹⁹⁰

The above is Grenz’s basic description of what Lyotard means by the “incredulity toward metanarratives.” It is one which is very similar to that offered by Richard J. Middleton and Brian J. Walsh.¹⁹¹ According to Middleton and Walsh, metanarratives are foremost universal stories that lead to totalizing marginalization. The central characteristic of a metanarrative is therefore its scope, or that it is a grand story. Second, they emphasize what they see as the socially constructed nature of metanarratives, which in essence makes them local stories with pretensions to universality. Third, Middleton and Walsh contend that metanarratives are beset with the ethical problem that their totalizing hegemony lends them to violent exclusion.¹⁹² According to James K. A. Smith this

¹⁸⁶ Grenz, “The Universality of the ‘Jesus Story,’” 93. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiii–xxiv.

¹⁸⁷ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 39–41.

¹⁸⁸ *RTC*, 181. Grenz cites Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn’t What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and Other Wonders of the Postmodern World* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1990), 243–4 who offers six competing stories in postmodernity: Western human progress, Marxist revolution, Christian social reconstruction, Islamic fundamentalism, Green ecology, and the “new paradigm” about a sudden leap forward in understanding our world.

¹⁸⁹ See the reference to Wittgenstein in Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 10, 40–1, 73.

¹⁹⁰ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 82.

¹⁹¹ Richard J. Middleton and Brian J. Walsh *Truth is Stranger than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995), chapters four and five.

¹⁹² Middleton and Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than It Used to Be*, 69–73. Terry Eagleton, “Awakening from Modernity,” *Times Literary Supplement* (20 February 1987), 194 also evinces the ethical interpretation, speaking of the “terroristic function” of metanarratives and the “manipulative reason” of the “nightmare of modernity.” Cited in *RTC*, 181–2. See also Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

approach to Lyotard commits a critical error in the reduction of metanarratives to how big they are, or their scope. This is then played off as an inherent conflict between universal and local stories. Smith argues this is an insufficient understanding of what Lyotard means by metanarrative.¹⁹³ For Lyotard, metanarratives are such not simply because of their size but due to the manner in which they claim justification or legitimization; namely, by appeal to modernist universal reason.¹⁹⁴ This becomes a problem when Middleton and Walsh seek to assess the manner in which the biblical narrative can be considered a metanarrative. In the process, they argue for a Christian metanarrative that is non-violent and avoids totalization, which is progress.¹⁹⁵ However, they seem not to notice that when the legitimization of metanarratives is in view and not simply their scope, that the biblical narrative is not a metanarrative in Lyotard's sense.¹⁹⁶ Such an observation is able to relieve much of the tension regarding the relationship between the postmodern critique as "incredulity toward metanarratives" and the Christian faith.

When we turn attention back to Grenz, we find agreement with Knowles that Grenz offers a generally close reading of Lyotard.¹⁹⁷ However, it is also apparent that Grenz falls into the same trap of reducing metanarratives to any grand story that stakes a claim to universality.¹⁹⁸ This is seen in Grenz's earlier *Primer on Postmodernism* when he says,

[W]e cannot totally affirm the central tenant of postmodernism as defined by Lyotard – the rejection of metanarrative. . . . There *is* a single metanarrative encompassing all peoples and all times. As Christians we claim to know what that grand narrative is. It is the story of God's action in history for the salvation of fallen humankind and the completion of God's intentions for creation.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ See James K. A. Smith, "A Little Story about Metanarratives: Lyotard, Religion, and Postmodernism Revisited," in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*, 123–40 and Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 59–79.

¹⁹⁴ Smith, "A Little Story about Metanarratives," 125. Smith notes Lyotard means "science" in a broad sense of "theoretical" discourse (*Wissenschaft*) and not simply the natural sciences. (137) See also Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2001), xiii.

¹⁹⁵ Middleton and Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than It Used to Be*, 87–107.

¹⁹⁶ Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 17

¹⁹⁷ Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 78.

¹⁹⁸ For this judgement, see Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 64, 69 and Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism*, 14, 30, 78–9.

¹⁹⁹ Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 164.

This misunderstanding of metanarrative as referring primarily to scope seems to have been carried over to his later work as well, particularly in *Renewing the Center* when he frames his discussion of Lyotard as “the move from grand metanarratives to local stories.”²⁰⁰ This places Grenz in the position of needing to affirm the (so-called) “metanarrative” status of the Christian story precisely because he rightly perceives its universal scope.²⁰¹ A potential concern here for Grenz’s aim for a postfoundationalist theology is that the linguistic confusion could serve as a basis for the charge of a latent foundationalism since metanarratives in Lyotard’s sense are legitimated by the appeal to universal reason.²⁰² Grenz, however, does supply himself with an important qualification when he states, “Ultimately the metanarrative [Christians] proclaim lies beyond the pale of reason either to discover or evaluate.”²⁰³ While there seems to be an equivocation regarding “metanarrative” in relation to Lyotard’s actual intent, this statement nevertheless prefigures Grenz’s subsequent theological development.²⁰⁴

Merold Westphal provides a helpful correction of terminology at this point. In addition to the clarifications regarding the scope of metanarratives and their means of legitimation discussed above, Westphal avers that Christianity is more properly called a *meganarrative* rather than a metanarrative due to their respective originations. Connected to the appeal to reason and theoretical discourse, metanarratives onto-theologically²⁰⁵ originate from the prognostications of (especially Western Enlightenment) science, philosophy, technology, politics, and so on. By contrast, Christianity is wholly revelational

²⁰⁰ *RTC*, 179.

²⁰¹ See this in *BF*, 23, 239, 261; *RTC*, 27, 225, 291; and Grenz, “The Universality of the ‘Jesus Story,’” 95–6 where he states: “Must the Christian community be content with viewing the Jesus-narrative as nothing more than one local story among others? Finding an answer to this question necessitates a return to the specific metanarrative that Christian’s espouse.”

²⁰² Knowles, “Postmodernism: Reasons to Be Cheerful,” in *Transforming Exclusion: Engaging with Faith Perspectives*, eds. Hannah Bacon and Wayne Morris (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 1–21 contends that “metanarrative” properly applies to Enlightenment (and thus foundationalist) Christianity. See Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xv–xvi for a similar suggestion.

²⁰³ Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 164–5.

²⁰⁴ John Franke follows Westphal below in correcting his use of metanarrative and then adopts Westphal’s language of meganarrative in reference to Christianity. (*The Character of Theology*, 17–19)

²⁰⁵ See Westphal’s critique of onto-theology in *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, 1–28.

and is narratively legitimized solely by the story of the Kingdom of God.²⁰⁶ I suggest Westphal's notion of the "Christian meganarrative" not only serves to reduce linguistic confusion but is descriptive overall of Grenz's postfoundationalist and theo-ontological posture. As such, the trajectory Grenz traces in *Social God* and *Named God* show that while in critical conversation with them, he looks to neither modern nor postmodern culture or theory for the legitimization or delegitimization of his proposals.²⁰⁷ His thoroughgoing trinitarian theo-anthropology and theo-ontology, therefore, succumb neither to the charge of foundationalism nor the Lyotardian "incredulity toward metanarratives."

Is Grenz's God Still Social?

The previous chapter conducted a review of critiques directed at social trinitarianism and some of the strengths of Grenz's theology in response. Now that the preceding summary of *Named God* has brought us to the end of Grenz's corpus, a response is in order to Jason Sexton's thesis of a purported move beyond the social Trinity in Grenz's last two monographs.²⁰⁸ I am in agreement with most of Sexton's analysis of the strengths of Grenz's trinitarian theology and the value of Sexton's scholarship for Grenz studies. For this reason, I am willing to accept the presence of most all the factors Sexton (mis)interprets as indicating Grenz's purported move beyond the social Trinity – such as, a robust Christocentric approach,²⁰⁹ a consistently thick application of divine transcendence,²¹⁰ a concern to uphold the divine unity,²¹¹ and the pro-Augustinian flavor of

²⁰⁶ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xii–xvi. Thus, in Westphal's telling, N. T. Wright's statement, "The whole point of Christianity is that it offers a story which is the [true] story of the whole world" (*The New Testament and the People of God*, 41–2) should be understood in meganarrative terms.

²⁰⁷ This is evident in chapters two and three of *SGRS* (leading to the postmodern self) and Part One of *NGQB* (leading to the demise of Being) in which Grenz takes seriously culture as "embedding context" in a way that does not capitulate. See also Stanley J. Grenz, "The Hopeful Pessimist: Christian Pastoral Theology in a Pessimistic Context," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 54.3 (September 2000), 297–311 which deconstructs therapeutic, psychological foundationalism and then offers Grenz's own proposal for a postfoundationalist theology of hope.

²⁰⁸ See Jason S. Sexton, "Beyond Social Trinitarianism: The Baptist, Trinitarian Innovation of Stanley J. Grenz," *Baptist Quarterly* 44.8 (October 2012), 473–86; Sexton, "The State of the Evangelical Trinitarian Resurgence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54.4 (December 2011), 792–3; and Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 102–4.

²⁰⁹ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 111, 115–8, 131–2.

²¹⁰ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 95–9.

²¹¹ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 82–3, 104, 116.

Grenz's theology.²¹² I contend, however, that Sexton simultaneously over-reads these features and downplays other factors which mitigate his thesis.

Turning first to *Rediscovering the Triune God*, Grenz's one-chapter treatment of the trinitarian renaissance in *Social God* now appears in book length form.²¹³ In addition to "the Trinity as the fullness of history" in Pannenberg, and the triumph of relationality in Zizioulas, Grenz draws on T. F. Torrance in particular as representative of "the return of the immanent Trinity."²¹⁴ The guiding methodological principle Grenz gleans from his study of the epistemological priority of the economic Trinity and the ontological primacy of the immanent Trinity was dubbed by Sexton as the "Grenz *Grundaxiom*."²¹⁵ However, while arguably applied most fully in *Named God*, this feature nevertheless makes its presence known throughout Grenz's work.²¹⁶ This central axiom represents Grenz's concern not merely to uphold the ontological divine unity on the one hand, and the undivided operations of the triune persons in the world on the other – but, as well, the unity of God in revelation and God *in se* together as the basis for both his communal the anthropology and trinitarian theo-ontology.²¹⁷

This method appears in *Named God* as Grenz traces the "saga of Being" throughout philosophical and cultural history, ultimately concluding that human "be-ing" arises from triune divine "be-ing" – "in Christ" and through the Spirit – by means of being brought into participation in the triune divine name bestowed on Christ by the Father in the love of the Spirit. Grenz's theo-ontology is then joined with his *imago Dei* theology, making specific reference back to *Social God*.²¹⁸ But there is as well the continuation of Grenz's earlier

²¹² Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 77–80, 82–5, 99, 106–8, 111, 146.

²¹³ *SGRS*, 23–57.

²¹⁴ *RTG*, 200–15.

²¹⁵ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 81, 100. Sexton observes that in addition to Torrance's influence: "With Barth, Grenz saw the economic Trinity serving as the noetic starting point while the immanent Trinity retains ontic priority. . . . With Balthasar, divine *missio* becomes the means of epistemological access to the *processio*, which in turn is the ontological basis of the *missio*." (*The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 118)

²¹⁶ See *TCG*, 66–7, 83 and *BF*, 190–2 for statements prefiguring Grenz's later *Grundaxiom*.

²¹⁷ Contra John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 29 who views Grenz's *Grundaxiom* as "disjunctive."

²¹⁸ *NGQB*, 361.

postfoundationalist posture, evidenced in his resistance to theology's need for any sort of external philosophical (or cultural) legitimization. Grenz deconstructs any onto-theological pretensions and instead proposes a thoroughgoing trinitarian theo-ontology. In a manner consonant with *Social God*, by reserving ontological primacy to the nature of the eternal triune God, rather than projecting anthropology back into the divine life, Grenz works in the other direction. Such is indicative of the methodological continuity between *Social God* and *Named God*, mitigating what is perhaps an implicit claim of discontinuity in Sexton's thesis of a move beyond the social Trinity.

Sexton also posits a combination of other factors for his thesis that may actually demonstrate the opposite. For instance, he proposes what he regards as the diminished influence of Colin Gunton along with Grenz's positive use of Augustine as illustrative of the move beyond the social Trinity. However, important to note is that Sexton derives his conclusion regarding Gunton's decline solely from unpublished draft outlines of *Rediscovering the Triune God*, where Gunton had a chapter initially that was ultimately dropped. However, Sexton neglects to establish Gunton's place in Grenz's theology more broadly as a baseline to support his conclusion of Gunton's "vanishing role."²¹⁹ As well, it is true Grenz never gave the kind of trenchant critique of Augustine for which Gunton has been taken to task.²²⁰ Even so, in his critique of the Augustinian inward turn in *Social God*, explicit reference is made to Gunton (along with Richard of St. Victor).²²¹ In *Named God*, while Gunton may not be directly identified, a strikingly similar critique of the turn inward appears as a corrective of Augustine's *via amoris*, a point Sexton fails to mention.²²²

²¹⁹ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 100. See also Jason S. Sexton, "Stanley Grenz's Relatedness and Relevancy to British Evangelicalism," *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 28.1 (Spring 2010), 73 and Sexton, "Beyond Social Trinitarianism," 7–8.

²²⁰ For a sympathetic critique of Gunton's treatment of Augustine, see Joshua McNall, *A Free Corrector: Colin Gunton and the Legacy of Augustine* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015). For Augustine as a "negative foil" for Gunton, see Robert Jenson, "A Decision Tree of Colin Gunton's Thinking," in *The Theology of Colin Gunton*, ed. Lincoln Harvey (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 11.

²²¹ *SGRS*, 31, 51, 60, 67, 317, 326. While dissatisfied with such categorizations, Gunton admitted to producing a "social" account in contrast to a "psychological" approach. (*The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 163–4.

²²² See Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 106–7 where he briefly mentions the Augustinian *via amoris* but overlooks Grenz's specific critique of the inward turn in *NGQB*, 336–9.

Sexton also cites an insistent Augustinianism as evidence of Grenz's "enduring 'Western' emphasis."²²³ Though Augustine received sharp critique elsewhere in the trinitarian renaissance, this suggestion by Sexton regarding Grenz is not incorrect. My concern is that Sexton emphasizes this such that Grenz's important Eastern influence is regrettably minimized. Sexton acknowledges the impact of Zizioulas and the Cappadocian Fathers for Grenz in *Social God*, though he as well overlooks here Grenz's significant use of Panayiotis Nellas (for instance) in reference to *theosis*.²²⁴ He also mentions Grenz's examination of the Eastern and Western positions on the *filioque*, with Grenz finding elements to commend in both, though ultimately siding with the West. Curiously though, Sexton fails to mention the deep engagement with both Western *and* Eastern traditions evidenced in *Named God*.²²⁵ Nor does he mention here the specific use of Nellas and Gregory Palamas in conjunction with Augustine in Grenz's refiguring of the *via amoris* that leads into *theosis*.²²⁶ Though admittedly Western and Augustinian, Grenz displayed a vital and even essential reliance on key Eastern influences as well.²²⁷

Sexton also rightly notes the importance of Grenz's Christology to his trinitarian *imago Dei* theology that issues into a "theo-eschatological-realist-ontology – a trinitarian

²²³ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 82–6 (82).

²²⁴ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 61, 77, 79, 135. Sexton (85) also notes an apparent compromise around Richard of St. Victor between John Franke's Eastern influenced perspective and Grenz's Augustinianism in *BF*, 169–202. (Cf. Brian S. Harris et al., "Stanley J. Grenz: A Theological Biography," in *Revisoning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center*, 24) Nevertheless, see Richard's appearance in *SGRS*, 31 along with the synthesis of Western and Eastern influences represented by Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzus, Zizioulas, along with Nellas in *SGRS*, 312–25. See this also in Stanley J. Grenz, "What Does It Mean to Be Trinitarians?," Baptist World Alliance Doctrine Commission, Charlottetown, PEI (5 July 2001), 5–6, 11–12, 15–16, file 'Trinity.bwa.essay.wpd' at the JRA.

²²⁵ Sexton cites Grenz on the *filioque* (*TCG*, 69–72) in *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 78. However, Sexton (84, 106) neglects Grenz's synthesis of apophatic and cataphatic approaches and reliance on Western *and* Eastern sources (*NGQB*, 291–335) which leads into his revisioning of the *via amoris*.

²²⁶ *NGQB*, 317–9, 336–40, 365. See also Grenz's discussions of all three Cappadocian Fathers (300–3, 318, 321, 323, 331), Zizioulas (300–1), and Thomas Hopko (317).

²²⁷ Grenz acknowledges legitimate distinctions between "East" and "West" without sharply dividing them. (*NGQB*, 320) He seems especially interested in forming a rapprochement and synthesis where possible. For instance, his support of the *filioque* is more muted in *NGQB*, seeking instead a pneumatological link between Augustine and Gregory Palamas regarding the Spirit as triune love. (*NGQB*, 336–7) See also Boris Bobrinsky, *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 66, 68, 77, 285, 301–2 for a positive view of the Spirit as "bond of love" from an Eastern theologian. For a favorable treatment of Grenz's pneumatology alongside T. F. Torrance's trinitarian "onto-relations," see Myk Habets, "Getting Beyond the *Filioque* with Third Article Theology," in *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century*, 211–30.

theology of the whole, informed by, unfolded in, and built on the revelatory event/s of divine self-naming.”²²⁸ Grenz admits to his desire to have developed a stronger connection between his Christology and *imago Dei* theology in his early work.²²⁹ Sexton, though, tenuously interprets the later movement of Grenz’s theology toward a more substantial Christology itself as a move past his earlier social trinitarianism. However, Grenz explicitly connected his Christology with his social trinitarianism the same year as (and prior to) his *Social God* volume, noting the incarnate Christ “reveals the truest vision of the nature of God, namely, that God is the Triune one and hence inherently social.”²³⁰ Furthermore, *Social God* itself displays a central Christological focus. The middle chapter of the middle section proposes a Christo-anthropology. This move is replicated in *Named God*, where the central chapter of the central section narrates the incarnate I AM.²³¹ Grenz’s developing Christology then does not absorb his social trinitarianism as Sexton claims.²³² Rather, his Christology develops alongside, extends, and deepens it.²³³

²²⁸ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 115–20 (119) and see 121–40 for his treatment of Grenz’s *imago Dei* theology. See also Jason S. Sexton, “The *Imago Dei* Once Again: Stanley Grenz’s Journey toward a Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1.26–27,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4.2 (Fall 2010), 187–206. We should note, though, the sparse treatment of *theosis* in Sexton’s full length monograph. (73–4, 107, 172) This is important because it keeps Sexton from fully connecting Grenz’s *imago Dei* “theo-epistemology” to Grenzian triune participation. (Smith, “A Generous Theology,” 226)

²²⁹ Grenz, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*,” 625. Grenz’s Christology is strengthened subsequent to *TCG*, 294–314 where he displays ambivalence to the post-Chalcedonian *logos asarkos* (or the *Logos* apart from the historical person of Jesus), wanting to avoid any hint of adoptionism. In his earlier efforts to balance his “from below” and “from above” approach, he potentially leaves himself open to charges of over-historicizing his Christology *at this point*. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out Grenz has always affirmed the eternal Trinity, divine (triune) transcendence apart from the world, eternal generation, and the full divinity and humanity of Christ. These features, the emphasis on the cosmic Christ in *SGRS* and *NGQB*, and Grenz’s *Grundaxiom* provide resources for a Grenzian narrative Christology that avoids the danger of over-historization. (Cf. *TCG*, 270–1) See also Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 171–8; Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit-Christology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 16, 27, 32–6, 39, 46–7, 229–30, 235–6, 241–2, 245, 267; and Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 115–17, 131–2, 156, 161.

²³⁰ Grenz, “The Universality of the ‘Jesus Story’,” 109 (Cf. *TCG*, 270). Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 132 even references this quote and elsewhere remarks on the relation of Christ and the inherent relationality of God in reference to T. F. Torrance. (98–9)

²³¹ *SGRS*, 183–222 and *NGQB*, 174–206.

²³² Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 115–17.

²³³ See *TCG*, 80, 86–7 for statements which reference the social Trinity and prefigure Grenz’s argument in *NGQB*. See also Grenz, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*” which appeared between *SGRS* and *NGQB*. This article evinces the strong Christology of *NGQB* and similar Christological exegesis as is found in *SGRS* and the last chapter of *NGQB*. As such, it forms something of a bridge linking the two monographs.

Lastly, Sexton cites the lack of explicit reference to God as the “social Trinity” in Grenz’s later publications.²³⁴ Yet we have seen that the statement “God is love” forms the heart of Grenz’s social trinitarian vision. Arguably, *Named God*, which evidences both Grenz’s abiding Augustinian focus and continued Eastern influence, contains his most thorough development of this idea. As well, a 2005 series of lectures delivered by Grenz just before his passing contain references to God as “the social Trinity,” “the divine community characterized by love,” and the “divine community of love.”²³⁵ Furthermore, Sexton himself even recognizes that Grenzian phrases which speak of the triune God as the eternal “community of love” and/or the “divine community” were other ways Grenz made reference to his particular conception of the social Trinity.²³⁶ Combine this with the appearance of the phrase “divine community” itself in Grenz’s first book published in 1985, and a twenty-year history for Grenz’s use of these designations is established.²³⁷ In light of these considerations, and along with the discussion in chapter two of this dissertation, instead of a move beyond the social Trinity, I suggest that Grenz rather presents us ultimately with a revised and strengthened social trinitarianism.

Grenz, Ricoeur, and the Narrative Self

The above determination serves to establish the continuity of Grenz’s trinitarian theological vision evident in *Social God* and *Named God*. Thus, at the end of *Named God*, Grenz’s trinitarian theo-ontology – which comes into being through the dynamic of the divine triune self-naming, and thus the narrative of the communion of the Father, Son, and Spirit – turns to his characteristic focus on the *imago Dei*. As discussed in chapter two, in *Social God* this focus yielded the social *imago*. Now, in *Named God*, as those who are caught up into the story of the triune name find themselves “in Christ” through the Spirit,

²³⁴ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 102–3.

²³⁵ Grenz, “Humanity: Personal Identity and the Quest for Home,” 5–6 and Stanley J. Grenz, “Church,” Session three of “Getting Back to Basics: Truth, Humanity, Church, and Scripture,” Critical Concerns Course, Emergent Conference, San Diego, CA (1 February 2005), 3, file ‘Session3.human.ccc.wpd’ at the JRA. See Sexton’s own reference to these lectures in *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 103.

²³⁶ See Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, 76–7. See also *CFC*, 180 and *BF*, 195, 201. See as well Grenz’s description of the “social Trinity” as “the eternal community of Father, Son, and Spirit” in *MQ*, 238.

²³⁷ Grenz, *The Baptist Congregation*, 18.

the narrative *imago* is thus constituted. The manner in which Grenz's theo-anthropology thus leads into a Christo-anthropology will be investigated below. For now, we take a detour as we revisit Ricoeur's narrative self. At the beginning of *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur mentions three aspects of his hermeneutics of the self.²³⁸ There is first "the detour of reflection by way of analysis." But as has been seen, this is not a return to the centrality of the modernist *cogito*, that "centered self" which constitutes itself by its own self-awareness. In fact, self-awareness is not Ricoeur's starting point, but the end goal of his hermeneutics.²³⁹ Ricoeurian reflexivity means the *cogito* does not escape critique or the hermeneutic of suspicion. But neither does Ricoeur decimate the self as in much radical postmodern theory. Ricoeur presents a wounded *cogito* that is at once a capable self.²⁴⁰

Second, Ricoeur mentions "the dialectic of selfhood and sameness." This is composed of the interplay of *idem*, or that which corresponds to the "what" of identity, and *ipse*, or that which corresponds to the "who" of identity. James Carter notes that the relation of the factual persistence of *idem*-identity and the narrative reflexive self-constancy of *ipse*-identity is less like the reciprocal relation between opposing poles as it is the dialectical interplay between a straight line and a circle.²⁴¹ While sameness (*idem*) is manifest through continuity over time, selfhood (*ipse*) is akin to a circle (or perhaps a spiral) of reflexivity in which the self remains true to itself in the face of change. The bond between *idem* and *ipse* is the narrative self in which identity is revealed through character.²⁴² Third, there is "the dialectic of selfhood and otherness." This dynamic is even implied in the title – *Oneself as Another* – which can be rendered "oneself inasmuch as other."²⁴³ The focus then for Ricoeur here is not the autonomous self-creation of narrative

²³⁸ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 16.

²³⁹ James Carter, *Ricoeur on Moral Religion: A Hermeneutics of Ethical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 110.

²⁴⁰ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 1–23 and Ricoeur, "The Question of the Subject," 243. See as well Paul Ricoeur, "The Addressee of Religion: The Capable Human Being," in *Philosophical Anthropology*, 269–89.

²⁴¹ Carter, *Ricoeur on Moral Religion*, 111. See also Paul Ricoeur, "Individual and Personal Identity," in *Philosophical Anthropology*, 222.

²⁴² David Rasmussen, "Rethinking Subjectivity: Narrative Identity and the Self," in *Ricoeur as Another*, 57–69.

²⁴³ Pamela Sue Anderson, "Agnosticism and Attestation: An Aporia Concerning the Other in Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*," *The Journal of Religion* 74.1 (January 1994), 67.

identity. The narrative self does not write its own story in simple fashion.²⁴⁴ Rather, narrative identity is received in irreducible relation to an other.²⁴⁵ The narrative self implies the relational self, and *vice versa*.

Yet the human “other” is not the only one on the horizon of narrative identity. There is also the Divine Other.²⁴⁶ Ricoeur gets at this in an essay titled “Naming God.”²⁴⁷ The act of naming God is one which “dislocates our imagination so as to reorient it toward the Wholly Other.”²⁴⁸ This is a God who is ultimately not subject to the whims of human narration, a God beyond Being who is instead the transcendent ground for any narrative meaning at all.²⁴⁹ Here we see a similarity between Grenz and Ricoeur in the naming of God that simultaneously outstrips and constitutes human capability. For instance, Ricoeur states, “I can name God in my faith because the [biblical] texts preached to me have already named God.”²⁵⁰ Furthermore, this contingent stance of the human subject in the face of divinity involves a listening that “excludes founding oneself,” the abandoning of the pretensions of onto-theological speculation, a “narrative confession,”²⁵¹ and the giving up of the will to self-mastery, sufficiency, and autonomy.²⁵² “The Gospels’ statement that ‘Whoever would save his life will lose it’ applies to this giving up.”²⁵³

²⁴⁴ See Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 83–93, 102, 150, 190 on emplotment.

²⁴⁵ Carter, 112 and Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 168. Grenz states: “[A] personal proper name comes to take descriptive meaning through a narrative of personal relationships.” (*NGQB*, 282) See Grenz on the narrative and communal character of naming in *NGQB*, 271–89, 370–1 and on Lévinas and otherness in *NGQB*, 329–30, 335, 340. Cf. John Wall, *Moral Creativity: Paul Ricoeur and the Poetics of Possibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 123.

²⁴⁶ See *NGQB*, 331 for Grenz on God’s distinctive triune Otherness.

²⁴⁷ Ricoeur, “Naming God,” in *Figuring the Sacred*, 217–35.

²⁴⁸ John Wall, “The Economy of the Gift: Paul Ricoeur’s Significance for Theological Ethics,” *The Journal for Religious Ethics* 29.2 (2001), 240.

²⁴⁹ Wall, *Moral Creativity*, 49–52.

²⁵⁰ Ricoeur, “Naming God,” 218. Ricoeur states, “The naming of God, in the original expressions of faith, is not simple but multiple. It is not a single tone, but polyphonic. . . . The whole of contemporary exegesis has made us attentive to the primacy of the *narrative* structure in the biblical writings.” (“Naming God,” 224) See also Mark I. Wallace, “Can God Be Named Without Being Known? The Problem of Revelation in Thiemann, Ogden, and Ricoeur,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59.2 (1999), 296–7.

²⁵¹ Quotes from Ricoeur, “Naming God,” 224–5. Such a confession can be thought of as a wager in which “the God who is named in the Bible [can] be experienced again in contemporary communities of interpretation” through “project[ing] a world of unimagined possibilities for the believer-reader.” (Wallace, *The Second Naïveté*, 30, 50) See also Ricoeur, “Naming God,” 223 and Wall, *Moral Creativity*, 50.

²⁵² Ricoeur, “Naming God,” 224–5. Cf. W. David Hall, “On the Possibility of (Un)Naming God: Thinking Theologically Along the Lines of Literature,” *Literature & Theology* 29.2 (June 2015), 172–5.

²⁵³ Ricoeur, “Naming God,” 224.

Yet there also appears a significant dissimilarity. We have already noted Grenz's dissent with theologians who seek to respect divine incomprehensibility by leaving God unnamed. Ricoeur does not seem to take exactly this same route. In reference to Exodus 3:13–15 he seeks to safeguard the narrative anticipation of the "I AM WHO I AM" saying that it "protects the 'in-itself' of God" and directs us toward the revelatory narrative of naming in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²⁵⁴ This is basically resonate with Grenz's notion of the "being with" of God unfolded in *Named God*. Yet Ricoeur also notes that, insofar as to know the name of a god was to have power over that god, he resorts to the designation "Unnameable Name" in reference to the naming of God.²⁵⁵ It is at this point that Grenz would remind us that the trinitarian act of divine self-naming revealed in the trinitarian history of the Father, Son, and Spirit results in a triune narrative identity in which the God of the Bible does not remain *unnamed*, but is rather *self-named*.²⁵⁶

The disjunction between Ricoeur and Grenz at this point is not an occasion for despair however. It is another instance of the philosophical humility of Ricoeur recognizing due limits. However, Grenz once again does not have such limits and is able to forge his distinctly trinitarian theo-ontological path which in due course comes into contact with his *imago Dei* theology. It is here that his theo-anthropology issues forth into a Christo-anthropology. On this point we return to *Social God* where Grenz makes specific reference to Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity in relation to the ecclesial self and the Jesus story.²⁵⁷ Grenz notes that the self can be thought of as a "self-in-process" which, taken

²⁵⁴ Ricoeur, "Naming God," 228. Regarding divine revelation, Stiver (*Theology After Ricoeur*, 128–31) points out Wolterstorff's misunderstanding of Ricoeur. Wolterstorff takes Ricoeur's "manifestation" ("Naming God," 223) approach to be "projective" such that divine discourse is undercut. Stiver contends Ricoeur remains open to a more traditional view of Scripture as God's written Word. What Ricoeur resists is a disincarnated view of divine dictation which elides the need for interpretation. Ricoeur likewise assumes both human and divine authorship of Scripture, "which as a whole names God in manifold ways as well as reveals God's promises, assurances, and other speech acts." (*Theology After Ricoeur*, 130) See also Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 73–118. For Wolterstorff's critique, see *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 28. For a concern similar to Wolterstorff's, see Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, 122.

²⁵⁵ Ricoeur, "Naming God," 228, 230, 233.

²⁵⁶ *NGQB*, 281.

²⁵⁷ See Ricoeur, "Naming God," 230–2 for his own Christological turn. Cf. Michael W. DeLashmutt, "Paul Ricoeur at the Foot of the Cross: Narrative Identity and the Resurrection of the Body," *Modern Theology* 25.4 (October 2009), 589–616. For a philosophical treatment of Ricoeur in reference to the cross of Christ, see

as a whole, forms a narrative.²⁵⁸ In agreement, Ricoeur suggestively observes that the self which forms a human life, is “a story in search of a narrator.”²⁵⁹ But it is not that the self simply has or makes up a narrative however. The self in a significant sense is formed and arises by connection to a particular narrative that shapes storied identity. This occurs as the narrative framework provides the hermeneutical schema which produces the plot for one’s sense of self.²⁶⁰ Connecting back to the opening quote of this chapter, the ecclesial sense of self for those “in Christ” arises from a particular form of emplotment which forms the narrative *imago*.²⁶¹ This dynamic “involves retelling one’s own narrative, and hence making sense out of one’s life, by means of the plot of the Jesus narrative.”²⁶² We noted above the importance of Ricoeur’s notion of “character” in the dialectical relation of sameness and selfhood in the formation of narrative identity. The question thus presents itself: what is the particular character (or perhaps shape) of the narrative *imago* which has been brought into theotic triune participation through inclusion into the Jesus story by the gift of the Spirit? It is to this question that we now turn.

Grenzian Christo-Anthropology and Cruciform Community

The question above occasions a return to Grenz’s integrative motif of community with the intention of focusing the previously articulated theo-anthropology into a Christo-anthropology. The Christological focus is not foreign to Grenz’s social trinitarianism. Already in *Theology for the Community of God* Grenz states: “In Jesus of Nazareth we do indeed encounter the great ‘I AM,’ the ultimate reality who is active in history from beginning to end.”²⁶³ Not only this, but the relational God – “the Father who desires that we might enjoy fellowship with him, the Son in whose fellowship with the Father we are

Brian Gregor, *A Philosophical Anthropology of the Cross: The Cruciform Self* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 24–31, 56–67, 142–51, 176–84.

²⁵⁸ *SGRS*, 310. Grenz cites Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 140–68.

²⁵⁹ Paul Ricoeur, “Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator,” in *On Psychoanalysis: Writings and Lectures 1*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Jean-Louis Schlegel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 187–200.

²⁶⁰ *SGRS*, 329. Cf. George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (Atlanta, GA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1981), 101–15.

²⁶¹ *SGRS*, 328–31 and *NGQB*, 361–4. On emplotment, see Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 140–9, 162.

²⁶² *SGRS*, 329.

²⁶³ *TCG*, 87.

called to share, and the Holy Spirit who as the bond of the divine fellowship brings us into participation in that relationship” – revealed in the triune I AM constitutes the people of God.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, Grenz states that Christology is the study of the identity and mission of Christ, in whom rests the disclosure of the divine intent for humanity as life-in-community. Christ is the revealer, effector, and originator of the proleptic, eschatological community belonging to the triune God.²⁶⁵ This early perspective contains the seeds for Grenz’s later development of these themes which culminate in *Named God* with the *imago Dei* as the “in Christ” vocation of the (ecclesial) new humanity, having already been developed in central fashion in the self-designated “Christo-anthropology” of *Social God*.²⁶⁶ Grenz’s Christology is connected to both the social *imago* and the narrative *imago*, evidenced in the numerous appearances of the phrase “in Christ and through the Spirit” (or a variation thereof) throughout this study.²⁶⁷ At the core of Grenz’s trinitarian theological theo-anthropology is a Christo-anthropology.

The social *imago* and narrative *imago* mutually imply one another. However, a focus on the narrative aspect of Grenz’s communal *imago Dei* theology will help sharpen the focus of the character of storied participation in Christ in a way that extends Grenz’s own insights. A 2004 essay, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*,” provides a summarization of key themes in his *imago Dei* theology in relation to Christology.²⁶⁸ Already noted is the manner in which Grenz’s theology of the *imago Dei* points beyond creation to eschatological new creation in a way that avoids simply bypassing creation. In this essay, Grenz presents an exegesis of New Testament passages very similar to what can be found within *Social God*

²⁶⁴ TCG, 87.

²⁶⁵ TCG, 245, 350 and Grenz, “The Universality of the ‘Jesus Story,’” 96–102.

²⁶⁶ NGQB, 361 and SGRS, 183–222.

²⁶⁷ See also Grenz’s sympathy towards Robert Jenson’s emphasis of the narrative dimension of Christology and the social character of both deity and humanity in relation to Christology. However, despite noting this as a key insight of Jenson’s, Grenz also displays “queasiness at Jenson’s idea that God – and not just the Father, Son, and Spirit – is a person, for this risks making God a fourth person in addition to the three persons of the Trinity.” (“The Divine Fugue: Robert Jenson’s Renewed Trinitarianism,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30.2 (Summer 2003), 213–15) Grenz’s misgivings here are similar to T. F. Torrance’s exhortation to set aside “any temptation to think of God behind the back of his three-fold self-revelation – there is no such God. Apart from God as he is revealed to us in his three-fold economic or evangelical manifestations as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is no divine Being undefined by Jesus Christ which we need fear.” (*The Christian Doctrine of God*, 177)

²⁶⁸ Grenz, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*,” 617–28.

and *Named God*. This exegesis focuses on the themes of an *imago Dei* Christology, in which creation and new creation come to find their coherence in Christ as the true *imago* and truly human one, as well as Grenz's characteristic link between the vocation of humankind and the divine intent of the *imago Dei* (now concentrated in Christ).²⁶⁹ Commenting on Wayne Grudem, Grenz expresses dismay at the paltry treatment of the *imago Dei* in evangelical systematic theologies. He notes that Grudem primarily relegates the *imago Dei* to creation such that it merely funds a creational anthropology rather than one Christologically conceived.²⁷⁰

Grenz comments similarly regarding the approach of Millard Erickson, whose exposition of the *imago Dei* is also sparse. This is evident especially in Erickson's dedicated treatise on Christology which contains no sustained treatment of the divine image.²⁷¹ Grenz states, "Erickson's chief concern is not to set forth an understanding of Jesus as the image of God that can inform anthropology, but to do the exact opposite – to argue that the creation of humankind in the divine image opens the way for the incarnation."²⁷² Grenz contends this unveils a common assumption that human ontology is located primarily in the primordial past. The drawback is that this kind of *imago Dei* anthropology risks becoming overdetermined by human sinfulness such that Jesus becomes a mere remedy to a human problem.²⁷³ Such a move serves to narrate Christology, the incarnation, and anthropology primarily through the fall of humankind rather than the vocation of Jesus as the true *imago Dei* in the divine program. The result is an onto-theological anthropological Christology rather than a Christ determined theo-ontological Christology.²⁷⁴ Grenz suggests that Christology should not simply be the third topic in a

²⁶⁹ See Grenz, "Jesus as the *Imago Dei*," 618–24; *TCG*, 279–86; *SGRS*, chapters five and six; and *NGQB*, 361–7.

²⁷⁰ Grenz, "Jesus as the *Imago Dei*," 624–5. Grenz is commenting on Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 444–5. See Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, Volume two, 938 for agreement with the Christocentric vs creation-centric *imago Dei*.

²⁷¹ For example, see the brief mention of the *imago Dei* in Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991), 544–5.

²⁷² Grenz, "Jesus as the *Imago Dei*," 625.

²⁷³ Grenz, "Jesus as the *Imago Dei*," 626. For agreement, see Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, Volume two, 1037.

²⁷⁴ See Grenz's related concern regarding Robert Neville's neo-liberal Christology: "I fear that to transform the resurrected Jesus from a living person who journeys with the church toward the eschatological

list of systematic *loci*, but a theology-informing *locus*. In this way, Christ as the *imago Dei* comes to inform the doctrine of God, creation, anthropology, and so on.²⁷⁵

Christ as the incarnate I AM, truly human one, Lord, and true narrative *imago*, then “completes the human vocation to be the *imago Dei*.”²⁷⁶ Those who are “to be the image of God according to the pattern disclosed by Jesus,” and thus “conformed to the *imago Christi*,”²⁷⁷ receive a narrative identity from outside themselves such that they are, in David Kelsey’s descriptive phrase, characterized by an “eccentric existence.”²⁷⁸ As such, Christ as the true *imago* is at once also the norming narrative *imago*. Determinative then for the “in Christ” eccentric community of the triune God, which comprises the prolepsis of the eschatological goal of the new humanity of the new creation, is the Jesus story. Grenz specifies this story is specifically the narrative of the suffering, crucified, and risen Jesus. To be united with Christ through the Spirit is to take on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the centrally formative catalyst for narrative identity.²⁷⁹ The shape or character of the narrative identity arising from this eccentric “narrative spirituality of the cross” has been aptly described as “cruciformity,” which is nothing other than conformity to the person and story of Christ.²⁸⁰ It is this cross shaped, cruciform story that is to shape the ongoing narration of the Christ constituted community. The result is a

future into a symbolic focal point for courageous living in the present is to reduce the Christian faith to psychology and to reduce Christology to anthropology.” (*Jesus as Symbol: Robert Neville’s Christology and the Neo-liberal Theological Project*, *Modern Theology* 20.3 (July 2004), 473) Grenz’s statement here would seem to mitigate the concern of Keith Johnson, who worries that Grenz makes Jesus a “mere prototype.” (“Review of Stanley Grenz, *The Named God and the Question of Being*,” *Princeton Theological Review* 12.1 (Spring 2006), 36)

²⁷⁵ Grenz, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*,” 627. While stating it “points in the right direction” (625), Grenz now seems to express some dissatisfaction with the structure of *TCG* in which “Part Two” covered anthropology and “Part Three” covered Christology. See also *MQ*, 220 which specifies a Christological focus for the ethical life.

²⁷⁶ Grenz, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*,” 626.

²⁷⁷ *NGQB*, 363.

²⁷⁸ David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, Volume one (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 340, 426–7, 429, 590–1.

²⁷⁹ *SGRS*, 259. See also *NGQB*, 183, 286–7 and *TCG*, 336–8 on “Jesus as the Suffering Servant.”

²⁸⁰ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 4 and Gorman, “Paul and the Cruciform Way of God in Christ,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 2.1 (2013), 64–83. Bringing Grenz into contact with Gorman on cruciformity works to address what Brian Harris, “Beyond Bebbington: The Quest for Evangelical Identity in a Postmodern Era,” *Churchman* 122.3 (2008), 210–12 notes as a diminished emphasis on the cross and “crucicentrism” in Grenz.

sharpening of Grenz's notion of community. In Ricoeurian terms, the eschatological community of Christ in the Spirit takes on a specific productive plot. Those who by the Spirit are brought into (theotic) storied participation in the Jesus narrative and receive their identity *extra se in Christo*, therefore, exist eccentrically not simply as "community" but as a particularly emplotted cruciform community.

The Narrative *Imago*, Gender, and Storied Participation

We now come to the second of three dedicated sections working toward a constructive account of the interrelation between the *imago Dei*, gender, and triune participation in Grenz's thought that can contribute to a hermeneutical ecclesiology. This section is devoted to a treatment of Grenz and gender from a Christological focus progressing through three moments. The first considers the notion of "headship" as it arises in Grenz's contested evangelical context, finding a suggestive Grenzian move to figure headship Christologically rather than lexically. The second moment comprises a detour to focus this suggestion. This is done in conversation with Sarah Sumner's work on the metaphorical function of headship in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 signifying union and oneness. Subsequently, this focus on union leads into a discussion of Michael Gorman's notion of cruciform *theosis*. The final moment concludes with a consideration of union with Christ as a theotic storied participation characterized by embodied and cruciform female/male mutuality.

The Narrative *Imago* and Female/Male Mutuality in Grenz

The previous section on gender mentioned the attempt by some in Grenz's evangelical context to ground a top-down hierarchy of male authority and female submission within an asymmetrical (or hierarchical) model of the Trinity wherein the Son is unilaterally subordinated to the Father.²⁸¹ Concerning such a subordinationism, Khaled

²⁸¹ A representative apologetic for the "eternal functional subordination" (EFS) of the Son as a basis for male-female hierarchy is Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005). See also Ware's recent "Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles: Eternal Functional Authority and Submission among the Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead," in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism?*, 13–38. For rejoinders, see Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002); Giles, *Jesus and the*

Anatolios expresses concern that this sort of move risks conflating the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity.²⁸² The Grenzian response to the trinitarian subordinationism of his day was his emphasis on reciprocal relational trinitarian personhood and the dynamic of triune mutuality, oneness, and dependence. As the complementary relations among the Father, Son, and Spirit are marked not by hierarchy but mutuality, so also the complementary relationship of “male and female” should be characterized by relational oneness expressed not in hierarchy but mutuality.²⁸³ As well, we have seen that Grenz presents a thorough working out of the Grenz *Grundaxiom*, enabling him to avoid the conflation of the economic Trinity and immanent Trinity that worries Anatolios.

However, another plank in the evangelical hierarchialist schema of top-down male-female relations of authority-submission relates to the doctrine of “headship.” *Kephale* (“head”) taken as “authority over” comes to underwrite an authority-submission structure of “God-Christ, Christ-man, and man-woman” in 1 Corinthians 11:3²⁸⁴ and a hierarchy of husband-wife in Ephesians 5:23. An egalitarian reading though takes “head” in terms of “source” in an effort to undercut the subordinationist reading.²⁸⁵ Grenz argues

Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006); and Giles, “The Trinity without Tiers,” in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism?*, 262–87. As well, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis questions the logic of EFS, “The idea that Christ’s subordination is eternal yet merely functional (and thereby compatible with ontological equality) is incongruent. An eternal [functional] subordination of Christ would seem logically to entail his ontological subordination.” (“Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 332) See also the critique that the authority-submission structure of EFS threatens to divide the divine will thus risking tritheism in D. Glenn Butner, “Eternal Functional Subordination and the Problem of the Divine Will,” *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 58.1 (2015), 131–49. Grenz’s focus on reciprocal relational personhood and triune mutuality and oneness in conjunction with his Augustinianism would indicate he is able to avoid dividing either the divine will or operations.

²⁸² Anatolios states: “[A] strict or unqualified conflation of the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity would entail that the subordination of the incarnate Son to the Father reflects the same order of subordination in the immanent Trinity. But a large part of the logic of Nicene theology consists precisely in overcoming this inference.” (*Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 4)

²⁸³ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 154–6.

²⁸⁴ Gilbert Bilezikian points out these sets are subtly rearranged to support a hierarchical reading. Their actual order in the text (Christ-man, man-women, and God-Christ) is chronological or historical corresponding to the creation of man, the creation of woman, and the incarnation of Christ. (*Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman’s Place in Church and Family*, Third edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 105–6, 191) See also Payne, *Man and Women, One in Christ*, 138–9 for support of Bilezikian’s reading.

²⁸⁵ See Wayne Grudem, “Does *Kephale* (‘Head’) Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature: A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” *Trinity Journal* 6.1 (Spring 1985), 38–59 and Grudem “The Meaning of *Kephale* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” *Trinity Journal* 11.1 (Spring 1990), 3–72 for classic statements

vigorously against a unilateral submission of women to men that is based on a reading of “head” as “authority over.” He concludes his contextual exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:3–16 by noting the radical assumption in this passage is that female voices would, in fact, be praying and prophesying in the early church’s public gatherings. In a social context that marginalized women, the gospel opened up their freedom of participation to such an extent that they became instruments whom the Spirit used to deliver authoritative messages to the whole community.²⁸⁶ Additionally, contra the hierarchialist reading, Grenz notes that in context Ephesians 5:21 frames the whole passage (5:21–33) with the overarching principle of mutual submission.²⁸⁷ Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, while Grenz seeks to undermine headship in terms of “authority over” for a more mutualist reading, he still doesn’t offer unqualified support for headship as “source,” noting that scholars still had yet to reach a consensus.²⁸⁸ But if Grenz does not fully accept the egalitarian reading of headship as “source,” how does he suggest it be rendered?

In a lexical sense, Grenz never resolved the meaning of *kephale* itself. Rather, he sought to take a Christological focus in relation to a passage such as Ephesians 5:21–24 in which headship and (mutual) submission are mentioned in close proximity.²⁸⁹ Grenz thus looked to the life of Christ itself for the clue as to the shape of submission in Christian social relations. The life of Jesus encourages not the reification of headship as emblematic of an authority-submission structure in male/female relations but rather issues forth the high calling for all God’s people: mutual submission one to another.²⁹⁰ Whatever the

in favor of the hierarchialist reading. See Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 113–39, 285–90 for a convincing argument for “head” as “source.”

²⁸⁶ See Grenz’s exegesis in *Women in the Church*, 111–7.

²⁸⁷ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 115, 178. See also Payne, *Man and Women, One in Christ*, 271–83 and Alan Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 66–7, 70–1.

²⁸⁸ Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 115.

²⁸⁹ Grenz, “Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationships,” 86–8. See also Payne, *Man and Women, One in Christ*, 283–90 for the Christological focus.

²⁹⁰ Grenz, “Theological Approaches to Male-Female Relationships,” 86. Grenz also states in reference to 1 Corinthians 11:3, “[W]e cannot appeal to the example of Christ’s subordination to the Father alone and hence an asymmetrical model of God as definitive for male-female relationships. Rather, the foundation for godly human relationships lies in the subordination of the Son to the Father together with the dependency of the Father on the Son. The application of the transcendent mutuality within the divine dynamic to the human sphere leads quite naturally to an emphasis on the interdependency of, and mutuality between male and female.” (88) See also Wesley Hill, *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and*

proper rendering of *kephale* in a lexical sense, we know that for Grenz it takes its meaning in the context of mutual submission and thus does not mean “authority over.”²⁹¹ Beyond this, however, Grenz indicates his Christological focus another way. Christ himself, who we have identified as the true and norming narrative *imago*, is the “head” of the new humanity destined to be formed according to God’s intent for the creation of the community of “male and female” as the *imago Dei* from the beginning.²⁹² This move to a Christological focus for headship, both in terms of Christ’s example as paradigmatic for female-male mutual submission as well as Christ himself as “head,” is suggestive of Grenz’s Christo-anthropology of Christ-shaped conformity through inclusion in the Jesus narrative. We now move to focus this suggestion and uncover its further meaning for female/male community in union with Christ.

Sarah Sumner and Michael Gorman on “Headship” and Cruciform *Theosis*

The debate on the meaning of *kephale* unfortunately stalls too often in the attempt to define it as one of two options, whether it be “authority over” or “source.” One reason is that, as seen in Grenz’s treatment of 1 Corinthians 11:3–16 and Ephesians 5:21–33, the meaning of “head” is highly contextual. Extending this basic insight exegetes such as Gordon Fee also point to the metaphorical nature of *kephale* in which the use of “head” assumes a “body” of some sort.²⁹³ Lynn Cohick offers the suggestion that *kephale* is polyvalent and can serve more than one signifying purpose, suggesting “preeminent” as

the Pauline Letters (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 129–34 for his more guarded notion of “asymmetrical mutuality” between the Father and Son.

²⁹¹ See also Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church*, 58–68.

²⁹² See *SGRS*, 18, 224, 225–6, 232, 256, 268, 330 and *NGQB*, 362–3. See also Colossians 1:18 and Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 121–2. The move to an ecclesial focus is consistent with Grenz’s insistence that the marital “one flesh” instantiation of “male and female” in the *imago Dei* is penultimate, pointing toward the divine communal intent for the *imago Dei* located on both the ecclesial and eschatological horizon. (Grenz, “Is God Sexual?,” 211–12) Insofar as marriage (and singleness) is “in Christ” and through the Spirit, it is marked as a specific form of ecclesial relation.

²⁹³ See this in Gordon D. Fee, “Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 149–55. Fee holds 1 Corinthians 11:3 as a possible exception to this norm in the metaphorical use of *kephale*. The metaphorical use produces a pluriform range of meaning depending on context for Fee. Ephesians, 4:15–16 and Colossians 2:19 suggest life-giving in relationship to the church, 1 Corinthians 11:3 suggests *kephale* as “source,” Colossians 1:18 suggests intimate connection to the body of Christ, and Ephesians 5:22–24 suggest life-giving dependence. Colossians 2:10, 15 speaks of Christ as “head of” (= over) the powers and authorities.

another possible meaning.²⁹⁴ And in agreement with Fee's contention for the metaphorical quality of *kephale*, Cohick states that it "represents a synecdoche whereby the specific part (head) stands for the whole."²⁹⁵ Sarah Sumner is another scholar who picks up this metaphorical use of headship. She holds that exegetes in the evangelical gender debate have been too quick to strictly define *kephale*. Pointing to the need to resist the temptation to transform biblical metaphors into too clear cut definitions which effectively demystify the mysteries of God she asserts the necessity of learning to "think metaphorically."²⁹⁶

For Sumner the relation of Christ to the church, marriage, and headship are among these mysteries for which metaphorical language is particularly apt. Thus, in substantial agreement with Fee, she contends *kephale* is meant to be a visual image – a word picture of sorts – of a head and body. She specifies what she thinks this means for 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 saying, "Christ is the head of every man, man is the head of woman, God is the head of Christ, the husband is head of the wife, and Christ is head of the church. Each represents a mystery. In every case, the head and body are *vitally connected as one*."²⁹⁷ Sumner provides us here with a way of viewing the metaphorical function of *kephale* as a picture of "organic" union and oneness that has great resonance with Grenz's relational paradigm of trinitarian and female-male mutuality outlined thus far.²⁹⁸ Furthermore, insofar as this union and oneness maintain a Christological ground

²⁹⁴ Lynn H. Cohick, "Prophecy, Women in Leadership, and the Body of Christ," in *Women, Ministry, and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms*, eds. Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP Academic, 2007), 94–9. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 119–25 also suggests "fountainhead" as a possible meaning.

²⁹⁵ Cohick, "Prophecy, Women in Leadership, and the Body of Christ," 94.

²⁹⁶ Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP, 2003), 152–3, 182–3. In the context of metaphorical language, Sumner cites McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 15. See also Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 119 who warns concerning the dangers of imposing current meaning on ancient vocabulary.

²⁹⁷ Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church*, 183. Emphasis mine. See 139–53, 154–71, 173–89 for her discussions of headship. We should note however that Sumner is not convinced along with Fee above that *kephale* means "source" in 1 Corinthians 11:3. (150) See also Cynthia Long Westphal, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Women and Men in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 94–5 on the "one flesh" and "head-body" metaphor in relation to headship in Ephesians 5:21–33.

²⁹⁸ Sumner (*Men and Women in the Church*, 167) speaks of the "organic unity that bonds a husband and wife" signified metaphorically by the "headship" and "one flesh" word pictures. In relation to Ephesians 5:23, headship becomes connected to the dynamic of mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21) in the context of

with Christ as the “head” of the new community, it directs our attention to the theme of “union with Christ.”²⁹⁹

In Grenz’s Christo-anthropology, the dynamic reality of “being” in Christ (which can also be spoken of effectively as union with Christ) constitutes an eccentric narrative identity received through inclusion in the Jesus story. This dynamic comprises a triune participation as well as a Christ constituted storied participation. Because this is a participation in the story of Christ, it necessarily has a cruciform character to it. The community of Christ is therefore a cruciform community. It is here that Michael Gorman’s insight of cruciform *theosis* can help to refigure Grenz’s notion of community arising from theotic triune participation even further. Two things make Gorman a good fit in conversation with Grenz at this point. One is that Gorman is a biblical scholar who can provide support to Grenz’s creative trinitarian theological reading of Scripture and the intimate connection of his Christology to his trinitarian theology. For example, Gorman concludes that “Paul’s famous phrase ‘in Christ’ is shorthand for ‘in God/in Christ/in the Spirit.’ That is, his christocentricity is really an implicit trinitarianism.”³⁰⁰ The second is

husband and wife as (described in another metaphor of relational union) “one flesh.” This is supported by the fact that Ephesians 5:22 assumes the Greek verb for “submit” from 5:21 in the context of submitting one to another, thus framing 5:22–33 with the posture of mutual submission. (See Westphal, *Paul and Gender*, 22, 92–3, 100–2, 164–6; Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 277–83; and Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 195–204 for support.) Furthermore, in Grenzian terms, the “headship” of God to Christ reveals the dynamic of trinitarian oneness and communion whereas the metaphorical “headship” of the husband to the wife reveals the outworking of the communal *imago Dei* in the context of the “one flesh” marriage relationship. As a reflection of the divine image, the oneness of husband and wife is characterized not by hierarchy but mutual submission and interdependence. See Grenz, “Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships,” 86, 88–94. See also Margaret Kim Peterson, “Identity and Ministry in Light of the Gospel: A View from the Kitchen,” in *Women, Ministry, and the Gospel*, 162–3 and Westphal, *Paul and Gender*, 94–5 for the theme of mutuality in reference to headship.

²⁹⁹ For the connection between Christ’s headship and union with Christ, see Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 275–6 which occurs within a larger conversation regarding the Apostle Paul’s “body of Christ” metaphor. (268–89) Campbell states: “This is no decapitated body! It belongs to its head, who shares with it, shapes it, promotes its growth, and cares for it. The body is ‘in Christ’ (Romans 12:5), and it also grows into Christ, its head (Ephesians 4:15). While the prepositional language that is associated with union with Christ is frequently absent with respect to the body metaphor, the concept of union is never far away and, in fact, is always implied by the metaphor itself.” (288–9)

³⁰⁰ Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 4. This offers a suggestive response to the proposal from social trinitarian critics such as Stephen Holmes and Kathryn Tanner that we look to Christology instead of the Trinity to guide ecclesiology. (Holmes, “Three Versus One?,” 82–4 and Tanner,

that Gorman develops his own exegetically sensitive theological reading of *theosis*, which both complements as well as offers a promising critical supplementation of sorts to Grenz's notion of community.

Gorman unpacks his argument by first examining Philippians 2:6–11 as Paul's "master story" to show that the kenotic self-emptying of Christ reveals the character of God. In this, a counterintuitive narrative divine identity is revealed in which cruciformity actually means theofority.³⁰¹ He then turns to an examination of justification, or what he terms "justification by co-crucifixion"³⁰² which also necessarily entails co-resurrection, and contends that "it is participation in the covenantal and cruciform narrative identity of Christ, which is in turn the character of God . . . justification is itself *theosis*."³⁰³ Gorman then turns to the nature of holiness for Paul, concluding that it comes to be redefined as entailing both a participation in and conformity to the cruciform character of the cruciform God. Important to Gorman's delineation is that holiness is not merely a supplement or "add on" attached to justification. Rather, holiness represents the actualization of justification, such that it can itself also be included in the idea of *theosis*.³⁰⁴ Gorman thus summarizes what may variously be called Christification,³⁰⁵ Christosis, deification, or *theosis*: "Theosis is transformative participation in the kenotic, cruciform

"Trinity," 329) For Grenz, as seen in the narrative of the triune name, to be Christological (and/or pneumatological) is at once also to be trinitarian, and *vice versa*.

³⁰¹ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 9–39. Gorman states Philippians 2:6–8 forms a narrative pattern of "although/because [x], not [y], but [z]" gleaned from the rendering "although/because [in the form of God], did not [exploit equality with God], but [emptied himself . . . humbled himself]." (16–25, brackets original) Gorman further states: "In Christ's preexistent and incarnate kenosis we see truly what God is truly like, and we simultaneously see truly what Adam/humanity truly should have been, truly was not, and now truly can be in Christ. *Kenosis is theosis*." (37, emphasis original) Additionally, see *NGQB*, 201–2 for Grenz's suggestion that the "name" of Jesus in Philippians 2:9–11, which is above all other names and at which everyone will ultimately bow, represents the holy divine name which Jesus possesses. For agreement, see R. Kendall Soulen, *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity, Volume 1: Distinguishing the Voices* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know, 2011), 208–10; Richard Bauckham, "Paul's Christology of Divine Identity," in *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies in the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 199; and Charles Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57.2 (2003), 128–30.

³⁰² Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 40–104.

³⁰³ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 2. See also 90–101.

³⁰⁴ See Michael J. Gorman, "You Shall Be Cruciform for I Am Cruciform': Paul's Trinitarian Reconstruction of Holiness," in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, eds. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 148–66 and Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 105–28.

³⁰⁵ "Christification" comes from Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, 24, 39–40, 121–4, 134–5, 138.

character and life of God through Spirit-enabled conformity to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected/glorified Christ, who is the image of God.”³⁰⁶

The cruciformity that comprises theoformity in Gorman’s conception thus comes through inclusion “in Christ” and is therefore a Christo-formity bound up in an inhabitation of the triune, cruciform God. Cruciform *theosis* in this view comprises a narrative soteriology or a “living exegesis of the Crucified [One], who is the image of God.”³⁰⁷ It is in this manner that the ecclesial community inhabits the cruciform God and who is inhabited in turn by the cruciform God. Thus the church, as that body constituted through ecclesial relation “in Christ” and through the Spirit, comes to be shaped by and embody the cruciform narrative identity of the triune God.³⁰⁸ The reality of union with the cruciform Christ as head of the cruciform community constitutes the ecclesial relation of “male and female” within the context of a triune participation that is at once a storied participation. Gorman’s theme of cruciform *theosis* in contact with Grenz’s theotic triune participation suggests that those who are “in Christ” through the Spirit also inhabit the triune, cruciform God. The result is not simply “community” in general terms but an ecclesial community of “male and female” that is characterized by an eccentric and cruciform existence.

Female/Male Mutuality and Storied (Ecclesial) Participation

In Grenz’s Christo-anthropology, human be-ing arises from inclusion “in Christ” through the Spirit. As John Zizioulas reminds us, “[T]he mystery of [humanity] reveals itself fully only in the light of Christ.”³⁰⁹ Yet this is a fully trinitarian reality as well, as our study of Grenz’s theo-ontology in this chapter has shown. For instance, Grenz states:

At the heart of the narrative of the I AM through which God's self-naming occurs is the act of naming that occurs between God and Jesus, and in which the Spirit participates. . . . The communal, eschatological aspects of the dynamic of naming lie at the heart of the act of self-naming of the self-naming God and even arise

³⁰⁶ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 7, 125, 162.

³⁰⁷ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 172.

³⁰⁸ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 161–73.

³⁰⁹ Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity,” 433. “Humanity” adapts a generic masculine from the original.

from this dynamic. God's act of self-naming is both communal and eschatological, for it involves the dynamic of the relationality of the three trinitarian persons.³¹⁰

Extending from this dynamic of transcendent triune self-naming, Christ, as the bearer and bestower of the divine name, is the head of a new humanity destined to be formed according to his image.³¹¹ Jesus as the true and norming narrative *imago* is the “‘grammatical paradigm’ of human being”³¹² through which the narrative *imago* of those “in Christ” is constituted and takes shape. The resulting ecclesial communion becomes the place in which the triune life of Christ grants life to its members in the Spirit. “Christ is not a simple liberator who abandons [persons] to their own devices after liberation, after entrusting them with his wise teaching. More radically, he creates a new place for them in which to live. And this place is His body.”³¹³ Because this body is Christoform, it is cruciform.³¹⁴

Furthermore, Christ exists as the true *imago* in both his divinity and his true humanity such that through participation in him our own true humanity is constituted and we receive “our primary ontological determination as those created to be in the image of God.”³¹⁵ Or as Bonhoeffer states, “In Christ’s incarnation all of humanity regains the dignity of bearing the image of God,” such that, “In community with the incarnate one, we

³¹⁰ *NGQB*, 283, 334. See also David Kelsey’s communal and eschatological trinitarian taxis: “In relating creatively, ‘the Father creates through the Son in the power of the Spirit’; in relating eschatological blessing, ‘the Spirit is sent by the Father with the Son’; in relating to reconcile, ‘the Son is sent by the Father in the power of the Spirit.’” (*Eccentric Existence*, Volume two, 915)

³¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 4, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, eds. Geoffrey B. Kelley and John D. Godsey (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 284–5.

³¹² Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, Volume two, 1009. Kelsey speaks here of eccentric existence as an “imaging of the image of God.” (1008–51) We can also discern here an “intertextual” intersection in Grenz’s theo-ontology between Scripture as paradigmatic “norming narrative” and Christ as paradigmatic “norming narrative *imago*.”

³¹³ Nella, *Deification in Christ*, 113–14. “Persons” adapts a generic masculine from the original.

³¹⁴ Jones, *Marks of His Wounds*, 110–14.

³¹⁵ See this emphasis in Suzanne McDonald’s discussion of Barth, Jesus as “Elect God” and “elect man,” and the *homoousion* in *Re-Imagining Election: Divine Election as Representing God to Others and Others to God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 51–4, 124 (54). For the theme that in the incarnation we learn that divinity and humanity are not inherently opposed and that Christ (and not sin) is definitive of true humanity, see Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 145–8. See also Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective*, 220–3 for his concern to still recognize the value of anthropology and Christology remaining distinct systematic *loci* and the need for an anthropology that is fully *Christological* while not being *Christomonistic*.

are once again given our true humanity. With it, we are delivered from the isolation of sin, and at the same time restored to the whole of humanity.”³¹⁶ In view of this reality, *theosis* can be said to comprise *anthroposis* as well.³¹⁷ Yet, we are met with a question concerning embodied maleness and femaleness at this point. How can it be maintained that the true humanity for those in the ecclesial community of male *and* female is to be found in the specifically male Christ? We should immediately warn here against the muting of Jesus’ maleness in a spirit of inclusiveness, just as it would be improper to erase his Jewishness.³¹⁸ In fact, it is precisely the particularly male and Jewish Jesus, who, in Grenz’s words, is the “universal human” showing and mediating the way to true life-in-community for all peoples.³¹⁹

Beth Felker Jones helps to delineate this further.³²⁰ She points out that the “marks of his wounds” are also a part of the concreteness and particularity of Christ. If one wants to know what is godly, one should look at the wounds of Christ. In this view, to be Christoform is to be cruciform, but not necessarily male-form. Jones states:

The church, itself, the body of Christ, includes the bodies of women and men as they are incorporated into Christ, even while the irreducible maleness and Jewishness of this Lord mysteriously make way for our own irreducibilities. The

³¹⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 285.

³¹⁷ Peter M. Candler, “The Logic of Christian Humanism,” *Communio* 36.1 (Spring 2009), 86. For the attribution of *anthroposis* (but not *theosis*) to the preceding Bonhoeffer quote, see Tom Greggs, “Bearing Sin in the Church: The Ecclesial Hamartiology of Bonhoeffer,” in *Christ, Church, and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer’s Theology and Ethics*, eds. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 89 who states: “For Bonhoeffer, salvation is by *anthroposis* not *theosis*.” I follow Candler in not setting *theosis* and *anthroposis* in opposition in this manner. See also Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 37 who says, “To be like Christ crucified is to be both most godly and most human. Christification is divinization, and divinization is humanization.”

³¹⁸ See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 79–96 regarding Christ’s particularity in relation to feminist, liberationist, and postcolonial concerns, and 42–4, 238–41 on the importance of Jesus’ Jewishness. See also Elaine Storkey, “Who is the Christ? Issues in Christology and Feminist Theology,” in *Gender and the Gospel*, 106–23 who warns: “It may be that liberation feminism has been bewitched by the very anthropomorphism which it warns against. For it needs to recognize that, though Christ is God-with-us in our humanity, pain, new life and our joy, God in Christ is not ultimately like any of us. There is no need to hold against the features of Christ’s particularity some checklist, so that we can be assured of our inclusion in the mystery of divine love. . . . God does not need to be re-imagined in our image.” (122) In agreement with Storkey, a Grenzian approach calls for a Christo-anthropology in theo-ontological (versus onto-theological) terms.

³¹⁹ *TCG*, 272–93 (especially 286–93). See also *CFC*, 86–92 for Grenz’s discussion of Jesus as “truly human,” “the True Human,” and “the New Human.”

³²⁰ Jones, *Marks of His Wounds*, 111–14.

rightly ordered [female or male] body finds its direction and telos in this specific Lord.³²¹

The materiality of Christ's body ensures his availability to his people such that participation in his body allows female and male bodies to become iconic, both individually and corporately. Specificity and particularity, whether ours as male and female or Christ's as the cruciform true human, should not be dissipated. Such would undermine the incarnation and be soteriologically (and ecclesially) deleterious.³²² In addition, "both Jesus' own resurrection and the doctrine of the resurrection in general indicate that human [female and male] sexual distinctions (albeit in transformed manner) are taken into existence in the [eschatological] community of God."³²³ "Male *and* female" then derive their ecclesial and eschatological being from the "wounded side" of the crucified and resurrected Christ.³²⁴

³²¹ Jones, *Marks of His Wounds*, 111. Jones states additionally: "We are returned to the patristic maxim, 'what is not assumed is not saved.' Humanity, then, had best hope that particularity is assumed. The assumption of particularity is accomplished in the multiplicity of the true body of Christ. He assumes human historical particularity in the incarnation and all of our diverse particularity in the ecclesia. It is not, then, as [Judith] Butler suggests, that particularities like the sexed or gendered body are dissolved in performativity. Rather, in faithful performance, exemplified in Christ's saving work, those bodies are made *more* concrete, more bodily." (112)

³²² Jones, *Marks of His Wounds*, 112. I would suggest attempts to construct a "multi-gender" Christ (Graham Ward, "Bodies: The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 163–81) or suggestions of the possibility of an "intersex Christ" (DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 279), in their laudable effort to affirm the particularity of some, regrettably risk diminishing Christ's particularity. Not only would this yield an improper onto-theological anthropological Christology rather than a properly theo-ontological Christo-anthropology, but to mitigate Christ's particularity for any reason, however noble, risks undercutting the very basis for participation and particularity "in Christ." Regarding Ward's "multi-gender" Christ, Jones states: "Ward would not need to make Jesus' fully human body 'multi-gendered' if he began with the recognition that Christ's body is fully a body in multivalent ways – in Nazareth, on the altar, and in the church. Difference is included in the latter two valences but can only be properly so included because it is real in the first." (*Marks of His Wounds*, 142)

³²³ *SE*, 250–1 (250). Jones states, "Our bodies now must refer to the resurrection bodies to come. The doctrine of the bodily resurrection points to the need to understand the signs of our created difference not as unimportant physical superfluities but as central to our theological anthropology and ethics." (*Marks of His Wounds*, 114) See also Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 134–8 for the manner in which Jesus' humanity is confirmed in the resurrection.

³²⁴ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 190. Volf gives four marks of cruciform gender relations: 1) the "irreducible duality of genders" exist in equal dignity without hierarchy. The male does not connote fullness and authority and the female lack and obedience. Both reciprocally command and obey and both experience fullness and lacking. 2) The construction of gender identities rooted in sexed bodies flows from both male to female and female to male. Each needs the other. 3) Female and male are not to be without the other as each gains identity in relation to the other. 4) "The affirmation of equal dignity of genders, the

In the community of “male and female” constituted by means of ecclesial relation “in Christ” and through the Spirit, the social *imago* and the narrative *imago* receive their theo-ontological be-ing through inclusion in the Jesus narrative. In this manner, the triune participation of the previous chapter and the storied participation of the present chapter are gathered up together and exhibit a fundamental unity as they point toward and mutually constitute ecclesial personhood. In addition, triune participation comes to be mediated by the storied participation derived from union with Christ.³²⁵ Together both comprise a theotic (storied and communal) triune and ecclesial participation in which the churchly community of “male and female” as the eschatological prolepsis of the *imago Dei* finds inclusion in the cruciform Jesus story and incorporation into the divine triune life.³²⁶

The result is a peculiar ecclesial community constituted by cruciform *theosis* and characterized by cruciform mutuality, which in its eccentric manner of being in the world, seeks to manifest the practical wisdom contained within the command Christ’s people have received from the triune, cruciform God which they inhabit: “You shall be cruciform, for I am cruciform.”³²⁷ Such provides further insight for the articulation of a hermeneutical ecclesiology. In addition to the trinitarian shape of the ecclesial community and the corresponding grammar of mutuality, we can now add – extending from the divinely intended reality of “the *imago Dei* as our vocation to be in Christ”³²⁸ – a Christoform narrative shape with a corresponding grammar of cruciformity, comprising for us a grammar of mutual cruciformity and cruciform mutuality as vital to the ecclesial existence by which the triune God is made known in the world.

symmetry in construction of gender identities, and the presence of the other in the self . . . is kept in place by self-giving [triune, cruciform] love.” (190)

³²⁵ See *NGQB*, 364–73 on “being ‘in Christ’” through the gift of the Spirit as “participation in God.”

³²⁶ Note again that the communal, ecclesial self is already a narrative self in *SGRS*, 304–36. Also, the notion of cruciform *theosis* at the heart of this dynamic works well to draw together the matrix Richard B. Hays identifies at the center of New Testament ethics of community/cross/new creation. (*The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation – A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1996), 5, 193–205)

³²⁷ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 106, 164.

³²⁸ *NGQB*, 361–7.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM MISSIONAL GOD TO ECCLESIAL *IMAGO*: THE MISSIONAL SHAPE OF THE HERMENEUTICAL COMMUNITY

This fourth, and final, chapter presents a consideration of the contribution which Grenz's trinitarian and communal ecclesiology can make to how we understand the connection between church and mission. In this manner, it seeks to go "from missional God to ecclesial *imago*." Thus far we have traversed through the trinitarian "main road" of chapter two and the narrative Christological critical detour of chapter three. This present chapter takes its place as an ecclesial return moment completing the structural matrix at the heart of this study of Trinity, narrative, and (ecclesial) mission. The first section of this chapter presents as its "main road" a descriptive summary of Grenz's later and mature ecclesiology, its relation to mission, and a proposed grammar towards articulating a hermeneutical ecclesiology. The second section provides the critical moment aimed at extending Grenz's theo-anthropology (chapter two) and Christo-anthropology (chapter three) into a missio-anthropology. The final section completes the movement with a suggestive proposal that the ecclesial *imago* and proposed hermeneutical ecclesiology find concrete manifestation within the ecclesial relation of "male and female" marked by mutual hospitality and ecclesial friendship.

The Missional God and the *Imago Dei*

[T]he community of love the church is called to be is no ordinary reality. The fellowship we share with each other is not merely that of a common experience or a common practice, as important as these are. Our fellowship is nothing less than our common participation in the divine communion between the Father and the Son mediated by the Holy Spirit.¹

The church's vocation to be the *imago Dei* finds its . . . fundamental existence "in Christ." Being in Christ brings the church to its true identity as the fellowship of those who participate in the life of the triune God. The facilitator of this participation is the Holy Spirit, who is the agent of the new birth. . . . By placing

¹ Grenz, "Restoring a Trinitarian Understanding of the Church in Practice: An Evangelical Response to Ferguson, Holloway, and Lowery," in *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement*, ed. William R. Barker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 233.

believers “in Christ,” therefore, the Spirit brings them to participate in the fellowship of the eternal Son with the eternal Father. Ultimately, then, we enjoy the fullness of community as, and only as, God graciously brings us to participate together in the fountainhead of community, namely, the life of the triune God.²

This first section presents a treatment of Grenz’s trinitarian ecclesiology in relation to the ecclesial *imago* and mission in the effort to explore the ramifications for a hermeneutical ecclesiology. Proceeding in three parts, the first is a descriptive summary of Grenz’s mature ecclesiology. Grenz would have produced his most definitive statement on the church in the ecclesiology volume of the *Matrix* series which he was tragically unable to complete. In light of this, my summary will be drawn primarily from his 2003 essay, “Ecclesiology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, which is the last dedicated academic treatment of length that Grenz produced on the church.³ The second part explores the intersection of the ecclesial *imago*, *theosis*, triune participation, and ecclesial mission in Grenz. Extending from this discussion, the third section proposes a three-part missional grammar (complementary to Grenz’s three-part trinitarian and narrative grammars) for the articulation of a hermeneutical ecclesiology.

Grenz and the Ecclesial Community

The prior investigations of the development of Grenz’s notion of the social *imago* extending from his revisioned social trinitarianism and emphasis on community, and the emergence of the narrative *imago* in relation to the triune divine identity and Christology in Grenz, set the stage for our investigation into Grenz’s ecclesiology. Both the social *imago* and narrative *imago* are intertwined in what can now be called the

² Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 268.

³ While the church is a constant theme for Grenz, his most concentrated ecclesiological investigations of at least chapter or essay length are, “Ecclesiology,” 252–68 (2003); “Restoring a Trinitarian Understanding of the Church in Practice,” 228–34 (2002); *SGRS*, chapter eight, 304–36 (2001, covering the ecclesial self); *RTC*, chapter nine, “Evangelical Theology and the Ecclesiological Center,” 295–332 (first edition, 2000); *CFC*, chapters nine and ten, 169–212 (first edition, 1996); *TCG*, Part 5 (on ecclesiology), 461–570 (first edition, 1994); *RET*, chapter seven, 163–89 (1993); and *The Baptist Congregation* (1985). See also Grenz’s less academic articles composed for pastors and focused on the church, “Being There for Each Other: The Church as Genuine Community?” *Enrichment* 10.4 (Fall 2005), 124–6; “What Does It Really Mean to be Postmodern?” *Enrichment* 10.3 (Summer 2005), 112–14; and “Does Evidence Still Demand a Verdict? The Church’s Apologetic Task and the Postmodern Turn,” *Enrichment* 10.2 (Spring 2005), 104–7. See as well Sexton, “Stanley Grenz’s Ecclesiology: Telic and Trinitarian,” 20–43.

ecclesial *imago*, which in turn is wrapped up in and find expression as what Grenz calls the ecclesial self.⁴ When we turn to Grenz's "Ecclesiology" essay, these same social/communal and narrative aspects are present. Grenz begins with an exploration of the theme of "community" as it appears in contemporary communitarian (Peter Berger and Robert Bellah) and narrative (Alasdair MacIntyre, and George Stroup) scholarship.⁵ On a most basic level, a community provides persons with a similar linguistic frame of reference and symbolic means of world-construction, a cohesive sense of group identity and solidarity, and a chief source of "personal" (i.e., relational) identity formation. Whatever "communities of reference" one inhabits contribute to the "formation of the 'self' by mediating the communal narrative necessary for personal identity formation."⁶ Such communal reference groups function as interpretive communities as they act as "communities of memory" and "communities of hope," providing the constitutive narrative through which persons interpret themselves and the world, and by which they draw their lives (past, present, and future) into a meaningful whole.⁷ For Grenz, the theme of communal identity formation functions as the "central function of community"⁸ and is identified by him as the most germane for the theological task of ecclesiology.

Grenz's communitarian exploration of community raises for him the ecclesiological question: what is the church? Here he expresses concern about the ways in which modernist individualism and voluntaristic social contract theory becomes replicated in the "contractual" ecclesiology of the free church evangelicalism of his own context.⁹ Under such contractualism, rather than the church constituting its members, the church is instead a voluntary association of individual believers who are somehow complete spiritual selves prior to and apart from church membership.¹⁰ The sociological

⁴ See *SGRS*, 312–31 on the social/communal and narrative aspects of the ecclesial self.

⁵ Grenz, "Ecclesiology," 253–7. See also *BF*, 203–223.

⁶ Grenz, "Ecclesiology," 255.

⁷ Grenz, "Ecclesiology," 255–6 (255).

⁸ Grenz, "Ecclesiology," 254.

⁹ Grenz, "Ecclesiology," 257. For Grenz's connection of an individualist, contractual ecclesiology to his own evangelical context, see *RTC*, 295–316, 322–3. Cf. Brian Harris, "Beyond Individualism: Stanley Grenz's Contribution to Baptist Theology," *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 6.1 (April 2010), 5–19.

¹⁰ Grenz laments the co-opting effect an individualist posture on the traditional Baptist emphasis of the priesthood of all believers. ("Ecclesiology," 257 and *BF*, 225) For a Ricoeurian revisioning of Baptist

language of community offers a beginning resource to resist the reduction of the church into such a lifestyle enclave. The church as “community” insists the church is more than an aggregate of individual members by presenting them with the particular “community-constituting” biblical narrative through which the church becomes an alternative community understood as participating in the transcendent work of God and “sharing together in a storied life of obedient service to and with Christ.”¹¹

As promising as communitarian insights are, Grenz realizes that a bare sociological description of the church as community eventually exhausts itself. Grenz firmly rejects any lapse into a sociological foundationalism in which sociology is granted priority as a scientific discipline to set the agenda and method for theological reflection and that treats the church as merely a specific instantiation of the more generic reality called “community.”¹² The question which arises then in the postmodern context is: in what sense can the church be spoken of as a community? The very nature of the church demands that this question can only be fully answered theologically. In this regard, Grenz appeals to John Milbank’s insight that theology is “itself a social science, and the queen of the sciences for the inhabitants of the *alterna civitas*, on pilgrimage through this temporary world.”¹³ Thus true to his theo-ontological perspective in *Named God*, Grenz is insistent that the ultimate basis for any talk of the church as community must be a distinctly trinitarian theological ecclesiology.

Accordingly, for Grenz the church is a community, not because it meets the demands of sociology, but because “it has a special role in the divine program, at the heart of which, according to the Bible, is the establishment of community.”¹⁴ Elsewhere, Grenz describes the brokenness wrought by sin in the world as the “destruction of community” that results in human alienation and in which we labor under the weight of enslavement

principles away from individualism, see Timothy Donald Fletcher Maddox, “Revisioning Baptist Principles: A Ricoeurian Investigation” (PhD Diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997).

¹¹ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 257–8 and Grenz, “Community, Interpretive,” 128–9. The long quote is from James William McClendon Jr. *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Volume 1* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), 28.

¹² *BF*, 226–7 and Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 258.

¹³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 382.

¹⁴ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 258.

(a reality in which Scot McKnight evocatively describes humans as “cracked eikons”).¹⁵ However, as noted in the previous chapter, sin is not ultimately defining of human being nor is the primordial divine communal intent ultimately thwarted. Rather the communal intent storied within the norming narrative of Scripture is recovered and given full trinitarian expression “in Christ” (as the truly human¹⁶ *imago*) and through the Spirit by which the church is constituted and all claims to “community” are to be evaluated. Nevertheless, Grenz warns against idealism with a reminder that the present experience of ecclesial community is proleptic and eschatological, and thus incomplete, as we wait expectantly for God as the triune Divine Community to complete the divine program.¹⁷

The ecclesial community brought into being as the embodiment of the biblical narrative of God working to bring about the divine communal intent endemic to the *imago Dei* functions as a peculiarly theological interpretive community that is at once a “marked” community.¹⁸ The four traditional marks which form the ecclesiological inheritance of the Nicene Creed speak of the church as “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.” Grenz notes that the Reformers accepted these marks as *notae ecclesiae* but nevertheless radically deemphasized them. The reason for this was because, in the Reformers’ perspective, the creedal marks could not locate where the presence of the true church was to be found. The Reformers thus turned to and came to emphasize two additional marks; namely, word and sacrament. This move served to bring about a renewed emphasis on the local church as that visible community brought into being by the Holy Spirit through the dual marks of word and sacrament.

That the Holy Spirit creates the ecclesial community through word and sacrament draws upon Grenz’s notion of the “instrumentality of the Spirit” discussed in the beginning

¹⁵ *TCG*, 181–212 and *CFC*, 59–75. On humans as “cracked eikons” see Scot McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 15–24.

¹⁶ See this within Grenz’s discussions found in *SGRS*, 18, 203–22; *TCG*, 272–93 (especially 273–85); and *CFC*, 86–92.

¹⁷ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 260 and *BF*, 229–30. Thus ecclesial existence in its present “cracked” condition is lived out in the midst of an eschatological “already/not yet” tension (what might be called the “in between”) as well as ultimate eschatological hope. See also *TCG*, 477–9; *MQ*, 238; and *SGRS*, 224, 322, 331–6. See also C. René Padilla, “The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God,” *Transformation* 1.2 (1984), 17.

¹⁸ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 260–4 and *RTC*, 317–27.

section of the previous chapter. The Spirit creates the church by speaking through the written and proclaimed word to form a people who inhabit and embody the new, eschatological world of Jesus Christ, the living Word. Rather than being a mere aggregate of spiritual individuals, the church is shaped as a community that draws its identity from the constitutive cruciform narrative of Christ as testified to in the biblical narrative of the triune God at work bringing creation to its divinely given *telos*. In this manner, the church is a people “focused on the Word and gathered around the word.”¹⁹ Not only this but the sacramental practice of baptism and the Eucharist (or Lord’s Supper) serve to accentuate the constitutive narrative of the church as these rites come to be visual sermons and thus the Word of God proclaimed in sign, symbol, and story.

Furthermore, Grenz specifies these practices are more than mere memorial, but full sacraments wherein believers are brought into storied participation in the cruciform narrative of Christ and the eschatological world brought about through the instrumentality of the Spirit.²⁰ In this manner, the ecclesial community, in union with Christ, becomes an interpretive and proleptic community in the present.²¹ Grenz discerns herein a clue to the way in which the church is local as well as universal. The church is local for it is in the ecclesial embodiment represented by the local fellowship that believers gather around word and sacrament. Nevertheless, the constitutive narrative of the triune God in the world embedded within word and sacrament is not the exclusive possession of any one ecclesial community. This narrative is rather a shared narrative which serves to unite, into what might be called a “Community of communities,”²² local expressions of ecclesia with all other congregations of the faithful. “The church, which is fundamentally the particular, local congregation gathered around word and sacrament, nevertheless simultaneously transcends any one local congregation and all congregations.”²³

¹⁹ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 262.

²⁰ See Stanley J. Grenz, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as Community Acts: Toward a Sacramental Understanding of the Ordinances,” in *Baptist Sacramentalism*, eds. Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 76–95. Cf. *NGQB*, 372–3.

²¹ *RTC*, 326.

²² *RTC*, 320.

²³ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 263.

Following on from this, Grenz now seeks to bring missional theology into conversation with the four traditional marks in a discussion of the church as “missionally marked.”²⁴ Grenz remarks that the Reformers tended to see the creedal marks as eschatological goals bound up in the fullness of the church invisible rather than attributes achievable by the church on the earth. Grenz, though, views ecclesiology as going astray if the creedal marks are pushed off into an invisible church disjointed from the visible church in the world. The eschatological directedness of the creedal marks suggests to Grenz that they should be taken in a dynamic rather than a static sense as comprising the shared task of the people of God as a whole. Grenz suggests this extends from a distinctly missional ecclesiology “which ultimately arises from the mission of the triune God in the world”²⁵ as the church is sent into the world with the gospel and is therefore a missionary church by nature. Drawing on the work of missiologist Charles van Engen,²⁶ Grenz suggests the *notae ecclesiae* are better rendered as adverbs than adjectives and in reverse order as a reminder of the direction of the missional task. The missional church is therefore a “proclaiming, reconciling, sanctifying, and unifying” expression of ecclesial community and proleptic witness to God’s eschatological new creation.²⁷

Extending this further, Grenz suggests this missional rendering of the creedal marks is derived from the commissioning lordship of Christ and is bound up in the mission of the triune God. Such a theological ecclesiology for Grenz serves to forge the link between the invisible church (the nature of the church in eschatological fullness) and the visible church (the church in the world). To explicate this link, Grenz turns to his familiar trinitarian *imago Dei* theology. The fundamental calling and mission of the church to be the foretaste of the communal divine intent of the *imago Dei* “determines the church’s proclaiming, reconciling, sanctifying, and unifying mission in the world.”²⁸ The vocation endemic to the *imago Dei* points forward beyond creation toward its realization in

²⁴ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 264–8 and *RTC*, 327–32.

²⁵ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 265.

²⁶ Charles van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991), 66.

²⁷ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 265–6 and Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 255.

²⁸ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 267.

ecclesial relation constituted “in Christ” and through the Spirit. The reality of the ecclesial communion therefore goes beyond a mere shared experience and is constituted by nothing less than a shared participation “in the perichoretic community of trinitarian persons.”²⁹ In this manner, the social *imago* and narrative *imago* of the previous chapters becomes the ecclesial *imago* in which participation in the divine triune life marks and constitutes the true church. “And being a people whose life is hidden with Christ (and hence the invisible church) even as it lives in the world (and therefore remains the visible church) is the present calling of those whose lives have been, and are being, transformed by the Spirit”³⁰ into the ecclesial and eschatological new community.

Theosis, Triune Participation, and Ecclesia

We have previously noted the importance of the crucial insight of what Jay Smith refers to as Grenz’s trinitarian “theo-epistemology” which is ultimately fully realized as the revisioning of the convertive piety of Grenz’s Baptist and Pietist inheritance itself as “trinitarian participation”³¹ – what in this dissertation has been more extensively developed along somewhat different lines as theotic triune participation. We have also already explored the manner in which Grenz’s trinitarian interpretation of humans as created in the *imago Dei* yields an emphasis on relationality. But Grenz, while not leaving creation behind, nevertheless does not remain merely at the creational moment of human community in the *imago Dei*.³² For Grenz, this creational ideal looks ahead to the community of those redeemed persons who have been brought into participation in the divine triune life, meaning that creational human community in general anticipates the

²⁹ *RTC*, 331.

³⁰ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 268.

³¹ See the subtitle to Smith, “A Generous Theology: Reinterpreting Convertive Piety as Trinitarian Participation in Stanley J. Grenz,” and in particular 3–6, 111, 117, 122–8, 223–6, 235.

³² Richard B. Hays states: “God’s ‘apocalyptic’ act in Christ does not simply shatter and sweep away creation and covenant; rather, it hermeneutically reconfigures creation and covenant, under the guidance of the Spirit, in light of the cross and resurrection.” (“Apocalyptic *Poiēsis* in Galatians: Paternity, Passion, and Participation,” in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul’s Letter*, eds. Mark W. Elliott et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 205) Likewise, though the creational moment points beyond itself, Dennis P. Hollinger offers a reminder that, “An ecclesial ethic begins at creation and does not annul or contradict what God established at creation.” (“Creation: The Starting Point of an Ecclesial Ethic,” in *Ecclesia and Ethics: Moral Formation and the Church*, eds. E. Allen Jones III et al. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 19)

realization of the ecclesial *imago* in particular and thus points forward to the ecclesial community.³³ As well, Grenz's emphasis on Trinity and community yield a theological anthropology not only marked with a distinctly ecclesial shape but an eschatological orientation as the church functions as a foretaste of the new humanity of the new creation. For this reason, the later pages of *Social God* are devoted to what Grenz calls the "ecclesial self" which becomes constituted by triune love.³⁴

To summarize what has been explicated in previous chapters, the mystery of the Christian life in the New Testament according to the Apostle Paul is encapsulated in the simple designation "in Christ." According to this, the company of those redeemed "in Christ" are not only constituted relationally in general terms, but are likewise constituted by participation in Christ's own life, who as the origin and final purpose of creation and Truly Human One is the very image of God.³⁵ In this way ecclesial identities come to be constructed *extra se in Christo* as ecclesial persons are incorporated into the divine life by the Spirit. Theological anthropology on this reckoning is very closely tied to ecclesial existence, which can be well described in Grenzian terms as having to do with our mutual participation in the triune perichoretic life accomplished "in Christ" and incorporated through the Spirit. Furthermore, while this is a present reality, the participation that constitutes the ecclesial self in triune love awaits the eschatological future for its fulfillment and is thus present now in a proleptic manner. As the Spirit constitutes those "in Christ" and thereby shapes the ecclesial community in the pattern of triune love, the church is likewise constituted as the prolepsis of the divine image.³⁶

³³ Indeed, we might even say Grenz moves beyond a simple "analogy of relation" toward his own version of what Gerald Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 175–91, 233–4 has called the *analogia ecclesiae*. See also Gerald Mannion, "Hermeneutical Investigations: Discerning Contemporary Christian Community," in *Christian Community Now: Ecclesiological Investigations*, eds. Paul M. Collins et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 74.

³⁴ See chapter two of this dissertation for the full discussion.

³⁵ *SGRS*, 18, 203–22 and *CFC*, 86–92. Regarding Christ as the origin and final purpose of creation, David Fergusson states eloquently: "No longer understood as an emergency or secondary measure to counteract the effects of sin and evil, though this remained an integral feature, *the incarnation was the fulfillment of an eternal purpose. The world was made that Christ might be born.*" (*Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 8, emphasis mine)

³⁶ *SGRS*, 312–36. Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 49–65.

Grenz focuses the ecclesial orientation of triune participation further in a 2003 essay titled “Celebrating Eternity.”³⁷ In this essay Grenz surveys common Protestant definitions of worship that focus on attributing ultimate worth to God, as offering a response to the saving acts of God in history, or that humans have been created to bring God ultimate glory. Grenz is appreciative of these themes and finds Scriptural warrant for them. Nevertheless, he finds that the standard definitions remain lacking. Grenz insists a more trinitarian approach is needed and looks to *theosis* (and deification) for help.³⁸ Grenz states, “Christian worship . . . entails glorifying the God disclosed in the biblical narrative who, in accordance with the divine eternal intention, glorifies us in Christ by the indwelling presence of the Spirit who brings us to participate in the divine life.”³⁹ It is through this theotic triune participation that those incorporated into Christ – the one in whom all things hold together (Colossians 1:17) – come to share in the filial relation and communion of Christ with the one he called “Father” or “Abba” by means of the indwelling presence of the glorious divine love who is the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Thus in the doxological practice of Christian worship and liturgy, and in the sacramental observance of baptism and holy communion, the company of humans who by the Spirit are “in the Son” participate in a proleptic fashion in the reciprocal dynamic of the sharing of triune love which characterizes the eternal divine life as a foretaste of the theotic triune participation

³⁷ Grenz, “Celebrating Eternity,” in *Semper Reformandum*, 378–91. This essay was also republished under the same title in *The Asbury Theological Journal* 60.1 (Spring 2005), 43–53.

³⁸ In Grenz’s own discussions he does not sharply distinguish *theosis* and deification, and much like Michael J. Christensen, “The Problem, Promise, and Process of *Theosis*,” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, eds. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 32–46 treats them as interchangeable. For treatments which seek to distinguish *theosis* and deification and/or find deification problematic, see Myk Habets, “*Theosis*, Yes; Deification, No,” in *The Spirit of Truth: Reading Scripture and Constructing Theology with the Holy Spirit*, ed. Myk Habets (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 124–49 and Bruce L. McCormack, “Participation in God, Yes, Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question,” in *Denkwürdiges Geheimnis: Beiträge zur Gotteslehre. Festschrift für Eberhard Jüngel zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. Ingolf U. Dalferth, Johannes Fischer, and Hans-Peter Großhans (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 347–74. See also Roger Olson’s insistence that Grenz’s use of *theosis*/deification “falls short of the strong doctrine of Eastern Orthodoxy.” (“Deification in Contemporary Theology,” *Theology Today* 64.2 (July 2007), 197) See as well Medley, “Participation in God,” 212–16 for a brief description of Grenz’s approach.

³⁹ Grenz, “Celebrating Eternity,” in *Semper Reformandum*, 383.

⁴⁰ Grenz, “Celebrating Eternity,” in *Semper Reformandum*, 383–88. See also Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, 6–12, 33–5 for a similar rendering of *theosis*/deification.

(*theosis*) that awaits them in the communal culmination of the new humanity.⁴¹ For this reason, having been linked to *theosis* and triune participation in God, doxology in some form is fundamental to even eschatologically redeemed human being and will continue on into the new creation.⁴²

Grenz recapitulates many of these same themes in *Named God*, but with a different emphasis.⁴³ Whereas *Social God* aimed for a “trinitarian theology of the *imago Dei*,” in *Named God* Grenz aims for a “trinitarian theo-ontology” in which human “being” is constituted by divine triune being. Grenz adapts Augustine’s *via amoris*, or “way of love,” as a means to develop his conception of triune participation. Grenz provides a lengthy discussion toward his synthesis of apophatic and cataphatic approaches to knowledge of God, in which both are needed. Without the cataphatic we may never say anything at all about God. Without the apophatic we may be tempted to say too much! Grenz notes that while the *via amoris* goes beyond the apophatic, it does not bypass it either. Augustine admits divine incomprehensibility but contends a way to God is through the *imago Dei*. In this, the noetic journey moves from creation to the soul and then through the soul, where the divine image is located, to knowledge of the transcendent God. But wanting to press beyond knowledge *per se*, Grenz directs his focus to the dynamic of triune love which characterizes the Father, Son, and Spirit and concludes that the noetic is a servant to the agapaic. The way of love then becomes the completion of the way of negation.

At a vital point, though, that of Augustine’s turn inward, Grenz offers a crucial correction; namely, that God is not found merely in the interiority of the soul but in the exteriority of the other. It is in our relationality that we find the *imago Dei*. Grenz then makes his move beyond a trinitarian theo-epistemology (though while not leaving this behind either) and presses his reconceived *via amoris* forward even further as leading ultimately to *theosis* or triune participation.⁴⁴ Herein Grenz finds the makings of a theo-

⁴¹ Grenz, “Celebrating Eternity,” in *Semper Reformandum*, 386, 388, 390. Cf. *NGQB*, 372.

⁴² Grenz, “Celebrating Eternity,” in *Semper Reformandum*, 388–91.

⁴³ See chapter three of this dissertation for the full discussion.

⁴⁴ *NGQB*, 335–41, 364–5. On the theme of *theosis*/deification in Augustine’s theology, see David Vincent Meconi, *The One Christ: St. Augustine’s Doctrine of Deification* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

ontology that issues forth into a theo-anthropology where human being is constituted by divine triune being. But this occurs in a very distinct way and Grenz specifically notes that what is involved here is not limited to external imitation or mere ethical improvement. Quoting Maximus the Confessor that “God the Divine Logos wishes to effect the mystery of His incarnation always and in all things,” Grenz presses forward to speak of the *imago Dei* in ontological terms as our vocation to be “in Christ” (who is himself the true *imago*) having been incorporated into the divine life by the eschatological gift of the Spirit.⁴⁵ Grenz’s theological anthropology thus exhibits a basically ecclesial orientation as human “being” is therefore constituted “in Christ” and through the Spirit. Yet Grenz would remind us that the church within time is itself not the final goal or *telos*. Rather, our present ecclesial existence and participation in God marked by doxological worship is but a proleptic foretaste of the full realization of *theosis*, and of the communal and eschatological participation in God anticipated within the new humanity of the new creation.

What becomes evident now is that on the other side of his critique of the individualist character of the evangelical ecclesiology of his own context, through his emphasis on triune participation and *theosis*, Grenz proposes his own revised trinitarian ecclesiology and gestures toward the articulation of a communion ecclesiology.⁴⁶ Accordingly, Grenz cites Zizioulas approvingly: “The Church is primarily *communion*, i.e. a set of relationships making up a mode of being.”⁴⁷ Within this move, the trinitarian theology of the *imago Dei* which sits at the core of Grenz’s theology, moves

⁴⁵ *NGQB*, 335–41, 360–73 (365).

⁴⁶ I suggest this places Grenz in close company with those who comprise the movement toward “Baptist sacramentalism” and/or “Baptist catholicity,” such as Steven R. Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future: Story, Tradition, and the Recovery of Community* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016); Harmon, *Toward Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2006); Curtis W. Freeman, *Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014); Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes, and Richard Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion of the Saints: A Theology of Covenanted Disciples* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014); and Barry Harvey, *Can These Bones Live? A Catholic Baptist Engagement with Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics, and Social Theory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008). For a positive evaluation of Grenz’s communion ecclesiology, see Paul S. Fiddes, “The Church Local and Universal: Catholic and Baptist Perspectives on *Koinonia* Ecclesiology,” in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center*, 97–120.

⁴⁷ *SGRS*, 334 and John D. Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study,” in *The Forgotten Trinity*, 27–8. Emphasis original.

beyond simply being “relational.” Instead, Grenz delivers an *imago Dei* theology that is multifaceted, pluriform, and ecclesial in shape.⁴⁸ The social *imago* and narrative *imago* point forward towards and intertwine to generate the ecclesial *imago*. This dynamic for Grenz gives rise to the ecclesial self which is constituted within ecclesial relation (or that relation which can be named “in Christ’ and through the Spirit” by which the church is brought into being), having been brought into theotic (storied and communal) participation in the divine triune life.

Within this dynamic the ecclesial community is constituted as the prolepsis of the *imago Dei* and foretaste of the new humanity of the new creation. Thus Grenz’s trinitarian theology of the divine image contains vocational, representational, communal (beyond just “relational”), and eschatological elements. The ecclesial *imago* forms a present reality shared by all those “in Christ,” a special calling and task for those “in Christ,” and the proleptic goal and destiny for all those “in Christ” through the gift of the Spirit. Drawing from Grenz’s resulting dynamic understanding of ecclesial existence, I propose that the church serves as God’s hermeneutic in the world insofar as it is: 1) the cruciform “storied” interpretive community of God, 2) the *sign* of God’s triune way of being in creation, and 3) the *sacrament* of triune love and communion as it comes to comprise the “human coming-to-representation of the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity.”⁴⁹

A Missional Grammar for Hermeneutical Ecclesiology

The mission of the church is to be the image of God and to carry on the mission of God in the world. Thus, the missional vocation of the church is to be the community of God, the representative of God in the world. As such, this

⁴⁸ This seems somewhat contra to David Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the *Imago Dei*: An Alternative Proposal,” *Zygon* 48.2 (June 2013), 439–53 who, while granting certain advantages to Grenz’s approach, still sees him as not moving beyond a “relational” approach. I would venture to suggest that Grenz’s *imago Dei* theology in full view actually takes strides towards answering Fergusson’s concerns about views of the divine image based on “a single determining characteristic or essential attribute” and his desire for a more “diffuse” approach. See also Anthony Thiselton’s consternation over singularly relational approaches to the *imago Dei* in “The Image and Likeness of God: A Theological Approach,” in *The Emergence of Personhood: A Quantum Leap?*, ed. Malcolm Jeeves (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 184–201, to which Grenz offers a positive response. See also chapter two, footnotes 112 and 260 on Grenz’s multi-layered view of the *imago Dei*.

⁴⁹ The description of the church as sign, sacrament, and “storied” community is taken from *SGRS*, 328–36 (336).

community is a particular community, namely, a missional community in keeping with the missional character of God.”⁵⁰

This statement can be considered a missional positioning of my rendering of the ecclesial *imago* in Grenz. Citing the missional pattern in the words of Jesus in John 20:21 (NRSV), “As the Father has sent me, so I send you,” John Franke follows the lead of David Bosch to ground the *missio Dei* in the divine triune communion. The dual classical movement of the Father sending the Son, and the Father and Son sending the Spirit may be extended into yet another movement wherein Father, Son, and Spirit send the church into the world to gather others into the triune mission.⁵¹ As such the church is “the socially, historically, and culturally embodied witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the tangible expression of the mission of God.”⁵² The vocation of the church then is to be the instrument of the triune God’s mission in the world.⁵³ All this coheres well with Grenz’s own exploration of a trinitarian ecclesiology wherein the church derives its essential nature from the divine (triune, missional) essence.⁵⁴ The Christian life, inseparable from ecclesial existence within the *missio Dei*, is to be understood “as a sharing in the trinitarian practice of God.”⁵⁵

Thus, in a very real sense the *missio Dei* not only precedes but also initiates, defines, and sustains the church. Thus mission does not exist because there is *ecclesia*; rather, there is ecclesial existence because mission exists already in the missional *praxis* of

⁵⁰ Franke, *The Character of Theology*, 174.

⁵¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth anniversary edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 381, 529. Stephen Seamonds states: “God is therefore in his very essence a missionary God. The Father is the first missionary, who goes out himself creating the world and sending the Son. The Son is the second missionary, who redeems humanity and all creation. The Holy Spirit is the third missionary, who creates and empowers the church, the fourth missionary, to go into the world.” (*Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 161) The dual movements of sending out and drawing in work to create a corresponding dual centripetal and centrifugal dynamic. Cf. Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 75.

⁵² Franke, “Afterword: An Agenda for the Future of Evangelical Theology,” in *RTC*, 362.

⁵³ Franke, “Afterword,” 363. See also John R. Franke, “Good News for All People: Trinity, Plurality, and Mission,” in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center*, 59–78.

⁵⁴ See for example Grenz, “Restoring a Trinitarian Understanding of the Church in Practice,” 233.

⁵⁵ Andrew Purves, “The Trinitarian Basis for a Christian Practical Theology,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 2.2 (1998), 226, 235. See also Jonathan R. Wilson, *Why Church Matters: Worship, Ministry, and Mission in Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 49–58 for the trinitarian practice and grammar of ecclesial existence and worship.

God within and flowing from the triune relations. It is God's own missional practice, grounded in participation in the divine life, that we are invited to participate such that missional existence is comprised of "our committed participation, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."⁵⁶ Missional existence then implies ecclesial existence, and ecclesial existence implies missional existence. Both are necessarily bound up in and inseparable from the other. Our ecclesial participation in the triune movement of missional community flows from our being "in Christ" through the Holy Spirit, "a relationship that allows us to enter into the trinitarian circle and be caught up in the motion of other centered love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit flowing out to the world."⁵⁷

These considerations lead to the conclusion that, in the words of Stanley Hauerwas, "the church does not have a mission, but rather *is* mission."⁵⁸ The church as the "pilgrim community"⁵⁹ of the triune God, which in its ecclesial existence in the world comprises a "faithful presence,"⁶⁰ in this view then is essentially missional at its very core.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 23.

⁵⁷ Seamonds, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 162–4. Cf. Wilson, *Why Church Matters*, 5. See also Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012) who argues for the missional nature of ecclesial existence through a theological and missional reading of the Gospel of John, in particular John 20:19–23.

⁵⁸ Hauerwas, "Beyond the Boundaries," 55. Emphasis original. This statement replicates the similar logic in Hauerwas' statement: "The church doesn't have a social strategy, the church *is* a social strategy." (*Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 43, emphasis original) See also Stanley Hauerwas, "Sent: The Church is Mission," in *Working with Words: On Learning to Speak Christian* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 164–9.

⁵⁹ Robert Sherman, *Covenant, Community, and the Spirit: A Trinitarian Theology of Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 211–23.

⁶⁰ The phrase "faithful presence" comes from James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 197–286 as hopefully descriptive of what I am proposing. Of note is Hunter's worry that, despite protests to the contrary, the neo-Anabaptist ecclesiology of someone like Hauerwas nets a sectarian withdrawal in its "sociological effect." (150–66) But Hauerwas insists, "the church is at her missionary best when she does those things that make her a faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ" and that "her first missionary task is to be a witness in and to the worlds in which she finds herself. All missionary tasks are in that sense local." ("Beyond the Boundaries," 57) These statements would seem to mitigate Hunter's concern. That the church is mission necessarily requires faithful witness and presence *in* the world even if the church is still yet not *of* the world.

⁶¹ Graham Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City: Introducing Missional Ecclesiology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), xvii. David Bosch states: "The *missio Dei* institutes the *missiones ecclesiae*." (*Transforming Mission*, 379–80) And John Thompson reminds us: "As the church belongs to God, is the body of Christ, the

Lesslie Newbigin echoes this by also declaring that insofar as the church is the primary instrument and vehicle of the activity of the Spirit in the world in the fulfillment of its vocation as a foretaste of God's kingdom on earth, "the church *is* the mission" and embodiment of the *missio Dei*.⁶² Newbigin here is suggesting that the reality of the gospel of Christ can only become manifest bodily, in a people. So, when faced with the question of how the gospel might be credible, he insists "the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it."⁶³

With this understanding of a missional ecclesiology of the church as mission in place, we can now draw on the nature of ecclesial existence as storied, sacrament, and sign and suggest the corresponding triad of "church, gospel/atonement, and kingdom" as comprising a missional grammar for hermeneutical ecclesiology. First, insofar as it is a cruciform storied community, the church is God's manner of being known in the world. This draws on Grenz's notion of the church as the interpretive community already explored. The storied nature of ecclesial existence though takes on a hermeneutical and missional character in two ways. The church is an interpreting and interpreted community as it seeks not only to read the norming biblical narrative missionally,⁶⁴ but as it also receives its narrative identity from storied participation and inclusion in the cruciform narrative of Christ, who is himself the norming narrative *imago*. This cruciform

temple of the Holy Spirit, so mission belongs to the very being of the church." (*Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 73)

⁶² See Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* (London: The International Missionary Council, 1958), 42 (emphasis original) and Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 379–80.

⁶³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 224–35 (227). See also John G. Flett, "What Does It Mean for a Congregation to Be a Hermeneutic?," in *The Gospel and Pluralism Today: Reassessing Lesslie Newbigin in the 21st Century*, eds. Scott W. Sunquist and Amos Yong (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 195–213; Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, *The Distinctive Identity of the Church: A Constructive Study of the Post-Christendom Theologies of Lesslie Newbigin and John Howard Yoder* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 15–6, 18, 63, 67, 76, 79, 181; and Jason S. Sexton, "A Confessing Trinitarian Theology for Today's Mission," in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology*, 179–89.

⁶⁴ For two proposals of "missional hermeneutics" in the reading of the biblical narrative, see Wright, *The Mission of God* as well as Dean Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing, and Telling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013). See also the implication in N. T. Wright, "Paul and Missional Hermeneutics," in *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life: Ethical and Missional Implications of the New Perspective*, eds. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 184–5, 190–2 that "missional hermeneutics" in Pauline theology is necessarily ecclesial in shape and character.

storied ecclesial existence constituted by the Christoform incarnational union of the divinity and humanity of Christ, and the following after Christ as its very paradigm for mission, forms the hermeneutic of God's way of being in the world.⁶⁵

Second, the ecclesial community is a sacrament of triune love as it is constituted as the "community called atonement"⁶⁶ which, within the mode of its ecclesial existence, becomes the embodiment of the gospel.⁶⁷ Important here is a lecture by Grenz titled "What Does It Mean to Be Trinitarians?" This essay contains the same trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesial emphasis connected to his *imago Dei* anthropology and theology of theotic triune participation, wherein believers share in Christ's filial relationship and inheritance from the Father by the mediation of the Spirit, which has already been explored within this study. Of significance in this essay is Grenz's explicit linking of *theosis* to soteriology. Citing Athanasius and John of Damascus, Grenz pictures "salvation as participation in the divine life or glory (2 Peter 1:3–4), a perspective often denoted 'deification' (*theosis*)."⁶⁸ Following his connection of atonement, salvation, and

⁶⁵ On Jesus as the paradigm of mission, see Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 614–15, 630–42 and Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 208–9. See also Gregory J. Liston's exploration of a Chalcedonian and Christological third article ecclesiology. Liston states: "the church is revealed as being tripartite in nature (the pneumatological union between Christ and church), relational in identity, unique in context, Christ-centered in orientation with a Christotelic momentum, indivisible in constitution, cruciform in shape, missional in purpose, and narrative in character." (*The Anointed Church: Toward a Third Article Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 123–4) See as well David E. Fitch and Geoffrey Holsclaw, "Mission amid Empire: Relating Trinity, Mission, and Political Formation," *Missiology: An International Review* 41.4 (2013), 396–9 for an "incarnation-centered view of mission" described in part as the church's "participation and discernment of the kingdom by neither blending in nor remaining separate from the world. God's reign is manifest in the midst of the church as a foretaste of what is to come in the world. It can do this because in a real sense the church precedes the world epistemologically." (399)

⁶⁶ This phrase comes from McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*.

⁶⁷ See Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015) on the church as the cruciform embodiment of the gospel (in particular 297–305). On sacramental ecclesiology, see also Ellen T. Charry, "Sacramental Ecclesiology," in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, eds. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 201–16.

⁶⁸ Grenz, "What Does It Mean to Be Trinitarians?," 15–20 (16). Though not explicit in Grenz here, we may also reference the patristic emphasis on Christ's act of "recapitulating" all of humanity and thus drawing humanity into union with the triune God (and so completing the divine triune intent and vocation of humanity) stemming from the Athanasian and Irenaeian soteriological formula "The Word was made man in order that we might be made divine" (16) as closely linked to *theosis*. On recapitulation and *theosis* and the Christological dynamic of "identification for incorporation," see McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 100–14.

theosis, he then moves further to connect the life of the church (i.e. ecclesial existence) within the reality of theotic triune participation.⁶⁹ Extending this development, we can further say that as the church is a sacrament of triune love and communion in the mode of its ecclesial existence constituted “in Christ” and through the Spirit (i.e., through ecclesial relation), it forms the bodily expression of the gospel. *Theosis* then is marked out simultaneously as being Christosis, and cruciformity as comprising theo-formity.⁷⁰ Through this theotic (storied and communal) participation in the divine life, the ecclesial existence of the community called atonement is as well a hermeneutical existence, as it comes to comprise the triune God’s manner of being known in the world.⁷¹

Third, the church in its embodied hermeneutical ecclesial existence in the world is the sign of God’s kingdom. Here we pick up the theme of the kingdom of God which, while more readily present in Grenz’s earlier theology, dropped out over time.⁷² In *Beyond Foundationalism* he finds the kingdom theme too generic to challenge modernist individualism. Moreover, Grenz avers that the theme of community is a more central integrative motif.⁷³ But while deemphasized, the kingdom theme did not disappear altogether, remaining implicit within his eschatological motif. However, recent developments in gospel studies in relation to the kingdom of God provide an occasion for

⁶⁹ Grenz, “What Does It Mean to Be Trinitarians?,” 19–20.

⁷⁰ See Michael J. Gorman, “The Cross in Paul: Christophany, Theophany, Ecclesiophany,” in *Ecclesia and Ethics*, 21–40 and Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). Gorman likewise suggests theotic triune participation, or what he calls cruciform *theosis*, also holds together ecclesial “act and being” and that “Spirit-enabled transformative participation in the life and character of [the triune] God revealed in the crucified and resurrected Messiah Jesus – is the starting point for mission and is, in fact, its proper theological framework.” (*Becoming the Gospel*, 5)

⁷¹ Connected to this approach to the atonement, important are recent explorations of the doctrine of justification which move beyond a mere forensic, declarative sense to include unitive, communal, and participative dimensions. For a unitive view, see James W. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul: Rediscovering the Community Conformed to Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 127–50. For accounts of justification with reference to (cruciform) *theosis*/deification, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004); Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 40–104; and Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 217–60, 277–89. We do well, though, to remember that while the forensic, declarative aspect can be decentered it cannot be totally displaced. See for example McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 64–9, 71, 76, 90–9.

⁷² See for example Stanley J. Grenz, *Prayer: The Cry for the Kingdom*, Revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), originally published in 1988, and *TCG*, 22–3, 107, 260, 333, 472–9, 502, 605.

⁷³ *BF*, 234–5.

reemphasis.⁷⁴ Scot McKnight is a biblical scholar who has been on the forefront in the articulation of a kingdom vision of the gospel centered on Jesus as the Messiah and true King. Herein, the gospel proper refers to the proclamation of the overarching story of the Old Testament coming to fulfillment in the whole story of Jesus. Or to put it another way, the gospel itself is the story of King Jesus, who in his very person is the arrival of the kingdom, Messiah, and Lord of all.⁷⁵

It is in this incarnational capacity that Jesus is “our new Adam *through his whole life*,”⁷⁶ and that within his faithfulness as the truly human norming narrative *imago* he comes to recapitulate the story of humanity and enact the ecclesially shaped ethics of the kingdom.⁷⁷ The emphasis on the whole life of Jesus is important, for it forms the narrative indication that the incarnation is not limited to simply birth, death, or resurrection, but includes all these together in a single story ultimately leading to the enthronement of Christ in the ascension.⁷⁸ It is through the proclamation of the narrative of King Jesus and this gospel of the kingdom by which the church is called into being in the power of the Spirit.⁷⁹ And though not representing the kingdom in all its fullness, the church’s “mission

⁷⁴ Jonathan T. Pennington states: “the ‘gospel,’ whether in oral or written form, is the message of God’s comprehensively restorative kingdom.” (*Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 3–18 (18))

⁷⁵ Scot McKnight, “Atonement and the Gospel,” in *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid Look at What’s Emerging*, ed. Kevin J. Corcoran (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011), 123–140 and McKnight, “The Gospel,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 195–208. On the connection of gospel to kingdom, see N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 39–62 and N. T. Wright, “Imagining the Kingdom: Mission and Theology in Early Christianity,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65.4 (November 2012), 379–401. See also Joshua W. Jipp, *Christ is King: Paul’s Royal Ideology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015).

⁷⁶ Cherith Fee Nordling, “Living as Jesus Did’: Practicing an Embodied Future in the Present,” in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center*, 199. Emphasis original.

⁷⁷ On the essential connection of gospel, kingdom, and an embodied ecclesial people, see Scot McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 81–124, 205–9. See also Padilla, “The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God,” 17 who states: “The Church is not the Kingdom of God, but it is the concrete result of the Kingdom.” See also *RET*, 181–2 and *TCG*, 478–9. On the *pistou Christou* debate, see Morna D. Hooker, “Another Look at *Pistis Christou*,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 69.1 (February 2016), 46–62, for whom the phrase refers primarily to the “faith/faithfulness of Christ,” but also discerns a dimension shared by all those “in Christ.”

⁷⁸ For the connection of ascension and incarnation, see Fitch and Holsclaw, “Mission amid Empire,” 396. For a full study on the connection of the ascension and church, see Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).

⁷⁹ See this in McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, 104–6.

imperative” is nevertheless “to *be the community* of God’s kingdom and therefore, in its corporate life together, make God’s kingdom visible.”⁸⁰ It is the narrative quality of the “apocalyptic” kingdom revealed in the living, dying, rising, and ascending of Jesus that gives aesthetic shape to the mission of God’s people and ecclesial participation in the saving reign of King Jesus.⁸¹ And because salvation itself is ecclesial, the church does not simply have a mission, “but by being faithful to the gospel the church *is* mission.”⁸² Constituted by theotic (storied and communal) triune participation as the sign of the kingdom, the ecclesial and missional existence of God’s people as a faithful presence is itself hermeneutical, comprising the vocational coming-to-representation of the triune God’s cruciform manner of being known in the world.

Critical Detour: The Ecclesial Self, Missio-Anthropology, and the *Imago Dei*

With the conclusion of the previous section, we have completed the “main road” for this chapter and extended the Grenzian social *imago* and narrative *imago* into the ecclesial *imago*. After the summary of Grenz’s ecclesiology and the constitution of ecclesial existence by means of triune theotic (storied and communal) participation, the triad of church, gospel/atonement, and kingdom was proposed as forming a missional grammar for the articulation of a hermeneutical ecclesiology. This chapter is working towards the concrete outworking of the ecclesial *imago* in mutual hospitality and friendship within the ecclesial relation of “male and female.” Ahead of that though, we conduct in three parts the last critical detour. The first part asks whether Grenz lapses into an ecclesiological foundationalism. The second explores Ricoeur’s notion of the “summoned self” as a critical supplementation to the Grenzian ecclesial self. The last

⁸⁰ Andrew Picard, “Be the Community: Baptist Ecclesiology in the Context of the Missional Church,” *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 5.1 (April 2009), 67. Emphasis original. See also Wilson, *Why Church Matters*, 79.

⁸¹ See Jonathan R. Wilson, “Aesthetics and the Kingdom: Apocalypsis, Eschatos, and Vision for Christian Mission,” in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center*, 157–74 and Wilson, *Why Church Matters*, 79–81, 84–8, 92–9, 116–31, 139–40. For a study of the church as participating in the triumph and reign of God, see Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010). See also Morna D. Hooker, “Conformity to Christ,” *Theology* 116.2 (2013), 83–92.

⁸² Hauerwas, “Beyond the Boundaries,” 62. Emphasis original.

expands the prior theo-anthropology and Christ-anthropology into a missio-anthropology as the pathway into the discussion of the ecclesial *imago*, gender, friendship, and hospitality.

Grenz and the Question of Ecclesiological Foundationalism

In the discussion of the critiques of the social Trinity, it was discovered that none of the most prominent critiques mention Grenz directly. This situation is reversed, though, in a recent essay written “On the Very Idea of a Trinitarian System” by Kevin Vanhoozer.⁸³ In part, this essay offers an analysis of Grenz’s trinitarian methodology. Vanhoozer begins his investigation with a taxonomy of three variations of trinitarian theological method. The first are those “weak” theological systems which affirm Nicene orthodoxy but simply treat the Trinity as one doctrine among many and accord it minimal or no methodological weight. The second is what he terms “reductionist” or “radical” trinitarianism which makes the mistake of distilling the complexity of the Trinity into a single principle. The third type Vanhoozer calls “strong” trinitarianism, of which he commends his own exploration of theo-dramatic trinitarian communicative action as an exemplar.⁸⁴ Prior to this essay, Vanhoozer had already voiced his misgivings concerning appeals to trinitarian *perichoresis* as paradigmatic for human relations in his *Remythologizing Theology*. In a manner similar to the charge of projection from Kilby and Tanner, Vanhoozer refers to such as “illegitimate trinitarian transfer,”⁸⁵ which he positions as a characteristic of radical or reductionist trinitarianism, and contends such a move threatens to undermine the

⁸³ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology: On the Very Idea of a Trinitarian System,” in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center*, 31–58. See also Vanhoozer’s earlier essay, “On the Very Idea of a Theological System: An Essay in Aid of Triangulating Scripture, Church, and World,” in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. A. T. B. McGowan (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 125–82 which offers a similar analysis of Grenz’s postmodern, postfoundationalist epistemology.

⁸⁴ Vanhoozer, “Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology,” 32–3, 50–6.

⁸⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 150 and Vanhoozer, “Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology,” 42. Vanhoozer’s “illegitimate trinitarian transfer” is akin to what Bruce L. McCormack, “What’s at Stake in Current Debates over Justification? The Crisis of Protestantism in the West,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates*, eds. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 111 laments as “creeping *perichoresis*.”

ontological distinction between God and humanity.⁸⁶ But according to Vanhoozer, is Grenz himself a radical reductionist?

Vanhoozer notes the two triads developed by Grenz in his theological method; the focal motifs of Trinity, community, and eschatology and the sources of Scripture, tradition, and culture. He then surveys several important Grenzian features, such as the centrality of the Trinity; the importance of community such that “all Christian theology is communitarian;”⁸⁷ the nature of the church as the proleptic, eschatological community that is nothing less than the shared participation in the perichoretic community of trinitarian persons; and Grenz’s reading of the *imago Dei*, which Vanhoozer sums up, saying, “In short: trinitarian theology entails relational anthropology.”⁸⁸ Ultimately, Vanhoozer fears that Grenz’s version of the social Trinity is in fact a reduced Trinity. Despite Grenz’s specific development of the Trinity as his structural motif, Vanhoozer contends that it is really the idea of community that functions as Grenz’s material principle. So instead of the divine triune communion defining community, Vanhoozer asserts that, to the contrary, community defines the Trinity for Grenz. As well, community is said to attain the position of “first theology” such that the relational meaning of the Trinity becomes abstracted from the doctrine itself in order to fund the *imago Dei*. Thus Vanhoozer concludes that Grenz evinces a reductionist trinitarianism and presumably has fallen prey to illegitimate trinitarian transfer.⁸⁹

The critique Vanhoozer makes of perichoretic trinitarian proposals in general and Grenz in particular not only closely mirrors the concerns of the social trinitarian critics discussed previously but is also more intensive. Anyone deemed to have a purportedly overly relational take on the Trinity seems suspect. Not only do the usual suspects such as Jürgen Moltmann and Miroslav Volf garner the expected charges of reductionism, but the trinitarian onto-relational approach of T. F. Torrance is also feared to skate the thin edge of reductionism.⁹⁰ Needed in Vanhoozer’s discussion, though, is a more extensive

⁸⁶ Vanhoozer, “Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology,” 42.

⁸⁷ Vanhoozer, “Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology,” 47.

⁸⁸ Vanhoozer, “Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology,” 48.

⁸⁹ Vanhoozer, “Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology,” 33, 45–50, 52, 54.

⁹⁰ Vanhoozer, “Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology,” 41–2, 52.

investigation of the Trinity proper as Grenz's structural motif, forming as it does the crux of Grenz's theology. Also advisable would be to note the combination of divine transcendence and a doctrine of creation that upholds the Creator/created distinction in the God-world relationship, while not rending it asunder either. But perhaps the most regrettable aspect of Vanhoozer's discussion is that his critique of Grenz gives little to no space to Grenz's mature revisioning of social trinitarian thought as found in *Social God* and continued on through *Named God*, the Grenz *Grundaxiom* identified by Jason Sexton, the close relation of Christology to Grenz's trinitarian theology, or the theo-ontology at the heart of *Named God*.⁹¹

However, these concerns are noted only briefly as matters previously discussed in order to move to the potential ecclesiological fallout. The implications from Vanhoozer's critique stem from the charge of communitarian reductionism combined with what Vanhoozer observes as the "basicity" of the church in Grenz's theology.⁹² Implicit within the contention that Grenz has moved the theme of community to the place of first theology and material principle is the charge of an ecclesiological or communitarian foundationalism. Thus it is the ecclesial community, or even worse, an abstracted notion of community in general that drives Grenz's theology, not the Trinity itself. This charge would mean that Grenz lapses into what amounts to a communitarian onto-theology.⁹³ We may also add here the concerns of James K. A. Smith, who worries of a residual correlationalism in regards to Grenz's approach to postmodern culture. Although mentioning the explicit rejection by Grenz of a "sociological foundationalism of community"⁹⁴ in his 2003 "Ecclesiology" essay, Smith still expresses concern that Grenz

⁹¹ Because of these omissions, Vanhoozer also neglects any consideration of the role of theotic triune participation within Grenz's trinitarian theology and ecclesiology. That he does not mention the Grenz *Grundaxiom* is also a missed opportunity given that he cites awareness of Sexton's connected work on Grenz's *imago Dei* theology. As well, the lack of engagement with *NGQB* is curious given Vanhoozer's sympathetic use of it in *Remythologizing Theology*, 13, 44, 86, 99.

⁹² Vanhoozer, "Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology," 47.

⁹³ The validity of this conclusion can be seen in that Vanhoozer's "illegitimate trinitarian transfer" is a feature of what he labels "kenotic-perichoretic relational *ontotheology*." (*Remythologizing Theology*, 31, emphasis mine)

⁹⁴ Grenz, "Ecclesiology," 258. See also *BF*, 226–7.

evinces a lingering correlationalism that places him at risk of succumbing to an ecclesiological foundationalism.⁹⁵

Concerns regarding an ecclesial foundationalism can again be seen to mirror closely the charges of sociological projectionism from the social trinitarian critics discussed in the second chapter. From that discussion we found that Grenz has ample resources in his earlier theology up through *Social God* for deflecting the projectionist charge (and with it concerns about ecclesial foundationalism). However, this becomes even more evident when Grenz's mature trinitarian theo-ontology (versus onto-theology) found in *Named God* is taken into account, which we found serves to strengthen (rather than move beyond) his social trinitarian theology. The consistent witness of Grenz's theological method is that the triune fullness serves as the transcendent ground, not only for the theological task in general, but the constitution of the church in particular. Thus we can note that in the flow of Grenz's trinitarian ecclesiology, the notion of *perichoresis* denotes not human sociality projected back onto the triune communion, but first and foremost the eternal and self-sustaining relations of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Following on from this, the activity of the triune God in the world "in Christ" and through the Spirit calls the church into being by means of ecclesial relation, wherein the ecclesial community is brought into theotic (storied and communal) triune participation in the divine life. Within this dynamic the notion of perichoretic participation denotes not only the character and source of ecclesial relation as it is constituted "in Christ" and through the Spirit, but the complete human contingency and dependence upon the perichoretic triune relations for this invited theotic participation even to exist or be sustained. Not only this, but Grenz's notion of the church as an eschatological community

⁹⁵ Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 125. Interestingly, in a 2003 essay, Vanhoozer comments that while Grenz "correlates" with postmodernism, he does not "capitulate" to it. ("Evangelicalism and the Church: The Company of the Gospel," in *The Futures of Evangelicalism: Issues and Prospects*, eds. Craig Bartholomew, Robin Parry, and Andrew West (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 67) But in this most recent essay, Vanhoozer suggests rather that Grenz "coordinates gospel and culture in a dynamic conversation" and neither "contextualizes not correlates" but "triangulates" ("Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology," 49–50), though Vanhoozer admittedly prefers his own method of triangulation to Grenz's (53–5). Grenz himself voices concerns that both correlationists and contextualizers risk lapses into foundationalism. (*BF*, 152–8)

also guards against ecclesial onto-theology and foundationalism. It is true that the positioning of the church as the interpretive storied community or the church as mission renders ecclesial existence in a certain sense “basic.”⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the distinctly eschatological character of the church as the proleptic sign of the kingdom and sacrament of triune love and communion serves to give testimony to the equally decentered and dependent nature of ecclesial existence on the triune God. These considerations not only protect Grenz against charges of projectionism but mitigate against worries of ecclesiological foundationalism.

Grenz, Ricoeur, and the Summoned Self

As was emphasized above, Grenz’s trinitarian *imago Dei* theology is necessarily pluriform. Though containing a relational emphasis, it presses beyond that with a narrative nuance as well as a communal character. We discussed in this chapter how the social *imago* and narrative *imago* intertwine towards the realization of the fully communal ecclesial self and ecclesial *imago*. Endemic to Grenz’s ecclesial vision is the *imago Dei* itself as a vocation of human identity that is at once a creational and Christological reality that points forward to the goal of eschatological consummation.⁹⁷ Indeed, as Henri de Lubac states, “the church is nothing else than humanity itself, enlivened, unified by the Spirit of Christ.”⁹⁸ The hermeneutical instantiation of the divine image in its ecclesial vocation, described by Grenz as a “coming-to-representation,” is well summed up in the phrase

⁹⁶ See *BF*, 232–4 on the dialectical manner in which the church both is and is not “basic,” in a way that avoids the charge of foundationalism. Curiously, Vanhoozer himself grants Grenz’s version of the “non-foundational basicity of the church” in “Evangelicalism and the Church,” 68. Emphasis mine.

⁹⁷ See Grenz’s vocational emphasis in *SGRS*, xi, 168, 202, 208, 323, 336 and *NGQB*, 360–73. See Paul Sands, “The *Imago Dei* as Vocation,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 82.1 (2010), 28–41 for a vocational approach offered, in part, as an alternative to relational approaches (of which Grenz is a representative for him), even while neglecting Grenz’s own specific emphasis on vocation. For a full length theological interpretation of the *imago Dei* as a vocation of human identity, see Ryan S. Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation*, *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Supplement 14 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016). See also Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 70–7, 188–99.

⁹⁸ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), 279. This is an expression of de Lubac’s view of the church as *totus Christus*. While Christ and his kingdom are never without Christ’s body (the church), the relation of church to Christ is best nuanced as an indirect identity, so as to maintain the Lordship and headship of Christ in the Spirit over the church. See also Liston’s description of the church as “the sequel to the incarnation.” (*The Anointed Church*, 85–90)

“representing God to others and others to God.”⁹⁹ This hermeneutical vocation oriented toward its Christological and eschatological goal exists as a beckoning, a calling, or – to draw on Ricoeur’s language – a summons. In an essay titled “The Summoned Subject in the School of the Narratives of the Prophetic Vocation,” he speaks of a “mandated self” and/or a “summoned self” in which the call of God is manifest through the conscience.¹⁰⁰

A danger lurks in that the conscience can quickly be reduced to barest levels of individualism, but Ricoeur’s hermeneutical philosophy, as we have seen, works against this in a strong manner. Any conception of a completed subject independent of or prior to either sociality or narrative is an illusion for Ricoeur.¹⁰¹ Ricoeur’s development of his wounded *cogito* resists in both directions the self-containment and self-sufficiency of the Cartesian *cogito* and the Nietzschean “shattered” *cogito* alike.¹⁰² The self in Ricoeur’s view then receives no threat from essential relation as with the modern self. And neither does it encounter dissolution or scattering within social embeddedness as with much radical postmodern thought. Rather, Ricoeur’s hermeneutical self is validated and constituted in relation to both human “others” and ultimately the transcendent Divine Other.¹⁰³ For this reason, neither relationality nor narrative are extraneous to the self’s identity, for the relational self is intrinsically a narrative self and narrative employment occurs only within irreducible relation to others.

⁹⁹ SGRS, 336. The latter quote is borrowed from the sub-title of MacDonald, *Re-Imagining Election: Divine Election as Representing God to Others and Others to God*. See 88, 90–1, 97, 117, 119–24, 126, 133, 137, 139–41, 166 for her sympathetic critique of Grenz. McDonald worries that while Grenz rescues the self from an inward turn, he still succumbs to an ecclesial inward turn (126) and an idealistic realized eschatology incommensurate with the church’s existence in wider society (133). Aside from my extension of Grenz’s ecclesiology of the church as mission (wherein Father, Son, and Spirit send the church into the world to gather others into the triune mission) within this chapter, her concerns could also be mitigated by greater attention to Grenz’s own statement of church and mission in his “Ecclesiology” essay (not mentioned by McDonald); his discussion of the church in outward witness in *TCG*, 502–10 and *CFC*, 185–9 (likewise not mentioned); and the church as the sacrament of “God’s way of being *in creation*,” and “*visible sign*” in the world in *SGRS* (336, emphasis mine, and see discussion above).

¹⁰⁰ Paul Ricoeur, “The Summoned Subject in the School of the Narratives of the Prophetic Vocation,” in *Figuring the Sacred*, 262–75. This essay along with Paul Ricoeur, “The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures,” trans. David Pellauer, in *The Whole and Divided Self*, eds. David E. Aune and John McCarthy (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1997), 201–20 are the two Gifford studies omitted from *Oneself as Another*.

¹⁰¹ See Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 161–78 and Thiselton, “The Image and Likeness of God,” 192–3.

¹⁰² Ricoeur, “The Question of the Subject,” 243 and Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 4–23. See also Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 95–7, 126–7.

¹⁰³ Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 168, 177–8.

Regarding the relation of the self to the other in Ricoeur, we should note again his engagement with Lévinas. In Ricoeur's argument towards viewing "oneself as another," one can see that he takes seriously Lévinas' responsibility toward the other as developed in *Otherwise than Being* and *Totality and Infinity*.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Ricoeur regards Lévinas' conception of the self in relation to the other as too totalizing, too hyperbolic, too dissymmetrical, and too passive. This dynamic seems to squeeze out any space for the mutual recognition and solicitude relationally conceived within what Ricoeur calls the "reciprocity of friendship."¹⁰⁵ Blundell observes that, from a Ricoeurian perspective, at issue is the danger wherein the "other becomes an external master through the injunction forced upon the self by the other's face."¹⁰⁶ Ricoeur pushes back against the reduction of the self to mere passivity, stating in rather terse fashion that Lévinas employs hyperbole "to the point of paroxysm."¹⁰⁷ Contrary to Lévinas, Blundell continues: "Ricoeur contends that there is no conflict between the self moving toward the other and the other moving toward the self. . . . In recognizing the other as a self, I am able to absorb the other's regard of me."¹⁰⁸ Thus, while the summoned self in Ricoeur may be a wounded *cogito*, it is nevertheless a self capable of ethical relation and response to summons, whether human or divine.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ See also the discussion in chapter two, "Grenz, Ricoeur, and the Relational Self."

¹⁰⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 296. Ricoeur states further concerning recognition and solicitude, "Recognition is a structure on the movement that carries self-esteem toward solicitude and solicitude toward justice." (296) Blundell also comments: "The key to recognition is *solicitude*, the open regard for the other within the context of the ethical aim." (*Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 125, emphasis original)

¹⁰⁶ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 124. For other discussions of Ricoeur in relation to Lévinas, see Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 82–104; Mark I. Wallace, "The Summoned Self: Ethics and Hermeneutics in Paul Ricoeur in Dialogue with Emmanuel Lévinas," in *Paul Ricoeur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, eds. John Wall, William Schweiker, and W. David Hall (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 80–93; Howard Ira Einsohn, "The Summoned Self Under Siege: Shaw, Ricoeur, and the Poetics of Personhood in *Too Good to be True*," *Shaw: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* 28 (2008), 112–36; and Michael Sohn, *The Good of Recognition: Phenomenology, Ethics, and Religion in the Thought of Lévinas and Ricoeur* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).

¹⁰⁷ For this assessment, see Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 332–41 (338). See also Thiselton, "The Image and Likeness of God," 193.

¹⁰⁸ Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*, 124–5. See also Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 295–6, 340–1. Blundell further comments: "Only in the act of regarding the other's regard for me can I esteem my self as an Other." (125, emphasis original)

¹⁰⁹ See also Jens Zimmermann, *Recovering Theological Interpretation: An Incarnational-Trinitarian Theory of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 7 who states that "Hermeneutics is all

In his essay on the “summoned subject,” Ricoeur discusses the manner in which the self arises in response to divine calling and summons.¹¹⁰ Ricoeur is true to form in specifying straightaway that there is no sense in which the self somehow posits itself. Rather, the self that responds is “a self in relation, without being an absolute self – that is, outside any relatedness and in this sense the foundation of every relation.”¹¹¹ This is a self described within the “hermeneutics of the ‘I am,’” as “already a self in relation” and therefore “a self in the position of respondent.”¹¹² It is herein that we find a remarkable congruence between Ricoeur’s summoned self and Grenz’s ecclesial self. Ricoeur presents a discussion of the way the self is brought into being through a commissioning from engagement with the “prophetic call” and within engagement with the prophetic tradition in the biblical narrative.¹¹³ Subsequently, he treats Augustine’s notion of the “inner teacher” which gives way for Ricoeur to the “testimony of the conscience.”¹¹⁴

Placed in between these discussions is a middle section in which he orients his proposal Christologically. Ricoeur states unambiguously that the summoned self here is called to “conformity to the image of Christ” and declares that the Apostle Paul forged “the central metaphor of the Christian self as christomorphic, that is, the image of the image par excellence.”¹¹⁵ Elsewhere Ricoeur discussed in close relation a two-part testimony which calls forth the outward witness of the Christian; namely, the dual testimony of Christ and the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁶ Especially in Ricoeur’s description of the summoned self as “christomorphic” and unable to found itself, we have come very near to our previous

about self-knowledge, and self-knowledge is impossible without knowledge of [and, we might add, relation to] God.”

¹¹⁰ For discussions, see Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 186, 217, 234–8 and Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology*, 158–64.

¹¹¹ Ricoeur, “The Summoned Subject,” 262.

¹¹² Ricoeur, “The Summoned Subject,” 262.

¹¹³ Ricoeur, “The Summoned Subject,” 263–7.

¹¹⁴ Ricoeur, “The Summoned Subject,” 268–75. Augustine, *The Teacher*, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, ed./trans. J. H. S. Burleigh (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1953), 69–101.

¹¹⁵ Ricoeur, “The Summoned Subject,” 267–8, 274–5.

¹¹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Testimony,” in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 138–9. See also Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” 93. Brian Gregor, referencing Matthew 16:24, further states that most pertinent for the interpretation of the cruciform self is “the call of Christ: take up your cross and follow after me . . . the self is called to gather itself up beneath the cross and follow after Christ.” (*A Philosophical Anthropology of the Cross*, 145)

discussion of Grenz’s ecclesial self in cruciform shape. Herein is the call of Jesus that “unless one forfeits oneself one cannot discover genuine [ecclesial] selfhood.”¹¹⁷ Here the ex-centricity of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics meets the outward oriented eccentricity of ecclesial existence as it is called into being “in Christ” and through the Spirit. Here the summoned self blossoms fully into the ecclesial self by means of triune theotic (storied and communal) participation and in ecclesial relation in which love of neighbor and love of God are bound together. True to Ricoeur and Grenz we can say: “My neighbor *oblige*s me because he or she is the presence to me of the appointment and vocation of [the triune] God.”¹¹⁸ It is the hermeneutics of the summoned and ecclesial self that gives rise to the Christomorphic eccentricity of cruciform ecclesial existence itself as mission in which the triune God is represented to others and others to God.¹¹⁹

Culture, Church, and Missio-Anthropology

The now vast amount of literature concerning theology of mission is replete with descriptions of the church in an era variously described as “post-Constantinian,” “post-Christendom,” and “post-Christian.”¹²⁰ In this cultural context the church finds itself regarded with indifference or perhaps even outright hostility. Some scholars therefore seek to apply the metaphor of exile to the shape of ecclesial existence in the world and culture at large.¹²¹ I find myself largely sympathetic to the notion of the church as exilic,

¹¹⁷ Wallace, “The Summoned Self,” 92. Cf. Matthew 10:38–39; 16:24–26.

¹¹⁸ John Webster, “The Human Person,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, 233. Emphasis original. Cf. Mark 12:29–31. We may note here not only a dynamic of hermeneutical *obligation* but one of *understanding* as well, seen within the act of the hermeneutical love of understanding one’s neighbor as oneself. Herein the ability (or inability) to understand texts mirrors our ability (or inability) to understand and love neighbors. See Merold Westphal’s description in *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 135–46 of the church as “conversation” with the hermeneutical virtue of listening. Ecclesial hermeneutics is thus not only “political” but practical.

¹¹⁹ I suggest the combination of Grenz and Ricoeur provides valuable narrative and communal resources for the revisioning and refiguring of believer priesthood in a fully ecclesial (and thus communal versus individualistic) mode.

¹²⁰ See Eddie Gibbs, *The Rebirth of the Church: Applying Paul’s Vision for Ministry in Our Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 3–30 and Brian Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 111–70.

¹²¹ See James Thompson, *The Church According to Paul*, 243–8 and Lee Beach, *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope after Christendom* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

however, for the purposes of this study I will simply note this briefly in order to hone in on a problematic close to heart of Grenz's corpus and ecclesiology. The milieu known as post-Christendom is intrinsically connected to the phenomenon known as postmodernism, which in turn sits very close to the central and strategic place the notion of community occupies for Grenz.¹²² This forms a problematic with two interrelated questions. The first comes by way of Kevin Vanhoozer, who wonders if Grenz's engagement with the postmodern context indebts him too deeply to communitarian thought. Vanhoozer asks, "what if communitarianism falls out of cultural favor?"¹²³ The second question regards the nature of postmodernism itself. Despite the oft-noted orientation of postmoderns to community, recent missional literature makes consistent reference to the pernicious effects of individualism within post-Christendom.¹²⁴ Does this mean that the communitarian intervention at the heart of the postmodern project has failed? And if so, what would this mean for Grenz's theology and ecclesiology?

James K. A. Smith suggests that much of what is called "postmodern" may be better termed as "*hyper-modern*," in which case, it can also be adequately said to be "most-modern."¹²⁵ Myron Bradley Penner offers a similar description. He surveys three options for discerning the character of the postmodern turn: the postmodern is beyond the modern, the postmodern as hypermodern in that it represents modernity come of age and bringing its logical conclusions to fruition and fulfillment, and the postmodern as before modernism (this last point draws on Lyotard's focus on logical priority rather than linear history).¹²⁶ Penner's description offers a way to conceptualize the multivalent nature of what the postmodern phenomenon displays. Also helpful is an additional heuristic

¹²² For example, see Grenz, "Christian Spirituality and the Quest for Identity," 87–105.

¹²³ Vanhoozer, "Three (or More) Ways of Triangulating Theology," 47.

¹²⁴ See Eddie Gibbs, *The Rebirth of the Church*, 11, 18, 23, 151, 203–6; Stefan Paas, "Mission among Individual Consumers," in *The Gospel after Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions*, ed. Ryan K Bolger (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 150–63; and Steve Hollingsworth, "Mission in a New Spirituality Culture," in *The Gospel after Christendom*, 164–75.

¹²⁵ James K. A. Smith, "Series Editor's Foreword," in Daniel M. Bell Jr., *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 9. Emphasis original. On "postmodernism as hypermodernism" see James R. Peters, *The Logic of the Heart*, 217–85.

¹²⁶ Myron B. Penner, "Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Some Preliminary Considerations," in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*, 18–19.

distinction between postmodernism as intellectual movement and postmodernity as cultural milieu, suggested by Smith.¹²⁷ Such a taxonomy is helpful for understanding how an ever-expanding diverse collage of competing worldviews (including the postmodern proper and the most-modern) can co-exist on the same cultural landscape.

I suggest that the image of a web is still a particularly apt metaphor for the current cultural context, especially given the virtual omnipresence of the “world wide web” and its ever increasing role in identity formation.¹²⁸ This is consistent with Lyotard’s description of the self as “existing in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before.”¹²⁹ The question of the self generated in modernity still persists, even if in a different form that is deconstructed, fluid, and without modern pretense. This means that even after the postmodern turn to relationality, the focus on the self can still be of such an intense nature that it would be possible to speak of a postmodern, or rather most-modern, “self” obsession, even though the self may exist in a fragmented and fluid condition. Nevertheless, in this state, the confluence of the turn to relationality, the internet, and social media has not dislodged the entrenched individualism of modernity as many may have formerly hoped. Strangely perhaps, while providing a reconfiguring of individualism, these developments seem also to have reinforced it further. The result is that the contemporary social imaginaries, or those “ensemble of imaginings that enable our practices by making sense of them,” have not only intensified what Charles Taylor has called “expressive individualism,”¹³⁰ but as well morphed into what can be called a most-modern “networked individualism.”¹³¹

Given this most-modern resurgence and mutation, has the value of Grenz’s theological offering explicated within this study been undercut along with his

¹²⁷ Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?*, 20.

¹²⁸ See Alberto Romele, “Narrative Identity and Social Networking Sites,” *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies* 4.2 (2013), 108–22. See also John Frederick, “Discerning, Disarming, and Redeeming the Digital Powers: Gospel, Community, The Virtual Self, and the HTML of Cruciform Love,” in *Ecclesia and Ethics*, 153–64.

¹²⁹ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 15.

¹³⁰ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 165. See also Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 145, 156, 171–6, 200–1, 323.

¹³¹ Heidi A. Campbell and Stephen Garner, *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in a Digital Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 9, 56, 72–3.

ecclesiology? I suggest that it has not, for a couple of reasons. We should first keep in mind the crucial insight from Jay Smith that Grenz's theology of triune participation itself is a revisioning of the convertive piety and "warm heartedness" of his Baptist context.¹³² The concern for the heart (and thus the affective dimension to theology, faith, and witness) remained important for Grenz throughout his career.¹³³ Within the "age of authenticity"¹³⁴ marked by the alienation and anxiety of expressive individualism, Grenz still points most-modern postmoderns toward (triune) participation in the truth that truly frees.¹³⁵ If anything, the refigured heightening of most-modern individualism, visible within the hyper-modern making of human life and identity by means of "an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constitute[s] oneself as the subject of one's acts,"¹³⁶ suggests that Grenz's communitarian and trinitarian project and ecclesial antidote is now even more urgent than before.

Equally important though is Grenz's consistent and thoroughgoing trinitarian theo-ontological orientation. Even as Grenz always aimed "toward the heart of the matter" in his engagement with culture, we have seen that Grenz carefully and critically avoided any sort of cultural foundationalism in proposing a distinctly trinitarian ecclesiology. The communitarian cultural mood provided a strategic target for Grenz to aim at, but it did not dictate to him. The thoroughly trinitarian theo-anthropology detailed in chapter two, and the cruciform Christo-anthropology of chapter three, now becomes an ecclesially shaped missio-anthropology in the formation of a peculiar people with a peculiar

¹³² Smith, "A Generous Theology," 38.

¹³³ On the affective dimension and importance of the heart in spiritual formation, see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies: Volume 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009) and James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies: Volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

¹³⁴ This is Charles Taylor's description in *A Secular Age*, 473–504, an age marked by "expressive individualism" and alienation. The "age of authenticity" is also very much an "age of anxiety." See also Wolfhart Pannenberg's discussion of anomie and meaninglessness in "Meaning, Religion, and the Question of God," in *The Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008), 147–62. "The concern with emptiness and loss of meaning, together with a questioning about and searching after meaning, has become a predominate theme in our time." (147) Written in 1988, the resonance of Pannenberg's statement seems intensified in 2017.

¹³⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, "Participating in What Frees: The Concept of Truth in the Postmodern Context," *Review and Expositor* 100 (Fall 2003), 687–93.

¹³⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, Volume 3, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1990), 37–68 (41). See also Webster, "The Human Person," 231.

missional existence “in Christ.”¹³⁷ This occurs as the Holy Spirit acts as the constituting divine love calling and summoning us to our ecclesial and eschatological home.¹³⁸ The bodily expression of this missio-anthropology is manifest in Christ-centered and Spirit-oriented ecclesial relation and faithful presence, as the church is called *as* hermeneutical mission within its vocational coming-to-represent God to others and others to God.¹³⁹

The Ecclesial *Imago*, Gender, and Triune Participation

We now arrive at the third (and final) of three dedicated sections seeking to explore the interrelations of Grenz’s *imago Dei* theology, the mutual relation of female and male, and triune participation oriented towards a hermeneutical vision of the church. The focus of this section is to offer a suggestion as to how the ecclesial relation of “male and female” as the vocational coming-to-representation of the *imago Dei* can be extended in a dual manner. As with the first two sections on gender, this one proceeds in three parts. The first part draws some of the main threads already discussed together and offers a summary of Grenz’s understanding of gender and its relation to the ecclesial *imago* and cruciform mutuality. The second proposes a further extension of ecclesial cruciform

¹³⁷ See N. T. Wright’s observation that within ancient Rome, “there were no other groups [other than the early church] living as though they were the new version of the human race.” (*Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 168) For Wright this comprises a distinctly *ecclesial* storied improvisation. (170–1) See Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 121–44 for his improvisational hermeneutics of the five-act play, where the church takes its place in the fifth act. See Grenz’s appeal to Wright’s five-act hermeneutic in *BF*, 128. See also Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 132–6 and Middleton and Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, 172–95 for extensions of Wright’s five-act schema into a six-act model. On hermeneutical and dramatic improvisation, see also Bruce Ellis Benson, “The Improvisation of Hermeneutics: Jazz Lessons for Interpreters,” in *Hermeneutics at the Crossroads*, eds. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, James K. A. Smith, and Bruce Ellis Benson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 193–210; Wesley Vander Lugt, *Living Theodrama: Reimagining Theological Ethics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2014); Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004); and David S. Cunningham, “Revelation, Community, and Culture: A Dramatic Inquiry,” in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune God*, 382–403.

¹³⁸ On the Holy Spirit as divine love calling us home, see Stanley J. Grenz, “The Holy Spirit: Divine Love Guiding Us Home,” *Ex Auditu* 12 (January 1996), 1–13. For the work of the Spirit in culture, see Stanley J. Grenz, “(Pop) Culture: Playground of the Spirit or Diabolical Device?” *Cultural Encounters* 1.1 (Winter 2004), 7–25 and Grenz, “Culture and Spirit: The Role of Cultural Context in Theological Reflection,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55.2 (Fall 2000): 37–51.

¹³⁹ See Sexton, “A Confessing Trinitarian Theology,” 177. See also Patrick Mitchel, “The New Perspective and the Christian Life: *Solus Spiritus*,” in *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life*, 71–102.

mutuality in the concrete expressions of ecclesial friendship and hospitality.¹⁴⁰ Though Grenz himself never explicated either of these themes in depth, they are not unprecedented for him, and are suggestive for the concrete outworking of a Grenzian ecclesiology.¹⁴¹ The third moment closes this section, and the main body of this study, by connecting the expressions of ecclesial friendship and hospitality to the hermeneutical vision of the church as mission.

The Ecclesial *Imago* and Female/Male Mutuality in Grenz

The ground, grammar, and goal of Grenz's theology is the God who exists as the Divine Community. The triune God, while beyond all sexual difference (which Grenz notes specifically), is nevertheless the transcendent ground of the relationality endemic to human female/male sexuality and community arising from creation in the (trinitarian and thus communal) *imago Dei*.¹⁴² Even so, the creational moment is only the beginning. Grenz's social *imago* looks onward toward the ecclesial and eschatological horizons in which the church is constituted as the vocational representation of the *imago Dei*. Thus, the primordial instantiation of the divine image in marriage is penultimate and partial. For Grenz, the marriage of "male and female" points onward towards ecclesial expression and eschatological fulfillment. But Grenz does not rest with a mere mirroring of the Trinity nor with a general theory of community. Grenz presses further to develop a theology of *theosis* in which ecclesial persons come to participate in the filial relation Christ shares with the Father (and thus Christ's inheritance of the triune name) mediated by the Spirit of triune love. Triune participation in the divine life thus constitutes the ecclesial self and brings into being embodied ecclesial relation. It is this ecclesial

¹⁴⁰ I would suggest friendship and hospitality are key ingredients to the Christian existence in the world that Miroslav Volf terms "soft difference." ("Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation between Church and Culture in 1 Peter," *Ex Auditu* 10 (1994), 15–30)

¹⁴¹ See the reference to the "practice of hospitality" in *TCG*, 654 and Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 81, 85, 90 on the key role of women in the practice of New Testament hospitality. Regarding friendship, see *SE*, 6, 120, 169, 192, 218, 220, 235, 243; Grenz, "Post-feminism and the New Gender Covenant, 55; and *SGRS*, 2, 45, 313, 318, 335.

¹⁴² Grenz, "Is God Sexual?," 190–212 and *SGRS*, 269–303. On the *imago Dei* and community, see also Nonna Verna Harrison, *God's Many Splendored Image: Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 169–84.

community of “male and female” constituted by triune love which forms the prolepsis of the *imago Dei* and foretaste of the new humanity of the new creation.¹⁴³

From the study on the social *imago*, and Grenz’s focus on the reciprocal trinitarian relations, we gleaned the grammar of trinitarian mutuality.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the female/male dynamic brought about by ecclesial relation achieved through triune communal participation takes on the mutualist character of the triune relations. Against hierarchical conceptions of gender relations, this translates for Grenz into what can be called the “blessed alliance” of full and complete female and male missional mutuality in church and ministry alongside each other and the practice of mutual submission and love in marriage.¹⁴⁵ Yet the trinitarian social *imago* is comprised as well as a narrative *imago* which draws its narrative emplotment from Christ as the truly human one, norming narrative *imago*, and true image of God. In addition to its communal aspect then, theotic triune participation is also storied in shape and character. It is in this theotic (communal and storied) participation that the *imago Dei* is established as our vocation to be “in Christ” through the Spirit within ecclesial relation and ecclesial existence.¹⁴⁶ Because the church’s very being is in its union with Christ as its true head, ecclesial existence then is essentially Christoform and thus cruciform in its narrative identity.¹⁴⁷ The social *imago* and narrative *imago* together give rise to the ecclesial *imago* of “male and female” in triune participation marked by the grammar of mutual cruciformity and cruciform mutuality.

We are reminded though that the constitution of the church “in Christ” and through the Spirit is a fully embodied reality. It is the Spirit who unites ecclesial persons to Christ and it is only by the Spirit that the church comes to participation in the

¹⁴³ *SGRS*, 334.

¹⁴⁴ For the connection of *theosis* and mutuality, see also Wyndy Corbin Reuschling, “Wholeness and Holiness: Christian Moral Formation,” in Jeannine K. Brown, Carla M. Dahl, and Wyndy Corbin Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy: An Integrative Conversation about Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 133, 135.

¹⁴⁵ See Grenz, “Biblical Priesthood and Women in Ministry,” 272–86 for his defense of women’s ordination. See also Grenz, “Post-feminism and the New Gender Covenant,” 46–56 and Grenz, “Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships,” 83–99. The language of “blessed alliance” comes from Karina Kreminski, “Gender, Being Missional, and the Reign of God,” in *The Gender Conversation*, 375–6.

¹⁴⁶ *NGQB*, 361–73.

¹⁴⁷ Jones, *Marks of His Wounds*, 111.

eschatological new humanity. Yet what the Spirit brings about is nothing less than a bodily reality and bodily participation in the cruciform shape of Christ.¹⁴⁸ Cherith Fee Nordling draws the explicit connection between Jesus as the new *adam*, Jesus as the restoration of the original *adam* (and thus the *imago Dei* as well), and the reconciliation between “male and female” in the new creation.¹⁴⁹ We are alerted here to a cautionary note that while Grenz presses beyond the creational moment, neither does he leave it behind.¹⁵⁰ For Grenz, there remains an intimate link between creation (and divine creational intent) and the eschatological reality of new creation effected proleptically in the ecclesial present. There is therefore a communal and storied narrative of the divinely intended human vocation of the *imago Dei* which runs all through creation, Christ, church, and consummation.¹⁵¹ This results in the intimate link between the cruciform bodily life of Christ and the eschatological, proleptic embodiment of ecclesial female and male persons as “predestined, called, justified, and glorified *brothers and sisters*.”¹⁵²

Elaine Storkey presents four paradigmatic categories which can help sum up the account of female/male relation in mutual cruciformity and cruciform mutuality developed within this study.¹⁵³ Her first category is that of *difference*. This is exemplified in the embodied nature of the *imago Dei* as “male and female” that gives rise to the

¹⁴⁸ Timothy Gombis, “Participating in the New-Creation People of God in Christ by the Spirit,” in *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life*, 110–18.

¹⁴⁹ Cherith Fee Nordling, “Being Saved as a New Creation: Co-Humanity in the True *Imago Dei*,” in *What Does It Mean to be Saved: Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation*, ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 124ff.

¹⁵⁰ For this, see also Nordling, “Living as Jesus Did,” 196.

¹⁵¹ On this, see also Cherith Fee Nordling, “The Human Person in the Christian Story,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, 66ff. See also the connection of creation, Christ, church, and new creation in Christoph Schwöbel, “Human Being as Relational Being: Twelve Theses for a Christian Anthropology,” in *Persons, Divine and Human: King’s College Essays in Theological Anthropology*, eds. Christoph Schöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 141–65.

¹⁵² Cherith Fee Nordling, “Resurrection,” in *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom*, eds. Bruce Ellis Benson, Malinda Elizabeth Berry, and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 187. Emphasis mine.

¹⁵³ See Elaine Storkey, *Origins of Difference: The Gender Debate Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 129–31. Storkey’s presentation of these categories is in full accord with Grenz’s vision of gender relations. However, while I borrow these categories from Storkey, my discussion here presents a synthesis of her discussion, Grenz’s treatment of gender, and my own presentation throughout this study. I suggest it is therefore broadly Grenzian in shape and character. Cf. Kreminski, “Gender, Being Missional, and the Reign of God,” 369.

expression of human community for Grenz. This is a difference that is present throughout the story of creation, Christ constituted ecclesial community, and the eschatological consummation of the new humanity. While female/male difference is eschatologically reoriented within ecclesial relation “in Christ” through resurrection and the Spirit, the gendered duality of “male and female” in the ecclesial *imago Dei* is still yet not dissolved into androgyny, but redeemed, reconciled, and finally brought to its triune divine intent.¹⁵⁴ The second category is that of *sameness* or *similarity*.¹⁵⁵ While marked by fundamental difference as “male and female,” they are nevertheless of the same flesh and of the same humanity. And beyond the creational horizon, the ecclesially reoriented and eschatologically directed “male and female” community are also of the same humanity, comprised of the embodied ecclesial humanity brought into being by participation in Christ’s own redeeming and reconciling humanity through the power of the Spirit.¹⁵⁶

The third category is that of *complementarity*. In Grenz’s evangelical context this is potentially a surprising (and perhaps inflammatory) claim if complementarity is taken to mean an essential male/female hierarchy of (male) authority and (female) submission.¹⁵⁷ Yet Storkey’s complementarity is premised on the “reciprocation and completion of female by male, and male by female” and founded on the claim that “in Christ woman is

¹⁵⁴ See “The Social *Imago*, Gender, and Triune Participation” in chapter two. See also Cherith Fee Nordling, “Gender,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, 506–9 and Kreminski, “Gender, Being Missional, and the Reign of God,” 370–1. On embodiment, see as well Harrison, *God’s Many-Splendored Image*, 107–22. For exegetical perspectives which support that Galatians 3:28 does not imply ecclesial or eschatological dissolution of female/male difference, see Gordon Fee, “Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26–29,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 172–85 and Westphal, *Paul and Gender*, 171.

¹⁵⁵ For the connection of difference, similarity/sameness, and mutuality, see Wyndy Corbin Reuschling, “Being and Becoming: The Trinity and Our Formation,” in *Becoming Whole and Holy: An Integrative Conversation about Christian Formation*, 122–3.

¹⁵⁶ See “The Narrative *Imago*, Gender, and Storied Participation” in chapter three. See also Grenz, “The Holy Spirit,” 11–13.

¹⁵⁷ See Nordling, “Gender,” 502–6 for a survey of the evangelical gender debate. See Kevin Giles, “The Genesis of Confusion: How ‘Complementarians’ Have Corrupted Communication,” *Priscilla Papers* 29.1 (Winter 2015), 27–8 for his contention that egalitarians have historically held to female/male complementarity without hierarchy and that only as recently as 1991 has the term “complementarian” been co-opted as a synonym for a hierarchical male/female schema. Note also the subtitle to the egalitarian/mutualist volume *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* and the affirmation of an egalitarian/mutualist complementarity in Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Ronald W. Pierce, “Introduction,” 17.

not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.”¹⁵⁸ This is therefore a complementarity without hierarchy which points us toward the kind of Grenzian mutuality between women and men discussed in this study, a complementarity realized through mutual submission and love.¹⁵⁹ The final category is that of *union*. Here Storkey echoes Grenz’s emphasis on *imago Dei* relationality, stating: “Women and men are *together* the image of God.”¹⁶⁰ This points us toward the communal (and storied) reality embedded within the overarching narrative of the *imago Dei* through creation, Christ, and new creation, pictured (or imaged) in the “one flesh-ness” of Christian marriage and ultimately the ecclesial and eschatological relational oneness and (comm)union of “male and female” constituted “in Christ” and through the Spirit (as the reality toward which female/male marriage ultimately points for Grenz).¹⁶¹ Storkey’s four categories of female/male relation find substantial resonance with Grenz’s own theology of gender relations and the ecclesial relation of “male and female” marked by mutuality and cruciformity developed in this study. It is this ecclesial relation, established by means of theotic (storied and communal) triune participation, that is brought into existence as a storied community, sign of the kingdom, and sacrament of triune love.¹⁶² It is this embodied, ecclesial, and eschatological community of “male and female” that is mission in the faithful presence of its hermeneutical existence marked by mutual cruciformity and cruciform mutuality as the triune God’s way of being known in the world.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Christine Pohl on Ecclesial Friendship and Hospitality

In John 15:15, Jesus tells his disciples: “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because

¹⁵⁸ Storkey, *Origins of Difference*, 130 and Storkey, “Evangelical Theology and Gender,” 170.

¹⁵⁹ See the critique of subordinationism and development of mutuality in “The Social *Imago*, Gender, and Triune Participation” in chapter two, and the discussion of “headship” in “The Narrative *Imago*, Gender, and Triune Participation” in chapter three.

¹⁶⁰ Storkey, *Origins of Difference*, 131. Emphasis mine.

¹⁶¹ See this in *SGRS*, 301–3 and Grenz, “Is God Sexual?,” 212. See also the description in Nordling, “Living as Jesus Did,” 196 of the communion of “male and female” as a “living pictogram” of the triune creator. The penultimate and “pointing” nature of Christian marriage suggests it is effectively positioned theologically under the sacramental umbrella of ecclesiology as one form/expression of the larger reality of ecclesial relation constituted “in Christ” and through the Spirit.

¹⁶² *SGRS*, 328–336.

I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father.”¹⁶³ (NRSV) We notice here a dual movement in which from out of the relational overflow of the Father to the Son, the Father makes himself known to the Son, and the Son makes known everything from the Father to his disciples. Out of this movement, Jesus declares that his disciples are now his friends. It is just from such a dynamic that Grenz develops his theology of *theosis* wherein believers participate in the triune divine life by being drawn into the sharing of the filial relationship of the Son to the Father by the Spirit. But this theotic (storied and communal) participation has a particular effect. It is by triune participation that ecclesial relation is established “in Christ” and through the Spirit and thus the church is constituted. The other aspect of this dynamic is that the church is then sent out as Christ’s body to gather others into the triune mission. Jesus calls those found in him friends so that they may go out and bring others in as friends of Christ in the Spirit. The idea of “making known” what is from the Father here suggests a hermeneutical practice bound up in ecclesial existence which I propose can be called ecclesial friendship. This is not friendship (or community) in general terms, but rather that specific concrete form of friendship established “in Christ” through the Spirit (that is, through ecclesial relation) as Jesus calls those found in him his friends.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ See *SGRS*, 318. Cf. *NGQB*, 205.

¹⁶⁴ What I am calling “ecclesial friendship” takes partial inspiration from what Wesley Hill terms “spiritual friendship” in *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015). I envision this as a form of chaste ecclesial relation manifest in multi-textured same-sex and cross-sex friendships as they gesture toward the new humanity “in Christ” and through the Spirit. Hill (who holds a classical/traditional view of Christian marriage as male/female in agreement with Grenz) advocates for a renewed and hopeful vision of Christian celibacy in singleness and offers his book as his contribution (with which I am sympathetic) to the current sexuality debates. (See also his mention of “vowed celibacy” in Wesley Hill, “Jigs for Marriage and Celibacy,” *Comment Magazine* (24 November 2016) <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/4987/jigs-for-marriage-and-celibacy/> [Accessed: 28 February 2017].) The inclusion of Hill’s book here raises the question regarding the manner of ecclesial inclusion of gays, lesbians, and other identities within the “sexual/gender identity framework.” (This is my adaption of what Jenell Williams Paris calls the “sexual identity framework” in *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex is too Important to Define Who You Are* (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP, 2011).) While the particulars are beyond the focus of this present study, we can answer briefly that any such inclusion would come in redemptive and refiguring fashion just as it does for anyone, that is, by means of ecclesial relation “in Christ” and through the Spirit. But this itself indicates the need for not merely a study of the hermeneutics of gender and sexuality as found in current cultural and critical discourse, but the necessity for a thoroughly reorienting *theo-ontological* study on “the ecclesial hermeneutics of gender and sexuality” beyond what I have been able to do in this study. Here I can only note the necessity of such a study. Nevertheless, I do regard this dissertation as something of a prolegomena for such further study.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers rich and suggestive resources by which the idea of ecclesial friendship can be focused further. Bonhoeffer forms a good conversation partner in part because Grenz himself references Bonhoeffer in relation to the creation of the duality of “male and female.”¹⁶⁵ For Bonhoeffer, that female and male were created as a duality suggests that their very creatureliness subsists as they are bound to the other and only in relation to the other can true freedom be found. Bonhoeffer states:

Anyone who scrutinizes human beings in order to find freedom finds nothing of it. Why? Because freedom is not a quality that can be uncovered; it is not a possession, something to hand, an object; nor is it a form of something to hand; instead it is a relation and nothing else. To be more precise, freedom is a relation between two persons. Being free means “being-free-for-the-other,” because I am bound to the other. Only in being in relation with the other am I free.¹⁶⁶

Following this description of the essential relation to the other, Bonhoeffer then gives a three-part rendering of the shape of this relation and the manner in which “male and female” are responsible to the other. Bonhoeffer declares that the creatureliness of “male and female” can only be defined as the existence of human beings “over-against-one-another, with-one-another, and in-dependence-upon-one-another.”¹⁶⁷

In this dynamic, “male and female” not only retain their respective difference but find that difference relationally constituted within essential dependence on the other. Similarly to Grenz, Bonhoeffer holds the creational moment of “male and female” in the

¹⁶⁵ SGRS, 294–6. Also, Bonhoeffer and Grenz both refuse to merely articulate a theory of sociality in general or theology of generic human community. For this in relation to Bonhoeffer’s Christology and ecclesiology, see Barry Harvey, “The Narrow Path: Sociality, Ecclesiology, and the Polyphony of Life in the Thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer,” in *Being Human, Becoming Human*, 102–23. See also Michael Mawson, “Theology and Social Theory – Reevaluating Bonhoeffer’s Approach,” *Theology Today* 71.1 (2014), 69–80.

¹⁶⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 63.

¹⁶⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 64. The statement “over-against-one-another” could raise concern from a feminist perspective if taken to assume a “binary” in an oppositional sense. However, I would suggest Bonhoeffer’s intertwining of male and female as a mutual “with-one-another” and “in-dependence-upon-one-another” works to mitigate such a reading. As well, the German for “over-against” (*Gegenüber*) can also be rendered much less starkly as “juxtaposition.” See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935–1937*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 14, trans. Douglas W. Stott, eds. H. Gaylon Barker and Mark S. Brocker (Minneapolis, MN, Fortress Press, 2013), 450–1 for this in reference to Christ in relation to the church. Thanks go to Bonhoeffer scholar David S. Robinson for pointing me to this reference. For feminist engagement with Bonhoeffer, see Lisa E. Dahill, *Reading from the Underside of Selfhood: Bonhoeffer and Spiritual Formation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009); Dahill, “Jesus for You: A Feminist Reading of Bonhoeffer’s Christology,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34.4 (August 2007): 250–9; and Karen V. Guth, “To See from Below: Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Mandates and Feminist Ethics,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 33.2 (Fall/Winter 2013), 131–50.

divine image as pointing beyond itself to the reality of ecclesial existence, or what he famously referred to as “Christ existing as church-community.”¹⁶⁸ For this reason, as the church is constituted as that concrete community which exists in the modes of “being-with” and “being-for”¹⁶⁹ as the faithful presence of the new humanity in Christ, we can see the dynamic of ecclesial friendship taking shape within Bonhoeffer’s insistence of the responsibility toward and dependence on the ecclesial female and male other within their mutual relation. But Bonhoeffer will allow no amount of idealism to fester at this point.¹⁷⁰ Instructively, in *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer raises the reality of “Christ existing as church-community” specifically within the context of sin and the broken community of the *peccatorum communio* (the community of sinners). The unity of existence in the old Adam is only superseded through Christ as the new Adam and the unity of the new humanity in Christ.¹⁷¹

Bonhoeffer here provides us with both an alert and a vital reminder. He alerts us to the persistent reality that not only does the church exist as mission in a broken world marred by sin, but that the church itself still shares in some measure in this brokenness, and will so share until the final eschatological consummation of the new humanity of the new creation.¹⁷² However, Bonhoeffer’s hopeful reminder is that Christ is faithful and will

¹⁶⁸ See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 1, trans. Reinhard Kraus and Nancy Lukens, ed. Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 121 and Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being: Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology in Systematic Theology*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 2, trans. H. Martin Rumscheidt, ed. Wayne Whitson Floyd Jr. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 110–16.

¹⁶⁹ See Jens Zimmermann, “Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Christological Humanism,” in *Being Human, Becoming Human*, 25–48, especially 34, and Zimmermann, *Incarnational Humanism: A Philosophy of Culture for the Church in the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 269–83, especially 275 where he discusses Bonhoeffer’s “being-there-for-others.”

¹⁷⁰ See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 5, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelley (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 36 where he states: “Every human idealized image that is brought into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be broken up so that genuine community can survive. *Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community* even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest, and sacrificial.” Emphasis mine.

¹⁷¹ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 121. See also Gregor, *A Philosophical Anthropology of the Cross*, 60ff on the way Bonhoeffer interprets “being in Adam” as the heart curved in on itself.

¹⁷² On Bonhoeffer’s ability to facilitate the honest recognition of the church as a community of brokenness, see Michael Mawson, “The Spirit and the Community: Pneumatology and Ecclesiology in Jenson, Hütter, and Bonhoeffer,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15.4 (October 2013), 453–68.

indeed complete his work. Ecclesial existence is not ultimately dependent on what Grenz referred to as a mere human shared experience or even narrative.¹⁷³ While still bearing the scars of sin as a broken community in a broken world, ecclesial existence is solely constituted and maintained through participation in Christ, and thus Grenz's notion of theotic (storied and communal) triune participation. Christ works even now to heal the brokenness, estrangement, and alienation between ecclesial "male and female" others precisely by constituting them in mutual cruciform dependence on each other in ecclesial friendship.¹⁷⁴ Herein Christ exists and makes his presence known within ordinary life in the form of his ecclesial body as the prolepsis of the new humanity of the new creation.¹⁷⁵ It is here that ecclesial female and male others call and summon each other "in Christ" through the Spirit to ethical and ecclesial responsibility to each other as their concrete witness in the world and response to the triune divine summons. And it is this reality of ecclesial relation comprised of the concrete form and reciprocity of ecclesial friendship which is itself the mission by which the triune God is made known through ecclesial existence in a broken world.¹⁷⁶

This manner of intertwining the realities of ecclesial relation and ecclesial friendship brought about "in Christ" and through the Spirit gesture us forward still to the concrete expression of ecclesial hospitality. Reflecting on the implications of the ethical responsibility to the other in Bonhoeffer, John McDowell finds the potential for Christian "counter-praxis" in the world within the "responsible life given in theologically ordered identity-determinative practices of embodied hospitality to the stranger in the Abrahamic traditions that 'refutes the fictitious notion that the isolated individual is the agent of all

¹⁷³ Grenz, "Ecclesiology," 268.

¹⁷⁴ For the suggestion that Bonhoeffer's Christology is agile enough to sustain the ethical posture of "being for others" even within the brokenness of a community of sinners (though in Christ), see David S. Robinson, "Peccatorum Communio: Intercession in Bonhoeffer's Use of Hegel," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 28.1 (2015), 86–100. See also the comparison of the *sanctorum communio* and *peccatorum communio* in Kirsten Busch Nielsen, "Community Turned Inside Out: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Concept of the Church and of Humanity Reconsidered," in *Being Human, Becoming Human*, 91–101.

¹⁷⁵ See M. J. Knight, "Christ Existing in Ordinary," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16.4 (October 2014), 414–35.

¹⁷⁶ See Gregor, *A Philosophical Anthropology of the Cross*, 78–9 for Bonhoeffer's idea that God's self-disclosure requires the church.

ethical behavior.”¹⁷⁷ The importance of hospitality as an expression of ecclesial existence is also emphasized by Luke Bretherton. The targets for Bretherton’s critique are thin notions of tolerance which he regards as insufficient for the Christian fulfillment of the ethical responsibility toward the other. Likewise, I would suggest that visions of mere tolerance fail to offer needed resources to foster ecclesial female and male persons in their mutual summons to faithful presence to each other and together within the world. Bretherton notes one reason for this is that contemporary (or what I suggest might be called most-modern) notions of tolerance fixate on individual autonomy such that it neuters its own ability to produce concrete social practices by which it may be identified. This is not the case, however, for a thickly conceived account of Christian hospitality.¹⁷⁸

Christine Pohl is a foremost scholar on the presence, practice, and impact of hospitality throughout the Christian tradition.¹⁷⁹ She details how hospitality functioned as something of a moral structure for ancient Christians.¹⁸⁰ It was by this moral structure of hospitality that they understood their place in the world and their duty in offering respite to the stranger and the power of hospitality to uphold the dignity and worth of persons created in the *imago Dei*. However, Pohl laments:

Offering welcome is basic to Christian identity and practice. For most of the church’s history, faithful believers located their acts of hospitality in a vibrant tradition in which needy strangers, Jesus, and angels were welcomed and through which people were transformed. But for many people today, understandings of

¹⁷⁷ John C. McDowell, “Hospitality’ at the End of Religion,” *The Bonhoeffer Legacy: Australian Journal of Bonhoeffer Studies* 1.1 (2013), 96. The quote within the quote comes from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 6, trans. Reinhard Kraus et al., ed. Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 258 and reflects a more recent translation versus the older translation McDowell included. See also Ford, “Holy Spirit and Christian Spirituality,” 279–80 and Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 30, 44, 127–8, 183, 235, 241–65 on the “hospitable self” and Bonhoeffer.

¹⁷⁸ See Luke Bretherton, “Tolerance, Education, and Hospitality: A Theological Proposal,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 17.1 (April 2004), 80–103 and Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 121–59.

¹⁷⁹ See her major study Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999). See also Christine D. Pohl, “Hospitality: Ancient Resources and Contemporary Challenges,” in *Ancient Faith for the Church’s Future*, eds. Mark Husbands and Jeffrey P. Greenman (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 143–55. See as well Amy Oden, “God’s Household of Grace: Hospitality in Early Christianity,” in *Ancient & Postmodern Christianity*, 38–48.

¹⁸⁰ See Pohl, *Making Room*, especially “Part I: Remembering Our Heritage” (3–58) and “Part II: Reconsidering the Tradition” (61–124). See also Christine D. Pohl, “Hospitality from the Edge: The Significance of Marginality in the Practice of Welcome,” *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 15 (1995), 121–36.

hospitality have been reduced to Martha Stewart's latest ideas for entertaining family and friends and to the services of the hotel and restaurant industry. As a result, even Christians miss the significance of hospitality and view it as a mildly pleasant activity if sufficient time is available.¹⁸¹

The scholarly work of Pohl is an effort to help Christians and churches reimagine themselves with the practice of hospitality at the center. In her recent book, *Living into Community*, she narrows in on four practices which are vital for ecclesial community (and the expression of what I have called ecclesial friendship above).¹⁸² They are the practices of gratitude, making and keeping promises, living in truthfulness (and thus confession), and hospitality. The last of these practices, hospitality, she regards as not only a distinct way of life in the church and Christian home, but as the practice that draws in the other practices and holds them together.¹⁸³

A central ecclesial practice that forms the church as a community of hospitality, for Pohl, is the Eucharist. All ecclesial communities that gather around the Lord's table are reminded that they participate in the eschatological welcome of the triune God and the manifestation of the kingdom of God "in Christ" and through the Spirit, and are thus called to "remember the poor, the stranger, [and] the needy."¹⁸⁴ Within this dynamic, the reality of ecclesial friendship constituted "in Christ" as the triune divine love of the Spirit guides us to our eschatological home, is at the same time constituted as an ecclesial hospitality in both its inward and outward dimensions.¹⁸⁵ The eschatological Spirit that effects these "in Christ" realities proleptically in the present is at once "the welcoming Spirit," drawing persons into ecclesial existence, as well as "the Spirit of hospitality," sending the church

¹⁸¹ Christine D. Pohl, "Hospitality, a Practice and a Way of Life," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 3.1 (Spring 2002), 34.

¹⁸² Christine D. Pohl, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

¹⁸³ Pohl, *Living into Community*, 159–176 and Pohl, "Hospitality, a Practice and a Way of Life," 37–9. On hospitality as a community practice, see also Pohl, *Making Room*, "Part III: Recovering the Practice" (127–87) and Christine D. Pohl, "A Community's Practice of Hospitality: The Interdependence of Practices and of Communities," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 121–36.

¹⁸⁴ Pohl, "A Community's Practice of Hospitality," 136. See also Pohl, *Making Room*, 30, 74–5, 158, 183. See also Grenz on word and sacrament and ecclesial narrative identity in "Ecclesiology," 261–4. See also Zimmermann, *Incarnational Humanism*, 299–304 regarding Bonhoeffer's notion of "Christ existing as church-community" within word and sacrament.

¹⁸⁵ Grenz, "The Holy Spirit," 6–13.

out as a participant in the *missio Dei* in its hospitable (and hermeneutical) existence.¹⁸⁶ It is this church which, in the concrete expression of the ecclesial friendship of “male and female” and practice of hospitality, manifests the defining grammar of cruciform mutuality and mutual cruciformity in its theotic (storied and communal) participation in the triune God.¹⁸⁷

Female/Male Mutuality and Missional (Ecclesial) Participation

As we have seen throughout, Grenz is insistent that the task of imaging the triune God is an inherently communal task. Neither ecclesial female nor male persons can image God alone. Thus, commenting on the relation of women and men in the church, he states:

[The new gender] covenant looks for its goal in our common task as purposed by God. In pursuit of godly relationships, women and men should direct their life together toward the common calling to reflect the divine character and thereby the image of God. Rather than being the *imago Dei* in isolation from each other, however, it is in our relationality that we image God. God’s character comes into view as through the Holy Spirit we love one another, whether as partners who share the exclusive love relationship of marriage or as participants in the more inclusive nonmarital bonds that bring persons – both male and female – together, especially within the context of Christ’s [ecclesial] fellowship.¹⁸⁸

Grenz goes on to connect the dynamic of mutual and non-hierarchical female and male ecclesial relation to the expression of friendship.¹⁸⁹ As with the whole of Grenz’s theology of “male and female,” this is grounded within the trinitarian dynamic of union with Christ and the work of the Spirit. It is for this reason, in addition to the emphasis in the quote above on reflecting the divine character of the triune God, this expression of the ultimate

¹⁸⁶ On the Holy Spirit as “the welcoming Spirit” with emphasis on the *missio Dei*, see Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 129–60. On the Holy Spirit as “the spirit of hospitality,” see Amos Yong, *The Missiological Spirit: Christian Mission in the Third Millennium Global Context* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 77–95. On hospitality as an eschatological reality, see Douglas H. Knight, *The Eschatological Economy: Time and the Hospitality of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006) and Hans Boersma, “Irenaeus, Derrida, and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence,” *Modern Theology* 19.2 (April 2003), 163–80. See also Hans Boersma, “Redemptive Hospitality in Irenaeus: A Model for Ecumenicity in a Violent World,” *Pro Ecclesia* 11.2 (Spring 2002), 207–26.

¹⁸⁷ For a trinitarian interpretation of hospitality, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Divine Hospitality and Communion: A Trinitarian Theology of Equality, Justice, and Human Flourishing,” in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center*, 135–53.

¹⁸⁸ Grenz, “Post-feminism and the New Gender Covenant,” 54–5.

¹⁸⁹ Grenz, “Post-feminism and the New Gender Covenant,” 54–6.

outworking of Grenz's ethical vision of ecclesial relation in ecclesial friendship flows from nothing less than theotic (storied and communal) participation in the triune God. Herein the ecclesial community of "male and female" is found to be in mutual and cruciform dependence on each other and established "in Christ" and through the Spirit as the ecclesial *imago*.¹⁹⁰ The resulting ecclesial friendship thereby comes to be marked by not only mutuality and cruciformity, but a mutual cruciformity and a cruciform mutuality.

Our account of ecclesial friendship was deepened by means of a detour through Bonhoeffer and the manner in which he places female and male within an ethical relation of "being-with" and "being-for" the other that prefigures and points forward to the ecclesial relation of "Christ existing as church-community." Stanley Hauerwas offers the observation that for Bonhoeffer, even within his world of terror, the church not only exists but makes the reality of friendship possible.¹⁹¹ In the relation brought about "in Christ" and through the Spirit, ecclesial friendship comprises the concrete expression of ecclesial relation. This move, however, points us further still to the ecclesial practice of hospitality. Our detour into the work of Christine Pohl reminds us here of the centrality of hospitality as that practice which draws in the other ecclesial practices of community life and holds them together, while Grenz's emphasis on theotic (storied and communal) triune participation reminds us that ecclesial hospitality is ultimately grounded in the triune Divine Community. In a reflection on Grenz's trinitarian theology, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen exclaims: "Name it Gift or Love or – as often done nowadays – Hospitality, it all speaks of the infinite fountain of goodness. God the Giver is also the divine Gift."¹⁹²

Thus the ecclesial existence formed by theotic participation in triune hospitality, which is again "in Christ" and through the Spirit, is constituted as a community of not only friendship, mutuality, and cruciformity, but hospitality as well.¹⁹³ It is therefore within the

¹⁹⁰ *SGRS*, 335 and Grenz, "Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationship, 98–9.

¹⁹¹ Stanley Hauerwas, "Friendship and Freedom: Reflections on Bonhoeffer's 'The Friend,'" in *Working with Words*, 270–85.

¹⁹² Kärkkäinen, "Divine Hospitality and Communion," 150.

¹⁹³ Connected to the theme of *hospital-ity*, see the metaphor of the church as not simply a hospital in general terms, but as more specifically a "field hospital" on the move in William T. Cavanaugh, *Field Hospital: The Church's Engagement with a Wounded World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 3. See also

expressions of ecclesial friendship and hospitality that “male and female” as the vocational instantiation of the ecclesial *imago* according to the divine intent come to exhibit the faithful presence of ecclesial relation wrought by theotic (storied and communal) triune participation, both towards each other and outward together toward the world in ecclesial witness and ecclesial missional participation. It is in this sense that the church *is* mission and comes to comprise the faithful hermeneutical witness to the gospel. It is this storied ecclesial community within its common life together (which finds its eccentric narrative identity in the cruciform Jesus story) that is the proleptic sign of the kingdom and God’s way of being in the world as a sacrament of triune love and communion.¹⁹⁴ Such an ecclesial existence, marked by female/male cruciform mutuality and mutual cruciformity, and constituted by theotic (storied and communal) triune participation “in Christ” and through the Spirit, itself comprises the divinely summoned ecclesial coming-to-representation and hermeneutics of community of the triune God.

Reuschling, “Wholeness and Holiness: Christian Moral Formation,” 133, 135 for the connection of *theosis*, mutuality, and “hospitable generosity.”

¹⁹⁴ *SGRS*, 328–36 and *TCG*, 472–8. Grenz states, “In short, the indwelling Spirit leads and empowers the church to fulfill its divinely mandated calling to be a sacrament of trinitarian communion, a temporal, visible sign of the eternal, dynamic life of the triune God.” (*SGRS*, 336)

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY AND SURPLUS

Summary

I conclude by briefly noting some of the main features of this study. No attempt is made to construct an exhaustive overview or summary. Rather my aim in this conclusion is to emphasize select important threads toward the end of articulating the theological import and constructive contribution of this dissertation to Grenz studies and the field of ecclesiology. The proposals I have made in this study have been helped along by two prior Grenz studies from Jason Sexton and Jay Smith.¹ Nevertheless, in my study I have developed my own constructive lines of argument regarding Grenz beyond their respective projects. For instance, I have disagreed with Sexton's conclusions regarding Grenz in one vital respect. As discussed and defended, while Sexton regards Grenz as having moved "beyond" a social trinitarian approach in his *Rediscovering the Triune God* and *Named God* volumes, I regard this as mistaken. In my own discussion, I contend Grenz did not move beyond the social Trinity, but rather presents us with a revised and strengthened social trinitarianism.

In regards to Smith, his central thesis that Grenz never left behind the convertive piety of his Baptist heritage, but reinterpreted it as trinitarian participation is a crucial moment for what might be called "Grenz studies." With Smith as a catalyst, I have developed my own proposal and constructive argument in terms of theotic triune participation, effected "in Christ" and through the Spirit, and the manner in which this dynamic constitutes ecclesial relation and existence. Thus I have sought to be more explicit, beyond that of any previous studies, about Grenz's development of a theology of *theosis* in his mature theology and how this extends into theotic triune (storied and communal) participation as constitutive of the ecclesial self, the ecclesial *imago*, and ecclesial relation. I suggest Grenz's trinitarian ecclesiological vision is one of his most important insights and vital gifts offered to his own Baptist and evangelical contexts. My

¹ Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz* and Smith, "A Generous Theology: Reinterpreting Convertive Piety as Trinitarian Participation in Stanley J. Grenz."

hope is that my work will be sufficient to make its own contribution to Grenz studies as the first full length study of Grenz's trinitarian ecclesiology.

The argument of this study has also been moved along by the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur. A material contribution can be detected in each chapter as the central sections (serving as pivot points) each present a distinct Ricoeurian theme: the relational self, the narrative self, and the summoned self.² However, the “detour and return”³ rhythm of Ricoeur's hermeneutics also factors heavily into the structure of the dissertation as a whole. Within each chapter are three moments: a main road, a detour, and a return moment. In chapter two the main road was a summary of Grenz's social trinitarian theology up through *Social God*. The detour was a discussion of prominent critiques of the social Trinity and the resources Grenz's theology held as a strong response in the form of a theotic trinitarian theo-anthropology and ecclesial relation “in Christ” and through the Spirit. The return was the consideration of Grenz's trinitarian social *imago* and ecclesial self in relation to the ecclesial existence of female and male as marked by the grammar of mutuality “in Christ” and through the Spirit. In chapter three the main road was a summary of the trinitarian theo-ontology of Grenz's *Named God*. The detour defended my dissent from the Sexton thesis (that Grenz moved beyond the social Trinity) and the manner in which Grenz offers a revisioned and strengthened social trinitarianism, before moving on to explicate the manner in which Grenz's theo-anthropology is at once a fully Christo-anthropology. Accordingly, the ecclesial community which derives its narrative identity from the “Jesus story”⁴ is marked by cruciform eccentricity. The return moment consisted of the treatment of the narrative *imago* in relation to the ecclesial existence of female and male as marked by the dual grammars of cruciformity and mutuality – or cruciform mutuality and mutual cruciformity.

The main road for chapter four begins with a summary of Grenz's 2003 “Ecclesiology” essay, which recapitulates his communitarian, narrative, and trinitarian

² I have drawn these themes from Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur, “Naming God,” and Ricoeur, “The Summoned Subject in the School of the Narratives of the Prophetic Vocation.”

³ See the subtitle to Blundell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy*.

⁴ *SGRS*, 315, 329–30, 332.

emphases and takes an initial step into extending his insights into a missional ecclesiology. The remainder of this main road is comprised of my own attempt to follow through on Grenz's instincts by suggesting my own constructive proposal of the church as mission insofar as the church is not only drawn into the divine triune life but also sent out into the world to gather others into the triune mission. To articulate my constructive extension of Grenz's ecclesiological insights, I proposed as well my own missional grammar for a hermeneutical ecclesiology. We will remember that two triads, what I have referred to as "Grenzian grammars," are at the heart of Grenz's theological method.⁵ There is the grammar of the trinitarian motifs wherein the Trinity forms the structural motif, community the integrative motif, and eschatology the orienting motif. And there is the grammar of the narrative sources in which Scripture comprises the "norming norm" and norming narrative, tradition the hermeneutical trajectory, and culture the embedding context. Extending Grenz's intuitions, I proposed my own missional grammar of church, gospel/atonement, and kingdom. The resulting hermeneutical ecclesiology in my proposal suggests that insofar as the church is mission, the ecclesial relation brought about "in Christ" and through the Spirit, and which comprises the church as a cruciform storied community, sacrament of triune love, and proleptic sign of the kingdom, constitutes ecclesial existence as the triune God's hermeneutic and manner of being in the world.⁶

At this point we pause briefly to observe that not only do the individual chapters evince Ricoeur's "detour and return" rhythm, but the dissertation's overarching structure of Trinity, narrative, and mission does as well. In the ecclesial explication of this study, chapter two forms the trinitarian main road, chapter three comprises the Christological and narrative detour, and chapter four constitutes the missional return moment. Returning our attention to chapter four itself, the detour moment defended Grenz from potential charges of ecclesiological foundationalism and extended the aforementioned theo-anthropology and Christo-anthropology into a missio-anthropology in which the church is mission. The return moment presented a discussion of the ecclesial *imago* in

⁵ These are detailed by Grenz in *BF*.

⁶ The triad of storied community, sacrament, and sign is taken from *SGRS*, 328–36.

relation to the cruciform mutuality and mutual cruciformity of “male and female” as constituted “in Christ” and through the Spirit. Herein the ecclesial relation and existence of female and male is manifest in the concrete expressions of ecclesial friendship and hospitality, which are ours in proleptic anticipation by means of theotic triune (storied and communal) participation, as the eccentric hermeneutics of (ecclesial) community.

While I have sought to extend beyond Grenz in this study, I also hope to have demonstrated the theological task done in a Grenzian style. I regard the extension of Grenz’s trinitarian ecclesiology into my own proposal for a hermeneutical ecclesiology arising from a missional grammar to be a substantial constructive offering on its own. However, as the presence of the third sections in chapters two, three, and four as return moments testify, I also desired to be more specific about the full cruciform mutuality and mutual cruciformity of “male and female” in ecclesial relation, friendship, and hospitality. In fact, I found that a study of Grenz’s ecclesiological vision necessitated it. The subject of gender relations was contentious when Grenz was still alive and remains just as heated today.⁷ At the end of this study I am more firmly committed than ever to the sort of Grenzian trinitarian vision for female and male ecclesial relation that I have outlined. However, I should also note that I realize there are many who will remain uncomfortable with any proposal for a “trinitarian” theology of gender relations, whether those relations be constructed in hierarchical or non-hierarchical fashion.⁸ Though I explicitly disavow that a trinitarian theology of gender relations is essentially hierarchical, I realize those who wish to forgo any talk of Trinity in relation to female/male relation, stemming from their suspicion of any sort of social trinitarian proposal, will potentially be disappointed I continue to apparently do what they contend should not be done.

I hope, however, that my examination of Grenz’s trinitarian theology in conversation with the critics of social trinitarianism will have demonstrated that Grenz’s revised and strengthened social trinitarianism provides a positive response to such

⁷ For a recent account of the evangelical gender debate, see Zimbrick-Rogers, “A Question Mark Over My Head’: Experiences of Women ETS Members at the 2014 ETS Annual Meeting,” 4–13. See also Ware and Starke, eds., *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life* for a recent collection of essays that argue for a male-female hierarchy.

⁸ See for example Bird and Shillaker, “Subordination in the Trinity and Gender Roles,” 305–6.

suspensions and strong safeguards against projectionism. Grenz maintained an unwavering emphasis on divine transcendence and the ontological distinction between Creator and created which serves to safeguard the God-world relationship while not rending it asunder either. These features, in addition to the extension of his postfoundationalist theological method into a trinitarian theo-ontology, all work as bulwarks against projectionist accounts of gender in relation to the Trinity. Also important is that Grenz's overall theology resists drawing the kind of straight and quick lines between the rendering of gender relations and the Trinity that results in the univocal collapsing of the divine into the human economy.⁹ This is accomplished on the one hand by what Sexton has called the Grenz *Grundaxiom* – that triune relationality and communion retain ontological primacy even as the presence of the triune persons in the divine economy in the world is granted epistemological priority.¹⁰ On the other hand, we see also that Grenz's perichoretic notion of personhood and theology of *theosis* speaks of the depth of human contingency and dependence on triune grace, and indicate that sacramental mediation and participation are built into Grenz's *imago Dei* theology. Accordingly, in my explication of a Grenzian notion of the relation of "male and female," the grammar of triune communion is itself mediated through the theotic triune (storied and communal) participation that effects ecclesial relation and existence.

Furthermore, because Grenz's trinitarian theology is organically connected to his Christology and pneumatology, we have seen ecclesial relation itself is constituted "in Christ" and through the Spirit. In fact, this has been a reverberating refrain throughout the whole of this study. What this means is that Grenz's revisioned social trinitarian theology is at the same time an "in Christ' and through the Spirit" theology. Thus I contend a Grenzian account of gender relations is not simply concerned with a trinitarian account that attempts to draw straight lines between the Trinity and "male and female" in order to construct a theology of community in general terms. Rather, a Grenzian trinitarian approach always flows, by means of theotic triune (storied and communal) participation,

⁹ See Grenz, "Is God Sexual?," Grenz, "Theological Approaches for Male-Female Relationships," and *SGRS*, 269–303.

¹⁰ *RTG*, 222.

through the reality comprised “in Christ’ and through the Spirit” – the very trinitarian dynamic which constitutes the ecclesial *imago* of “male and female” in ecclesial relation. Rather than building a general theory of community which is then foisted back onto the Trinity, Grenz’s notion of female and male mutuality flows entirely in the other direction from its grounding in the transcendent triune divine life, and then subsequently as it becomes situated and implicated from within his trinitarian ecclesiology as it is constituted “in Christ” and through the Spirit through and through. Extending from this, my suggestion is that the cruciform mutuality and mutual cruciformity endemic to the ecclesial relation and existence of “male and female,” wrought “in Christ” and through the Spirit, and manifest in ecclesial friendship and hospitality is itself mission, as the storied community of Christ comprises a sacrament of triune love, the proleptic sign of the kingdom, and the ecclesial coming-to-representation and hermeneutics of community of the triune God.

Surplus

This investigation and constructive extension of Grenz’s trinitarian ecclesiology and theology of the mutuality of “male and female” as the ecclesial *imago* “in Christ” and through the Spirit has been fruitful and productive. However, the indebtedness of this study to Ricoeur reminds us that the symbol which gives rise to thought as well gives way to a surplus of meaning.¹¹ Such is the case with this study. Though we have come as far as we can go in this space, there remains much surplus which needs investigation. Here I briefly note just three such areas of surplus which could conceivably extend out of this project and emerge in productive fashion from further engagement with Grenzian and Ricoeurian themes.¹² The first concerns the intersection of Grenz’s postfoundationalist epistemology, which decenters modernist notions of certitude, and what has been called

¹¹ The idea that the symbol gives rise to thought comes from Paul Ricoeur, “The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought,” in *Philosophical Anthropology*, 107–23 and Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 347–57. On the surplus of meaning, see Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

¹² See chapter four, footnotes 10, 119, and 164 for other instances of surplus for further study.

Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of testimony" and theory of attestation.¹³ In a similar way to which I have proposed the church is mission, I suggest a productive account of the church as apologetic could be gleaned from such a study.¹⁴ As the ecclesial community "shines as the *imago Dei*,"¹⁵ its very ecclesial existence comes to comprise an apologetic of beauty even within the brokenness of its common life together. Ecclesial community is itself an attestation and testimony to the triune God.

The second area of surplus I suggest could engage Grenz and Ricoeur along with the "Cultural Liturgies" project of James K. A. Smith.¹⁶ Because Grenz's theology of triune participation still never leaves convertive piety behind, Grenz carries with him a concern about the shape of the heart all throughout his corpus. Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity and hermeneutics of subjectivity comprise a substantial trove of philosophical resources through which to examine the formation of the heart. Smith's project, also focused on heart formation, offers a productive account of human desiring and imagining oriented towards the kingdom. Because Smith's project is a study of cultural liturgies and their role in spiritual formation, he offers a way to focus further Grenz's study of culture. In turn, Grenz along with Ricoeur offer their own resources to focus the narrative dimensions of heart formation and, along with Smith, resources to take culture seriously without being overdetermined by it. As well, Grenz offers perhaps a thicker account of the Spirit speaking in culture and the distinctly ecclesial shape of the desire and imagination oriented towards the kingdom. Such a project has the promise of being mutually informing all the way around.

The third area of surplus I propose, though, goes beyond a formal study in the form of a dissertation or book. Theological prognostications are surely marked by their own inherent amount of surplus. To the writing of theological tomes, it seems there will be

¹³ See Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur*, 188–228 and Stiver, *Ricoeur and Theology*, 126–34.

¹⁴ See Dennis P. Hollinger, "The Church as Apologetic: A Sociology of Knowledge Perspective," in *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*, eds. Timothy R. Philips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995), 182–229; Myron B. Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013); and Grenz, "Does Evidence Still Demand a Verdict? The Church's Apologetic Task and the Postmodern Turn" for additional generative resources.

¹⁵ *SGRS*, 335.

¹⁶ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* and Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*.

no end. This is perhaps fitting given the utterly transcendent nature of the triune God who has nevertheless come near to us “in Christ” and through the Spirit. Yet for all their important service and surplus, theological tomes can never take the place of an embodied ecclesial community. To restate the important words of Lesslie Newbigin, “the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.”¹⁷ It is the church, drawn into theotic participation in the triune life and sent out to gather others in, which *is* mission. It is the ecclesial *imago* which forms our summons “in Christ” and through the Spirit as the cruciform storied community, sacrament of triune love, and sign and foretaste of the kingdom. It is the fellowship of Christ’s body, constituted “in Christ” and through the Spirit in ecclesial relation by means of theotic triune (storied and communal) participation, and manifest in the blessed alliance of ecclesial “male and female” cruciform mutuality, mutual cruciformity, friendship, and hospitality, that comprises the vocational instantiation of the ecclesial *imago* in the coming-to-representation of God’s manner of being and hermeneutics of community in the world.¹⁸

¹⁷ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 227.

¹⁸ Grenz, “Ecclesiology,” 267–8; *SGRS*, 336; and *NGQB*, 361–73.

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