

Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living

Pages: 322

Publisher: Baker Academic; 3 edition (January 13, 2015)

Format: pdf, epub

Language: English

[DOWNLOAD FULL EBOOK PDF]

© 1996, 1998, 2014 by Stanley J. Grenz and Jay T. Smith

Published by Baker Academic

a division of Baker Publishing Group

P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287

www.bakeracademic.com

Ebook edition created 2015

Ebook corrections 10.10.2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

ISBN 978-1-4412-2056-1

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations labeled NASB are from the New American Standard Bible®, copyright

© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations labeled NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

To Roger E. Olson

Scholar, Educator, Friend

In Memory of Stanley J. Grenz
Contents

Cover [i](#)

Title Page [iii](#)

Copyright Page [iv](#)

Dedication [v](#)

Foreword John R. Franke [ix](#)

Preface to the Third Edition [xiii](#)

Preface to the Second Edition [xv](#)

Introduction: Christian Belief and Christian Living [xvii](#)

1. Knowing the God of the Bible in the Contemporary World [1](#)

2. The God Whom We Know [15](#)

3. Our Identity as God's Creatures [39](#)

4. Our Human Failure [59](#)

5. Jesus Christ: "God with Us" [77](#)

6. Jesus's Mission in the Divine Program [99](#)

7. The Holy Spirit: The Author of Life [119](#)

8. The Holy Spirit and Our Salvation [141](#)

9. The Pioneer Community [169](#)

10. Participating in the Pioneer Community [191](#)

11. The Climax of Our Story [213](#)

12. God's Community: Our Eternal Home [235](#)

Epilogue: Making the Connection [257](#)

Postscript Jay T. Smith [261](#)

Resources for Further Study [265](#)

Glossary [269](#)

Subject Index [273](#)

Scripture Index [281](#)

Notes [288](#)

Back Cover [293](#)
Foreword

The writings of Stanley Grenz remain one of the treasures of evangelical theology. He pioneered evangelical engagement with postmodern thought and culture, remaining faithful to the historic traditions of the church without being enslaved by them. His concern to bear witness to the truth of the gospel in a way that was comprehensible to contemporary people led him to be creative and innovative in connecting Christian faith to the day-to-day complexities of life and the shifting cultural landscape. In order to do this most faithfully, he believed it was important to do the sort of rigorous scholarly research and analysis characteristic of academic inquiry as a means of demonstrating the coherence of the Christian vision. He also believed it was important to make the results of this work available in a form that could be grasped and appreciated by those in the church, many of whom were keenly interested in the contents, conversations, and controversies of their faith but who often had little interest in the intricacies and nuances of technical scholarship.

In keeping with this conviction, Stan wrote for both the academy and the church. On the academic side, the two published volumes of his projected six-volume *The Matrix of Christian Theology* series make a significant contribution to the field of systematic theology and set an agenda for one of the most ambitious undertakings of trinitarian theology in recent years.¹ On the more generally accessible side, his book *What Christians Really Believe & Why* led one reviewer to consider whether Stan was the next C. S. Lewis.² The present work, *Created for Community*, brings together Stan's commitment to doing serious thinking about the meaning of Christian faith in our time with his conviction that theology is not simply an intellectual enterprise for a few highly trained scholars. Rather, it is intended to be a transformative discipline that is ultimately in service to the life, witness, and mission of the church. Three aspects of this volume are particularly noteworthy in this regard.

First, one of the central concerns of the book is that the goal of theology is not simply intellectual reflection or right thinking but also the activity of bearing witness to the good news of God's presence in the world through a distinctive way of life. This theme is clearly set forth in the subtitle, *Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*. From this perspective the way we live becomes a central element in the task of theology, for it is when our beliefs actually make a difference in our lives that we are most fully engaged with the transformative significance of thinking carefully and critically about Christian faith. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of theology is not simply to establish proper belief but rather to assist the Christian community in its calling to live as the people of God in the particular social-historical context in which they are situated. For Stan, one of

the most basic characteristics of good theology is that it facilitates and leads to authentic participation in the mission of God by enabling faithful performance of the gospel by the Christian community.

Second, the emphasis on community as an integral part of God's design for creation is an important corrective to the individualism that permeates both our society and the church. This was a central component in all Stan's thought and functions as an important integrative motif in his theology. The intention of God is to establish community that transcends every human division, people from every nation and ethnicity, every socioeconomic status, consisting of both male and female who find their identity in Christ (Gal. 3:28). While the fullness of this community will be realized only at the completion of God's creative intentions, it is the vocational calling of human beings created in the image of God to anticipate this community in a partial yet genuine fashion. The biblical characterization of the church as the image of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit points to its significance as a focal point of the representation of God in the world. In light of this, Stan articulates a theology that does not lose sight of the individual but asserts that individuals are created for the purpose of participating in community.

Third, the book takes seriously the significance of culture in the work of theology. Because Christian communities are always situated in particular social and historical settings, it is important to remember that all expressions of Christian faith are shaped by the cultural context in which they are embedded. One of the implications of this is that theology is an ongoing discipline and not something that can be done once and for all. Rather it draws on the language, symbols, and thought forms of a particular time and place in order to communicate the gospel and the biblical story in ways that will be intelligible to contemporary people. In light of this state of affairs, we must be careful not to absolutize any particular cultural model lest it impair our ability to discern the teachings and implications of Scripture. We must also remember that because culture is diverse and ever changing, particularly in the technological and fragmented age in which we live, we need to be alert to shifting developments and trends in order to communicate the Christian message as clearly and effectively as possible. In light of Stan's convictions on the importance of the contemporary setting in the articulation of theology, *Created for Community* is full of cultural connections and allusions. However, since the volume was first published in 1996, much has changed and many of the cultural references are dated. In order to do justice to Stan's approach to theology, this new edition has been capably updated by Dr. Jay Smith, who served as Stan's research assistant for many years.

May this revised edition of *Created for Community* introduce a new generation of readers to Stan's work and help to spark and continue the ongoing reformation of evangelical theology for which he worked, hoped, and prayed.

John R. Franke, DPhil

Executive Director and Professor of Missional Theology, Yellowstone Theological Institute

Professor of Religious Studies and Missiology, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven

General Coordinator, The Gospel and Our Culture Network, North America
Preface to the Third Edition

In 2015, the theological vision of Stanley Grenz continues to be meaningful and challenging for both the inquisitive seeker and the post-conservative evangelical. Roughly ten years after his untimely passing at the age of fifty-five, Grenz's work has spawned numerous doctoral dissertations and theses from inspired young theologians seeking to embody the erudition and ethos that was Stanley Grenz. I am one of those students. I met Stan Grenz in the summer of 1998

and moved to Vancouver to study with him at Regent College, where I was his teaching and research assistant from 1999 to his untimely death in 2005. His understanding of convertive piety as trinitarian participation shaped my own doctoral work. In both my life and work, I am indebted to Stan's love of God, of the church, and of the theological task.

This revised edition of *Created for Community* contains a new foreword by Dr. John R. Franke. Dr. Franke was Grenz's coauthor for *Beyond Foundationalism*, the provocative construal of evangelical theological method in a postmodern context. Additionally, Franke has taken Grenz's method and ethos to the next level with his construal of missional theology. For many, myself and John Franke included, Grenz's work not only stimulates and invigorates our own theological projects but also serves to enrich our daily spiritual lives. This is one of the enduring qualities of his work—it is both theologically engaging and spiritually encouraging. Not many theologians can make that claim. The parsing of theology into a variety of subdivisions, such as systematic, practical, historical, and spiritual, has had the effect of segregating the intellectual from the spiritual. Not so in Grenz's work. By his own estimation, Grenz was “a pietist with a PhD,” and all of his readers will benefit from that understanding.

The body of *Created for Community* basically remains as Stan wrote it, with a few notable changes, including footnotes with references to his other works and updated cultural references. The discussion questions have been updated and expanded as well. This edition also contains a bibliography of Grenz's works and a postscript. The goal of this edition is to provide more resources and access to Grenz's work for both serious laypersons and undergraduate theology students. Many thanks go to Bob Hosack and Christina Jasko at Baker Academic for their commitment to this project. Bob, a longtime friend of Stan Grenz, is committed to Stan's vision of a “generous theology,” and Christina is a patient and insightful editor. Without both of them, this project would still be a dream.

Both John Franke and I dedicate this new revision to Stan Grenz and the generations of students yet to be touched by his life and theological vision.

Preface to the Second Edition

Peppermint Patty was describing to Charlie Brown the exam she took in school that day. One question on the test read, “How many angels can stand on the head of a pin?” Peppermint Patty queried her friend as to how a person could answer such a question. True to form, Charlie Brown offered an astute, carefully crafted explanation. He informed Patty that her teacher had posed an old theological problem, for which there is no answer. Oblivious to her friend's display of theological acumen, Peppermint Patty expressed her dismay. She had answered, “Eight, if they're skinny, and four if they're fat!”

Many people cringe at the thought of reading a theology book. They are convinced that theologians are stuffy academic types who hang out in ivory towers where they discuss obscure, unknowable, and irrelevant questions like the one posed to Peppermint Patty. Unfortunately, many theologians provide ample support for this stereotype. They are sometimes content to argue with each other about issues that are of no concern to most people, even to most Christians. And they often give the impression that their discussions have no bearing on life in the real world. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. Theology is by its very nature connected to life. Each of us, regardless of religious affiliation (or lack of it), has a core set of beliefs (a worldview) about God and the world (or ultimate reality). And these beliefs form the foundation for how we live.

This book is about theology, and more specifically, Christian theology. It sets forth my understanding of the core beliefs we share as believers. My goal is to make theology accessible to people who are reticent to read a theology text. More specifically, I want to survey the Christian

theological landscape with you, so that you might sharpen your core set of beliefs—not for the sake of priming you to win theological arguments but to assist you to live as a Christian in the society in which God has placed you so that you can connect Christian belief with Christian living.

The theme around which this book revolves is given in the title, *Created for Community*. At the heart of the Christian message is the good news that the Triune God desires to bring us into fellowship with himself, with each other, and with all creation. I believe that this biblical vision of community—this core set of beliefs—can provide the foundation for truly Christian living, as we are drawn by the Holy Spirit to live on the basis of this vision.

In a sense, this volume is the distillation of my lengthier book, *Theology for the Community of God*, published in 1994 by Broadman & Holman. In that volume I take the reader through the process by which I arrive at the theological conclusions presented in more summary fashion here. You might view *Created for Community* as an extended sermon, similar to what a pastor might say in twenty-five minutes. *Theology for the Community of God*, in contrast, represents the diligent work that would occupy the pastor throughout the week of preparation for that Sunday sermon.

Roger Olson represents those theologian-pastors who have devoted their lives to assisting Christians—especially younger Christians—in discovering and clarifying the core beliefs we share. In addition, over the years he has become a close and cherished friend. In gratitude for his partnership in the theological enterprise, for his personal scholarship, but above all for his friendship, I dedicate this book to him.

Introduction

Christian Belief and Christian Living

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

“Don’t let that theology professor destroy your faith!”

I had worked at the Northwest Church for three years as youth director during my seminary days. Now I was preparing to leave for graduate studies in Germany. A dear saint in the congregation was concerned that further academic training would undermine the firmness of my Christian convictions and deaden my zeal for serving the Lord. His concern led him to caution me with this well-meaning warning about what he feared might be the result of my desire to pursue further theological education.

Rather than unfounded and misguided, my church friend’s caution reflects many tragic experiences. Theological studies are sometimes the enemy of faith. Yet his warning strikes at the wrong target. The problem is not theology itself but the incorrect conclusions some practitioners of the discipline draw from their studies.

Contrary to what certain Christians suggest, there are no simple believers who can remain untainted by theological reflection. Whether consciously or unconsciously, each of us has a set of convictions about ultimate reality. We believe something about God, ourselves, and the purpose of life. And these foundational beliefs surface in what we say and how we live. Every person is in this sense a theologian.

Although all persons have beliefs, many people give little thought to how they form their

fundamental convictions. And they rarely reflect on how these convictions are affecting the way they live. Christians, in contrast, take convictions seriously. We know that all beliefs are not equal; some are better than others. And certain convictions are true, whereas others are false.

The Bible confirms the importance of convictions. It emphasizes the role of the mind in discipleship. Jesus, for example, reiterated the Old Testament command to love God with all our being, including our minds (Matt. 22:37). Similarly Paul admonished his readers to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). The attempt to give serious place to this dimension of discipleship—to ask, “What do I believe?”—brings us into the realm of theology.

What Is Theology?

Our English word “theology” arises from two Greek terms, *theos* (“God”) and *logos* (“word,” “teaching,” “study”).¹ Hence, “theology” means “the teaching concerning God” or “the study of God.” The authors of Scripture constantly engage in this activity. All of their writings speak about God and his dealings with creation.

“Theology” can also carry an expanded meaning. In academic circles, it is a generic term referring to the various aspects of the study of the Bible and the church. Scholars often organize these studies into three major divisions:² Biblical theology is the study of the doctrine espoused by the individual books or authors of Scripture. Historical theology describes the development of doctrine in the church, whereas systematic theology delineates an understanding of the faith in the contemporary situation. And practical theology applies doctrine to contemporary church life.

Today, however, Christians often use “theology” in a more specific sense. The word denotes the set of beliefs about God and the world that are uniquely ours. Thus, we may offer this definition:

Theology is the systematic reflection on, and articulation of, the fundamental beliefs we share as followers of Jesus Christ.

Theologians generally organize our foundational beliefs into several major categories. This organization of theology by category is often referred to as systematic theology in that theologians organize these categories or topics in systemic relationships. Following their lead, we will arrange the twelve chapters of this book according to a sixfold division of theology:

God	theology proper	
humankind and the created universe	anthropology	
Jesus and the salvation he brought	Christology	
the Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s work in us and in the world	pneumatology	
the church as the fellowship of Christ’s disciples	ecclesiology	
the consummation or completion of God’s program for creation	eschatology	

Why Theology?

Theology arises out of an attempt to describe what we believe as Christians and to connect our beliefs with Christian living. But why is this important? Why be concerned to know what we believe?

Since the first century, the church has continually affirmed the importance of theology to its mission. Theology assists the church in at least three ways.³ First, theological reflection helps us sift through the many belief systems that vie for attention. With the help of theology, we are better able to affirm correct doctrine.

As in every era, we are bombarded with the teachings of people who claim to offer a fuller understanding of Christianity. Contemporary claimants carry a variety of labels. These range from the more familiar (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses) to the more esoteric (e.g., Scientology).

In addition, we find ourselves bombarded with an unprecedented number of competing religious systems and views of the world. These include not only the older world religions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism) but also a host of newer proposals. Beginning in the early twentieth century and extending to our contemporary context, many new religious and metaphysical movements⁴ have challenged the faith of Christians. Each of them appeals to a purported fuller revelation from God and promises a fuller life to its adherents.

In the midst of this situation, the study of Christian belief can help us differentiate true belief (orthodoxy) from false teachings (heresy). Thereby, theology grounds us in the truth so that we are not "blown here and there by every wind of teaching" (Eph. 4:14). Second, theology serves the crucial task of instructing believers in Christian doctrine.

New converts are especially dependent on sound teaching. They may have only a minimal understanding of Christianity. Or their previous conception of the faith may have been ill-informed. For them to become stalwart believers requires that they be instructed in the fundamental beliefs that lie at the heart of the Christian faith. In instructing new believers we are following Jesus's example. Indeed, our Lord commands us not only to evangelize the world but also to "make disciples of all nations." And this task includes "teaching them" (Matt. 28:19–20).

God desires that we all become mature, stable disciples of our Lord (Eph. 4:11–14). Therefore, we never outgrow the need for instruction. Theological study can deepen our understanding of the distinctively Christian teaching about God and the world. Third, theology brings together in summary form what the Bible teaches about God and his purposes.

As Christ's disciples we naturally desire to be biblical Christians. We want our conception of God and our understanding about what God has done for us to reflect that of the prophets and apostles. Theological reflection assists us in this task.

The desire to summarize our faith is not unique to contemporary Christians. Even the biblical peoples capsulized their beliefs. At the heart of the faith of the Hebrews was their belief in the God who had called their forefather Abraham and had rescued their ancestors from Egypt (Deut. 26:5–9). This God was the sole God and the only one worthy of love (Deut. 6:4–5). In a similar manner, the New Testament church summarized what they had come to believe about Christ and the salvation he brought (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:3–8; Phil. 2:6–11; 1 Tim. 3:16).

Theology, then, helps us to differentiate true belief from false teaching, gain a firm grounding in the Christian faith, and understand what the Bible teaches about God and the world.

Because it aids us in this manner, the study of theology is vital to every Christian. Rather than undermining the firmness of our convictions, such study should enhance our faith.

Our study of Christian belief ought to enhance our faith.

Of course, theology exercises a critical function. It leads us to jettison certain beliefs that we thought were true but that in fact do not square with sound teaching. But even this critical aspect serves to strengthen faith, not destroy it. The study of theology should cause us to become more steadfast in faith and more sure of what we believe.

Theology and Christian Living

Because of this connection to the what and why of our beliefs, Christians generally view theology as a purely intellectual discipline. This perception is, of course, partially correct. Theology can be heady stuff. And theologians often appear to split hairs about seemingly inconsequential matters. But the study of theology includes more than an academic debate about intellectual questions.

While it is an intellectual activity, theology is immensely practical. In fact, theology is among the most practical endeavors of the Christian life! First, theology is practical because of its link to our encounter with God in Christ—to that marvelous transaction we call “conversion.”

The Bible narrates God’s saving activity on behalf of sinful humankind. For us to receive God’s salvation, however, we must not only hear the gospel story but also be told the meaning of God’s saving acts. Specifically, we must hear not only that Christ died and rose again but also why he sacrificed his life and how in him God acted for us.

Theology seeks to understand the significance of the gospel we proclaim. In so doing, it assists the church in declaring the good news in ways that people from varied backgrounds can understand so that they too may encounter God in Christ.

Once we have committed our lives to Christ, we naturally desire to know more about the God who has acted to save us. In this quest, theology also serves the people of God. Through theological reflection we wrestle with how we can best conceive of and speak about the God who is the Author and object of our faith. Hence, faith—conversion—naturally leads to theology. But theology’s purpose is not merely to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. It has another practical goal in view—to provide direction for Christian living.

Regardless of religious orientation, a person’s basic beliefs (or worldview) affect his or her way of life. And the way people live is the best indication of what they really believe about reality—in contrast to what they may profess to believe.

The Christian life flows out of a set of beliefs shaped by the Bible. Theology sets forth the uniquely Christian understanding of the world, at the heart of which is the story about Jesus of Nazareth. It explores Christ’s significance for all of life. In this way, theology provides the needed intellectual resources for facing the challenges of the historical and social context in which God calls us to live. Our theological orientation—our fundamental beliefs about who God is, who we are as God’s people, and what God is seeking to accomplish in the world—offers needed direction as we seek to live as Christ’s disciples.

Our study of Christian belief ought to enhance our lives as disciples.

The practical goal of theology stands as a warning against the persistent danger of intellectualism. We pursue theology with the goal of understanding our faith in a systematic manner, of course. But constructing a theological system cannot be our ultimate purpose. Instead, we engage in theological reflection so that our lives might be changed. We desire to become stronger and more effective disciples—to connect Christian belief with Christian living.

Sound theological reflection will make a difference in how we live. Doctrinal conviction provides the foundation for our attempts to determine the best way to live out our Christian commitment in the midst of the varied situations that confront us. And it motivates us to act continually in accordance with our commitment to Christ. Whenever our theological work stops short of this, we have failed to be obedient to our calling as thinking Christians. Indeed, our goal must always be to link Christian belief with Christian living.

Theology and Faith

What we have said so far suggests that theology is closely connected with faith. Yet we must never confuse the two.

We may characterize the difference by suggesting that biblical faith is immediate. Indeed, faith comprises our personal response to the God who encounters us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And this response involves all aspects of our personhood—specifically, our intellect, volition, and emotions. Faith includes our intellect. Faith means accepting as true certain specific assertions about reality. For example, we believe that God is our Creator, that humans are fallen, and that Christ died for us. As we acknowledge these truths, we come to view the world in a specific way. Faith includes our will. Faith means willingly committing our entire life to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. By faith we cast ourselves on Christ alone to save us. And faith includes our emotions. Faith is our heartfelt response of love to the One who saves us. This love for God, in turn, translates into love for others.

If faith touches on all three aspects, what about theology?

Immediately we must note that theology is closely related to faith, because it studies the response that God desires of us to the good news. But theology approaches faith from a unique vantage point. As Christian theologians, we seek to understand faith and to articulate the content of the Christian faith. In this endeavor, we raise certain specifically intellectual questions: What statements best express the nature of the God who is the Author and resting point of our faith? What is God “up to”—what are God’s intentions for creation? And how is God accomplishing these goals? Who are we as participants in God’s program?

But above all, our theological reflection focuses on the significance of Jesus of Nazareth for our understanding of God, creation, and history. By engaging in theology, we seek to assist the Christian community in understanding the importance of Jesus Christ to the divine program. And we seek to understand the significance of our commitment to Jesus for all human life.

In short, therefore, theology probes the intellectual dimension of Christian faith. Consequently, theology is called forth by faith. We engage in theology because we naturally want to articulate the intellectual content of our faith.

We must note as well, however, that theology is likewise subservient to faith. That is, it seeks to serve faith. We engage in theology so that we may better understand our faith. A deepened understanding of faith, in turn, is one means whereby our faith is strengthened.

Because theology is the servant of faith, we must be vigilant against another danger—substitution. People who study theology sometimes allow theologizing to become a substitute for genuine, personal faith. But we cannot fall into this trap. We dare never replace commitment to the Triune God with our doctrines about God. We dare never allow our enthusiasm for our ability to formulate statements about Christ to diminish our love for him. And we must resolutely avoid placing confidence in our abilities to develop a theological system. Our hope for salvation can rest only in the God in whose service we stand.

The danger of substitution is real. Yet when theology truly does its work, the result is the opposite. Our theological reflections will lead to a deeper love for Christ and a deepened trust in the one true God.

Our Resources as Theologians

Because theology's wider goal is practical—to connect Christian belief with Christian living—theological reflection ought to foster in us a truly godly spirituality and obedient discipleship. What resources or tools are available to us as we engage in this?⁵

Central to the theological task are three resources (which theologians often refer to as “sources” or “norms”):⁶ the biblical message, the theological heritage of the church, and the thought forms of our culture.

By properly using these tools—which includes valuing them in this order—we can construct a helpful theology for our day, a theology that is biblical, Christian, and contemporary. Our primary resource as we engage in the theological task is the divine message inscripturated in the Bible.

Faith is our response to the God who encounters us in the gospel. Therefore, our articulation of the Christian faith naturally looks to the good news that we find in the Bible. For this reason, our theology must arise from the story of God's saving activity. God has disclosed this saving activity in the history of Old Testament Israel, in Jesus Christ, and in the New Testament church.

Through the pages of Scripture, the Spirit speaks to us about what it means to be the community of those who confess faith in the God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. And the Bible guides us in our task of verbalizing and embodying our devotion to Christ in the context in which we live.

Some Christians strive to establish the authority of Scripture by elaborate proofs. While these attempts are sometimes helpful, we do not need to prove the Bible in order to begin the theological task. Instead, we may simply assume the Bible's authority.

As we will elaborate in chapter 7, the Bible is the Spirit-produced document through which the Spirit has always spoken to God's people. For this reason, it is the foundational document of the Christian church. Therefore, its message remains the central resource for Christian theology in every age. Of secondary importance to us in the theological task is the theological heritage of the church.

Throughout their history Christians have joined together to express their faith in the God revealed through Jesus. This has resulted in a rich deposit of theological reflection within the church. The creeds and confessions of the past offer guidance for us as we engage in the same task today.

Past theological statements are instructive in our attempt to set forth a statement of Christian doctrine that is relevant to our contemporary context. They remind us of previous attempts to fulfill the theological mandate. In so doing they alert us to some of the pitfalls to avoid. And they point us in directions that may hold promise for our attempts to engage in the theological calling in our own situation.

Certain past formulations—often called “creeds” or “confessions of faith”—carry special significance. These classic statements express what has been the doctrine of the church throughout the ages. Because we are the contemporary expression of the one church, we should take seriously those doctrinal formulations that have engendered broad acknowledgment among Christians of many generations.

Of course, creeds and confessions of faith are not binding in and of themselves.⁷ They must be tested by the Scriptures and by their applicability to our situation. Theology's tertiary resource lies in the thought forms of contemporary culture.

We are called to express the Christian faith within the context of the world in which we live. One

aspect of this calling is the task of articulating Christian doctrine in a manner that speaks to people today.

Engaging in this task requires that we understand our culture.⁸ We must become aware of the longings of people today. And we must be thoroughly acquainted with the ways people around us view their world and speak about life. Only then are we equipped to express Christian belief in a way that connects with life—in a way that can address the problems, felt needs, and valid aspirations of people today.

In exploring Christian belief, we use the tools of the Bible, Christian heritage, and contemporary culture.

We can discuss the resources for theology in isolation from each other. However, when we engage in the theological enterprise, we discover that they are inseparable. In seeking to express the faith of the people of God we must look simultaneously to the biblical message, the theological heritage of the church, and our contemporary cultural context. At the same time, we keep our focus on the Bible as our “norming norm,” as the one authoritative standard for Christian belief and Christian living.

Theology and the Concept of Community

The pages of this volume seek to build from these three resources. Our goal is to offer a systematic statement of the faith of the church in a manner that can speak to contemporary culture. To this end, we will order our theological reflections around the concept of community, understood as the goal of God’s program for creation. God is at work in our world, we declare. And God’s purpose in this activity is the establishment of community—a reconciled people who enjoy fellowship with him, with one another, and ultimately with all creation.

Why community? Because the focus on community encapsules the biblical message, it stands at the heart of the theological heritage of the church, and it speaks to the aspirations and the sensed needs of people in our world today.⁹ In short, as we realize that we are created for community, we are in a position to connect Christian belief with Christian living.

The following chapters describe the Christian faith by speaking about community. Our discussion opens with the central doctrine of the Christian faith—God (theology proper). In chapters 1 and 2 we explore the nature of the Triune God who is at work in establishing community in the highest sense.

Standing in relationship with the sovereign, community-building God are God’s moral creatures. The discussion of who we are—as those God has designed for community—forms the subject of chapters 3 and 4 (anthropology).

God’s goal for creation is community—a redeemed people dwelling in a renewed creation, enjoying the presence of the Triune God.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus the Christ (Christology). In this section we reflect on what it means to confess that the man Jesus is the eternal Son whose earthly vocation was to initiate community between God and sinful humans.

In chapters 7 and 8 (pneumatology) the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, comes into our purview. We explore the Spirit’s role in Scripture and in effecting personal salvation, which we will view as community with God and others.

Chapters 9 and 10 (ecclesiology) and 11 and 12 (eschatology) view the Spirit's corporate and consummative work. In these chapters, we explore the activity of the Holy Spirit as God at work establishing community in history and ultimately in eternity. The bringing about of the eternal community brings to completion the divine goal for creation.

A Closing Connection

Each of us is a theologian, just as God intended. Consequently, our question is not, Will we be theologians? but, Will we be good theologians? Will we develop a worldview that is biblically sound and theologically correct? And will we translate theology into life, thereby showing ourselves to be disciples of the one we acknowledge as Lord? The following pages are intended to sharpen our theological knowledge so that we may connect Christian belief with Christian living—that is, so that we may love God more completely and serve Christ more effectively.

Songwriter Mark Pendergrass got the order correct. In his poignant musical prayer, "The Greatest Thing," he articulates the earnest desires of his heart.¹⁰ The three verses of his prayer express the yearning first to know, then to love, and finally to serve God more. Indeed, as we come to know God more—which is the direct task of theology—our love for God ought to deepen. And a deeper love for God ought to flow into greater service. Only then have we truly connected Christian belief with Christian living.

Mastering the Material

Having Read This Chapter, You Should Know: The definition of "theology" and its major divisions. Three ways in which theology assists the church in its mission. Why theology is practical and spiritual, not merely intellectual. Theology's three main resources and their relative importance and authority. Theology's unifying focus.

For Connection and Application How would you define "theology"? Why is theology as you defined it important? Do you agree that we are all theologians? How are our real beliefs reflected in the way we live? Indeed, what do our beliefs mean outside of the way we live? Think of a specific situation in which you have consciously connected Christian belief with Christian living. What process did you go through to make the connection? Can you think of other areas of your life where God is calling you to translate your faith into good works (see James 2:14–17)? 4. If Christianity is true, then our beliefs as Christians can make a real difference in our lives. Our Christian belief should lead us to a greater commitment to Christ and a deeper love for God. How have your studies of Christian belief strengthened you spiritually? Who can you share this discovery with, in order to encourage them?

1

Knowing the God of the Bible in the Contemporary World

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:3

"We no longer need to prove the existence of God to the people living around my church." The pastor's remark grabbed my attention. "The people living in this 'yuppie' neighborhood in the heart of Toronto," he explained, "all assume the reality of the supernatural."

The pastor's observation is confirmed by opinion polls that consistently indicate that the vast majority of people in the United States and Canada claim to believe in God or to acknowledge

some divine reality. Yet this does not mean that these people enjoy a personal relationship with the living God. Indeed, many people in the early twenty-first century simply choose to ignore the existence of God. God may exist for this populace, but for a complex variety of reasons, people in Western culture are discounting the practice, and in some instances the possibility, of a living faith.

At the heart of our faith is the testimony that through Jesus Christ we have come to know the only true God. We declare that to know God means more than merely asserting that a vague, generic Supreme Being exists. We likewise cannot assume that all religious traditions automatically lead their devotees to the God of the Bible.

On the contrary, we assert that biblical faith entails a personal relationship with the God who encounters us in Jesus. Knowing this God, in turn, leads us to see all of life in a special way. Our faith commitment motivates us to live for the glory of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a faith shaped by the Trinity. It is this faith that provides the foundation for knowing how to live for God's glory. Theology assists in this process, for it facilitates us in our quest to know the God of the Bible.

God and the Contemporary World

But how can we continue to proclaim the ancient message about the God of Jesus our Lord in the contemporary context? Does our Christian confession still remain credible in today's world? And can we truly anticipate that people will listen when we declare that God has encountered us in Jesus Christ?

In responding to these questions, we must remind ourselves that our world is populated by people with many differing opinions about, and attitudes toward, religious matters. Therefore, our claim that the Christian faith is true may take several forms.

Is There a God? Our Response to Atheism

Certain people today deny the existence of any God whatsoever. "There is no God," they firmly assert. We may call this denial "atheism," a word that means literally "no God." Atheists argue that the universe is not the creation of a purposeful God. Rather, it is shaped by blind, random natural forces. Or they see in the presence of evil in the world conclusive proof that a benevolent God cannot exist.

An atheistic spirit has filtered into our general cultural ethos. Pressured by a scientific worldview that leaves no room for religion, many people have discarded the concept of God.¹ For them, God has become either the God-of-the-gaps for whom no gaps are left or a debilitating limitation on human freedom.

What can we say to people who do not acknowledge the reality of God?

Intellectual atheism is a relatively new development in the history of humankind. It did not gain a widespread following until long after the church expanded into the world dominated by Greek culture. In fact, it is in one sense a result of the rejection of the Christian gospel by intellectuals standing in the tradition of the Greeks.

Let's look at this historical development, for it provides a window on our world today.

The Greek philosophers loved to engage in intellectual argumentation. Above all, they debated whether or not we could devise philosophical proofs for theological beliefs, including the existence

of the one God, understood as the First Cause of the world.

Influenced by the Greeks, Christian philosophers devised arguments that they thought actually proved God's existence. These Christian thinkers intended to provide intellectual confirmation of faith in God. Apologists such as Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) thought that they were simply living out Augustine's famous dictum, "I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand."² Like other thinkers, Anselm was convinced that intellectual proofs for God's existence offered the "understanding"—the logical persuasion—that Christian faith naturally evokes. *

This revised edition of a classic college-level introduction to theology presents the core doctrines of the Christian faith, encouraging readers to connect belief with everyday life. Stanley Grenz, one of the leading evangelical scholars of his era, and Jay Smith, an expert on Grenz's theological legacy, construct a helpful theology that is biblical, historical, and contemporary. The third edition includes a foreword by John Franke, a new preface and afterword, resources for further study, and updated footnotes. The book's easy-to-use format includes end-of-chapter discussion questions and connects theological concepts with current cultural examples.

Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with - Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living faith, encouraging readers to connect belief with everyday life. Vol 7 No. 7 Books and Authors - Canadian Baptists of Western - 2015 Christianity Today Award of Merit (The Church/Pastoral Mention; 2014 Best Books About the Church from Byron Borger, Hearts and Minds Bookstore. "When . . . faith communities begin connecting together, in and for the when the local church is actually a part of the community, connected to the The 50 books every Salvationist should read - New Frontier - Created for community : connecting Christian belief with Christian living /. Saved in: Format: Book. Language: English. Published Subjects: Christian life. (PDF) Review of Stanley J. Grenz and Jay T. Smith, Created - Our faith is built around a strong belief in God as made known to us in Jesus Christ. We are building a welcoming, nurturing faith community that is guided by Jesus and God reveals Himself, creates faith, and authors Christian life through the the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions as found in the Book of Concord. ISBN 9780801021831 - Created for Community : Connecting - Book Reviews 489 The author may defy some readers' preconceptions Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living, 3rd ed. Nurturing Friendships in a Cellphone World: Friendship with - Whether you are engaging substantiating the ebook Created For Community: Connecting Christian Belief With Christian Living (Bridgepoint Books) in pdf What Every Church Website Needs - In the decades since I asked that

question, Christian theologians have engaged in a burst of in recent decades: Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with - Created For Community Connecting Christian Belief With Christian Living Short and Talented COGAT Test Prep: Gifted Test Prep Book for the COGAT Level 8;. Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with - Series 44 Study 1 GOING THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS. It is our vision to seek God's help in connecting the worldwide military community to Christ. A Life Worthy Of The Gospel (Philippians) Acts: A Model For Ministry; College Success;. Cru Bentley is a community of Christians looking to strengthen individual Stanley Grenz - - Antiqbook - Do you need the book of Create, Narrate, Punctuate: How to Fashion.. Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living [eBook Kindle] pdf, epub Cru Bible Study - Nov 29, 2019 Â· World Challenge seeks to help Christians Live a Better Life and of St. Features news and current events, list of churches, and information on faith. Life isn't meant to be lived alone â€“ God created community to help us carry life's.. connecting communities with resources, and creating sustainability within

Relevant Books

[\[DOWNLOAD \]](#) - View Book Redeemer of the Ripper epub online

[\[DOWNLOAD \]](#) - Download book Gender-Swapped Cheater Collection pdf, epub

[\[DOWNLOAD \]](#) - Pdf The Good Green Earth (Colors of Love Book 3)

[\[DOWNLOAD \]](#) - Download KASANE NO TAO #55

[\[DOWNLOAD \]](#) - Family Pledge: The Ultimate Guide To Raising Smart Kids in a Broken School System (Common Sense Parenting Book 2) pdf
