raises at the world-view level and finds that proof fails to overcome secular prejudice. This book goes a long way towards the persuasion he desires.

Back in the early 1980s Harvie Conn wrote, “The Third World church will find its greatest struggle in learning to be a teacher of the West. The Western church will find its agony in being taught to be a learner” (Eternal Word and Changing Worlds [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], p. 252). Both Escobar and Sanneh are making it easier for all of us.

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"Deciding whether postconservatism is a 'movement' or simply a 'mood' is rather unimportant for our purposes. What is important—and what is by and large no longer questioned—is that a significant shift is taking place in some segments of evangelicalism" (p. 1). In their book, Reclaming the Center, Erickson, Helseth, and Taylor set out to show (1) the influence of postconservatives (also called “reformists,” “the emerging church,” “younger evangelicals,” “postfundamentalists,” “postfoundationalists,” “postpropositionalists,” and “postevangelicals”) on evangelicalism generally and (2) the deleterious and corrosive effects of such a “movement” or “mood” on evangelical faith. We will offer a brief summary first, then move to their (and our) critique.

Central to the book's discussion in virtually every essay is the book by Stanley Grenz entitled Renewing the Center. Given its centrality, Reclaming begins (after an introduction) with D. A. Carson's review of Grenz. It is "centrally" Grenz's book, Renewing the Center, that motivates this book's title. The quality of Carson's review is such that, in reading it, one is adequately prepared for the substantive content of the rest of the book. Carson notes, for example, the metamorphosis that has taken place in postconservatism with respect to the notion of truth. Quoting Grenz:

The communitarian reminder that the goal of all social traditions is to construct a well-ordered society ... suggests that the truth question is better formulated: Which theologizing community articulates an interpretive framework that is able to provide the transcendent vision for the construction of the kind of world that the particular community itself is in fact seeking? Hence, rather than settling for the promotion of some vague concept of community, the communitarian insight leads to the question, Which religious vision carries within itself the foundation for the community-building role of a transcendent religious vision? Which vision provides the basis for community in the truest [sic] sense? (p. 41)

As becomes clear in the rest of the book, the question of truth and its content is (rightly) the issue that occupies virtually every essay, either explicitly or implicitly.

In his plea for a new paradigm, notes Carson, Grenz argues for new categories of discussion as well:

... the situation in which the church is increasingly ministering requires a "generous orthodoxy" characteristic of a renewed "center" that lies beyond the polarizations of the past, produced as
they were by modernist assumptions—a generous orthodoxy, that is, that takes seriously the postmodern problematic. Therefore, the way forward is for evangelicals to take the lead in renewing a theological “center” that can meet the challenges of the postmodern, and in some sense post-theological, situation in which the church now finds itself. (p. 42)

The renewing “center” to which Grenz calls his sympathetic readers is a theological center characterized not by its theology (for that would be to revert to a foundationalist epistemology), but by its “convettive piety.” It is a center focused on the community as the source and justification of its “truth.” The design of Reclaiming the Center is to persuade its readers that the renewing “center” of Grenz et al. is, in fact, at best marginalized, and that the possibility of maintaining evangelicalism lies in a reclamation of its philosophical, theological, and historical roots.

With the question of truth front and “center,” Douglas Groothuis’s essay “Truth Defined and Defended” argues for a return (for postconservatives) or a reaffirmation (for evangelicals) of a correspondence theory of truth. Groothuis deals only indirectly with the postconservative challenge. In setting forth the substance of a correspondence theory, he then contrasts that theory with other, (in his estimation) lesser views. He offers critiques of coherentist, postmodern, and pragmatic theories of truth. “Christians, of all people, must swear allegiance to the notion that truth is what corresponds to reality—and we must do so unwaveringly whatever the postmodern winds of doctrine may be blowing in our faces. Whenever postconservative evangelicals depart from the correspondence view of truth—which is both biblical and logical—and thus sink into the postmodernist swamps of subjectivism, pragmatism, or constructivism, they should be lovingly but firmly resisted” (p. 79).

J. P. Moreland and Garrett DeWeese argue for a “modest foundationalism.” In “The Premature Report of Foundationalism’s Demise,” the authors (rightly) note that the rumors of foundationalism’s death have been greatly exaggerated. In a fascinating and clear presentation, the authors argue for a “direct realist, [modest] foundationalist model” (p. 104). This model seeks to reject the overly zealous certainty of Cartesian foundationalism, while offering, nevertheless, an epistemology that assumes direct access to the world, as well as the adoption of long-standing metaphysical notions such as substance, property, exemplification, and so forth (p. 101).

Two essays take on the linguistic theories that have become, to a greater or lesser extent, inextricably tied to postconservative methodologies. R. Scott Smith’s “Language, Theological Knowledge, and the Postmodern Paradigm” offers the best critique of the postconservative “mood” in the entire book. He is able to do that because he moves from the more superficial “moods” of the postconservatism of Grenz and Franke to the philosophies and theories that provide for the postconservative mood in the first place. A. B. Caneday, in “Is Theological Truth Functional or Propositional? Postconservatism’s Use of Language Games and Speech-Act Theory,” argues that the communitarian model of theology proposed among postconservatives results, in the end, in “the loss of the gospel itself” (p. 151). (Caneday is quoting Vanhoozer’s criticism of Lindbeck’s postliberalism, but affirms that criticism to be equally applicable to a postconservative model.) Indeed, if Smith and Caneday are correct, then postconservatism should be seen, not as a relevant and updated version of Christianity, but as standing in stark
contrast to the Christian faith. Note, for example, Caneday's analysis: "Christian theologians have occupied themselves ... more with concern for the impact of culture upon forging Christian theological beliefs than with the impact of Christian theological beliefs upon transforming culture" (p. 137). The similarity of this analysis with liberalism is striking.

Stephen J. Wellum's "Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis" offers helpful clarification with respect to a postconservative view of Scripture. "... I find it difficult to fathom how our authors link evangelical theology's acceptance of an 'error-free Bible as the incontrovertible foundation of their theology' with an Enlightenment foundationalism" (p. 186). This, it seems, goes to the crux of the "truth question" in theology and Wellum does a fine job of articulating some of the more significant errors in scholarship committed by Grenz and Franke (see pp. 186ff.).

Though other essays are quite helpful, including Kwabena Donkor's "Postconservatism: A Third World Perspective," William G. Travis's "Pietism and the History of American Evangelicalism," and Millard Erickson's "On Flying in the Theological Fog," there are three more essays in the book that deserve, for varying reasons, more than a mention.

Paul Kjoss Helseth revises a previous article, here entitled "Are Postconservative Evangelicals Fundamentalists? Postconservative Evangelicalism, Old Princeton, and the Rise of Neo-Fundamentalism." Helseth maintains here what he has argued in other and earlier publications, that is, that the best theologians of Old Princeton were not as seduced by Scottish Common Sense Realism and Enlightenment rationalism as has been previously argued by others. Helseth maintains, and he provides a nice selection of quotations for support, that the notion of "right reason" as articulated by the Princetonians was not indebted to an Enlightenment notion of reason, but was rather informed by its Reformed theological heritage. "For the followers of Augustine, therefore, 'right reason' is not a faculty all human beings possess that forms the epistemological foundation for a natural theology and a naïve approach to evidentialist apologetics. Rather, it is an epistemological ability of the regenerated soul 'which acknowledges the authority of God and which functions for moral, not [merely] speculative ends'" (p. 237). If Helseth is correct in this analysis, then Old Princeton would be in continuity with the Reformation and post-Reformation theology rather than with the Enlightenment and its corollaries (contra some postconservatives' analysis of Old Princeton), especially with respect to epistemology.

For several reasons, one of the last essays, Chad Owen Brand's "Defining Evangelicalism," should perhaps have been placed at the front of the book. Carson mentions that one of the problems in these discussions is the definition of just what evangelicalism is (p. 43). Brand opts, perhaps rightly, for a minimalist description of evangelicalism: "a commitment to biblical reliability that results in a stand for Scripture against the prevailing trends of assault; an emphasis on evangelism and the need for a conversion experience; and the importance of the life of discipleship" (p. 304). His primary focus is on the first: "This belief in a fully trustworthy Bible 'represents a basic unifying factor throughout the whole of contemporary evangelicalism'" (p. 295). He concludes with a basic concern in this regard: "My concern is that some postconservatives are motivated by a
sort of theological seeker-sensitivity that compels them to a sort of theological worldliness that is antithetical to Scripture and the faith once delivered to the saints. I hope I am wrong" (p. 304).

Perhaps the most prescient essay comes in the last section of the book entitled “Post-postmodernism.” James Parker III’s essay, “A Requiem for Postmodernism—Whither Now?” explores some of the new trends in music, the visual arts, architecture, poetry, and cinema in order to show that what must inevitably be the case—the death of postmodernism—is in fact already in full swing. He notes that perhaps we have moved from the postmodern to (following Paul Vitz) the “transmodern.” The transmodern “(a) rejects skepticism and subjectivism by affirming the possibility of attaining genuine knowledge...; (b) takes the deliverances of empirical science seriously...; (c) affirms the centrality of value, along with moral and theological knowledge, in rationally shaping and directing human experience; and (d) recognizes that the mere application of technology will neither rid the human heart of wretchedness or cruelty nor endow life with significance or nobility” (p. 310). In sum, this chapter is a reminder that he who marries the spirit of the age (as postconservatives have done) soon finds himself a widower. This chapter is encouraging in that it shows that it is not always the case that evangelicals are a decade behind current trends.

This is a book, perhaps the main or only book, that one needs to read in order to ferret out the primary problems of postconservatism that face evangelicalism currently. The authors, on the whole, do a masterful job of dealing with the actual positions that they want to refute (no straw man fallacies here), and of offering criticisms that get to the heart of the problems themselves. Though a review this brief cannot adequately capture the depth of critique available in the book, we will single out three contours of that critique, all of which seem to deal a death blow to postconservatism itself.

First, there is a running theme throughout the book that postconservatism is presented in its various forms without so much as an argument for its position. In their dogmatic rejection of foundationalism, it is simply taken for granted that the only option available is some form of postconservatism. “We find it rather disappointing that postconservative writers uniformly reject foundationalism, and generally do so with very little argument.” In stating that we do not inhabit the “world-in-itself” but live instead in a “world of our own making,” “Grenz and Franke offer no argument, and one looks in vain for arguments for such claims in other postconservative writers” (p. 89).

This is reminiscent of Plantinga’s complaint of postmoderns generally who seek to offer a defeater for Christian belief:

But you don’t automatically produce a defeater for Christian belief just by standing on your roof and proclaiming (even loudly and slowly), “God is dead!” (Not even if you add: “And everybody I know says so too.”) Nor can you call Christian belief (or anything else) into question just by declaring, “I hereby call that into question!” You can’t destroy a way of thinking just by announcing, “I hereby destroy that way of thinking!” This will not do the job, not even if it is embodied in writing of corrosating wit and style, and not even if you adopt a superior air and elegant gestures while intoning it. Something further is required. (See Alvin Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000], 425-26.)

The “further” that is required is an argument. And those seem to be scarce to nonexistent in the postconservative literature. Carson, Moreland/DeWeese, and Wellum
are particularly concerned with the superficiality and dogmatism of much, if not most, of postconservatism's views. According to Carson, for example, Grenz's *Renewing the Center* "has the flavor of the amateurish about it" (p. 54). Perhaps more serious is the fact that so much of postconservatism simply gets the historical and theological analyses wrong.

One might legitimately ask, therefore, "why the fuss?" Just why is it that postconservatism has drawn so much attention? The answer to such a question is complex. From our own vantage point, it seems that the answer might be analogous to the appearance of the "perfect storm" in October 1991. One might remember in Junger's book, *The Perfect Storm*, that the storm that developed was deemed "perfect" because the right kind of meteorological factors, rarely appearing together, combined at just the right time so that what was near-impossible meteorologically became a tragic reality. Thus, just a very few factors, relatively harmless in and of themselves, combined to create a deadly storm.

Perhaps evangelicalism's tentative identity combined with the three current strands of cultural, philosophical, and sociological relativism (a relativism, it should be said, to which postconservatism has attached itself) produced a climate in which such theories as postconservatism could, for a time, flourish, wreak havoc, and cause many to flee for cover. Whatever the case, one thing is certain: postconservatism is not attractive because of its intellectual tenacity or respectability.

It is because of this lack of argumentation (and thus lack of intellectual content, not to mention acumen) that postconservatism falls prey to other, similar, errors of judgment. In some cases, their historical judgments are "deeply tendentious, in need of serious qualification, or simply mistaken" (p. 43). Not only so, but a near-blind acceptance of postmodern tenets leads to an approach to epistemology that thinks of "all knowledge in terms of social construction (a predominantly American approach)" (p. 45). Rather than working for clarity of thought, Grenz, to use one example, is simplistic in his approach and "this leads him to a merely faddish treatment of science" (p. 46).

Second, and following on the first, because postconservatism lacks intellectual depth, it seems to be unaware of its own self-referential incoherence. In their assertion that "the importance of being-in-relationship is grounded not on God as he is but on the grammar of discourse of the community," Carson asks (what should be) the obvious question: "How can the grammar of discourse of the community properly ground the grammar of discourse of the community" (p. 51)? Smith's essay, in part because he avoids dealing with "pop" versions of postconservatism and moves rather to its roots, brings this problem to the fore in a most penetrating way.

Murphy and the other authors have given us accounts of foundationalism and its degenerative state; the failures of representational views of language; the problems of dualism or reductive physicalism, etc.; as well as all of Murphy's suggested replacements. They have told us that language and world are internally related, and so on. In *which* world do these conditions obtain? And *what* are these claims? To be consistent, they must be constructions made by how people talk according to the language of a local, discrete community. They cannot be statements that are true in a sense of corresponding with an extra-linguistic reality, lest they undermine one of their core beliefs. (p. 125)

Thus, notes Smith,
Following their own view consistently, they cannot be giving us a report of how things are in the real (i.e., objective, extra-linguistic) world. If that is the case..., then all their charges are just the ways they happen to talk in their respective communities. . . . But if there is not a real, objective problem (i.e., in the extra-linguistic world), then why should anyone outside their local communities accept (much less be concerned with) their claims? (p. 126)

This gets to the heart of the intellectual problem.

The third problem, in part, lies outside the concerns of this very helpful book. As the book itself articulates, though the philosophical problems loom large, and are relatively serious, most disconcerting and of primary concern are the theological implications of postconservatism, especially with respect to the view of Scripture that is commonly prof­fered in this context. Note just one of many examples: "Grenz’s reformulation of the doctrine of Scripture is so domesticated by postmodern relativism that it stands well and truly outside the evangelical camp (whether ‘evangelical’ is here understood theologi­cally or socially/historically)” (p. 50).

However, reading this book “from the outside looking in,” as it were, it seems that a healthy dose of historic Reformed theology would go a long way toward analyzing and correcting the problems inherent in postconservatism. To use just one example: Because of the central concern (i.e., truth), the doctrine of Scripture figures into these debates in a significant way. The book references on a number of occasions the attempt by some postconservatives to adopt the phrase from the Westminster Confession of Faith, 1:10, namely, “the Spirit speaking in the Scripture” (see, e.g., pp. 37, 43, 49, 152, 235). The authors rightly see this phrase as so misconstrued and reconstructed by postconservatives that it turns into the opposite of its intended meaning. That seems to be exactly right.

The point to be made as well is that such a phrase does not come in a vacuum. Specif­ically, unless one understands sections 1–9 of this chapter of the Confession, section 10 can indeed be accommodated to a postconservative (or Barthian) paradigm. Even more specifically, the Confession is concerned to underline the nature of Scripture’s authority before it outlines just how it is that such authority is to be understood, and thus used by us. In section 4 of chapter 1, the Divines, following Calvin (and in direct contradistinction from Romanism and, apparently, postconservatism), affirm the self-attesting nature of Scripture. Scripture carries with it, by virtue of its Author, the authority of God himself. This is what Scripture is, whether or not one acknowledges it. Its authority does not lie in a community’s interpretation; it lies squarely in its own very words.

Thus, section 10 of chapter 1 is just another way of saying by what authority Scripture comes to us (and in section 10, the particular problem addressed is the problem of theological controversy). It tells us more about the authority that is embedded in Scripture (i.e., that Scripture is no “dead letter,” but comes to us by, in, and through the Spirit); it is not designed to highlight the Spirit’s ministry in and among the people of God (as postconservatism would have it).

In other words, it seems a historic look at the arguments and tenets of confessional theology might serve to steer evangelicalism in a less fragmented, more secure, and more biblical direction. It would seem to be intellectually impossible (not to mention irresponsible) for one to subscribe, for example, to the Westminster Confession of Faith, on the one hand, and to countenance any of the central tenets of postconservatism, on the other. (One may pick and choose certain aspects of the Confession, as postconservatism
has done, but to do so misses the systematic coherence of the Confession itself and thus misconstrues its meaning and intent.) Perhaps evangelicalism could begin to take such an option seriously, for the sake of its own orthodoxy.

In sum, what seems to be missing, and sorely needed, in all of these discussions, both in postconservatism and in evangelicalism, is a recognition and reclamation of the Reformed notion of *principia*. Without detailing any of the positive aspects of this notion, its tried and true emphasis on God as the *principium essendi* and thus on Scripture as the *principium cognoscendi* moves appropriately beyond discussions of coherentism, a correspondence theory of truth, foundationalism (modified or otherwise), and establishes a metaphysical and epistemological ground, without which any discussion of truth conditions, epistemology, and so forth, will inevitably founder.

This is the book to read if one wants to know evangelicalism’s assessment of many who would prefer to keep the label, while discarding its content and meaning.

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For those interested in the ongoing debates about the social consequences of the Protestant Reformation for subsequent Western history, this book of great learning is a welcome contribution to the literature. *The Impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition* has also been a much anticipated book, coming now twenty years after Harold Berman’s path-breaking first installment, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*. In the present volume, Berman continues his provocative analysis of theological and ecclesiastical roots of the legal tradition that has been developing in the West for nearly a millennium, but that he fears is presently in crisis.

The primary idea that animates this work is that the Western legal tradition has been indelibly shaped over the centuries by six great “revolutions”: the Papal revolution of the twelfth century, the German Lutheran revolution of the sixteenth, the English revolution of the seventeenth, and the American, French, and Russian revolutions. Theological ideas of some sort significantly shaped these revolutions, and especially the first three. According to Berman, each of these revolutions produced “a fundamental change, a rapid change, a violent change, a lasting change, in the political and social system of a society, involving a fundamental change in the people themselves.” The beginning of the revolutions saw violent upheavals and the propagation of great ideals, yet each one took several generations to take root. Compromises were entered, yet many major purposes of the revolution endured. In the end, new bodies of law were produced that transformed the Western legal tradition in significant ways, yet remained within that tradition.

The first volume of *Law and Revolution* examined the Papal revolution and in doing so challenged common periodization. Berman argued that modernity came into being in fact with the Papal revolution, and with it the distinctive Western legal tradition. With
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