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**The Centrality of Jesus Christ for Moral Theology: A Critical Appraisal of the Distinctively Religious-Moral Theology of Bernard Haring**

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THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST FOR MORAL THEOLOGY:  
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE DISTINCTIVELY  
RELIGIOUS-MORAL THEOLOGY OF BERNARD HÄRING

VOLUME II

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School  
of the University of Notre Dame  
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by

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### JESUS CHRIST: THE KINGDOM OF GOD MADE PRESENT

Stanley Hauerwas is one of Häring's most interesting interlocutors, for both theologians discuss similar ideas throughout their respective work. The key for the Christian ethic of Hauerwas and the moral theology of Häring is the significance of Jesus Christ for Christian morality. At the heart of both theological ethics lies the importance of discipleship in Jesus Christ. The importance of Jesus Christ is not the only similarity in their theologies, however, for both Hauerwas and Häring discuss certain concepts and themes as fundamental to the development of Christian morality. Indeed, Häring's and Hauerwas' theologies would be unrecognizable without such foundational concepts as the role of the Scriptures in ethics, the importance of community in the formation and development of the person, the role of character and virtues in the moral life, and the understanding of the Church as the most appropriate context or social location for Christian ethics. How Hauerwas and Häring use these concepts, however, is quite different, and leads to a different overall picture of the meaning of Christian discipleship.

Let me state from the outset, however, a few caveats regarding my comparison of the theologies of Hauerwas and Häring. First, my examination of Hauerwas' Christian ethic is certainly not meant to suggest that Hauerwas' work should serve as a new

direction or even as a corrective for the moral theology of the Roman Catholic Church. Rather, I analyze Hauerwas' Christian ethic specifically in terms of its contribution to a reconstruction of Häring's Christocentric moral theology. Second, the use of Hauerwas' Christian ethic does not suggest in the least that Hauerwas serves as a representative of all Protestant ethics, for even Hauerwas does not intend his Christian ethics as such. As I shall note in the following section, Hauerwas writes neither as a Protestant nor a Catholic, and cannot be considered a part of the mainstream of either tradition. Finally, my examination of Hauerwas' Christian ethic is not an exhaustive account of all of his work. Rather, I have attempted to identify specific recurring themes throughout his work that are useful for the conversation with Häring's moral theology. The purpose of examining Hauerwas as an interlocutor for Häring's moral theology is to appreciate the way in which the figure of Jesus Christ is used in two different theological ethics. Although they both use similar terms to describe the importance of Jesus Christ in Christian morality, the way that they use these terms is significantly different.

While Häring emphasizes response and responsibility as the fundamental concept for describing the divine-human relationship for moral theology, Hauerwas relies primarily on "narrative" as the fundamental concept that brings together all of his ideas regarding Christian morality. The way that each of these fundamental concepts are used in their respective theologies suggests an underlying difference between Häring and Hauerwas that ultimately leads to very different views of Christian morality. What is most important regarding Hauerwas' work for a reconstruction of Häring's Christocentric ethic is that Hauerwas gives Häring's moral theology a context or social location in which his moral theology can be most appropriately done.

I shall first begin by addressing where Hauerwas' Christian ethic fits into the contemporary conversation regarding the distinctiveness and universality of Christian ethics. This will necessarily include an examination of charges that Hauerwas ultimately moves into a form of sectarianism with his specific Christian ethic. I shall then proceed with a comparison of the theologies of Haring and Hauerwas – using the primary themes of the Scriptures, community, virtues and character, and the Church – to suggest that, although they use similar concepts and even similar language at times, their understanding of each of these motifs is quite distinct from one another.

#### I. Situating Hauerwas: The Dreaded Sects Talk

To attempt to locate the work of Stanley Hauerwas within the framework of contemporary theological ethics is a difficult task indeed, for Hauerwas himself is not entirely certain as to what his location is. He knows, and embraces, that he is a Texan (of first and foremost importance, clearly), a son of a bricklayer, and a Protestant in the Church catholic. Even he, however, does not seem to know entirely what this means. Hauerwas is not necessarily, and certainly does not intend himself to be, a representative of Protestant Christian ethics in general. On the other hand, despite his attachment to the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist, he does not affiliate himself with the Roman Catholic Church. Hauerwas has leanings towards the Anabaptist movement, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, and recently the Episcopal Church; yet Hauerwas has seemingly not been able to find his ultimate home in any particular church community. The only clear and definitive statement one can make regarding Stanley Hauerwas is that he is a Christian pacifist. Or at least he thinks he is.

Like the man himself, Hauerwas' Christian ethics does not seem to have a home in any one school of thought or specific tradition. The lack of commitment to one single tradition suggests that his theological ethics can have broad-ranging implications for the greater Christian community at large, not for merely one denomination or another. Neither the "Protestant Church"<sup>1</sup> nor the Catholic Church are the specific church communities to which Hauerwas directs his Christian ethics. Indeed, from the outset Hauerwas insists, "I do not believe that theology when rightly done is either Catholic or Protestant. The object of the theologian's inquiry is quite simply God – not Catholicism or Protestantism."<sup>2</sup> Rather Hauerwas seeks to address the Christian community broadly construed. Hauerwas intends that his theological ethics will "be done" in the Christian community, in a community of people with common habits and skills, and a shared belief in the story of God made known in the people of Israel and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the "specific" location for Hauerwas' Christian ethics is the Christian community, the Church.<sup>3</sup> According to Hauerwas, the Church is not meant to change the world "at large," but to announce to the world that Jesus Christ has made possible a new social order, through the reality of the kingdom of God made present in Jesus Christ. Largely because of his stance that Christians are not meant to

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<sup>1</sup> I, like Hauerwas, clearly am aware that there is no one "Protestant Church," nor one way in which Protestant ethics are developed. Given Hauerwas' lack of adherence to one specific Protestant tradition in his own work, I use the term "Protestant Church" to provide a general category for non-Catholic traditions.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983): xxvi.

<sup>3</sup> I prefer to use the term "Church" rather than "church" in order to emphasize that Hauerwas identifies the members of the Christian community as a body or group of believers, the Church, rather than a specific community within the general Christian tradition, a church. Hauerwas never makes the distinction between Church and church, but I think it is an important way of identifying the Christian community as a whole.

change the world, as well as his contention that Christian ethics is best done when the Church is focused on being Church, critics contend that Hauerwas is a sectarian.

Indeed, every page of Hauerwas' work makes clear his position that Christian ethics is specific and not universal. Hauerwas generally has a rather negative, or at least pessimistic, view of the world. From his view, the world is filled with deception and illusions, violence and resentment. As the Christian navigates the deceitful and violent world in a way that conforms to the story of God's relationship with this world of illusions and fracture, she inevitably encounters the tragedy, the suffering, of one who sees the world from the perspective of the truth rather than as the world sees itself. Hauerwas insists that most people turn to ethics in an attempt to find "truth" and integrity in the midst of tragedy and disparity. People seek absolutes and what is common or shared in the search for a universal morality so as to know how to act in such a violent and fractured world. Throughout much of moral theology, the act has been the primary focus for ethical deliberation, with little attention to the agent who performs the action. Like Häring, Hauerwas views this lack of focus on the agent as a threat to the integrity of Christian ethics. In this respect, Hauerwas is correct. The moral act cannot be considered adequately without reference to the acting person with a specific intention and with a particular end under certain circumstances.

Hauerwas contends that, although most people turn to ethics in order to attain moral absolutes, ethics is dependent upon a particular people's history. He specifies that this history is the history of God's interaction with creation. In Hauerwas' Christian ethics, the divine-human relationship is manifest most particularly in the Scriptures and Tradition handed down from one generation to another. For Hauerwas, the starting point

for Christian ethics must not be doctrines or principles or theories; rather, Christian ethics is reflective activity regarding the distinctive story of a particular people's history, the story of God made known through the lives of the people of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As such, Christian ethics is not concerned primarily with acts, but with agents. Of particular interest to Hauerwas is the character of the agents who perform (or do not perform) actions through the development of the life of virtue for the specific community, such that the agent develops the skills, habits, and vision to act in accordance with the narrative of the community.

Several important themes appear consistently throughout Hauerwas' extensive work. Clearly the concept of the narrative is the fundamental theme that underlies all of his work, but within that foundational concept are many other significant notions of what makes Christian morality distinctive. Of great significance for Hauerwas is the idea of character and, more precisely, the development of character in a progressive journey. The importance of character is particularly evident in Hauerwas' discussion of the significance of narrative in forming the individual within the community. Hauerwas claims that the agent seeks to become an integral self in order to find the truthfulness beyond the illusions and deceptions of the fractured world. In order to attain this integrity of being, this character, the person must acknowledge herself not as a story into which the stories or lives of others must fit, but as a part of an ongoing narrative of which she is not the creator or author. Her character is formed within the ongoing narrative, rather than the narrative being "fit" into her life. As such, the agent is a character with an integral "self" only when she is not considered apart from the narrative that forms and shapes her. Hauerwas explains,

The concepts of character and narrative provide a means . . . to express the moral significance of integrity without assuming that any one moral principle is available, or that moral development requires that there be a final stage. Indeed, the necessity of character for the morally coherent life is a recognition that morally our existence is constituted by a plenitude of values and virtues, not all of which can be perfectly embodied in any one life. Integrity, therefore, need not be connected with one final end or one basic moral principle, but is more usefully linked with a narrative sufficient to guide us through the many valid and often incompatible duties and virtues that form our selves. From such a perspective growth cannot be antithetical to integrity, but essential to it; our character, like the narrative of a good novel, is forged to give a coherence to our activities by claiming them as our own.<sup>4</sup>

The agent who acts, then, cannot be separated from her history, her narrative. Thus, rather than determining the rightness or wrongness of an act, one must first look at the character of the agent who performs the action in her whole history and narrative. The person's history, however, is not limited to the past, but includes the process of growth in character in the present and in the future, in the journey of conversion to life in the kingdom of God. The character of the person is not merely the "self," then, but the ability of the person to recognize and accept her past as part of her ongoing story, with a view toward how the changes that take place in her life form her character and what shape her life will take due to this development of character in the future.

The character of the person requires growth in the life of virtue. The moral life is more than just a series of decisions or choices. Hauerwas insists that the virtuous person recognizes the moral life as the life in which freedom is understood as the ability to claim what was done (or not done) as one's own, not as a choice, but as a power to become the kind of person who lives within a particular ongoing narrative.

To be a person of virtue, therefore, involves acquiring the linguistic, emotional, and rational skills that give us the strength to make our decisions and our life our

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<sup>4</sup> Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Social Ethic*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981): 134.

own. The individual virtues are specific skills required to live faithful to a tradition's understanding of the moral project in which its adherents participate. Like any skills, the virtues must be learned and coordinated in an individual's life, as a master craftsman has to learn to blend the many skills necessary for the exercise of any complex craft. Moreover, such skills require constant practice as they are never simply a matter of routine or technique. . . . That is why the person of virtue is also often thought of as a person of power, in that their moral skills provide them with resources to do easily what some who are less virtuous would find difficult.<sup>5</sup>

This is not to say that the virtuous person can easily overcome difficult tasks due solely to the "possession" of the appropriate virtues, but to say that the virtuous person faces the difficult task as part of the ongoing narrative that places the person on the journey of growth and development in the life of virtue. For Hauerwas, the development of the character of the individual cannot be understood apart from the community that shapes her. Likewise, the community cannot be separated from the ongoing narrative that shapes the individual in the process of growth. Therefore, the individual cannot be separated from the narrative that forms the community as well as the individual. The person who develops a specifically Christian character within the community not only acquires a new vision, but develops the virtues specific to the community in which she is a member so as to attest to the narrative that shapes the community in which she lives. Thus, the idea of virtue is also a significant aspect of Christian ethics, for virtues are essential to the formation of the character of the person within the narrative of the community. The Christian adopts the narrative of the Christian community as her own narrative in which she is an integral part.

The specific narrative to which the virtuous Christian conforms is the story of God's relationship with creation. According to Hauerwas, the Christian must learn to

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<sup>5</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 115.

acknowledge and serve God who has been made known to the world through a very definite and concrete history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. What is made known specifically in the person of Jesus Christ is the peaceableness of the kingdom of God, made present reality in the life of Jesus Christ. Critics charge Hauerwas with sectarianism precisely because of such particularistic language that seems to isolate the Christian community from the world at large. Hauerwas claims, however, that a universal morality is impossible “if Christians fail to take seriously their pluralistic convictions,”<sup>6</sup> the convictions that lead to being witness to the presence of the kingdom in a new social order made possible by Jesus Christ. The new social order that is attested to in the Christian narrative is specifically a peaceable kingdom. Because the vision of the Church is inherently one of peace, since it is shaped by the narrative of the person of peace who is Jesus Christ, the Christian vision is unique.

The Church to which Hauerwas consistently refers throughout his Christian ethic is specifically the Christian community whose seeing and hearing of the world is shaped by the narrative of God’s relationship with humanity. The primary function of the Church is to be Church, according to Hauerwas. Hauerwas explains,

the call for the church to be church means that the church is the only true polity we can know in this life. For the church, because it is a polity that fears not the truth, is also a community that has the courage to form its citizens virtuously. Thus the challenge before us is to be a patient and hopeful people who are able to live truthfully between the times. Only by being such a people will we be able to resist the false choices . . . that would have us take sides in a manner that divides the Christian people from each other and their true Lord.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 6.

<sup>7</sup> Hauerwas, *Against the Nations* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992): 130.

As such, Hauerwas' ethic is not only a Christian ethic but also a political ethic, in that the Church is the polity of people who live the truthfulness of the story of God. United as Christians, then, but ultimately separated from the illusions and self-deceptions of the world at large, the Church is the real peaceable kingdom, already in the world witnessing the truthfulness of the narrative that is one that gives the community the vision of peace. Because the Christian community is formed by the Scriptures, it attests to the new social order that is "already" and "real" in the life of the Church, yet maintains the eschatological focus on the kingdom as still to come.

Special attention must be given to the fact that Hauerwas insists that the obligation of the Christian is not to bring about peace in the world, for this has already been made possible by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; rather, the Christian must live faithful to the kingdom of peace made present in Jesus Christ. Thus, Hauerwas states, "The church must learn time and time again that its task is not to *make* the world the kingdom, but to be faithful to the kingdom by showing to the world what it means to be a community of peace."<sup>8</sup> As such, the Christian community does not seek to be effective – that is, to effect change in the world – but to be faithful to the kingdom of God made reality in Jesus Christ. For Hauerwas, then, the problem with a universal ethic is that people seek certainty, not peacefulness, as they live according to the world rather than their distinctive convictions based on the peaceableness of the kingdom made possible in Jesus Christ. Häring also argues that the Christian moral life must be based on specifically religious-moral convictions founded in Jesus Christ, who is the source, norm, and principle for Christian morality. Like Hauerwas, Häring ultimately contends

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<sup>8</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 103.

that Christian ethics are distinctive from the universal ethics common to all persons. For Häring, however, the separation between Christian and more philosophically inclined approaches to ethics is not based on seeking certainty rather than peacefulness; rather, the separation is based on the Christian convictions that lead the person to assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ as the foundation for moral formation and development.

As with Häring's relationship to Aquinas' work on the virtue of religion, the difference between Häring's Christocentric moral theology and Hauerwas' Christian ethic is primarily a difference in emphasis regarding what aspect of the person of Jesus Christ is most significant for Christian moral formation and action. For both Häring and Hauerwas, the Christian person and the Christian community attain to the truthfulness of the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ as the source for moral formation and action. Häring describes Jesus Christ's role in Christian religious-moral formation primarily in terms of the call-response model. Hauerwas presents the narrative of Jesus Christ as the fundamental source for Christian moral development, but more specifically, Hauerwas identifies the primary role for Jesus Christ in the Christian moral life as manifesting the peaceableness of the kingdom that is to be imitated and lived in the life of the Christian community.

According to Hauerwas, the formation of the Christian person takes place in a community that is shaped by the particular story of Jesus Christ, the narrative of God's saving action for us. This particular narrative informs the life of the community by giving the community a specific identity. Rather than giving solutions to problems in the world, this narrative expresses the shape which the life of the community is to take. Thus, the Christian is given a radical new vision of the world. For Hauerwas, the

community of Christians is not called to change the world at large, but to witness to the narrative that shapes the community. The truthfulness of Christian convictions lies in their practical force, the character and activity that they generate. Most significantly, the truthfulness of the narrative is found in the witness of the Church. More than just speaking one truth among many, the Church is the witness of *the* truthfulness of the narrative, shown in the life of the community that lives the narrative in truth. Thus, I believe, with the distinctive witness of the Church as *the* truthfulness which the rest of the world does not acknowledge, Hauerwas ultimately separates the Church from the world at large.

In large measure, Hauerwas' theology is specifically a reaction to the trend in moral theology to move toward "universalizables," an attempt to develop an ethic based on commonality, or universal human principles common to all human experience. For Hauerwas, this is the wrong move for the Christian community to make. According to Hauerwas, the modern mistake is to attempt to develop an ethic that is based on anything other than what is specifically Christian, which for Hauerwas is the particular narrative of the Christian community. Rather than basing an ethic on what is universal human experience, a truly Christian ethic is one which is distinctively Christian because it is grounded in and formed by the narrative which shapes a moral vision that cannot be understood outside of the narrative. The Christian story is not one that appeals to reason, but is one that relates the narrative of God's choosing the community and the community's attempt to embody that story in its life. Any attempt to speak to the world at large using the language of the world rather than the language of the Christian narrative leads to an ethic that does not convey the truthfulness of the Christian story.

For Hauerwas, then, truthfulness cannot be found in reason, or science, or universal experience. Truthfulness is found in the Church alone, in the witness of the Church whose community life *is* the truthfulness of the “already real” kingdom of God that is here and now. Unless this story has been adopted by the individual, the person cannot understand the truthfulness of the kingdom, and no language or stories or experience common to all of humanity can make this particular story intelligible to one outside of the Christian community.

Given his focus on the Church as the truthfulness of the peaceable kingdom, Hauerwas’ critics accuse him of being “inherently isolationist” (McCormick) and ultimately sectarian (Gustafson). Indeed, in his attempt to eschew the universals in ethics in favor of what is distinctive to Christian ethics, Hauerwas does in some respects succumb to the “sectarian temptation.” James Gustafson says that the move to emphasizing what is specific to the Christian community has positive and negative connotations for Christian ethics. He states,

Sectarianism in theology and ethics becomes a seductive temptation. Religiously and theologically it provides Christians with a clear distinctiveness from others in beliefs; morally it provides distinctiveness in behavior. It ensures a clear identity which frees persons from ambiguity and uncertainty, but it isolates Christianity from taking seriously the wider world of science and culture and limits the participation of Christians in the ambiguities of moral and social life in the patterns of interdependence in the world.<sup>9</sup>

I shall examine Gustafson’s critique of Hauerwas’ Christian ethic in further detail later, but for now it is important to note that the move toward specificity in Christian ethics faces the danger of becoming sectarianism when such a distinction utterly separates the Christian community from the world at large. Although Hauerwas insists that he does

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<sup>9</sup> James M. Gustafson, “The Sctrarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University.” *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society* 40, 1985: 84.

not espouse a sectarian ethic, one can see how aspects of his emphasis on the importance of narrative for the Christian community can lead to such charges against him. Let us examine a few critiques of Hauerwas' Christian ethic briefly.

Richard McCormick claims that Hauerwas creates a Christian ethic which cannot be challenged from sources outside of the community itself, which leads to a tendency toward a sectarian Christian ethic. Because the ethic cannot be critiqued from outside the system, the ethic itself loses its coherence, or worse, its purpose. McCormick's first disagreement with Hauerwas' reliance on the narrative approach to Christian morality is that it presents merely "an attitude which does not determine in individual cases the morally right or wrong."<sup>10</sup> If moral discourse is concerned with the rightness or wrongness of a moral action, then necessarily this discourse must involve more than the attitude of the acting agent. McCormick explains that Hauerwas' use of narrative helps the person and community "to *recognize* an obligation, but not to *justify* it or its violation." Hauerwas makes it clear throughout his work, however, that his concern is not about the rightness or wrongness of Christian action primarily, but with what kind of person and what kind of community is shaped by the story of God's care for creation through the vocation of Israel and Jesus. While the moral justification for Christian action is not his primary concern, Hauerwas still does not adequately address the judgment of right or wrong regarding action apart from what kind of community or individual develops according to the story of God. McCormick says that the function of narrative should be to nourish considerations of rightness or wrongness of actions rather

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<sup>10</sup> Richard A. McCormick, SJ. *Notes on Moral Theology: 1981-1984*. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America: 1984): 24.

than suggesting that such considerations are irrelevant, or at the very least underemphasized for Christian morality.

McCormick further argues that Hauerwas' approach to Christian ethics suggests that warrants for distinctively Christian actions actually only confirm what is, or can be, already known without reference to the story of the Christian community. Specifically Christian convictions "do not raise the issue of how one originally knows God's will within a storied community."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Hauerwas rejects the idea of starting with principles or theories or doctrines, and specifically states that "theology cannot begin a consideration of ethics with claims about creation and redemption, but must begin with God's choice of Israel and the life of Jesus."<sup>12</sup> That is, theological ethics begins with the narrative.

Hauerwas' response to these criticisms is best summarized when he asserts,

When nature-grace, creation-redemption are taken to be the primary data of theological reflection, once they are abstracted from the narrative and given a life of their own, a corresponding distortion in moral psychology seems to follow. Since the material content – that is, the rightness or wrongness of certain behavior – is derived from nature, Christian convictions at best only furnish a motivation for "morality."<sup>13</sup>

For Hauerwas' Christian ethic, the narrative of God's care for humanity is the primary narrative, portrayed in the stories of God's choice of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. While Hauerwas views his Christian ethic as a guard against identifying the distinctness of Christian morality only in terms of the motives or intentions for action, ultimately his theology is a rejection of any attempt to find a

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<sup>11</sup> McCormick: 25.

<sup>12</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: xviii.

<sup>13</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 57.

universal language for discussing the rightness or wrongness of actions apart from the story of God's care for creation in the community of Israel and the person of Jesus Christ. The problem with the narrative as the starting point is that Hauerwas' claims that Christian epistemology is different from the knowledge one is able to attain outside of the Christian tradition is based solely on the story of God known in the Christian community; but how God's will is known to that community in the first place is never fully developed in Hauerwas' work.

All of this is to say that Hauerwas never addresses the fact that some moral judgments are available to all human persons, through natural insight or natural reasoning, without the story of revelation. McCormick is correct in suggesting that Hauerwas' Christian ethic that starts with the narrative primarily serves to point out, or confirm, what is already known of God, self, and world apart from the story. The stories of the Christian community do not give us resolutions to difficult situations or tasks, nor do they provide strategies for seeking resolution to these problems. Hauerwas explicitly does not intend narrative to function in such a way. Rather, the Christian stories offer Christians a way of understanding ourselves and the world in a language that makes such difficulties insignificant.

McCormick's most persuasive argument against Hauerwas' Christian ethic is, "If we argue our conviction in terms of a unique community story, others need only assert that their story is not ours. The conversation stops at that point."<sup>14</sup> McCormick criticizes Hauerwas for creating a vision that can only be seen or understood from within the seeing and believing community. By excluding the external world from the internal thought of

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<sup>14</sup> McCormick: 25.

the Church, the Church no longer functions properly. McCormick agrees with Hauerwas that our theological convictions shape our moral reasoning, but he cautions that, in Hauerwas' Christian ethic, theological convictions have ultimately replaced our moral reasoning. McCormick insists that the authentic natural moral law, the basic moral knowledge and its correlative justifications, is not exclusive to the Christian community. The role of the Christian narrative for McCormick, then, is to deepen our Christian convictions rather than replace them.

McCormick's solution for Hauerwas' Christian ethic is to focus on the Church more realistically, with less of a "rarified" view of the Church. Although McCormick appreciates the richness of Hauerwas' Christian ethic, he is concerned that "a too exclusivist reading of the Christian story will render their [Hauerwas and Yoder] imposing contributions muted in the political lives of Christians."<sup>15</sup> Hauerwas provides a response to this critique in his insistence that the "church serves the world first by providing categories of interpretation that offer the means for us to understand ourselves truthfully, e.g., we are a sinful yet redeemed people. Interpretation does not preclude action, but our actions can only be effective when they are formed according to a truthful account of the world."<sup>16</sup> Hauerwas continues, "And part of what such an account entails is that the world can never be the church. . . . The world cannot be the church, for the world, while still God's creation, is a realm that knows not God and is thus characterized by the fears that constantly fuel the fires of violence."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> McCormick: 127-128.

<sup>16</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 109.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

My objection to Hauerwas' response is that, while the rest of the world may not know the God of the Judeo-Christian narrative, one cannot claim that the world has no understanding or experience of what Häring calls "the Other," an ultimate value outside of the self that draws the person to itself. Is that not an aspect of the truthfulness or reality of God in the world? Hauerwas is correct in his identification of the reality of human existence, namely, that we are sinful yet redeemed. He is incorrect, however, to claim that the world cannot know God. Hauerwas focuses so heavily on the violent aspects of the world that he fails to give due attention to the reality of the grace that works in ordinary human experiences apart from the experiences of the specifically Christian life in the Christian community. Häring's Christocentric moral theology can lend a greater balance to Hauerwas' Christian ethic precisely because Häring is careful to emphasize that all persons, Christians and non-Christians alike, are capable of encountering Ultimate Value in the experience of that which is outside of the self. The person is capable of moving toward that which she perceives to be of a higher value than herself, whether or not she explicitly names that Ultimate Value as God or Love or whatever name she may give to the value. Häring is also careful to point out that, while non-Christians may experience such Ultimate Value in deeply personal encounters with that outside of the self, the experience is an authentic but *limited* experience of the reality of participation in the divine life. Häring's moral theology also underscores the importance of all persons being created in the image and likeness of God, and thus all persons are capable of contributing to the increase in value in the created order, but, again, he insists that non-Christians do not attain to the perfection of the religious-moral life unless their actions are in accordance with a commitment to the imitation of Jesus

Christ in a life that gives glory and honor to God. Häring's value theory highlights the fact that non-Christians are able to experience the Other, God, through the encounter with others in creation, although he also specifies that the experience is limited as compared to that of the Christian who recognizes Christ as the Ultimate Value in such experiences. While Hauerwas' Christian ethic is limited to moral formation within the Christian community, Häring contends that the Church must not isolate itself from the rest of the world. For Häring the Church must be the living presence of Jesus Christ for others, in a relationship in which the Church learns from the world and at the same time teaches the world the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Along with McCormick, I suggest that if the Church is separated from the rest of the world, then the "real" aspect of its presence in the world, and the purpose of the Church as authoritative voice in moral deliberation, is lost. Without the Church being able to share in the conversations with the rest of the world, the world has no witness to the truthfulness of the narrative. For McCormick, the options are not either story or reason, but to reason about its story. In reasoning about its story, the Christian community can "reveal the deeper dimensions of the universally human."<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the Church can be, and has been, corrected by secular society.

Secular correction of the Church is not available in Hauerwas' Christian ethic. Absolute truthfulness for Hauerwas is the story that shapes the community and is witnessed in the life of the Church. Todd David Whitmore has criticized Hauerwas for this very aspect of his Christian ethic. Whitmore argues that, in his attempt to avoid absolutism, Hauerwas has blurred the line between unchanging truth (truthfulness) and

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<sup>18</sup> McCormick: 127.

revisable human justified belief (justifiable practices).<sup>19</sup> The problem is that, without challenges to the internal system from external sources, the truthfulness of the story appears to be only truth that is justifiable through the actions of the community, and verifiable only to the community itself. If the outside world is not able to challenge the community of the Church, then the Church can proceed without critique and thus without response to the changing world. The problem with Hauerwas' system, then, is that its reliance on the truthfulness of the narrative cannot respond to the changes that take place outside of the narrative. As such, Hauerwas' ethic lacks effectiveness in the world outside of the Church. For Hauerwas, the practice of the virtues shapes the vision of the community. Whitmore insists, however,

if we are to avoid the problem of absolutism, we would do better to understand virtue as a readiness to respond in a particular way (which is guided by a vision and honed by practice) than to understand virtue as a practice displayed by one who acts in accordance with a univocally interpreted narrative. Both narrative vision and practice specified by principles are then open to revision in the face of changed circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

This lack of emphasis on response, according to Whitmore, leads Hauerwas' ethic to a lack of effectiveness in dealing with the situation of the world outside of the Church. Thus, Hauerwas needs to give greater emphasis to practical reasonableness if he is to answer the charges of his critics, but also, and more importantly, if he is to present a coherent system that has an effect outside of the narrative of the Christian community. Just as the character of the person is changed by circumstances or situations outside of the Christian community, so too the Christian community can, and often should, be

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<sup>19</sup> Todd David Whitmore, "Beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism in Christian Ethics: A Critique of Stanley Hauerwas." *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 1989: 207-225.

<sup>20</sup> Whitmore: 214.

changed by the input of those outside of the community. Without the input of communities and sources outside of the narrative of the Christian community, Hauerwas' Christian ethic loses all practical force.

Perhaps Hauerwas' most contentious critic is James Gustafson, who accuses Hauerwas of ultimately giving in to the sectarian temptation. Gustafson sees Hauerwas' negative reaction to the language of universals as an overreaction that ends up completely separating the Church from the world. In radically separating the Church from the world, Hauerwas defeats the purpose of Christian ethics, which in Gustafson's Christian ethic is "for the intellectual and moral life of the Christian community, its credibility, and its capacities to deal with alternative construals of life without retreating into intellectual and moral sectarianism."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, I agree that those who adhere to the catholic ideal of the Christian community (being universal) understand that contribution to the conversation with those outside of the Christian community in moral deliberation is essential for being authentic witness to the kingdom of God. Christians are not merely witness to the kingdom for one another within the community, but for the whole world.

Hauerwas binds the Christian community's identity to the narrative of Scripture, primarily because he is wary of the move to universalism in ethics. Gustafson interprets Hauerwas' ethic as an argument against "any effort to move beyond the historical tradition (as defined, in the end by him) either to justify it or to criticize and possibly alter it, [as] a move to what he calls 'universalism.'"<sup>22</sup> In his anti-universalism/distinctively Christian ethic, then, Hauerwas has identified the Church as a self-serving community

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<sup>21</sup> James M. Gustafson, "A Response to Critics." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 13, 1985: 187.

<sup>22</sup> Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation": 89.

that *cannot* contribute to the dialogue in moral debates outside of the Christian community. Gustafson says that this move is essentially Hauerwas succumbing to the sectarian temptation, which is detrimental to the project of Christian ethics. As such, the distinctively Christian ethic that defends only the historical identity of the Christian tradition is not able to “provide a critical religious vision of reality that can aggressively interact with other ways of construing the world.”<sup>23</sup> Gustafson agrees with Hauerwas’ other critics that outside challenges to the Christian community help to further develop the community itself and help the community to change and grow as the outside world changes and grows.

Gustafson’s primary concern, however, is not so much how the Church can be changed from the outside world, but how the Christian community can contribute to changing the world. Gustafson insists that the moral lives of Christians cannot be confined to the Christian community, for “Christians, whether they choose to or not, are members of, and make choices in, other social communities.”<sup>24</sup> His negative reaction to Hauerwas, then, is grounded in Hauerwas’ refusal to allow that the Church is meant to change the existing order rather than just witness to the new social order founded in Christ. Thus, Gustafson concludes,

Theology has to be open to all the sources that help us to construe God’s relations to the world; ethics has to deal with the interdependence of *all* things in relation to God. This, for me, necessarily relativizes the significance of the Christian tradition, though it is the tradition in which our theologies develop. God is the God of Christians, but God is not a Christian God for Christians only.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Gustafson, “The Sectarian Temptation”: 90.

<sup>24</sup> Gustafson, “The Sectarian Temptation”: 92.

<sup>25</sup> Gustafson, “The Sectarian Temptation”: 94.

For Gustafson, the Christian community must be a part of the dialogue, not set apart from the dialogue, if the world is to understand the coming of the kingdom. The primary language used in the conversation with those outside of the community is clearly “God” for Gustafson, and not specifically the person of Jesus Christ, but at least Gustafson allows that theological language has a place in non-theological communities outside of the Christian tradition.

In my opinion, the charges leveled against Hauerwas are important, for they serve to underscore some deficiencies in Hauerwas’ Christian ethic. Hauerwas does indeed tend to present the Christian community as isolated from the world at large. Unlike Hauerwas, I see the purpose of the Christian community as much more than merely witnessing to the narrative of Jesus Christ. While I want to maintain the importance of a distinctively Christian ethic, I believe that the story alone is not enough. The Christian community is not called to serve only those within the community, nor to merely repeat what we have learned in the Scriptures. Indeed, Hauerwas insists that the telling of the story is not just about telling the story, but living it. I wholeheartedly agree! The problem is that Hauerwas focuses so heavily on the Christian community that it appears that the Christian community is all that matters. To the contrary, the Church is meant to serve the world – not just as witness of the reality of the kingdom, but in actions that seek to make the kingdom present in the world at large – not just the Christian community. The good news of Jesus Christ is not just that the kingdom has arrived, but that the kingdom effects a change, a transformation of persons in their relationship with God, themselves, others, and all of creation. Therefore, bringing the kingdom to others outside

of the community is an essential aspect of the Christian life, both as individuals and as community.

Hauerwas' primary limitation, in my opinion, is in fact twofold, but based on the singular difficulty of separating the Church from the world. First, the Church is not meant to change the world, but only to show the world that there is a new social vision, a new world that is here and now in the Church community; therefore, the Church cannot be part of the dialogue that is essential for any ethic. The Church cannot speak to the world except as a witness, and even then the language that the Church can use is only intelligible within the faith community. Rather than allowing for the possibility that universals are the best means of communicating with those outside of the Church, Hauerwas rejects all appeals to the universal in favor of the distinctively Christian language of the narrative of the Christian community. When one cannot use language that is intelligible outside of the group, any means of change even within the community is highly unlikely. The fact is, however, that no community can remain static, and thus new language has to be developed. This language ought to be intelligible beyond the originating group.

Second, and in a similar vein, the world cannot speak to the Church, and thus will have a difficult time adapting in a post-Vatican Council II Roman Catholic Church, which further exacerbates the problem of a lack of internal critique and change. The Christian community must learn to adapt to and learn from the world as much as the world must learn from the Church, the Christian community. Without the input of experience from those outside of the community, without science, without practical reason that can communicate beyond the boundaries of the isolated community, the

Church community stagnates in its perception of itself as the kingdom already made present through its witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures present a dynamic community that undergoes changes, but from my interpretation of Hauerwas, the Christian community seems to be self-revolving and therefore not in need of change – shaped by the narrative and living the narrative – without contributing to the dialogue with those in the world at large. Without dialogue, neither the world nor the Church can learn or be taught. This is the vision of the Church that would be most helpful for Hauerwas' Christian ethic, the Catholic vision of the Church as both teaching the world and also as learning from the advances in the world. Thus, I see Hauerwas' vision of Christian ethics as an inadequate one for a truly catholic vision of Christian morality.

In the end, I believe that the strongest aspect of Hauerwas' Christian ethic, the emphasis on narrative, is also his weakest aspect, because outside of the narrative, there can be no dialogue. Without universal language and without appeal to humanity at large, Hauerwas constructs an ethic that is self-defeating, in many ways. If the purpose of the Church is to embody the narrative of the kingdom as both already and real, how is the community to speak to the world as a whole? Unless the world understands our narrative in a way that is intelligible to everyone, in the language or narrative that fits *their* story, they cannot understand what the Church is witnessing. Instead, the community is merely isolated from the rest of the world and the kingdom is unintelligible outside of the community that understands it as already present and real. Thus, the purpose of a distinctively Christian ethic is lost.

Hauerwas does not view himself as a sectarian, for he claims that he does not advocate withdrawal from the world. Rather, he argues, the Christian is obliged to be a witness to the story of God for the rest of the world. Hauerwas insists that he is not advocating a retreat or withdrawal from the “world” at large, but advocates a new stance for the community that serves as a witness to God’s kingdom made a reality in the person of Jesus Christ. The Christian witness takes place within the Christian community that forms the one who understands himself precisely as a self within a narrative, specifically the narrative of God’s faithfulness to the world, made known in the story of the life of the people of Israel and the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The life of the Christian is the life of one who is formed by, and likewise further shapes, the Christian community. As such, the Christian is called to be faithful to the peaceableness of the kingdom of God made present in Jesus Christ. Hauerwas insists,

No “sectarian” type, and certainly one accused of being such a type like me, argues that adherence to Christ requires wholesale rejection of culture in the way [H. Richard] Niebuhr implies. Rather, the question is how to relate discriminatingly both to the cultures and the corresponding political forms in which Christians find themselves. To put the issue in terms of all or nothing the way Niebuhr . . . do[es] is to distort the challenge facing Christians as they confront many different cultures as well as the diversity of any one culture.<sup>26</sup>

Because the Christian lives in a diverse world, he must learn to live in the reality of the kingdom that is already made present in Christ but not yet perfected in the present world. Jesus Christ makes peaceableness a possibility, not merely an ideal. The task of the Christian, then, is to be faithful to the story of God through living according to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ which makes possible the reality of the peaceableness of the kingdom. Hauerwas further refutes the label of sectarianism when

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<sup>26</sup> Hauerwas, “Will the Real Sectarian Stand Up?” in *Theology Today*, Vol. 44, No. 1, April 1987: 88.

he states, “What is required for Christians is not withdrawal but a sense of selective service and the ability to set priorities. This means that at times and in some circumstances Christians will find it impossible to participate in government, in aspects of the economy, or in the educational system.”<sup>27</sup> The determination for participation or non-participation is made through the development of discriminating skills formed in the Church.

Perhaps, however, Hauerwas takes the “discriminating” relation between the Christian and the rest of the world a bit too far, particularly since he insists that the faithfulness of the Christian is most truthfully lived in the life of the Christian community, the Church, dedicated to the peaceable kingdom. Because only those within the Christian tradition can attain to this truthfulness, Hauerwas ultimately separates the Christian from the “world at large” through his emphasis on the truthfulness of the Christian narrative as what most fully distinguishes the Christian community from communities outside of the Christian tradition. Indeed, the Church community most fully knows itself through its particular story, the story made known in the witness of the Scriptures. Hauerwas admits that, “first and foremost the community must know that it has a history and tradition which separate it from the world. Such separation is required by the very fact that the world knows not the God we find in the scripture.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Hauerwas insists that the people in the community of the Church derive their identity from a book, the Scriptures. As such, the narrative that shapes the community likewise determines how we are able to relate to those outside of the community who do not

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<sup>27</sup> Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living In Between*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 1988): 15.

<sup>28</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 68.

identify themselves according to our story. This ultimately leads to an inherent separation between Church and world, for we cannot understand or acknowledge the truthfulness of a story apart from our own story.

In my view, despite the fact that the narrative is used as a descriptive theology of a community of people living as witness to the kingdom, Hauerwas' ethic blurs the line between the descriptive and the normative; for Hauerwas consistently identifies peaceableness as the hallmark of the witness of the Christian community, such that those who do not conform to the peaceableness of the kingdom are not living according to the truthfulness of the story. Hauerwas is indeed correct that an increased reliance on the concepts of freedom and "personal" morality as the basis for morality in contemporary ethics has led to further fracture and disunity in conversations regarding Christian morality. The difficulty I have with Hauerwas' solution to the problem, however, is that ultimately he disavows all discussion regarding what is common or even similar among all humans, such as freedom and choice, as legitimate points of conversation with those outside of the Christian tradition. With such a drastic move, Hauerwas finally ends all dialogue with those outside of the Christian community, for Hauerwas only wants to speak with those who are willing to hear the narrative of the Christian community on his own terms. Hauerwas does not even attempt to find common ground or general concepts that can open the dialogue to all people who seek the common good, or even those who embrace the idea of attaining the ultimate goal of the peace of the world. For Hauerwas, then, it seems that the goal is not as important as the way that the goal is achieved. If non-Christians seek peace, that is not enough! The methods employed to attain that goal have to fit the story of the Christian community, for the story of the life of God made

known in the story of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the only truth, and the goal of peace can only be attained through the truth, specifically, the Christian narrative. This is a tendency toward sectarianism, despite Hauerwas' protests to the contrary, for in the final analysis, it is a call for Christians to live according to the truth that cannot be known outside of the Christian tradition and the Christian community; therefore it is a truth that cannot speak with those who do not know (or who, as with Hauerwas' dismissal of narratives outside of the Christian tradition, are unwilling to hear) the truth of the Christian narrative regarding the kingdom of God.

In the final analysis, Hauerwas' Christian ethic is not so hopelessly sectarian that one can ignore his important contributions to Christian ethics. To the contrary, Hauerwas points to significant aspects of the Christian moral life that are often either relegated to the periphery of the Christian moral conversation (e.g, the importance of the narrative in the formation of Christian identity and morality) or altogether ignored in the Christian tradition, because certain principles are considered non-essential for Christian identity, or perhaps too difficult to maintain in light of the desire to engage in conversation with the rest of the world (e.g., Hauerwas' emphasis on peaceableness as the hallmark of Christian identity). Hauerwas concludes that certain aspects of the Christian moral life are, and ought to be, shared in common between all Christians as a witness to the rest of the world to the truthfulness of the Christian moral life and the Christian community as a whole. While Hauerwas claims that these are specific to the Christian community, I would refine his point in order to suggest that perhaps these Christian convictions are, as Häring claims, distinctive of the Christian community, but not specific or exclusive to the Christian community alone. As Hauerwas allows in his responses to his critics, Christian

actions in the world can only be effective when Christians understand the truth of their own lives and the truth of the world.<sup>29</sup> Häring would not disagree with Hauerwas to the extent that Häring also insists that the Christian must first understand who we are called to be in light of discipleship in accordance with our imitation of Jesus Christ, and only then can our actions reflect our commitment to ongoing conversion in the life of Jesus Christ. We must understand how we are formed by the narrative of God's concern and care for creation before we can contribute to the life of the world and before the world can contribute to our own moral formation.

I have spent some time here highlighting the sectarian tendencies within Hauerwas' Christian ethic, as well as several critiques of this aspect of Hauerwas' work, in order to suggest that the Christian community must have greater awareness of the aspects of the Christian moral life that are distinctive of Christian identity. While I believe that Hauerwas tends to use distinctive features of the Christian moral life in way that may isolate the Christian community from the rest of the world, I want to emphasize that Hauerwas provides an important contribution to contemporary moral dialogue. Despite his distaste for universalism and his assurance that Christian ethics ought not to seek to effect change outside of the Christian community, Hauerwas' Christian ethic can contribute to an ethic, such as Häring's Christocentric moral theology, that views the imitation of Christ as inherently important for all persons, even those outside of the Christian community. Hauerwas provides a greater sense of the importance of Christian convictions for the moral formation and development of the Christian person and the Christian community. Rather than suggesting that one's Christian convictions or faith are secondary to how one "behaves," Hauerwas, like Häring, insists that Christian

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<sup>29</sup> See especially Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 109.

convictions are fundamental to what kind of person one is as a Christian living in the world.

While Haring’s moral theology ultimately sides with the distinctiveness of Christian morality over the universal appeal of what is common for all people of all times, Haring never endorses the move to sectarianism. Indeed, such a drastic move is contrary to Haring’s entire Christocentric moral theology in which all persons are invited to God’s offer of grace manifest most perfectly in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Haring, the distinctiveness of Christian morality is necessary because the Christian religious-moral life is precisely the life of perfect imitation of Jesus Christ; but this does not mean that the Christian is called only to be a witness of discipleship for the rest of the world. Rather, the Christian must enjoin others to become disciples in the following of Christ, through the religious-moral life that is the very sacramental presence of Jesus Christ in the world. The Christian life is the life of invitation to grace, not merely a witness to that grace.

Despite their differences, the theological ethics of Haring and Hauerwas can benefit from each other. Indeed, if Hauerwas were to adopt some of Haring’s concepts, I believe his Christian ethic could avoid the “sectarian temptation” and more adequately join in the pluralistic dialogue of the world, thus making the Christian life more appealing to those outside of the Christian tradition. Likewise, if some of Hauerwas’ ideas were more fully integrated into Haring’s moral theology, I believe his Christocentric could have greater influence in the continuation of the dialogue with the contemporary world. Haring and Hauerwas share similar language and concepts in their respective theological ethics, but both can benefit from a greater development of these concepts within their

own work. Perhaps the most important aspect of Hauerwas' Christian ethic for the purposes of my project is that his emphasis on narrative provides the context in which the use of principles, norms, and even doctrines is appropriate. Hauerwas' Christian ethic gives a social context, a location, for Häring's Christocentric ethic. With Häring's emphasis on response and responsibility, this clear context sets the stage for interaction with other communities, rather than separating the Church community from other communities outside of the Christian tradition. Therefore, the Church can benefit from the input of communities outside of the Church, while still having an effect on the functioning of the world in light of the relationship of response and responsibility among God, self, others, and the world. In order to demonstrate how each of these theologians can benefit from each other's work, I shall attempt to expand on the similarities and differences between Häring's and Hauerwas' work, and how these can contribute to a reconstruction of Christocentric ethics for contemporary moral theology, in greater detail in the following sections.

## II. Scripture and Tradition in Hauerwas' Christian Ethic

One of Häring's greatest contributions to moral theology is his insistence that the Catholic tradition must more fully integrate the Scriptures into its discussions regarding Christian morality. Häring's emphasis on the relevance of the Scriptures for moral theology has a significant impact on the efforts for the renewal of Catholic moral theology prior to the Second Vatican Council. While this is a significant change within Catholic moral theology, the relevance of the Scriptures for Christian morality has been a prominent feature of Protestant ethics throughout its history. Not surprisingly, then, I

believe that Häring's moral theology could benefit from an incorporation into his work of some aspects of Hauerwas' understanding of the Scriptures' role in the moral formation of the individual and the Christian community. Of particular benefit to Häring's moral theology is the fact that Hauerwas takes the whole story of election into account in the use of the Scriptures in the development of his Christian ethic.

As I discussed at some length earlier in this project, I view Häring's use (or lack thereof) of the Old Testament as an extremely problematic aspect of his moral theology since Häring claims that the Scriptures "as a whole" must have relevance for moral theology. Häring never makes clear the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, other than to say that the Old Testament essentially foreshadows what we learn in the New Testament. Likewise, despite his emphasis on the importance of relationship with others, Häring never adequately explicates the nature of the relationship between Jews and Christians as relevant for an understanding of the importance of Tradition for Christian morality. While I do not believe that Häring deliberately evades such conversations, I do think that the marginalization of such an important aspect of the *Judeo-Christian* tradition is a weakness that must be addressed in an examination of Häring's moral theology.

For Häring, the role of the Scriptures is to show God's relationship with humanity as one of covenant fidelity (Old Testament) and the call to discipleship (New Testament). God's faithfulness to the people of Israel and their response of fidelity to God in the keeping of the covenant is the heart of the teaching of the Old Testament in Häring's moral theology. Häring never fully develops how his theology of response and responsibility applies to the people of Israel. Rather, his emphasis is on the response of

the Christian community made known in the New Testament writings, particularly by Paul and John. The Old Testament merely foreshadows the coming of Christ.

Although Häring appears unable to fully integrate the Old Testament into his Christocentric moral theology, Hauerwas insists that the Christian story cannot be understood apart from the story of God's relationship with the people of Israel. Throughout his Christian ethic, Hauerwas is as likely to cite passages from Isaiah and Psalms as he is the Sermon on the Mount or the Epistle to the Romans in his Christian ethic. More than merely the texts from the Scriptures, however, Hauerwas insists that the narrative of the Scriptures is essential for the truthful development of the community that lives as a witness to God's care for creation. Indeed, the community derives its identity from the Scriptures, beginning with God's relationship with the people of Israel and continuing with the Church. To claim that Hauerwas gives a more positive role to the Hebrew Scriptures and the Israelites than does Häring is an understatement. In fact, the people of Israel and Jesus are inextricably linked throughout all of Hauerwas' work.

Hauerwas' Christian ethic gives much greater prominence to the role that Israel plays in the formation of the Christian community than Häring allows in his Christocentric moral theology. Unlike Häring, Hauerwas does not relegate the Judaic influence on Christian morality to a periphery role, but as essential for the development of the Christian community. This is a huge step beyond where Häring allowed the Judeo-Christian tradition to go. While Häring acknowledges the importance of tradition, his primary emphasis is on the New Testament witness to the person of Jesus Christ. Hauerwas, on the other hand, emphasizes tradition, the handing down of the story of God, as the most essential aspect of the development of "Church." Hauerwas insists that the

Christian community would not be able to be Church without the story of God's dealings with the people of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ being handed down from generation to generation.

The stories of the people of Israel and Jesus are inextricably linked throughout Hauerwas' ethic. Indeed, the Church community is not able to know the story of God apart from the role that Israel plays in the story. Hauerwas insists that the Christian community would not even exist without the tradition that remembers and reinterprets the texts and stories of the communities in which they were originally formed. Hauerwas claims that to know God the creator,

we are required to learn through God's particular dealings with Israel and Jesus, and through God's continuing faithfulness to the Jews and the ingathering of a people to the church. Such knowledge requires constant appropriation, constant willingness to accept the gift of God's good creation. As Christians we maintain that such appropriation is accomplished in and through our faithfulness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We believe that by learning to be his disciples we will learn to find our life – our story – in God's story. In the process we find our life in relation to other lives; we discover that as Christians our lives are intelligible only as we acknowledge indebtedness to the people of Israel, both in the past and in their continued presence.<sup>30</sup>

From this passage one can clearly see that Hauerwas understands the relationship between Judaism and Christianity as essential for developing a complete picture of the story of God. In fact, Hauerwas not only explicates the nature of Jewish-Christian relations as a continuation of the story of God, but as the development of a distinctive knowledge that is not available to those outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Häring's early work clearly does not have such an understanding of the role of Israel in the development of the life of the Christian community, and he initially is hesitant to suggest that the Judeo-Christian tradition gives the Church a specific moral epistemology.

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<sup>30</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 28.

While Häring claims to want to emphasize the importance of the vision of the Scriptures as a whole, his primary focus is on the images or themes throughout the Scriptures that show the moral life of the Christian as essentially the life of discipleship in the imitation of the life of Christ. Hauerwas' Christian ethic can offer a specific corrective to Häring's moral theology to the extent that Häring's discussion of the moral life of the Christian (particularly in terms of the virtues) never addresses the narratives of Jesus' ministry and teaching. Rather, Häring focuses on the importance of the Incarnation and the death on the cross and the resurrection of Christ as essential concepts for Christian development of the moral life. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, this is largely due to Häring's Christological approach to morality being a Christology "from above" with less emphasis on low Christology in his virtue theory. Häring's fundamental concern is to show that the life of Jesus, particularly as made known in the Incarnation and his death on the Cross and subsequent resurrection, is the perfection of the divine-human relationship, the invitation of God and the perfect human response given in, with, and through Jesus Christ. The people of Israel have little to do with Häring's understanding of the relevance of the Scriptures in the moral formation of the Christian person and the Christian community. Jesus Christ is central to moral theology, and therefore the Old Testament and the lives of the people with whom God's covenant was initially made serve only to point to the more central figure of Jesus Christ. Because Häring wants to incorporate the Scriptures as a whole into moral theology, he could benefit from a greater focus on the narrative aspects of the Scriptures that point to the life, ministry and teaching, and death of Jesus Christ rather than relying primarily on the Incarnation and Redemption as key concepts for the virtuous Christian life.

Quite opposed to Håring's starting point, Hauerwas insists that Christian ethics cannot begin with doctrines, even the doctrine of the Incarnation, in order to illuminate the Christian moral life. Rather, Hauerwas contends that the narrative of the Scriptures is essential for the moral development of the Christian community, specifically the development of the particular virtues distinctive to the Christian community. In Hauerwas' estimation, the world is fragmented and chaotic, and in order for the Christian community to maintain its distinctive identity the community must develop particular virtues that will sustain it and help it to survive in the midst of the chaos. These virtues "can only be displayed by drawing on a particular community's account of the good, and that account necessarily takes the form of a narrative."<sup>31</sup> Because of his emphasis on the importance of the narrative, Hauerwas insists that Scripture is not merely about doctrines or principles, but about the stories of the community's witness of God's care for creation. The witness of the community begins with the stories of the people of Israel and continues in the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and continues still in the Church community. The narrative of the Scriptures, then, forms the life of the community in accordance with the stories of Israel and Jesus, particularly in terms of the growth of the community in the development of the virtues.

The narrative is the key concept for Hauerwas' Christian ethic. The importance of the narrative for Christian ethics is three-fold for Hauerwas: 1) narrative demonstrates the creature-status of our existence and the world, as well as the contingent situation of creation, such that we come to know ourselves only in God's life; 2) narrative is the characteristic form of our awareness of our historical status, as well as the importance of

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<sup>31</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 22.

the community in the formation of the individual identity as we work toward the good, such that we come to discover our true selves through a community's narrated tradition; and 3) God reveals God's self narratively, in the stories of the history of Israel and the life of Jesus, such that the importance of the Scriptures is that they tell us the story of the covenant with Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the ongoing history of the Church that bears witness to, retells, and lives the narrative of that life.<sup>32</sup> For Hauerwas, "the Bible is fundamentally a story of a people's journey with their God. A 'biblical ethic' will necessarily be one that portrays life as growth and development."<sup>33</sup> The growth and development of the community takes place because the people in the community derive their identity from the narrative of the Scriptures, such that they know themselves and their history only according to the tradition that hands down the stories from one generation to the next, a tradition that forms the community in keeping with the truthfulness of the narrative. As such, Hauerwas contends, the "authority of scripture derives its intelligibility from the existence of a community that knows its life depends on faithful remembering of God's care of his creation through the calling of Israel and the life of Jesus."<sup>34</sup> Without the Scriptures that share the stories of the people of Israel and Jesus, therefore, the community would not exist as the kind of people that form that community. The role of the Scriptures for the moral formation of that community is to train us to be a faithful people to the story of God.

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<sup>32</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 24-29.

<sup>33</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 24.

<sup>34</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 53. One must note that Häring is not concerned to discuss the authority behind the Scriptures at length; rather, Häring's primary concern is to emphasize that the Scriptures have an important role in the moral formation of the Christian and the Christian community. He assumes their authority as evident to all who would use Scripture for moral formation.

The communal aspect of Hauerwas' Christian ethic cannot be overemphasized. The ethical significance of the Scriptures is attributed to the fact that the Scripture requires a community that remembers and reinterprets the stories in order to maintain a distinctive way of life. Scripture does not shape individuals, but a specific community devoted to a way of life that bears witness to the significance of the stories. Thus, Hauerwas claims, "for Christian ethics the Bible is not just a collection of texts, but scripture that makes normative claims on a community."<sup>35</sup> For Hauerwas, the ethics of the Scripture derives from the fact that biblical ethics are intimately bound to the life of Christ and the community that lives according to that specific life through its remembering and reinterpretation of the narrative. The interpretation of tradition develops as the community develops, but always in continuity with tradition. Hauerwas suggests that a community that lives according to tradition requires both continuity and change, which is "even more true when the tradition of a community is based on witnessing to non-repeatable events. For such events must be fitted within a narrative that is an interpretation. But that interpretation must also remain open to a new narrative display not only in relation to the future, but also whenever we come to a new understanding of our past."<sup>36</sup> The new understanding of our past does not imply that new meaning is given to the past, but a new and deeper understanding of how the tradition can have greater relevance to the community through reinterpretation. Through this reinterpretation, the community understands more fully the truth about itself and the world.

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<sup>35</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 56.

<sup>36</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 61.

As stated earlier, Hauerwas' critics claim that his Christian ethic isolates the Christian community from the rest of the world. While Hauerwas contends that the Christian community distinguishes itself from the other communities to which the person belongs precisely because Christians are a people who derive their identity from the Scriptures, his critics counter that the distinctive Christian identity must not exclude the Christian from ongoing growth and development within the life of the world. Such ongoing relationship with the world means that the world must be able to join in the conversation within the Christian community as well as the Christian community contributing to the dialogue with the world. For Hauerwas, however, the new understanding of the past of the Christian community requires reinterpretation; that reinterpretation, however, takes place only within the Christian community, which excludes the input from persons who live outside of the particular community of the Church. Although the Scriptures serve as a primary foundation for the presentation of Häring's moral theology, Häring allows sources from outside of the Church to contribute to the development of his distinctively Christian moral theology, and thus Häring's moral theology allows for greater dialogue with those outside of the Christian community, in terms of the capacity of the Church to be a teacher and a learner at the same time. Hauerwas' Christian ethic could benefit from allowing non-Christian sources to contribute to the development of Christian morality without diminishing the authority of the Scriptures for the formation of Christian identity, much as Häring does in his own work. Scriptures would still be able to maintain their normative relevance in Christian moral formation without being relegated to the role of merely addressing problems or difficult situations in moral deliberation.

The purpose of Scripture for Hauerwas' ethic is not to resolve problems or find solutions to "quandary" situations. Rather, Scripture forms a kind of people who remember the stories of the past and who live in the present looking toward the future. Hauerwas insists that the narrative of the Scriptures serves to shape a particular community that lives faithful to the truth. He states, "the scripture forms a society and sets an agenda for its life that requires nothing less than trusting its existence to the God found through the stories of Israel and Jesus. The moral use of scripture, therefore, lies precisely in its power to help us remember the stories of God for the continual guidance of our community and individual lives."<sup>37</sup> The narrative of Scripture determines the shape of the community that lives according to God's call to Israel and the significance of the life of Jesus Christ. Clearly the individual as an individual is less important for the meaning of Scripture for Hauerwas than the shape of the community that derives its identity from the Scriptures. The Christian life cannot be understood apart from the community which shapes the life of the individual according to the community's interpretation of the tradition as it relates to the formation of the distinctive community in light of God's story. The Scriptures shape a community of character that interprets and reinterprets the story of God so that we may be faithful to God's calling. Thus, Hauerwas contends,

The narrative of scripture not only 'renders a character' but renders a community capable of ordering its existence appropriate to such stories. Jews and Christians believe this narrative does nothing less than render the character of God and in so doing renders us to be the kind of people appropriate to that character. To say that character is bound up with our ability to remember witnesses to the fact that our understanding of God is not inferred from the stories but is the stories.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 66.

<sup>38</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 67.

To say that Scripture renders a character is a moral claim, for the very being of the community, not merely the community's or individual's actions, are determined by the normative value of Scripture. Hauerwas concludes that "the question of the moral significance of scripture, therefore, turns out to be a question about what kind of community the church must be to be able to make the narratives of scripture central for its life."<sup>39</sup> Scripture shapes the community to be a kind of people who live in the imitation of God and the imitation of Jesus Christ in order to live faithful to the truth. The truthfulness of the narrative is manifest in the story of the people of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Although Hauerwas views the relationship of Israel and the Christian community as clearly important for moral formation according to the narrative of God's care for creation, the relationship appears to be a bit undefined at certain points throughout Hauerwas' ethic. From the outset, Hauerwas links "the people of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus" so inextricably that often the reader is left wondering if an essential distinction between Israel and Jesus exists. Hauerwas never fully explains the role of Israel for the moral development of the Christian other than to connect Israel and Jesus throughout his work. Hauerwas seems to further exacerbate the problem when he claims,

Jesus brought no new insights into the law of God's nature that Israel had not already known and revealed. The command to be perfect as God is perfect is not some new command, nor is the content of that command to love our enemies new. Both the structure and the content of the command draw from the long habits of thought developed in Israel through her experience with the Lord.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 68.

<sup>40</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 76.

Israel retells the many stories of God's interaction with creation. To love God required them to learn to love as God loved and continues to love. Hauerwas states, "Israel is Israel, therefore, just to the extent that she 'remembers' the 'way of the Lord,' for by that remembering she in fact imitates God. Such a remembering was not simple mental recollection, rather the image remembered formed the soul and determined future direction."<sup>41</sup> For the Christian community, then, the purpose of Israel is to demonstrate through the life of remembering the stories that show God's loving care for creation and thus to point to the need for imitation of God's love in order to remain faithful to God's story. Now the question becomes, if Israel can show us the importance of the moral formation of the community according to the imitation of God, then what is the purpose of Jesus Christ? That is to say, if Israel has already developed a community shaped by the imitation of God, what is the significance of Jesus Christ in Hauerwas' Christian ethic? One of the most problematic aspects of Haring's use of the Scriptures is his lack of attention to the importance of Israel in the development of the Christian tradition. In Hauerwas' Christian ethic, however, the problem initially seems to be that one can know all that needs to be known through the life of Israel without reference to the person of Jesus Christ.

Hauerwas responds that the stories of the life of Israel are only the beginning of the narrative of God's care for creation. The Christian community develops distinctive convictions about the nature of God and God's care for us only through God's calling of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We only know God through the retelling of the story of Israel and the life of Jesus. This distinctive narrative

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<sup>41</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 77.

determines our understanding of the kind of God who cares for us, but also our understanding of the world in which we live. Through the narrative we understand ourselves as contingent, creaturely, sinful, forgiven, and always only in relation to others.

Thus Hauerwas claims that the importance of remembering is evident in the fact that

Christians and Jews are commanded not to forget, since the very character of their community depends on their accepting God's forgiveness and thus learning how to remember, even if what they must remember is their sin and unrighteousness. By attending closely to the example of those who have given us our scripture, we learn how to be a people morally capable of forgiveness and thus worthy of continuing to carry the story of God we find authorized by scripture.<sup>42</sup>

To understand our story, we must locate ourselves within the story of God, starting with the story of God's relationship with the people of Israel. By understanding ourselves in relation to others, we understand ourselves as part of the ongoing story of God's care for creation. Through the Scriptures we recognize ourselves as part of an ongoing story in which we are the creatures, not the authors of the story. Likewise, we understand ourselves as sinners in need of forgiveness, for God calls to us again and again, yet never imposes the divine will on us. The story of the people of Israel is the story of a community called to be faithful to the covenant as God is faithful to creation. The story of Israel is, then, the story of the imitation of God.

The significance of Jesus Christ in the story is that Jesus is the continuation of the story of God's calling of Israel. In Jesus, according to Hauerwas, the early Christians

found a continuation of Israel's vocation to imitate God and thus in a decisive way to depict God's kingdom for the world. Jesus' life was seen as the recapitulation of the life of Israel and thus presented the very life of God in the world. By learning to imitate Jesus, to follow in his way, the early Christians believed they were learning to imitate God, who would have them be heirs of the kingdom.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 69.

<sup>43</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 78.

The imitation of Jesus, then, is the imitation of God's way of caring for creation. The life of Jesus demonstrates that God's way of caring for Israel is to call for the people's faithfulness to the covenant, but always allowing for the people to be disobedient to the covenant. In Jesus' death on the cross, God shows God's relationship with the world to be a refusal to impose the divine will on the people. The death on the cross is the climax of God's relationship with Israel and the rest of the world. Hauerwas concludes, "Through that cross God renews his covenant with Israel; only now the covenant is with the 'many.' All are created to be his disciples through this one man's life, death and resurrection, for in this cross we find the very passion of God."<sup>44</sup> Jesus' relationship to Israel, then, is the fulfillment of the covenant; now, however, the covenant is not offered only to the people of Israel, God's chosen people, but to all who live faithful to the story of God made known initially in the story of the calling of Israel, and subsequently in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the final analysis, then, God's kingdom made present in Jesus Christ appears to be the more crucial aspect of the narrative than is the story of God's call to the people of Israel; for only through Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection is the eschatological reality of the kingdom made present. Hauerwas insists, however, that the people of Israel are participants in God's kingdom, and indeed in God's very life, just as the people of the Church are participants in the divine reality. The Jewish community is formed according to the narrative which shapes lives according to the imitation of God's faithfulness to the covenant and care for creation. The Christian community, the Church, is likewise shaped according to the life of the community that bears witness to the life, death, and

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<sup>44</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 81.

resurrection of Jesus Christ through the imitation of Jesus, particularly Jesus' obedience to God's will and His instantiation of the sovereignty of God. Thus, Hauerwas contends, "we must remember that for Israel to imitate God or for Christians to imitate Jesus is not an end in itself. Such an imitation is to put one in the position of being part of a kingdom."<sup>45</sup> Just as the Israelites understood the world eschatologically – as having a beginning, a continuing drama, and an end – so, too, must we understand Israel's role in the kingdom as situating itself at the beginning of the narrative and giving us the direction for our imitation of God in Jesus Christ. The people of Israel know the kingdom as an ideal, not as a reality that has already been made present in Jesus Christ. Hauerwas at least acknowledges that the people of Israel are participants in the kingdom of God, but the depth of that participation is never fully disclosed in Hauerwas' ethic. Nonetheless, the primary role for Israel in the Christian story is to show the Christian community steadfast devotion to the Master of the universe.<sup>46</sup>

Hauerwas' emphasis on the importance of Israel in the continuing story of the Church is a significant contribution to a reconstruction of Häring's moral theology. A

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<sup>45</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 81-82.

<sup>46</sup> See especially Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 83. Although Hauerwas clearly sees a greater role for the people of Israel in the tradition that forms the Christian community than Häring allowed, I am still not overwhelmingly convinced that Hauerwas has presented a complete understanding of the importance of Israel for Christian ethics. Certainly Hauerwas provides a positive advancement for Jewish-Christian relations in moral deliberation, but his explication of the meaning of God's relationship with the people of Israel for Christian morality is not developed clearly enough. Of course, Hauerwas' concern is for the moral formation of the Christian community in particular and not the development of Jewish ethics, but one is left wanting more than what Hauerwas offers regarding the importance of Israel. Because Hauerwas clearly advocates "qualified" ethics, one wonders *where* the people of Israel are positioned in God's kingdom following a distinctively Jewish ethic that has not taken the full step towards recognizing the reality of the kingdom of God already made present in the person of Jesus Christ. Clearly the participation of the people of Israel in God's kingdom is at the beginning of the story that teaches the Christian community the importance of the imitation of God, but where does this leave the Israelites in the final salvation of the kingdom at the end of the story? Much like Häring's theology, the purpose of the story of Israel seems ultimately to serve the primary purpose of pointing to the story of Jesus Christ as the authentic revelation of God's relationship with humanity.

deeper understanding of Christianity's inherent indebtedness to the witness of the Israelites can only bolster claims regarding the importance of a renewed significance for the Scriptures in moral theology. Israel serves as the first witness to God's care for creation, God's faithfulness to creation especially in the covenant; but the story of the Israelites also gives the Christian community the proper direction for our imitation of God in Jesus Christ. Hauerwas' inclusive and even reverential attitude toward the people of Israel is an important contribution to Häring's work.

### III. Christological Narrative in Hauerwas' Christian Ethic

Hauerwas, like Häring, clearly views Jesus Christ as central to the moral life of the Christian community. Hauerwas identifies discipleship – in the form of faithfulness to the narrative of God's care for creation – as the primary form of the imitation of Christ in the Christian community. For Häring, the discipleship of the Christian in the imitation of Christ entails responsibility before God, self, others, and the world, such that the authentic disciple is the one who responds in fidelity and creative freedom to God's invitation to grace through the movement toward value outside of the self, namely, the Ultimate Value that is Jesus Christ. For both Häring and Hauerwas, then, to be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to imitate the life of Jesus Christ. For Hauerwas, the imitation of Jesus Christ primarily means instantiating the peaceableness of the kingdom of God in the life of the community. For Häring, assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ means instantiating the obedient and sacrificial love of Christ for others in each religious-moral decision that serves as a response to God's invitation to grace. The most interesting comparison

between the theological ethics of Häring and Hauerwas, therefore, can be made in relation to their “Christological anthropologies.”

The role of Christological anthropology cannot be overstated in either Häring’s or Hauerwas’ theological ethics. The relationship between God and humanity is central to how both theologians understand the purpose and shape of the distinctively Christian moral-religious life. While Christology is the beginning and end of each of their ethics, their conclusions are rather diverse, for Häring and Hauerwas view the importance of Jesus Christ’s relationship to God and to humanity in very distinctive ways.

According to Hauerwas, Christian ethics must not begin with “Christology,” but with Jesus. Hauerwas contends that most ethics that make Christology their starting point tend to lose sight of the importance of the historical person who is the Jesus of the Gospels. Rather than concentrating on the Incarnation or the Redemption, Hauerwas focuses his ethic on the person of Jesus Christ – particularly the life, death, and resurrection of this particular person – depicted in the tradition of the early church. The concern of Christology must not be the status of Jesus Christ, but Jesus’ life, work, teachings, death, and resurrection. For Hauerwas, what is important about Jesus for Christian ethics is not that God becomes human in the person of Jesus, but that the life of this man, Jesus of Nazareth, brings salvation through his teachings about the kingdom of God. Therefore, Hauerwas insists that the eschatological message of Jesus is the most relevant aspect of Jesus’ life and teaching for Christian ethics, because through Jesus’ life and works we are able to know the nature and immediacy of God’s kingdom. While the traditional understanding of “Christology” is not Hauerwas’ starting point, Christology clearly is important for Hauerwas’ Christian ethic.

The respective Christologies of Häring and Hauerwas clearly show the different ways in which they view Jesus' relationship to God and to humanity. Häring's Christological anthropology draws primarily from his understanding of Jesus Christ as the Word of God made flesh, and is therefore a "high Christology" in which Jesus fully understands his relationship to the Father and Holy Spirit, and to creation, as a relationship of faithfulness and fidelity to the loving will, and the honor and glory, of God. For Häring, Jesus Christ is both God's invitation and humanity's response to the invitation of grace. The Incarnation and Redemption are the key aspects of Jesus Christ's life for Christian moral formation. Because God becomes one of us, and because God ultimately overcomes death on the Cross at the hands of others, we are able to attain a deeper understanding of God's loving invitation to creation, and likewise we are capable of responding to God's offer of grace in the response of loving adoration and sacrificial obedience in faithfulness to the will of God. Jesus Christ, the invitation and response, is the unique and unrepeatable person-event from whom all of Christian morality attains its meaning and force.

Although Hauerwas also views Jesus Christ as fully understanding His relationship to God and His significance for the life of the world, one cannot claim that Hauerwas uses high Christology in his approach to Christian ethics. The focus of Hauerwas' Christology is on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As such, Hauerwas rejects Christian ethics that emphasize the language of Incarnation as fundamental to the Christian life, and instead looks to the narrative of the life and work of Jesus Christ as the life to be retold and imitated by the Christian community. In Hauerwas' interpretation of the story of Jesus, he relies heavily on a low Christology in

which the entire historical life, work, ministry, teaching, healings, and preaching of Jesus are central to the way that the Christian community understands the kingdom of God. At the same time, however, Hauerwas presents the most important aspect of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as pointing to the meaning and nature of the kingdom of God. The categorization of Hauerwas' Christology is difficult, then, as even Hauerwas demonstrates in his own work. Hauerwas claims that his Christological position "would generally be associated with so-called 'high christologies,'" <sup>47</sup> yet in a footnote in the same article he states that his "general christological approach is closer to those that want to do christology from 'below.'" <sup>48</sup>

Indeed, Hauerwas insists that his is not a low Christology precisely because his focus on the narrative form of the Gospels emphasizes the importance of the teachings of Jesus Christ as they shape the community in accordance with the life of God. The focus on the narrative of the Gospels helps us to understand Jesus as God's anointed. Our training in discipleship teaches us to locate ourselves within the very life of God, in a journey toward the Kingdom. For Hauerwas, then, "the very heart of following the way of God's kingdom involves nothing less than learning to be like God. We learn to be like God by following the teachings of Jesus and thus learning to be his disciples." <sup>49</sup> Hauerwas insists that this is not low Christology, but high Christology because the focus is on Jesus' relationship to the kingdom of God. Hauerwas further explains that the contrast between Christologies from above and from below are not particularly helpful,

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<sup>47</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 40.

<sup>48</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 235 (footnote 25).

<sup>49</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 75.

because such distinctions tend to focus on the “status” of Jesus rather than the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, Hauerwas’ concern is to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the revelation of God, and doctrines regarding the two natures of Jesus are more harmful than helpful in determining the kind of life necessary to understand what it means to say that Jesus is the revelation of God.

Hauerwas’ difficulty with Christian ethics based on the doctrine of the Incarnation is that such an exclusively incarnational focus, particularly for any ethic of imitation of Jesus Christ, “can provide a warrant for the assumption that one can know who Jesus is or ‘what’ he was in terms of essences, substances, and natures, without the necessity of in some way knowing Jesus himself – without, that is, being his disciple.”<sup>50</sup> Christology is the heart of Hauerwas’ Christian ethic, but it is specifically a Christology based on the narrative of Jesus Christ rather than doctrines or ideals. The whole of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection makes present the reality, and thus the possibility rather than ideal, of nonviolence as the truthful story for the community that seeks the kingdom of God.

One may agree readily with Hauerwas’ assessment that excessive focus on the Incarnation can indeed lead one to neglect the importance of discipleship for the Christian community, particularly if the emphasis is on the two natures of Jesus and on doctrinal concerns rather than concerns for the kind of community shaped by the life of the historical Jesus. Despite Häring’s frequent reference to the Incarnation and the Cross as pivotal points in the life of Jesus Christ for Christian morality, however, he does not negate the significance of discipleship in his own moral theology. Indeed, discipleship is the cornerstone of Häring’s Christocentric moral theology, for the Christian life is

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<sup>50</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 41.

nothing other than the life lived in the pursuit of the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ.

The weakness with Häring's ethic of imitation of Jesus Christ, however, is that he never addresses satisfactorily what aspect of the life of Jesus Christ we must imitate. Häring's Christocentric moral theology lacks a specific emphasis as to the definitive or detailed meaning of the imitation of Jesus Christ for Christian discipleship. We cannot imitate Jesus' Incarnation or Redemption because we are humans who do not attain to the divine-human status of Jesus Christ. Häring recognizes that the ordinary Christian cannot attain the incarnational status of Jesus Christ, nor can we merit redemption of our own making. One is left to wonder what precisely of the life of Jesus Christ, as presented in Häring's moral theology, the Christian discipleship is meant to imitate. Hauerwas' Christian ethic can make a significant contribution to Häring's moral theology particularly in regard to the decisive elements of imitation necessary for the moral formation and development of the Christian disciple.

Although Häring never defines what exactly the life of Christian discipleship in the imitation of Christ should look like, he does suggest that the life of discipleship has a distinctive direction for Christian moral formation. What is central for Häring's moral theology is what kind of people we are called to become according to the way in which we imitate the life of Jesus Christ. The Christian life is lived in the imitation of the life of the Word-made-flesh who willingly sacrifices Himself on the Cross in order to attain our redemption. What is significant, then, is the kind of relationship between God and humanity that is made known through these extraordinary, supernatural events that are unrepeatable, and yet which we are called to imitate in our own ordinary lives. We are not called to become the Incarnate Word, but to assimilate our lives to the life of the

Word Incarnate such that our response to God's invitation is the fitting and appropriate response made acceptable to God specifically in the person of Jesus Christ. For Håring, then, Jesus Christ is not "the Christ event" or something beyond our grasp, but Jesus Christ is precisely the person of history who is the loving invitation of God and at the same time the adoring response of humanity. The Christian life is the life that gives glory to God in all aspects of the religious-moral life, both in internal dedication to God and in external acts of loving service to others.

Just as response and responsibility are the recurring motifs throughout Håring's Christological anthropology, and his Christocentric moral theology in general, the concept of narrative plays a significant role throughout Hauerwas' Christian ethic, particularly in regards to his Christological anthropology. Throughout Hauerwas' Christian ethic, the person of Jesus Christ is consistently tied to the story of the people of Israel. The story of Jesus, then, is a continuation of the story of Israel, for both stories cannot be considered apart from the narrative of God's care for creation. Through Jesus Christ, however, God's kingdom is offered not only to the people of Israel, but to the multitude through Jesus' death and resurrection. Without participation in the narrative of Jesus Christ, then, people cannot participate in the kingdom, and therefore in the life of God.

Hauerwas begins his examination of the meaning of the life of Jesus Christ for Christian ethics with the assumption that the Jesus portrayed in the Scripture is the Jesus of the early church. What is central to Hauerwas' understanding of Jesus' relevance for Christian ethics, however, is his insistence that "the very demands Jesus placed on his followers cannot be known abstracted from his disciples' response. . . . [for] we only

learn who Jesus is as he is reflected through the eyes of his followers.”<sup>51</sup> Hauerwas is concerned to show that the historical Jesus is the Jesus of the Scripture, for each of the diverse accounts of the life of Jesus are still the depictions of each diverse community’s understanding of Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom. Because Jesus can be known and understood only through the witness of his followers and their response to his life and commands, Hauerwas further says that Jesus does not have a social ethic which can be followed. Rather, Jesus *is* a social ethic, for Jesus’ ethic, his message, is integral for his life and is his life. The life of the Christian disciple is the life committed to following Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection through the retelling, and living, of his story in the distinctively Christian community.

According to Hauerwas, the Christian must first learn to be a disciple – what following Jesus requires – before he understands the significance of Jesus’ story. The story of God made known in Jesus is the story of the kingdom of God. One must be trained in the skills necessary to live according to the story of Jesus, which is the story of Jesus’ life as the presence of the kingdom. To that end, Hauerwas says,

You cannot know who Jesus is after the resurrection unless you have learned to follow Jesus during his life. His life and crucifixion are necessary to purge us, like his disciples and adversaries had to be purged, of false notions about what kind of kingdom Jesus has brought. Only by learning to follow him to Jerusalem, where he becomes subject to the powers of this world, do we learn what the kingdom entails, as well as what kind of messiah this Jesus is.<sup>52</sup>

For Hauerwas, then, discipleship is a process of training, a journey with fellow disciples, which guides us in our commitment to become the kind of people who are worthy and capable of participation in the kingdom made known in Jesus Christ. A significant aspect

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<sup>51</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 73.

<sup>52</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 74.

of Hauerwas' Christian ethic that can contribute further to Häring's moral theology is Hauerwas' contention that the training in Christian discipleship necessarily involves placing ourselves within the ongoing narrative of the kingdom, begun in the history of Israel's life with God and continued in the Church. Thus, Hauerwas says that the story of Jesus is inseparable from how that story teaches us to follow him, for the Gospels show that "only because the disciples had first followed Jesus to Jerusalem were they able to understand the significance of the resurrection."<sup>53</sup> The importance of the resurrection cannot be understood apart from undertaking the entire journey with Jesus, through which we learn the nature of the kingdom as well as the immediacy of the kingdom. Participation in the narrative of God requires knowing the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as the proclamation of the kingdom of God as present and still future reality. Therefore, to be a follower of Jesus Christ requires training in order to understand our position within the story of God made known through Jesus Christ. One cannot know Jesus without being trained as his disciple. Discipleship requires personal relationship with, and knowledge of, Jesus. The training for discipleship takes place only in the distinctively Christian community, according to Hauerwas, for only in the Christian community can the story of God be fully understood and most truthfully lived. One's training in the life of Jesus' story forms one's own story and one's own character. The Christian only knows how to live his life by knowing Jesus' life.

The Jesus of Hauerwas' Christology is the proclaimer of the kingdom, and at the same time is the kingdom in person. The identity of Jesus "is revealed through his

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<sup>53</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 42.

relation to God and the authority that relationship gives him to proclaim the Kingdom.”<sup>54</sup>

The Kingdom which Jesus reveals is the peaceable kingdom of God that is both present and future reality through Him. Jesus’ entire life, therefore, exemplifies the life necessary to attain in order to participate in God’s kingdom. Because Jesus comes to proclaim the reality of the kingdom of God, Jesus “did not come to leave us unchanged, but rather to transform us to be worthy members of the community of the new age.”<sup>55</sup>

The purpose of Jesus’ life for us is to initiate and make present the kingdom of God, and in so doing, to teach us how to live according to the peaceable kingdom as disciples on the journey. God’s Lordship is revealed in the story of Jesus which “defines the nature of how God rules and how such a rule creates a corresponding ‘world’ and society.”<sup>56</sup>

Through His death on the Cross, however, Jesus is revealed both as Lord and as Servant at the same time, for Christians see in the Cross “the climax of God’s way with the world. In his cross we see decisively the one who, being all-powerful, becomes vulnerable even to being a victim of our refusal to accept his Lordship. Through that cross God renews his covenant with Israel; only now the covenant is with the ‘many.’”<sup>57</sup> Jesus’ death on the cross, however, is not the only aspect of His life that has relevance for the Christian community, for Hauerwas insists that the entirety of Jesus’ life, Jesus’ “whole self is an act of participation in God’s purpose for man.”<sup>58</sup> Through the life of Jesus Christ, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God’s will for creation is made known. Therefore the

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<sup>54</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 45.

<sup>55</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 73.

<sup>56</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 45.

<sup>57</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 81.

<sup>58</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 45.

relationship between God and humanity revealed in Jesus Christ, according to Hauerwas, is one in which God is the Lord and Master of all of creation, while humans are the followers of the peaceable kingdom made known in Jesus Christ.

By making oneself part of the story of God, she finds a way to make God's life her own. Humans do not have the innate ability to make God's life our own; rather, God has "an unrelenting desire to have each of us serve in the kingdom. The call to such service we find only in the presence of another, whose need is often the very occasion of our freedom."<sup>59</sup> God's role in the divine-human relationship is to call us to service, and humanity's role is to serve others for the sake of God's kingdom. This relationship is manifest perfectly in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who is known only through the response of his disciples in the telling of His story. Underlying Hauerwas' whole theory, then, is the implicit assumption that the divine-human relationship is one of call and response, although Hauerwas emphasizes the narrative form of the Gospels as the primary means by which this relationship is made known in Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, although Hauerwas has a stronger emphasis on narrative and community than does Häring, the response to God's call to participation in the kingdom is still at the foundation of Hauerwas' vision of the divine-human relationship. He just prefers to use a different language to describe the call and response model. The call of God is to the service of others. The Christian response is the life lived in the imitation of Jesus Christ who makes real the kingdom of God.

The imitation of Jesus Christ, according to Hauerwas, does not involve imitation of Jesus' external actions. The imitation of Jesus Christ does not entail *being* Jesus, but

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<sup>59</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 44.

being *like* Jesus. Jesus does not reveal any new insights regarding God's nature that the people of Israel did not already know,<sup>60</sup> but Jesus' life shows the people of Israel their task, as well as the very life of God. As both Lord and Servant, Jesus' death on the Cross shows that Jesus is subject to the wills of others, and not His own will. Indeed, God's will is worked out throughout the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Hauerwas contends,

The resurrection, therefore, is not an extra-ordinary event added to this man's life, but a confirmation by God that the character of Jesus' life prior to the resurrection is perfectly faithful to his vocation to proclaim and make present God's kingdom. Without the resurrection our concentration on Jesus would be idolatry, but without Jesus' life we would not know what kind of God it is who has raised him from the dead.<sup>61</sup>

The imitation of Christ is not to take the form of dying on a cross as did Jesus, but a participation in the narrative of Jesus Christ as the story makes known the God who is revealed in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Imitation involves discipleship, which means following the way of God, which is the way of renunciation of one's own desires and wills and longings, in the life of humble obedience and loving service for the sake of Jesus Christ who is the Servant of God.

With a greater understanding of who Jesus Christ is in the theological ethics of Häring and Hauerwas, a brief examination of their anthropologies in light of their Christologies will further highlight the similarities and discrepancies between the work of Häring and Hauerwas. They both view Christology as important for their respective theological ethics, and they both understand the imitation of Christ as essential for

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<sup>60</sup> See especially Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 76, as cited previously in the discussion regarding Jesus' relationship with Israel.

<sup>61</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 79.

Christian moral formation. Indeed, Hauerwas and Häring both envision the life of imitation of Christ as living like Christ, such that basic attitudes and dispositions are central to a Christian understanding of the moral life that participates in the life of God. Häring and Hauerwas, however, view different aspects of Christological anthropology as most relevant for their respective ethics. For Häring, personalism and value theory are foundational elements for his Christological anthropology. For Hauerwas, character and narrative are essential for understanding the relationship between the kingdom of God and humanity made known in Jesus Christ.

For Hauerwas, as for Häring, Christian ethics ought to be concerned primarily with the agent, rather than the act. Hauerwas contends that the problem with traditional Catholic and Protestant renderings of theological ethics is that they focus on establishing a foundation for basic beliefs and only then proceed to examine how these beliefs have moral implications for the Christian person or community. Hauerwas insists, however, that he intends “to show that Christian ethics is not what one does after one gets clear on everything else, or after one has established a starting point or basis of theology; rather it is at the heart of the theological task. For theology is a practical activity concerned to display how Christian convictions construe the self and world.”<sup>62</sup> For Hauerwas, the fundamental role of theology in the moral life of the Christian is the descriptive task of situating the person and the community in relation to the story of God. Thus, rather than response and responsibility as fundamental concepts for his Christian ethic, Hauerwas draws heavily upon the notion of narrative as the most adequate concept for understanding Christian morality.

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<sup>62</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 55.

For Hauerwas, as well as Häring, ethics is theology. The moral life for both Hauerwas and Häring is the religious-moral life lived in the imitation of Jesus Christ. Hauerwas views ethics as critical reflection on the particular story of the people of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the sharing of the story of God, the person is formed into the kind of person who is able to live within the community that shares the story. Hauerwas contends that Christians “do not create moral values, principles, virtues; rather they constitute a life for us to appropriate.”<sup>63</sup> That is to say, morality shapes the Christian rather than the Christian choosing what is of value and importance for “his” morality. The person does not have Christian convictions that lead to a moral life; rather the morality of the person is formed within a community whose convictions are shaped by the story of God who is made known in the life of the people of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christian ethics is specifically concerned with the story of one particular man, and likewise the kind of people shaped and formed by that story as disciples. The concern is for who the person is, rather than merely how the person acts. In order to participate in the life of the Christian community, the person must be the “kind of person” who understands himself as a part of the story of God. Christian convictions are not decisions, but the ethics that are the foundation for the Christian moral life.

Hauerwas utterly rejects the notion of “quandary” situations in which a decision against God is possible once the person belongs to a community formed by the narrative of God. The character of the person is formed within the community to which the person belongs. The virtuous person views himself as part of a narrative rather than the creator

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<sup>63</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 3.

of his own story. Therefore he sees himself not as confronted by situations, but as an event within a purposive narrative. Thus, Hauerwas says, “Character determines circumstance, even when the circumstance may be forced upon us, by our very ability to interpret our actions in a story that accounts for moral activity.”<sup>64</sup> In Hauerwas’ estimation, a member of the Christian community does not even recognize situations in which the rejection of God’s kingdom is a possibility, for even circumstances which are put upon us cannot sway us from the truthfulness of the peaceable kingdom. The person trained in the Christian community views himself as part of the story of God, which is the story of the kingdom made present reality in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, the person’s character is formed according to the faithful living of the story, not only in telling the story, but in living the story throughout everyday life. As such, Christian ethics is not about making decisions, even fundamental or basic decisions that orient one’s life for or against God. Rather Christian ethics is concerned with living the truthfulness of the story of Jesus Christ in which one has been trained by the Christian community. The Christian lives according to the narrative. The person does not make decisions or choices about how to act. Rather, the Christian person is who he is precisely because he is part of the ongoing narrative of the community to which he belongs, the Christian community that is witness to the truthfulness of the story of God.

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<sup>64</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 8.

Much of Hauerwas' work is a reaction against "modern" and "postmodern"<sup>65</sup> ethics based on the ideas of freedom, autonomy, and choice as the essence of the moral life, as well as those ethics that are founded on the understanding of the moral life of the person disengaged from historical and communal situations. Hauerwas believes that modern and postmodern trends in ethics ultimately have led to an understanding of morality only in terms of the personal, such that morality is merely that which we choose or create; rather than being shaped by morality within a community, we shape our own morality according to our own freedom and choice without reference to our historical contingencies and social relations. Thus, "moral knowledge is not so much discovered as 'created' through personal choice. Therefore the necessary basis of authentic morality is seen as the freedom to choose and willingness to take responsibility for choices."<sup>66</sup> Hauerwas' reaction to such emphases in ethics, then, is to view "narrative" as the only authentic way to discuss Christian morality, for the people of Israel and the Christian community know who to be, and thus how to act, only according to the story of God passed down generation after generation as witnesses to God's relationship with humanity and the world.

Unlike Hauerwas, Häring insists that the Christian moral-religious response to God's invitation necessarily requires a fundamental option, a basic decision for or

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<sup>65</sup> Hauerwas says that modernity and postmodernity are illusive terms because they suggest that we are able to know where we are located in history. He synthesizes the goals of modernity and postmodernity: "Modernity sought to secure knowledge in the structure of the human rationality, and relegated God to the 'gaps' or denied Him all together. Modernity said that God is a projection of the ideals and wants of what it means to be human so let us serve and worship the only God that matters – that is, the human. Postmodernists, in the quest to be thorough in their atheism, now deny that the human exists. Postmodernists are thus the atheists that only modernity could produce." From "Preaching As Though We Had Enemies," *First Things: The Journal of Religion, Culture and Public Life*. May 1995: 45.

<sup>66</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 7.

orientation toward God. Rather than seeing the self as a participant in the narrative of God, Häring emphasizes that the person is in constant dialogue with God in the divine-human relationship. Häring is not as concerned with the transcendental moment at which the person attains to a new understanding of her relationship to God, as Hauerwas interprets theologies that employ the fundamental option as important for Christian morality. Rather, Häring focuses on the moral formation of the person throughout the entirety of one's life as a distinctively religious-moral response to God's offer of grace in the life of the person integrally considered. Häring and Hauerwas share the same general concept that the person and community participate in the life of God, but Häring discusses this relationship in terms of the call-response model while Hauerwas considers the narrative as the primary form for understanding the relationship. Because Häring emphasizes the importance of dialogue, he views the relationship between God and humanity as an ongoing communication that requires a fundamental decision for or against fellowship with God. According to Häring, then, decision-making is of utmost importance, because the person chooses to respond in the affirmative to God's offer, or to respond in the negative with a rejection of God's grace.

As I discussed at length previously in this project,<sup>67</sup> Häring emphasizes that moral theology must attend to the person as agent rather than the acts of the person alone. Indeed, Häring's entire moral theology revolves around the idea that the person must be formed in the image of Jesus Christ with the attitudes and dispositions necessary to be a true disciple of Christ, and likewise the actions of the person will reflect that discipleship. The freedom of the Christian, as presented by Häring's Christocentric moral theology, is

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<sup>67</sup> See Chapter Two regarding Häring's discussion of personalism and freedom.

the freedom of Christ which enables the person to respond to God's invitation with the freedom and fidelity of one who participates in the very life of God through the moral-religious response to God's offer of grace. The person is, therefore, a self, and only understands himself as "self" in relation to others and the Other who is God. Indeed, Häring insists that the I-Thou relationship is understood most perfectly only as an I-Thou-We relationship in which the person understands the self as drawn to the innate value of that which is other, or outside of the self. Häring's understanding of "personhood" is not, then, entirely unlike Hauerwas' understanding of the character because both personhood and character require formation and development within community.

Like Hauerwas, Häring also ultimately rejects the idea of casuistry as important for Christian moral decision-making, for he insists that moral theology must be concerned with the kind of person formed according to the imitation of Christ; from this kind of person flow the kinds of actions in keeping with the person's identity as a disciple of Christ. Unlike Hauerwas, however, Häring insists that the person must develop a fundamental orientation which guides him in the response to God's invitation, which is a basic decision to accept or reject God's offer of grace. While Hauerwas contends that this is not even a possibility for one who is truly formed according to the life of the Christian community, Häring says that the image and likeness of God within all persons allows for the authentic freedom to accept or reject participation in God's life. As such, the freedom of the Christian is not merely the freedom to choose this as opposed to that action; the freedom of the Christian is the freedom to be like God and accept God's

indwelling within himself, or to reject God's grace and therefore to become a false self, a person lacking integrity and coherence.

While freedom is an essential aspect of Häring's Christological anthropology, Hauerwas eschews the modern fascination with freedom as necessary for morality. Hauerwas' Christian ethic is largely a reaction against contemporary quandary ethics that focus on the difficult situations rather than being based on Christian convictions that shape the life of the Christian community. In Hauerwas' Christian ethic, "character is not merely the result of our choices, but rather the form our agency takes through our beliefs and intentions."<sup>68</sup> As such, our character is the source of our freedom, because ultimately "freedom is more like having power than having a choice."<sup>69</sup> Human freedom is not the ability to make up our own story or our own history or even to make our own decisions. Rather, human freedom is the ability to view the events of our lives as our own through our attention and intention. Freedom is the ability to describe our actions and our lives as part of an ongoing story. Moral action, then, is not something that happens apart from the character of the person, but is a part of the character's ongoing story. Actions are purposive and intentional, but the person does not cause things to happen; rather the acts become part of the person's ongoing story according to how the agent describes how the action fits into her story. Hauerwas states, "My power as an agent is therefore relative to the power of my descriptive ability. Yet that very ability is fundamentally a social skill, for we learn to describe through appropriating the narratives of the communities in which

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<sup>68</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 39.

<sup>69</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 115.

we find ourselves.”<sup>70</sup> We learn how to describe our actions as moral through the narratives of the community. Our agency comes from our narrative, not our freedom. Freedom depends on the habits acquired through the descriptions we learn from our communities, and true freedom comes from being part of a truthful narrative that gives us the ability to “have” a character at all.

For Häring, God’s invitation to the person takes place in the community because the communities to which the person belongs are formative of the person’s moral understanding of the self as always in relation to others and to the Other that is God. The invitation of God, however, is available only to the person who freely seeks to respond to God’s offer of grace in the integral life of the person as person, that is, as a personality that is open to the dialogue with God. Freedom, therefore, is the heart of Häring’s Christocentric moral theology, for the freedom of the person in dialogue with God is the freedom of Jesus Christ. The response of the person is the free response of the person who chooses to accept or reject the offer of grace in a fundamental orientation toward (or away from) giving glory to God. Each decision is a moral decision, for each decision of the person who acts in accordance with the freedom of Jesus Christ is a choice that affects one’s basic decision for God.

Hauerwas, quite to the contrary, insists that the divine-human relationship is manifest in the community that acquires the skills necessary to recognize that freedom is the ability to see oneself as part of the ongoing story of God, not as the author of one’s own story. Therefore, decisions are not really decisions at all, for each moral action is merely a descriptive event within the person’s ongoing story. To that end, the person is

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<sup>70</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 42.

not truly free to make any choice, but can only recognize the events that are part of his story as being in keeping with the habits of the community or as being incongruent with what is worthy of being a member of the community. What we have done, and what has happened to us, are part of our history and part of our ongoing narrative. As a member of the particular community that is shaped by the narrative of Jesus Christ, certain “decisions” are not even available to the Christian person that are available to those outside of the community who do not live according to the habits of the Christian community.

While Häring wants to emphasize the importance of the personality as indicative of the participation of the person in the freedom and fidelity of Jesus Christ, Hauerwas wants to focus on the narrative that demonstrates the illusion that contemporary notions of freedom engender through giving the false impression that individuals are in control of the world and even of themselves. Thus, Hauerwas states,

We acquire character through the expectations of others. The “otherness” of another’s character not only invites me to an always imperfect imitation, but challenges me to recognize the way my vision is restricted by my own self-preoccupation. Thus the kind of community in which we encounter another does not merely make *some* difference for our capacity for agency, it makes *all* the difference. From this perspective we are not the creators of our character; rather, our character is a gift from others which we learn to claim as our own by recognizing it as a gift. Our freedom is literally in the hands of others. I am free just to the extent that I can trust others to stand over against me and call my own “achievements” into question. It is from them that I learn the story that gives my life a purpose and direction.<sup>71</sup>

I think that this passage is important for understanding the role that “others” play in the moral formation of the individual within the community that shapes the character of the Christian individual. The “others” that Hauerwas discusses appear to be other people in

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<sup>71</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 45.

the community who retell and live the story of Jesus Christ and not necessarily others outside of the Church community. Furthermore, the other that we encounter never seems to include Jesus Christ as someone that we personally encounter in our life on Earth. We know who Jesus is in light of the narrative retold and lived by the community, and we know Jesus only because we know the response of the disciples to his call to the kingdom of God. From Hauerwas' Christian ethic, however, one does not have a sense of the importance of the experience of Jesus Christ in a personal encounter, which Häring's moral theology presents as so vitally important for growth in Christian maturity and moral development. In Hauerwas' ethic we do not know Jesus Christ through personal experience of Christ's intimate invitation to participation in the life of God, nor through the encounter with another person as an encounter with the reality of Jesus Christ as present reality here and now in the life of another person. While the purpose of the community is to develop the skills to make present the reality of the kingdom of God, Hauerwas never gives the impression that Christ is present in the life of the community in a personal or intimate way, but only as a person about whom stories are told and retold and lived and imitated.

Hauerwas does not explain how Jesus continues to be present in the community aside from the narrative that makes present the kingdom of God as a reality rather than an ideal. Although we know that the kingdom is present in Jesus Christ, Hauerwas does not give a sense of the importance of personal encounter with Jesus here and now through the experience of the other as the image of God or as an instantiation of Jesus Christ's presence in the world right now. Rather, the community is working to shape its life according to the narrative of Jesus Christ through the development of skills and

disciplines made known through the Scriptures and Tradition that have formed, and continue to form, the Church as witness to the narrative. The question remains, then, how can we experience Jesus Christ as present reality rather than merely as witnessed through the stories of others? That is to say, the encounter with Jesus in Hauerwas' Christian ethic seems always to be a mediated experience through the witness of the community in the telling of the narrative of Jesus Christ, rather than an encounter with Jesus Christ that directly calls us to participation in the life of God.

Although both Hauerwas and Häring examine the relational aspect of the character or personality, respectively, for moral development, the role of "others" in the person's moral formation is quite different in Häring's moral theology. Häring's understanding of the importance of "the other" for moral formation is that the person encounters, and is drawn toward, value in the experience of the other. The movement of the person toward the other in appreciation of the value of the other is a movement of love. For Häring, the personal encounter with Jesus Christ as Ultimate Value does not necessarily occur in one moment of conversion or one specific experience of grace that utterly alters the direction of one's life. Rather, the experience of Jesus Christ in a personal and intimate way can take place through the encounter in an ongoing relationship with another who bears moral value and beckons the person to a deeper communion of love and fidelity to God. The encounter with the other who is a bearer of moral value may take place within the Christian community, but it may also take place within the greater world, for the Church does not have the exclusive hold on the experience of God's grace. Yes, Häring's evaluation of the Church clearly views the Church as the most prominent place for the sacramental encounter, but he further

contends that all persons of good will who seek the common good can be bearers of moral value and instances of the loving will of God for creation, and therefore can be analogously encounters with the person of Jesus Christ. The experience of Jesus Christ need not be mediated through narratives or communities, but can be a direct encounter with the very will and passion of Christ in the experience of the other as the very presence of Jesus Christ. While Häring focuses on the importance of the intimate awareness of Ultimate Value, however, his moral theology suffers from the lack of concreteness and the focus on the communal contexts so richly evident throughout Hauerwas' Christian ethic.

Hauerwas seems to reject the importance of experience in his emphasis on the significance of the narrative description of God's care for creation. Moral knowledge is available to the Christian because she is able to locate herself within the narrative of God. The only way in which the Christian knows Christ is through the accounts of the disciples who respond to Jesus' call to the kingdom. Moral knowledge is important for Hauerwas' Christian ethic, therefore, because only acknowledgement of the truthfulness of the story of God can provide authentic moral knowledge. Overall, Hauerwas provides a rather pessimistic view of humanity. Human beings in Hauerwas' ethic are first and foremost described as sinful creatures who live according to the illusions and deceptions of the fragmented world that only perpetuates the violence inherent in attempting to maintain our illusions and self-deceptions. The world is in the state of fragmentation and violence precisely because it does not understand itself as violent and in need of forgiveness. For Hauerwas, the experience of the other outside of the self can be an experience of fear in which one recognizes differences rather than similarities between each other. The

violence of the world is evident in the fact that human beings are always in opposition to one another, viewing each other as “other” that threatens our freedom and our power.

In the Christian community alone, however, the experience of the other is the experience of trust and freedom from fear. Hauerwas is not concerned with the function of others as bearers of moral value, for Hauerwas does not view the moral life of the Christian as acting morally in order to attain any kind of value. Rather, Hauerwas insists that the significance of the other in the moral formation of the person is to give us the gift of “ourselves,” to give us our character that provides our life with meaning and coherence. Hauerwas is concerned to point out that contemporary notions of freedom emphasize the importance of choice, and indeed the choice to make ourselves a product of history who is capable of decisions in the face of quandary situations. For Hauerwas, however, “freedom is a quality that derives from having a well-formed character. Put in traditional terms, only the truly good person can be the truly free person. In this view, freedom follows from courage and the ability to respond to a truthful story.”<sup>72</sup> Through the encounter with others we learn what they are doing and how they live in order to better understand what we are to do and how we are to live, who we are to be as members of a community that derives its identity from the narrative of God. Unlike Häring, Hauerwas never discusses freedom in terms of the freedom of Christ. Freedom in Hauerwas’ Christian ethic, then, appears primarily as the freedom to become who we ought to be as disciples of Christ, as members of the Christian community, through the imitation (albeit imperfect) of other members of the community living the story of Jesus Christ. The tragedy of the Christian life seems to far outweigh the joy of the Christian

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<sup>72</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 37.

life throughout Hauerwas' Christian ethic. The entire Christian moral life is a challenge to oppose the powers of the world that perpetuate the tragedy and make the moments of true joy rare occasions indeed.

Häring's moral theology can benefit from Hauerwas' emphasis on the importance of narrative for shaping a distinctively Christian identity. Although the imitation of Christ clearly is central to Häring's work, one is sometimes left wondering precisely what the assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ entails. Häring obviously views the life of the Christian disciple as one of loving adoration of God that gives glory and honor to the triune God. Likewise, the Christian life is one of sacrificial obedience to the will of God, to the extent that the Christian disciple must be willing to sacrifice all things for another in the name of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the life of the Christian disciple is the life of creative freedom that is the freedom of Christ, and also the life of fidelity in the faithful response of the disciple to the invitation of grace in Christ in imitation of Jesus Christ's faithful and loving obedience in his death on the Cross. All of these aspects of the meaning of Christian discipleship are evident throughout Häring's work, but how these dispositions and attitudes are lived out precisely in the life of the community remains a bit unclear at times in Häring's moral theology.

Hauerwas offers a striking alternative to Häring's lack of clarity, for he insists that the distinctive life of the Christian disciple is the life of peace-making for the sake of the kingdom of God, in the perfect imitation of Jesus' pacifism as made known in the narrative of Jesus Christ. While Häring broadly describes the kind of person who is a disciple of Christ as the person who adopts the attitudes and dispositions of Jesus Christ, Hauerwas decisively points to the peaceableness of the kingdom made present in Jesus

Christ as the fundamental attitude and disposition of the Christian disciple. While one can argue that pacifism is not the *only* attitude or way of life that we learn from Jesus Christ who makes present the kingdom of God, Hauerwas is very specific that the life of the Christian community necessitates nonviolence as the fundamental shape of the life of the disciple of Christ.

The evaluation of Häring's and Hauerwas' Christological anthropologies demonstrates some areas of incompleteness within each of their works. Throughout Häring's moral theology, the significance of Jesus Christ for Christian moral formation is portrayed generally based on the importance of the Incarnation and Redemption. He looks to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as central for Christian morality, but he somewhat neglects the specific teachings of Jesus Christ, such that the narrative aspects of Jesus' life and ministry are largely ignored in Häring's work. Although Häring ultimately espouses a normative moral theology in which Jesus Christ is the norm and center of Christian morality, Häring's Christocentric ethic is, in the final analysis, largely descriptive. The Christian is responsible for living according to the life of Christ, but Jesus Christ's life is broadly construed as the life of loving and faithful obedience to God in the loving service to the neighbor.

In contrast to Häring's moral theology, Hauerwas' Christological anthropology lends itself to problems because the distinctive life of Jesus of Nazareth, and specifically the nonviolent aspect of Jesus' life, serves as the narrative which the Christian must follow in order to be worthy of living within the Christian community. Despite Hauerwas' claim that his Christian ethic is primarily descriptive, and despite the fact that he claims to eschew norms and principles in the development of his Christian ethic,

ultimately Hauerwas' work is normative even though it is based on descriptive aspects of the life of Jesus Christ. Rather than providing a general description as to what the Christian life is to entail, Hauerwas insists that the norm for the Christian life is the peaceableness of the kingdom of God, such that the only authentic Christian life is the life of nonviolence and peace.

Jesus Christ's relationship with humanity is central to Häring's understanding of Christian morality, for God invites the person to loving participation in the very life of the triune God in, with, and through Jesus Christ. The relationship between God and humanity is one of loving communion in which God invites the person to grace, and the person accepts or rejects the offer. The acceptance or rejection can take many distinct forms, but at the heart of each response of acceptance is the response of love and fidelity to the glory of God. The interior attitude of the Christian disciple who imitates Jesus Christ's life must be one of adoring love and sacrificial obedience in fidelity to the Word of God. This attitude can take a variety of forms in external actions that are consistent with the fundamental orientation toward the honor and glory of God. While the fundamental disposition certainly excludes particular actions that clearly violate the adherence to moral value and right worship of God made known perfectly in Jesus Christ, Häring does not mandate that only one kind of action, such as pacifism, is the sole action or attitude that serves as the criterion for what is a fitting response of love to God's offer of grace. The role of the Church, then, is to guide the Christian disciple in the formation of the moral life such that the fundamental attitudes of Jesus Christ become also our fundamental attitudes and dispositions that direct our lives toward communion with the

triune God in the response to God through the loving service for, and friendship with, the neighbor.

Although Hauerwas agrees that the divine-human relationship is important for the moral formation of the Christian community, his focus is not on God's invitation to grace made known in the Word made flesh. Rather, Hauerwas' concern is to show that the life of Jesus Christ is ultimately defined as the life of nonviolence. Because the nature of the kingdom of God is the peaceable kingdom, Christian morality essentially requires that the community formed according to the story of Jesus is the community of nonviolence.

Hauerwas insists that *the* truthfulness of the Christian story is the peaceableness of the kingdom. Therefore, only those who live the pacifist life that resists the violence of the world are able to live faithful to the narrative of God, while all others continue to live in the illusion of the world in which violence and power only perpetuate the fear of others and the sinfulness of the world that refuses to recognize its need for forgiveness. Such tragedy is inevitable in human life, because we are sinful creatures who deceive ourselves into trusting illusions rather than the reality of the kingdom of God made present in Jesus Christ. Like Häring, Hauerwas insists that forgiveness is essential for those who seek the path of nonviolence, but the world refuses to accept forgiveness and therefore perpetuates the violence and fragmentation of the world.

Both Hauerwas and Häring view the cross and resurrection as essential for Christian moral development, because the Redemption is the way in which the kingdom of God, and God's sacrificial love, is made most visible for humankind. For Häring, Jesus' Cross and Resurrection is the manifestation of God's adoring and forgiving love. While Hauerwas agrees that God's love for humanity is made visible in the Redemption,

he contends that what is most significant regarding Jesus' Cross is the Resurrection in which God's kingdom of peace is made manifest, for through the Resurrection we are forgiven and thus know ourselves as sinners. Hauerwas states,

That we are only able to have a history, a self, through the forgiveness wrought by God means that the resurrection of Jesus is the absolute center of history. It is on the basis of the resurrection that we can have the confidence to remember the history of our sin. Through the resurrection, by being invited to recognize our victim as our hope, we are gifted with the power to break the hold of our most determined oppressor – ourselves.<sup>73</sup>

According to Hauerwas, then, the Resurrection helps us to locate ourselves within the story of God's salvation for creation. From Jesus' death on the Cross and in His resurrection, we see ourselves as in need of forgiveness, and at the same time we recognize ourselves as forgiven. Likewise, we see the need to live as forgiven agents in God's kingdom. From this forgiveness comes our power, our ability to live in confidence despite our history of sinfulness. For both Hauerwas and Häring, then, the cross and resurrection are inseparable from God's forgiveness being offered and made known to humanity.

Häring's Christological anthropology can generally be described as loving communion with God and fellowship with others made known through Jesus Christ and most perfectly responded to in Jesus Christ. Hauerwas' Christological anthropology can be described as the life of the community that is witness to the peaceableness of the kingdom of God made present reality in the person of Jesus Christ. Häring offers Hauerwas' Christian ethic a greater focus on the responsibility of the Christian to respond to God's offer of grace in a life centered on participation in the divine life of the Trinity in the ongoing divine-human dialogue. Häring's view of the person as basically good

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<sup>73</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 90.

and fundamentally oriented to participation in the triune life gives a more positive role to the person than is available in Hauerwas' focus on the person as sinful rather than as an image and likeness of God. Hauerwas gives Häring's moral theology an expanded role for the narrative, not only the narrative of Jesus' life in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, but also the ongoing narrative of the story of God that helps the person to see himself as historical and communal. While Häring discusses the historical and social character of the person, Hauerwas gives a more fundamental role to the narrative as helping the person to locate himself within the story of God. Both approaches to Christian morality based on Christological anthropology have their own merits, but also deficiencies that can be overcome with a more nuanced view towards the shape of the life of the Christian disciple and the Christian community according to the fundamental attitude and disposition of Jesus Christ in relation to God and to creation.

#### IV. Christians and Non-Christians in the Kingdom of God

One of the most interesting aspects of Hauerwas' Christian ethic is his insistence that the convictions of the person are morality. Belief and morality are not separate in Hauerwas' theology. This is reminiscent of Häring's insistence that the person does not live a moral life and a religious life, but that all of the person's responses to God's offer of grace are specifically religious-moral responses in the Christian life lived in the imitation of Jesus Christ. Likewise, Hauerwas insists,

The task of Christian ethics is to help us see how our convictions *are* in themselves a morality. We do not first believe certain things about God, Jesus, and the church, and subsequently derive ethical implications from these beliefs. Rather our convictions embody our morality; our beliefs are our actions. We Christians ought not to search the 'behavioral implications' of our beliefs. Our

moral life is not comprised of beliefs plus decisions; our moral life is the process in which our convictions form our character to be truthful.<sup>74</sup>

Hauerwas clearly advocates a Christian ethic in which, much like Häring's moral theology, the religious and the moral life of the Christian are not distinct from one another. On the other hand, however, Hauerwas and Häring do not agree entirely as to what aspect of the moral-religious life of the Christian person is for the formation of Christian morality. Certainly Hauerwas and Häring agree that the beliefs of the person are embodied in his actions. They also agree that truthfulness is a fundamental concern for the Christian who lives as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Indeed, while much agreement exists between Häring and Hauerwas regarding the necessity of faith or Christian convictions for moral development, the context in which moral formation occurs differs for each of the theological ethicists. This is most evident in the prominent role which the Christian community plays in Hauerwas' Christian ethic, while the relevance of the community in Häring's moral theology is rather different.

While Häring addresses the importance of community for moral development throughout his moral theology, the community attains the highest status in Hauerwas' Christian ethic. The difference in emphases indicates a significant distinction between the two theological ethics, for it points to a difference between their two moral epistemologies. How the person comes to moral knowledge and awareness is quite different in Häring's and Hauerwas' ethics.

At the heart of Hauerwas' Christian ethic lies the function of the community in the moral development of the character of the person who lives according to the narrative of God. Most important to the notion of the narrative for Hauerwas' Christian ethic is the

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<sup>74</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 16.

idea that narrative is “done,” or retold and lived, specifically in the Christian community. Despite the differences between the stories of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection presented in the Gospels, the narrative remains the same in that they all agree that Jesus’ life sets the standard for the community regarding the kingdom of God. Hauerwas emphasizes narrative and character in order to remind us of

what kind of community we must be to sustain the sort of discussion required by the stories of God. These stories are, of course, the ones found in scripture, but by their nature they have given and continue to give birth to diverse narrative traditions which are essential to understanding the original stories. The church is nothing less than that community where we as individuals continue to test and are tested by the particular way those stories live through us.<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, Hauerwas contends, the stories of Jesus’ life are not meant merely to portray the particular life of one man, but to train the community that retells that story to locate itself within the narrative of Jesus Christ. The community is the context in which the person learns and lives the story of God as an ongoing narrative. The Christian community trains the person to identify herself as a creature within the story of God’s care for creation. Likewise, the story of Jesus teaches the person to understand oneself as a sinner within the story. Thus the community calls the person to a whole new way of life in which she can recognize her self, her character, as having a history of sinfulness, and yet also as part of the ongoing narrative of God. Hauerwas concludes that “to be moral requires constant training, for the story that forms our lives requires nothing less than perfection – i.e., full participation in an adequate story.”<sup>76</sup> We are trained to be worthy to live within the community that is the story only by following the examples of

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<sup>75</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 95-96.

<sup>76</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 151.

the masters in the community who can teach us the skills to become part of the true story, and therefore to be the story ourselves.

Because of the importance of community in the development of Hauerwas' Christian ethic, Hauerwas claims that Christology at its core is political, for the concern of Christology is the particular community of people who are formed by the story of Jesus Christ. Jesus does not have a social ethic, but is a social ethic, and therefore "our 'christologies' are determined by our social ethical presupposition. To answer Jesus' question 'Who do men say that I am?' we must be formed by the kind of community he calls into existence. Therefore any adequate Christology must be political in its beginning, not just in the end."<sup>77</sup> The concern for Christology, then, must be the community that tells the story of Jesus Christ and is likewise formed by this very same story. According to Hauerwas, the development of the character takes place only in the particular community in which the narrative of God, and more specifically the story of Jesus Christ, is fundamental to the person's own self-understanding. While Häring contends that the person can only be truly understood in relationship to God, self, others, and world, Hauerwas insists that the community is of greater importance than the individual self or person, for the community is the location in which personal moral formation occurs. For Hauerwas, the person knows himself as a person only in relation to how he views himself as part of an ongoing narrative which is not of his own making, namely, the narrative of Jesus Christ.

A retrospective regarding Häring's understanding of the community throughout his moral theology is useful at this point, because Häring's discussions regarding the

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<sup>77</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 40.

community provide the clearest account of his development of moral epistemology for Christocentric moral theology. The role of the community is often overlooked in Häring's moral theology because the idea of "personalism" is central to Häring's Christological anthropology. Häring insists, however, that the person develops skills in moral decision-making according to the support of the community, and likewise the person supports the community through her moral development. The various communities to which the person belong contribute to the individual's apprehension of moral value. Therefore, Häring clearly sees the community as important in the development of the moral life of the Christian. Even his emphasis on personalism attests to the fact that the individual Christian cannot be understood apart from his relationship with God, self, others, and the world. Thus, Häring's understanding of personalism as the person living in community is not individualism, but relationship, response, and responsibility.

For Häring, the person must be considered in relationship, such that the person knows oneself as a person only in relation to God, self, others, and the world. Häring depicts the person as social and religious, living as an individual who is offered divine grace in the communal life of service and love. According to Häring, "the human person can be understood only from the standpoint of personal community and fellowship with God."<sup>78</sup> Religion, for Häring, is central to Christian morality because the person is viewed always within the reality of the divine-human relationship. Religion is more than merely external acts of public cult, for religion is community and fellowship with God through the participation in the divine life. The participation in the life of God takes

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<sup>78</sup> Häring, LC 1: 40.

place most authentically through the religious-moral life of the person who perfectly imitates the sacrificial obedience and loving response of Jesus Christ to God. Jesus Christ is the perfect offer of God's grace, and the perfect response of humanity to God's offer of grace, so only through assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ can the human person attain to authentic fellowship and loving community with God. According to Häring, then, only from the perspective of the divine-human relationship can the religious-moral life of the person be fully understood. The religious life of the person instructs the moral life of the person, in Häring's moral theology, for the person participates in the divine life through the imitation of Jesus Christ. The imitation of Christ takes place not only in the Church community, however, but through experiences within all the communities to which the Christian belongs. From this brief recounting of Häring's concern for community, particularly with his concern for the Christian's striving for communion with God through Jesus Christ, one can begin to see the very different ways in which Häring and Hauerwas understand the meaning, and significance, of "community" for Christian morality.

The Christian person's association with a variety of communities is evident throughout Häring's moral theology. Häring views the community as the "human community – family, religious community, state – in which man progresses and develops: from person to personality."<sup>79</sup> "Community," for Häring is akin to communion or fellowship, or loving solidarity, in seeking value, more than a concern for living in a particular social order of likeminded people.<sup>80</sup> The person attains moral knowledge

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<sup>79</sup> Häring, LC 1: 76.

<sup>80</sup> Perhaps this is precisely why Häring's Christocentric moral theology frequently is accused of lacking a particular social location or social context, for Häring's concern seems less centered on the locus

through the apprehension of value in the created order. While Häring acknowledges that the person must be understood as a social and religious being, he understands the social nature of the person primarily in terms of the person's movement toward value that lies outside of the self, whether this value is a fellow person on the journey toward salvation or the Ultimate Value of Jesus Christ. Häring consistently refers to the importance of solidarity in our actions that serve as responses to God's invitation to grace, but even this solidarity is primarily described in terms of common action that seeks fellowship with God or service to one another. Häring states,

Genuine community is not constituted by the mere pursuit of common objectives, nor is it achieved solely by organization. Community is something presupposed and given, with its roots deep in the very nature of man. Only in community can man attain to the full measure of individuality and personality (that is, become a personality with the fullness of personal values). Community means more than the union of two individuals in a relationship of I-Thou. (Exclusive friendship between two individuals is therefore not the model or prototype of community.) True community can be understood only in the light of an intimate grouping of members who refer to themselves as We, and to which each person is drawn by the closest ties of loving solidarity. . . . The bond of love between the individual member and the community, the I and the We, also embraces each individual member in a tender I and Thou relationship, so that each individual in his affection for the whole community loves each and every other member (at least virtually!).<sup>81</sup>

For Häring, then, community is a relationship based on loving solidarity in which the individual person becomes a personality, or as Hauerwas would express it, a self with a particular character. Häring's emphasis regarding the importance of the community for the individual is that the community is loving fellowship in which the person understands himself as a being in relationship with others. We love ourselves and others only as we

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for Christian morality and more focused on how to sustain and develop moral values for the individual person within a community, whether that community is the family, the Church, or the state. The individual belongs to many communities, according to Häring, and all have different influences that guide the person in the formation of the moral life.

<sup>81</sup> Häring, LC 1: 77-78.

exist as persons within the “We” of community, in a relationship of mutual love for one another. The solidarity of individuals, then, is possible because in the community individuals are open to one another and share their inner attitudes, dispositions, and wills with one another. These inner convictions “of the individual in the community are fully community-forming only when they reveal a sense of responsibility, not merely for the individual fellow member, but also for the bond of unity which holds all the group together, the unity of the We. This is what is implied by solidarity.”<sup>82</sup> Such an understanding of fellowship adds concreteness to Häring’s moral theology. At the heart of Häring’s understanding of community, then, is the importance of loving solidarity amongst the individual members, in a relationship of response to each other and responsibility for the sustenance and development of each other’s moral values.

Häring insists that, while the person develops into a personality specifically in the community, the person likewise supports the community. He states, “Not only the average man in his spiritual immaturity, but also the mature and advanced person is largely sustained and molded in moral worth by the community. In fact, the support is mutual.”<sup>83</sup> Häring explains that many good acts are derived from the moral riches of the community as a whole, not merely from personal or independent appreciation of moral values. Likewise, the community is able to develop such riches only because of individual members who respond to the needs of the community and thus help to sustain it. The role of the community, then, is to guide the individual person into conformity with the good behavior and underlying moral values of the community that sustains the

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<sup>82</sup> Häring, LC 1: 78.

<sup>83</sup> Häring, LC 1: 79.

individual convictions and intentions of the person. The social source of moral knowledge lies in the fact that the “virtuous conduct of an entire community naturally enkindles a true appreciation of good, whereas the associative conformity to a debased social standard will indeed engender evil morals, but never appreciation of true moral values.”<sup>84</sup> Both the individual person and the community are bearers of moral value, and thus they mutually sustain one another.

Like Häring, Hauerwas views the Christian community as integral to the development of Christian morality. According to Hauerwas, the Christian convictions of the community are fundamental to the distinctively Christian moral life. One of Hauerwas’ problems with contemporary approaches to ethics, therefore, is that they begin and end with anthropology rather than Christology and politics; the individual, not the community is central to Christian morality. Hauerwas is not concerned with the personality of the individual person, but with the character that makes a person worthy of belonging to the distinctive community of the Church. The character of Hauerwas’ Christian ethic is not unlike the personality of Häring’s moral theology. For both Häring and Hauerwas, the personality or character of the individual cannot be integrally considered apart from the person’s participation in the life of the community that guides and forms the moral development of the individual member.

For Hauerwas, however, the focus on the “self” and the individual in contemporary theology has tended to rely too heavily on the importance of freedom and decisions in “quandary” situations, rather than emphasizing the relevance of the training of the person in the skills of the community that enable the person to live a life such that

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<sup>84</sup> Häring, LC 1: 80.

certain “choices” are not even possibilities to be chosen. In his discussion of the notion of the “self,” Hauerwas emphasizes that the person only knows herself as a self because she is able to see herself within the narrative of God. Rather than seeing how God fits into her story, she sees herself as a part of God’s ongoing story with creation. As such, she recognizes herself as a creature who does not direct the story, and who does not even have the freedom to choose her own story. Hauerwas rejects the notion of freedom as freedom of choice or freedom to create morality, because, he insists,

Freedom lies not in creating our lives, but in learning to recognize our lives as a gift. We do not receive our lives as though they were a gift, but rather our lives simply *are* a gift: we do not exist first and then receive from God a gift. The great magic of the Gospel is providing us with the skills to acknowledge our life, as created, without resentment and regret. Such skills must be embodied in a community of people across time, constituted by practices such as baptism, preaching, and the Eucharist, which become the means for us to discover God’s story for our lives.<sup>85</sup>

Hauerwas contends that the freedom of the self is the freedom to acknowledge that we are creatures who are given the gift of our lives as part of the ongoing story of God’s relationship with humanity. The story itself is gift, but our lives as a part of that story are the further gracious gift of God. The convictions we form according to the story make us who we are as part of that story. Human agency, then, is becoming the person, or character, that one is called to be in that story.

Integral to becoming a moral agent, however, is the development of skills within the community that gives the person his character as a gift. Just as Hauerwas emphasizes that the person is an agent who is formed within the narrative of a distinctive community, he further contends that the character of the person is formed within the community to which the person belongs. In fact, the person becomes a “self” or a person with a

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<sup>85</sup> Hauerwas, “Preaching As Though We Had Enemies”: 48.

particular character not through decisions or choices, but through the remembering and accepting of his history as a creature, and a sinful one at that, within the ongoing story of God. The character of the person is shaped by the community that shares his convictions, and the character continues to develop according to the life of the community. Thus, Hauerwas insists,

our character is not the result of any one narrative; the self is constituted by many different roles and stories. Moral growth involves a constant conversation between our stories that allows us to live appropriate to the character of our existence. By learning to make their lives conform to God's way, Christians claim that they are provided with a self that is a story that enables the conversation to continue in a truthful manner.<sup>86</sup>

The Christian person is a character shaped by his Christian convictions which are formed according to the stories of the Christian community. Therefore, Hauerwas contends, the person who lives according to the truthful narrative of the community has already been trained to respond appropriately to any circumstances which may appear to challenge the person to a difficult decision. The response of the Christian who lives according to the narrative of the Christian community is the response of truthfulness and faithfulness to oneself, and to the community which has trained him according to the narrative of Jesus Christ. That is to say, a person's character determines the circumstances which confront the person because the virtuous person trained to be truthful and faithful to the Christian community's story does not confront "choices" or "decisions" about appropriate responses to circumstances. Rather, the Christian follows the examples and adopts the stories of the other members of the community who have most perfectly embodied the habits of the community that make one capable of living faithful to the story of God.

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<sup>86</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 133.

While Hauerwas ultimately would reject Häring's notion that the Christian moral-religious life requires fundamental decisions that affirmatively respond to God's offer of grace, he would agree with Häring that faith is fundamental to the Christian moral life. For Hauerwas, each "decision" for God is not as important as the development of the Christian life according to the Christian convictions of the community that shape the moral life of the Christian. The moral life of the Christian is not concerned with decisions, but with faith or Christian convictions. This is the significant role of faith in Hauerwas' Christian ethic, for the Christian cannot attain faith without the guidance of the Christian community. That is to say, the Christian cannot be a Christian without adherence to the life of the Christian community that derives its identity from its assimilation to the life of Christ made known in the narrative of the Christian community.

Although Häring and Hauerwas both embrace the person of Jesus Christ as fundamental to their theological ethics, they recognize the inherent tension in a Christian ethic or moral theology that seeks to have universal ramifications despite allegiance to the distinctive center and norm for the Christian community that is the person of Jesus Christ. Like Häring, Hauerwas struggles with the tension of the universality and distinctiveness of Christian ethics. For Hauerwas, however, the resolution to the problem lies in the community that derives its identity from being disciples of Christ. The distinctively Christian community is called to remain distinctive, and in so doing the Christian community serves as a witness to the rest of the world. Hauerwas states,

To be sure, any christology must deal with how this particular individual is also affirmed as the savior of all people. But the appropriate form of his universality is lost if metaphysical and anthropological theories are made to substitute for the necessary witnessing of Christian lives and communities to the significance of his story. Witnessing presupposes and claims universality, but in a manner that

makes clear that the universal can be claimed only through learning the particular form of discipleship required by this particular man.<sup>87</sup>

The life of the Christian disciple is the life of the imitation of Jesus of Nazareth who is the revelation of God, the revelation of the peaceableness of the kingdom which can only be properly and truthfully understood in the Christian community which is a witness to the universality of salvation, but only through the specific kind of discipleship in which the narrative of Jesus Christ is central to our own identity. Christian ethics, then, must not find its foundation in anthropology or universal norms or principles. Rather, the foundation for Christian ethics must be discipleship in Jesus Christ. The Christian is trained in the life of discipleship only in the Christian community, the Church.

Because discipleship as the imitation of Jesus Christ is the heart of his ethic, Hauerwas (like Häring) insists that faith has a prominent role in Christian morality. The Church is the community in which the Christian convictions of the disciple are formed. Hauerwas defines the faith of the Christian as “our appropriate response to salvation, [which] is fundamentally a moral response and transformation. . . . Faith is not so much a combination of belief and trust, as simply fidelity to Jesus, the initiator of God’s kingdom of peace.”<sup>88</sup> The life of faith is essentially finding one’s place within the story of God, and thus finding one’s true life within the life of Christ. The only way in which one is able to live in Christ, however, is through becoming a part of the community that lives faithful to the life of Jesus Christ. Hauerwas’ understanding of “the self” or the character is entirely relational, such that the individual is not an individual apart from locating herself within the ongoing story of God witnessed in the Christian community. For

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<sup>87</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 41.

<sup>88</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 93.

Hauerwas, the Christian community is the central locale for the hearing and living of the narrative of God.

Those who live in the Christian community who go before us show us the way to live according to the narrative of Jesus Christ. The story that is shared in the Christian community makes us

possessors of the happy news that God has called people together to live faithful to the reality that he is the Lord of this world. All men have been promised that through the struggle of this people to live faithful to that promise God will reclaim the world for his Kingdom. By learning their part in this story, Christians claim to have a narrative that can provide the basis for a self appropriate to the unresolved, and often tragic, conflicts of this existence. The unity of the self is not gained by attaining a universal point of view, but by living faithful to a narrative that does not betray the diversity of our existence. No matter how hard such a people work to stay faithful to such convictions, they never can forget that it is only through a gift that they are what they are.<sup>89</sup>

The life of the Christian community is the life based on faith convictions in the inherent truthfulness of the story of Jesus Christ. The lives of other Christians within the community show that Jesus Christ is not merely the example of the peaceable kingdom, but is the peaceable kingdom itself. Therefore, “what Jesus has done enables us to know and embody God’s peace in our lives by finding peace with God, with ourselves, and with one another.”<sup>90</sup> Only through understanding our location within the story of Jesus Christ can we recognize ourselves as capable of living within the truthfulness of the kingdom of God. Only through the life of faith can the Christian person attain to participation in the peaceable kingdom, for the convictions of the Christian community are what make the Christian capable of living the moral life that participates in the life of God through Jesus Christ. The Christian community, and the Christian person, are only

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<sup>89</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 149.

<sup>90</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 93.

who they are according to their convictions of faith. For Hauerwas, then, the *only* place for the truthful living of the narrative of God is the Christian community, the Church.

In Hauerwas' Christian ethic, the divine-human relationship is a personal relationship in which the person attains special knowledge of God unavailable to those who do not know the narrative of God presented in the Scriptures and tradition. While Häring draws from the Scriptures to emphasize the image and likeness of God in all persons, Hauerwas sees the Scriptures as primarily pointing out our creaturely status and the sinfulness inherent in all persons. Through the narrative of God the Christian community attains the knowledge that we are creatures within the story of God's care for creation, but we are also sinners who reject the truthfulness of the narrative of God. Thus, Hauerwas contends, the Christian community must know first and foremost "that it has a history and tradition which separate it from the world. Such separation is required by the very fact that the world knows not the God we find in the scripture."<sup>91</sup> In Hauerwas' Christian ethic, the world does not know the God we find in the Scriptures, and therefore the world is not able to know itself as violent and sinful. The function of the Church, then, is to be Church so that the world can know itself as world, in order that the Church can bear witness to the narrative of God. According to Hauerwas, "to be like Jesus is to join him in the journey through which we are trained to be a people capable of claiming citizenship in God's kingdom of nonviolent love – a love that would overcome the powers of this world, not through coercion and force, but through the power of this one man's death."<sup>92</sup> Thus, for the Christian person, the community that shapes the moral

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<sup>91</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 68.

<sup>92</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 76.

life of the individual is the Church community, the community in which certain habits and skills are developed so that the response to God's offer of the kingdom is the right one, the one of peace and nonviolence, according to our position within the peaceable kingdom of God. For Hauerwas, the central feature of the imitation of Jesus for the Christian is the life of peace and nonviolence, which is possible only in the life of the Church as the life in, with, and through Christ.

Hauerwas gives the Christian community, the Church, the most prominent role in the moral formation of the Christian. Therefore, the moral life of the Christian is utterly distinctive from the moral life of non-Christians, or the rest of the world. Although all persons are capable of living moral lives in keeping with universal principles and norms, the moral life of the Christian is united so completely with one's Christian convictions that all other morality falls short of the truthfulness of the Christian story that serves as the foundation for the Christian moral life lived in the imitation of Jesus Christ.

While Häring consistently struggles with his attempt to maintain the universality of Catholic moral theology with the distinctiveness inherent in a theological ethic based on the person of Jesus Christ, he also concedes that Christian ethics ultimately remain distinctive. Although he acknowledges that non-Christians are capable of living according to universal moral principles and standards, his insistence that the person of Jesus Christ is the center of moral theology finally requires him to grant that the Christian person attains to a specific moral knowledge and thus a distinctive moral life separate from that of the non-Christian. For Häring, then, the Church is an essential component in the moral development of the Christian person and the Christian community.

Indeed, Häring says that the personality and the community find their highest fulfillment in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Because “Christ Himself is the native center of leadership and at the same time its source of inner power,”<sup>93</sup> Christ calls each individual member to respond in love and obedience within the community, and likewise Christ unites the community in the highest solidarity. The solidarity of the Mystical Body of Christ is superior to all collective solidarity of dispositions, for it is an authentic interior, intimate togetherness in participation in the divine life and will. In Christ, good actions “have their source of grace, their vital center, their power and merit. He is also the source of our knowledge of values. For through word and example He opens our eyes to the good. As the Eternal Truth it is ultimately He who makes it possible for us to have any knowledge of value at all.”<sup>94</sup> Although we can attain a sense of moral value from the communities to which we belong outside of the specific community of the Church, Häring insists that the goodness of our actions and the true knowledge of value are attained only through our communion with Christ, the Ultimate Value, who is the center and source of Christian morality.

Christ lives in each individual but also in the community, and particularly in the Church. Good actions that are truly in conformity with the imitation of Christ are the actions that are done in and through Christ. Thus, Häring says that in the Mystical Body of Christ we attain supernatural fellowship “in the sacraments, in the doctrine, in the guidance and example of the Church. Christ accepts as His own all that we on our part do through Him. And He accepts it and augments its value in the fullness of the Mystical

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<sup>93</sup> Häring, LC 1: 81.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Body in which it continues its effectiveness.”<sup>95</sup> So while the community helps the person develop into a personality according to the moral values of the virtuous community, Christ works in a special way in the particular community of the Church, such that the individual responds to Christ’s invitation with a continual response of love in the community and our subsequent meritorious acts increase the abundance of grace in the Church and likewise Christ’s own plenitude of love in the Church. The sacraments shared in the community of the Church are of utmost importance for the Christian religious-moral response to God’s offer of grace in Jesus Christ, for the sacraments are personal and intimate encounter with God in, with, and through Jesus Christ, and at the same time the sacraments are communal sharing in divine grace. Thus, Häring states,

The community in its form and spirit arises from the sacraments. From them too comes the vocation and mission to the life of the spirit, first in the unity of worship and then in the solidarity of responsible partnership for salvation. One upon whom God has showered the favors of His graces in the sacraments of the community must realize that his salvation is rendered more secure if the grace received is claim and assignment to apostolic love for the community, particularly for its weakest members.<sup>96</sup>

For Häring, then, the Church is the primary community in which authentic religious-moral response is made possible, for the Church is the place in which the person receives the sacraments as responsibility for the salvation of others, even those outside of the Church, in the saving solidarity of Jesus Christ.

In Häring’s moral theology, Christ’s relation to the Church is unique: Christ operates both within the Mystical Body and at the same time outside of the Mystical

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. The treatment of the sacraments in relation to the moral life, of course, has no parallel in Hauerwas, except perhaps in his later work on the liturgy. For the purposes of this project, however, I shall direct the reader’s attention to the work of Kathleen Cahalan, which I have become aware of only recently. In her book, *Formed in the Image of Christ*, she discusses at length the relationship between Häring and Hauerwas on the issue of liturgy and Christian ethics. See especially pp. 209-228.

<sup>96</sup> Häring, LC 2: 169.

Body. Christ is the center and source of power within the Church, and at the same time Christ influences and directs the Church from outside as the Founder of the Mystical Body of Christ. The abundance of Christ's grace influences the Church from within, but Christ does not impose this grace from outside of the Church community onto the members of the Mystical Body. As such, Häring claims,

Christ not only transforms us into the likeness of His own nature, but constantly beckons to us with His loving will. For the operation of the grace of Christ is not at all a natural impersonal activity like the flow and flood of the tide: grace is distributed by Christ, the Head, according to His own free choice through action of the center which is his own 'will' and 'I.' It does not operate in the soul after the manner of something self-imposed from an autonomous center of power, since the persons who are members of the Mystical Body themselves freely accept or refuse grace through a decision that emanates from their own center – of will and autonomous 'I' – although ultimately their freedom, in some mysterious way, is a participation in the freedom of Christ.<sup>97</sup>

Christ's relation to the members of the Mystical Body, the Church, is one in which the will of the individual person confronts the will of Christ in a personal communion through the offer of participation in the power and freedom of Christ. The personal responsibility of the individual personality derives from her acceptance or rejection of Christ's offer of participation in His own freedom and love. The role of the community, the Mystical Body of Christ, in this relationship is to unite the individual members of the community with the Head of the Mystical Body, Christ, through developing the moral values of the community and thus all the good actions of the members that are sustained by Christ. The particular function of the Church community, then, is to engender a distinctive and continual love for Christ within the community through the very presence of Christ Himself in the life of the community, through the sacraments and teachings and moral values developed and sustained in the Church.

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<sup>97</sup> Häring, LC 1: 82-83.

Lest one forget the presence of sin in the world, Häring explains that the community shares in the guilt of those members who sin in a collective guilt and responsibility. The Church and Christ bear the burden of the sins of the individual members, although the Church and Christ are incapable themselves of sin. The collective guilt of the Church community stems from the guilt of the many members of the Church who share the responsibility for the sin due to the neglect of the good and their own sinful actions that imply a decrease in the moral values sustained in the community. Häring insists, however, that the human community, and even the Church herself, cannot pass judgment on the guilt of individuals or even the collective guilt of the community, for “[o]nly God can call us to account for this failure and in the day of judgment open our eyes to the havoc wrought in the community by our neglect of grace.”<sup>98</sup> The Church and the social community can identify the sins of the members of the community, and can even seek penance or reconciliation with the individual sinner and even the sinful community, but ultimately only God can call for a full accounting of our sins. This is a distinctively Christian supposition.

Häring contends that the Church community is the highest form of community because the Mystical Body lives under the influence and direction of the grace of Christ, and the Church is the particular location in which the loving solidarity and obedience with Christ is more perfectly embodied. For Häring, however, other communities offer resources for moral development, albeit in a limited fashion. Häring believes that all communities are capable of bearing moral values, and all communities can sustain moral knowledge through practices that give guidance in the development of the individual

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<sup>98</sup> Häring, LC 1: 85.

personality, such that the person is able to see himself always in relation to God, self, others, and world. Because the call-response model is the central motif of Haring's moral theology, Haring allows that non-Christians and non-Christian communities can influence, in a limited way, the moral life of the Christian. Such a position is in stark contrast to Hauerwas' Christian ethic. For Haring, response and responsibility are not unique to the Christian, but available to all persons. What is unique to the Christian and the Christian community is the apprehension of Ultimate Value in the person of Jesus Christ, who the Christian understands to be the invitation of God and the response of humanity at the same time.

While Haring views the Church as the highest form of community, he also views the Church as only *one* community to which the person belongs and which aids in the moral formation of the person. Although Haring contends that the Church is the most perfect place in which moral formation can occur, he further claims that ordinary encounters with others can also constitute an authentic experience of moral value and thus moral formation. The encounter with value outside of the Church, Haring admits, however, may provide only limited moral knowledge because the experience of the other is not necessarily the encounter with the Ultimate Value that is Jesus Christ Himself. The experience may be merely analogous to the experience of faith that is the most authentic source of moral knowledge in the personal encounter with Jesus Christ. While Haring contends that discipleship necessitates personal relationship with and knowledge of Jesus, he suggests that all persons are capable of attaining such a relationship and knowledge. He insists, however, that non-Christians are more limited in the knowledge that they are

able to attain because their experience of value is not the highest form of value made known in Jesus Christ.

In Häring's moral theology, the highest goal of the Church is identical with the goal of Christ: the glory of God. Häring says that salvation is in the Church alone, because all grace comes from Christ and refer back to Christ in a bond of love between Christ and His Bride, the Church. Only in the Church can God be praised and honor justly and rightly. Häring further concludes, however,

All those who receive the sacraments validly outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church and, in harmony with these means of grace, lead a good and holy life have some share in the royal priesthood of the one true Church whose sacraments they receive. And even those who receive the grace of justification without the use of these visible signs of grace are at least implicitly and by desire in the sacred choir of the unique community of cult, though they are not strictly members of the Church.<sup>99</sup>

For Häring, then, even people outside of the Church community are capable of receiving the grace of Christ and thus are able to participate in the divine life. Although the Church is the distinctive context for Christian moral knowledge and responsibility before God in the service of others, Häring insists that the religious-moral response can also take place outside of the Church community even if only by implicit desire or analogy of faith. To this extent, Häring's moral theology is distinctive in the sense that Christians have a specific motivation and distinctive knowledge from those outside of the Church, but not to the point that the Church is exclusive and unintelligible to those outside of the Christian community.

Hauerwas, on the other hand, claims that the precise problem with Christianity is that the Christian community is willing to accept itself as one religion among others

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<sup>99</sup> Häring, LC 2: 168.

rather than giving priority to the distinctive convictions of the Christian faith over finding a common ground or general anthropology that meets the needs of humanity at large.<sup>100</sup>

For Hauerwas, the Church is the truthfulness of the story of God, and therefore the Church must stand as witness to the rest of the world to show that the kingdom of God is possible, and real, and also to witness to the world that the world is sinful, deceitful, violent, and in need of forgiveness.

For Häring, however, the Church does not serve merely as a witness to the rest of the world, as in Hauerwas' Christian ethic, but as the invitation to drastic change for the world at large, for the Church is the invitation to grace even for those outside of the Christian community. The Church does not stand apart from the rest of the world only as a witness to reality. Rather, according to Häring, the Church stands with the world, but also ready to change the world and participate in the life of the world as the light of Christ, the law of love and saving grace, for all who accept God's invitation to grace made visible in the sacramental life of the Christian community. The Church lives in responsible service to all neighbors, not only those within the Christian community. The Church in Häring's moral theology is not merely the witness to the sinfulness of the world, but more importantly the loving offer of the grace of God for all who live as Christ for one another. Therefore, although inclusiveness is not a priority for Hauerwas, his Christian ethic could benefit from Häring's claim that even non-Christians can attain to some form of relationship with Christ outside of the Christian community even if only in an analogous sense.

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<sup>100</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 13.

Although Häring and Hauerwas understand Christian moral epistemology in different ways, they both agree that an authentic accounting of the life of Jesus Christ includes the recognition that Jesus is, among many other descriptors, the nonviolent Servant of God. Hauerwas views nonviolence as the hallmark of Christianity, for the imitation of Jesus Christ necessitates the peaceable life with Christ. While Häring agrees that the Christian ideal is the life of peace in, with, and through Jesus Christ, he does not insist that the only way to be a Christian, an authentic disciple of Christ, is to live as a pacifist as the sole identification of one's faith commitment to Jesus Christ. Häring's presentation of the moral life of the Christian is a very complex and multifaceted view of the human person's participation in the life of God in a responsible relation of loving obedience and freedom. Hauerwas essentially identifies the life of the Christian community as the life of nonviolence in witness to the peaceableness of the kingdom of God.

While Häring and Hauerwas view pacifism as important for the Christian and the Christian community, they come to acknowledge the significant role of pacifism from very different perspectives. Häring's adherence to the way of nonviolence (which, as I have shown, is qualified) is based on the belief that Jesus Christ is the nonviolent Servant of God, but also on his experiences of brutality against fellow human beings in Hitler's rise to power and in the ensuing Second World War. Häring says that his sorrow is for so many "involuntary victims of the crazed deeds of one individual, Adolf Hitler, but also of the failure of so many people to share responsibility for peace and for the common good."<sup>101</sup> While Häring believes that the life of Jesus Christ is a reflection of the peace of

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<sup>101</sup> Häring, *Free and Faithful: My Life in the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1998): 14.

God, his own pacifist stance stems from his experience of how humans reject the grace of God and harm each other in the struggle for power and domination. Furthermore, while Häring views the life of nonviolence as important for Christian morality, he does not say that in order to be a member of the Church community, the Body of Christ, one must *necessarily* be a pacifist. Rather, he claims,

a nonviolent culture of peace presupposes that before all else we must cultivate the attitude of nonviolence in ourselves. We have to forgive others (and ourselves) from the heart and ban all loveless thoughts. More than just forgiving people, we must make them capable, in healing and in nonviolent love, of becoming friends of ourselves and of others.<sup>102</sup>

In Häring's estimation, then, the person must generally adopt the attitude and disposition of Jesus Christ in order to live freely and faithfully in response to the invitation of God, in an inner movement that is made visible in our external actions of love for God and in loving service toward the neighbor. If the relationship between God and persons is an authentic fellowship based in loving solidarity, then the relationship of its very nature will be one based on nonviolence, or more specifically, a relationship founded on forgiveness and love in the freedom for communion with God and one another. For Häring, nonviolence is liberating because the way of peace offers authentic fellowship in loving solidarity with one another.

Hauerwas' pacifism does not come from his firsthand experience of brutality and violence, but from his interpretation of the truthfulness of the narrative of God, in which Jesus' whole life was devoted to the preaching of the kingdom of God as the kingdom of peace. The way of the Christian community, according to Hauerwas, is the way of pacifism, and all efforts that fall short of nonviolence ultimately reject the truthfulness of

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<sup>102</sup> Häring, *Free and Faithful*: 77-78.

the narrative of the kingdom of God made present reality in Jesus Christ. The role of the Church is to train the Christian community in the skills that make us worthy of belonging to the community that lives the truthfulness of the story of Jesus Christ. The Church is the witness to the narrative of God's care for the world. This witness necessarily – essentially – entails adherence to Jesus' fundamental disposition toward nonviolence. Jesus is a social ethic, Jesus is the peaceable kingdom. If the Christian community is to become assimilated to the life of Jesus Christ, then the Church must be Church so that the world can know itself as world; the Church must be the peaceable kingdom that is witness to the narrative of Jesus Christ, so that the world can know that the freedom the world heralds only serves to imprison the world within perpetual conflict and violence. The Church must be a social ethic, the community that embodies the practices of perfection, the peace, of Jesus Christ.

Although Häring and Hauerwas both espouse pacifism as significant for the moral coherence of the Christian community, one easily can see the very different roles that Jesus Christ's nonviolence plays in each of their ethics. For Häring, nonviolence is an ideal for which the Christian should strive in the imitation of Jesus Christ. For Hauerwas, nonviolence is a reality and a possibility that must be witnessed to and embodied in the Christian community for the rest of the world. In this sense, Hauerwas' Christian ethic provides a very specific context for Christian morality, while Häring's moral theology speaks more of ideals in the pursuit of the perfection of Jesus Christ.

I would suggest that in some ways Hauerwas' Christian ethic defeats its own purpose, in the sense that his intention to provide an alternative to normative Christian ethics ultimately becomes precisely a normative ethic. Hauerwas' Christian ethic tends

to inhibit the ability of the Christian community from communication with those outside of the Church, for Hauerwas' insistence on the necessity of pacifism affirms his claim that the Church stands over against the rest of the world. For Hauerwas, the Christian life is inseparable from pacifism. The narrative function of understanding the kingdom of God through the narrative of Jesus Christ ends with the particular normative command that the Christian community is identified solely as the nonviolent community that lives according to the peaceable kingdom of God. Although Hauerwas insists that Scriptures and tradition require reinterpretation as the life of the community develops and progresses, the requirement of pacifism as the hallmark of Christianity is unable to be reinterpreted because it is the standard for the Christian community. What we ought to do as Christians is be nonviolent, because who we are is pacifists, for all Christians throughout all times. Those people in the Christian community who do not adhere to the pacifist tradition clearly are not living according to the truthfulness of the narrative of Jesus Christ, for they are misinterpreting the story according to their own mistaken understanding of their place in God's story. That is to say that non-pacifist Christians try to fit God's story into their own story rather than seeking to understand how their lives fit into the story of Jesus' life. Pacifism is the only appropriate Christian understanding of the kingdom of God, and anything other than nonviolence is a denial of one's place in the story of God.

While Häring provides a fairly adequate depiction of the authenticity of non-Christian morality that could serve as a corrective to Hauerwas' Christian ethic, Hauerwas does not address satisfactorily the truthfulness of the lives of even nonviolent non-Christians. Hauerwas does not acknowledge that the non-Christian can adhere to the

principle of nonviolence as the driving conviction for his life, as is evident in the life of a person such as Mahatma Gandhi. What is the nature of the story of nonviolent non-Christians? If their story is not directly tied to the narrative of Jesus Christ, is their story less truthful than the Christian story that leads to a life lived according to the just war tradition rather than pacifism? My interpretation of Hauerwas' Christian ethic is that the stories of the nonviolent non-Christian and the adherent to the just war tradition who still maintains his identity as a Christian are not truthful stories in Hauerwas' estimation. The non-Christian is not able to be a truthful witness to the peaceable kingdom because her story is not in keeping with the narrative of Jesus Christ. Likewise, the Christian who does not maintain the peaceable nature of the kingdom of God through adherence to the truthfulness of the story of the Christian community is perhaps misinterpreting the truthfulness of the narrative. Both the non-Christian pacifist and the Christian non-pacifist persist in the illusions and deceptions of the violent world that insist that the person must "maintain control" over their histories. If peaceableness and nonviolence are the hallmarks of the Christian community, then how do we account for people who are nonviolent outside of the witness of the Christian community? Do they have a special relationship with God that is not acknowledged by Hauerwas? The point is that Hauerwas is so focused on the peaceable kingdom that he neglects to address the important role of nonviolent Christians as part of the witness of the reality of God's indwelling within the world regardless of one's convictions.

Furthermore, Hauerwas does not account for those who live according to the just war tradition as interpreting the same narrative of Jesus Christ and embodying that story in their own lives. Hauerwas suggests that Christians who live according to the just war

theory are still blinded by the illusions and self-deceptions of the world, and therefore they are living a story, but not the truthfulness of the narrative of God's peaceable kingdom. This explanation is not adequate, however, as it fails to view the kingdom, and the life of Jesus, as more than the definition and reality of peace. Jesus makes the peaceableness of the kingdom a possibility rather than an ideal, but just as my worship of God can take place in public cult or in private acts that give glory to God, so too can my following of the story of Jesus take many possible forms that make real the kingdom of God for others. Nonviolence is one form, but not the only form or the hallmark of my identity as a Christian disciple. For Hauerwas, however, nonviolence is *the* Christian principle by which to live rightly in the kingdom of God. Therefore, despite his resistance to principles and norms as central for Christian morality, Hauerwas ultimately bases his Christian ethic on the principle of nonviolence as the hallmark of Christianity. As such, he ends the conversation not only between the Church and the world outside of the Christian community, but also the opportunity for dialogue within the Christian community between those who adhere to pacifism and those who see principles other than pacifism as having greater priority than peaceableness.

A comparison of Häring's and Hauerwas' moral epistemologies is useful because the analysis demonstrates an internal lack of consistency in both of their work. In Hauerwas' Christian ethic, we are given a very clear and decisive accounting of the shape of the life of the Christian community in the imitation of Jesus Christ. We do not attain such a decisive picture, however, regarding what aspects of Jesus' life and ministry provide our foundation as Christians apart from Jesus' nonviolent stance in order to show the nature of the kingdom of God. In Häring's moral theology, we are given a clear

description of the life of Jesus Christ as the Word-made-flesh who invites humanity to participation in the very life of the triune God and at the same time is humanity's fitting response to God's invitation. Häring does not, however, provide specific proscriptions or prescriptions as to precisely what the life of the Christian disciple necessarily entails due to Jesus Christ the God-man. While Häring does give copious guidelines as to the variety of responses available to the Christian who seeks to live according to the life of Jesus Christ, as is evident particularly in the third volumes of his two major works, Häring does not define the Christian life solely in terms of nonviolence as the *only* fitting response to God's invitation to grace in Jesus Christ.

Although Hauerwas' vision of the narrative of Jesus Christ is important for the development of morality within the Christian community, his sole focus on the nonviolent aspect of Jesus' life somewhat neglects or stultifies the deeper meaning of the life of Jesus Christ for creation. Häring's moral theology makes clear that Jesus Christ does not call the Church to be Church for its own sake, but for the sake of all, just as Jesus' life is the life of salvation for all who follow Him. Hauerwas specifically intends to examine the character formed by the life of Christ first and foremost, but in doing so, he does not provide an in-depth depiction of Jesus' relationship with God and humanity other than to point to the message of the peaceable nature of the kingdom of God. In the final analysis, for Hauerwas the only authentic Christian is the person who lives the nonviolent life according to her location within the narrative of God made known in Jesus Christ.

My comments regarding Hauerwas' work are not meant to deny that the kingdom of God is the kingdom of peace, but to suggest that the kingdom of God, and the person

of Jesus Christ, can be described in richer language than merely conceiving of the divine life as the life of peace. Pacifism is not the only principle upon which the Christian life is founded. Given the eschatological nature of the time between times that Hauerwas consistently addresses throughout his Christian ethic, at some points the Christian community may prioritize certain principles as fundamentally more necessary to enact at one time or another in order to attempt to achieve the highest value in the hierarchy of values.<sup>103</sup> Häring does not understand Jesus Christ apart from the Trinitarian life of God, while Hauerwas understands the significance of Jesus Christ primarily in terms of how Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection point to the nature of the peaceable kingdom of God. From Hauerwas' Christian ethic, we seem to know more about the kingdom of peace and who we ought to be (pacifists) in order to be worthy of the kingdom than we do about other values for the Christian community. Jesus teaches us that the kingdom is made real in the life of nonviolence, but the Jesus of Hauerwas' Christian ethic does not teach us how we are to participate in God's kingdom apart from the life of nonviolence. The only moral knowledge we attain regarding God through Jesus Christ is the knowledge that the nature of the kingdom is that of peaceableness. Jesus' relationship with humanity is one of mastery and teaching, not one of friendship or particularly one of love in Hauerwas' Christian ethic. Jesus' life serves to teach us how to live according to the kingdom of peace, but the meaning of our relationship with God

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<sup>103</sup> For instance, the Christian community may give highest priority to justice that enacts human freedom and equality. Hauerwas, however, contends that such a prioritization of values feeds into the coercive violence of the culture that seeks to transform the world into its own image rather than the image of God made known in the narrative of Jesus Christ, the narrative of the peaceableness of the kingdom of God.

still remains rather remote and lacking in true participation and sharing in the life of the triune God in a loving relationship of communion and fellowship.

Unlike Hauerwas, Häring emphasizes the importance of responsibility before God and participation in the divine life through loving service to others as part of our life of worship that gives glory to God. This life necessarily entails more than just nonviolence, although nonviolence is certainly one aspect of the Christian moral life in Häring's moral theology. What Häring's moral theology can contribute to Hauerwas' Christian ethic is a broader view of the life of Jesus Christ as both the invitation of God and the response of humanity. Although Häring is very vague regarding the identity of the person of Jesus Christ, the Jesus Christ presented in Häring's moral theology is a person with a multi-dimensional personality that beckons all people to follow Him according to their unique abilities made possible through the grace of God.

Häring's emphasis on the moral-religious life of the Christian living in community is quite similar to Hauerwas' focus on how Christian convictions shape the moral life of the Christian individual and community. For both Hauerwas and Häring, the person cannot be adequately understood apart from her imitation of, and participation in, the life of Jesus Christ. For both theological ethicists, then, the person, and therefore the community, cannot be understood apart from the identity of being a Christian disciple, or a community of disciples of Christ. As such, the Christian community, the Church, is essential for authentic moral development for the Christian. For Hauerwas, the Church is *the* location for Christian moral formation. For Häring, the Church is the context in which the person and community attain their highest fulfillment, but moral development does not occur within the Church alone.

For Hauerwas, the only community that lives faithful to the truthfulness of the story of God is the Christian community, the Church. Therefore the Church is the only community in which authentic moral development can occur for the Christian. Likewise, the only way to live faithful to the narrative of God is through the life of pacifism, manifest in the Christian community. Christian morality, therefore, is utterly distinctive in Hauerwas' Christian ethic. The only universal aspect of Hauerwas' ethic is that the Church is witness to Jesus Christ's universal salvation, but this is possible only through the distinctive life of discipleship in the imitation of the life of Jesus Christ.

For Häring, the Church is the primary community in which Christian moral formation takes place; but the Church is not the *only* community through which the Christian person can apprehend moral value and therefore attain true moral knowledge. Furthermore, while Häring concedes that nonviolence is the ideal for the Christian community, he admits that pacifism is not the only principle to which the Christian must adhere. Although Häring's moral theology is ultimately distinctive in that the Christian attains a specific moral knowledge through Jesus Christ's indwelling in the life of the Christian community, Häring denies that authentic moral knowledge is available only to Christians. Rather, all persons have the capacity to attain to moral value through the encounter with the other in communities outside of the Church, but the highest fulfillment of the individual and community specifically identified as Christian takes place in the Church because Jesus Christ is present in the Church in a unique and unrepeatable way. Because Häring allows that communities outside of the Church community can have a significant impact on the moral development of the Christian individual, then, one clearly can see a fairly stark contrast between Häring's and Hauerwas' theological ethics.

## V. The Christian Virtues

Häring and Hauerwas understand the community as fundamental to development and growth in the moral life. The community is integral in the training and guidance of the person who seeks to participate in the divine life. For both Häring and Hauerwas, in fact, the specific role of the community is to form the moral life of the person according to the life of virtue such that the person is made capable of attaining to participation in the divine life. As with their understanding of the meaning of personhood and community, however, Häring and Hauerwas understand the virtues in very different ways. Given the different ways in which Häring and Hauerwas present the community in their respective theological ethics, the role of the virtues for Häring and Hauerwas are also quite distinct in each of their theological ethics.

Häring and Hauerwas consistently refer to the Christian person and community in terms of progress and growth. The person is understood as a pilgrim on a journey in both theological ethics, and this journey takes place in the Christian community with fellow persons on the journey toward the kingdom of God. Of greatest importance for the Christian disciple is the ongoing conversion to the life of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Conversion, however, cannot take place for the person who lives in isolation. Rather, conversion to the life of God requires moral growth and development within the community that bears witness to the story of Jesus (Hauerwas) or through the community of persons who serve as bearers of moral value through which one is able to most adequately encounter Jesus Christ as Ultimate Value (Häring). Regardless of their descriptions of the role of the community in moral development, Häring and Hauerwas

understand the community as central to the development of Christian morality because the community is the context in which the person attains to the life of virtue on the way of conversion.

As I mentioned above, Häring ultimately concedes that Christian morality tends more towards distinctiveness rather than universality specifically because Jesus Christ is the source, center, and norm of his moral theology. Although he does not claim that the Church must separate itself from the world as an entirely distinctive community set apart from the world as Hauerwas insists, Häring contends that the Church has a special function in the moral formation of the Christian. For Häring, the Church community is a distinct community in which the encounter with Jesus Christ is the highest fulfillment of the individual personality as well as the life of the community. Likewise, Häring's presentation of the virtues demonstrates the distinctive nature of the Christian virtues, with the virtue of religion at the heart of his virtue theory.

Häring's discussion of the virtues largely adheres to the traditional presentation of the virtues from St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas to contemporary evaluations of the virtues in terms of the four cardinal virtues and the three theological virtues. As I indicated in the previous chapter, what is most significant regarding Häring's discussion of the virtues is his emphasis on the virtue of religion, which had been relegated to a fairly minor role in moral theology after Aquinas' time. In Häring's moral theology, the virtue of religion is the most exalted of the moral virtues, yet shares aspects of the theological virtues, particularly the virtue of charity. For Häring, the virtue of religion is of utmost importance for his Christocentric moral theology, for through the distinctive virtue of religion the Christian is able to give honor and glory to God through the life of

worship in the imitation of Jesus Christ. Häring's vision of worship entails the entirety of one's life, such that worship is understood not only as public cult, but also as loving and sacrificial service to others in keeping with one's identity as a Christian disciple.

The fundamental option is important for Häring's understanding of the virtues, but as I have already indicated, Hauerwas rejects the notion of the fundamental option in his Christian ethic. A clarification regarding Häring's understanding of the fundamental option is important at this point, because the fundamental option is central to Häring's discussion of the development of the virtuous life. Hauerwas interprets the fundamental option as

a stance by which we exercise that transcending kind of freedom in order to define ourselves as persons. . . . [which] seems to imply that fundamental option is but the name given to the *moment* in which that stance is assumed or emphatically renewed. It is that deeper meaning and significance some of the decisions we make in our lives seem to have. But, ironically, such a "moment" cannot be "in history," as its power lies exactly in its ability to transcend history.<sup>104</sup>

I believe that Hauerwas' interpretation of the fundamental option is not precisely in accordance with Häring's presentation of the fundamental option throughout his Christocentric moral theology. Indeed, Häring describes the fundamental option as a basic orientation toward God (or rejection of God) in which the person transcends the self in order to attain to the freedom in which one understands himself as a person. For Häring, however, the transcending of the self necessitates that the person understands himself as a historical being and also as a person in relation to the Other and to others, to God and to the neighbor. The person is not a self except as a self in the divine-human relationship.

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<sup>104</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 41.

Häring further argues that the person cannot attain to the good, which is the basic orientation developed through the fundamental option, except through the knowledge of the good. The knowledge of the good is only possible through the experience of value that lies outside of the self, the value which is apprehended through the encounter with the Other and the others outside of the person. For Häring, then, the fundamental option is affected by each decision of the person in which the person actualizes value. As such, the fundamental option is not a momentary, life-altering event necessarily. Rather, the fundamental option is a basic decision aggregate of the multiple decisions that realize value outside of the self in a life that is fundamentally oriented toward God as the supreme good, made known in the Ultimate Value that is Jesus Christ. The Christian must make a fundamental decision at the core of his very being that is either an acceptance or a rejection of God's offer of grace. While singular actions can be instances in which one may make a radical decision for or against God, Häring emphasizes that one's fundamental option is a gradual development of the basic orientation toward the good, in a life that strives to attain to the perfection of God in the formation of the virtuous life.

Hauerwas clearly is opposed to any Christian ethic that has decision-making at its core. The Christian moral life cannot be described as a fundamental decision, or even as a series of decisions, for or against God. Rather, Hauerwas prefers to describe the Christian moral life in terms of agency and character. The moral life is not occasioned through decisions or situations that "happen" to us, but through the agent situating herself within an ongoing narrative. The agent views herself as part of a story that is already happening, rather than fitting the story into her own life. Therefore, the freedom of the

agent is not the freedom to make this rather than that choice, but the freedom to understand oneself as a character in an ongoing narrative. The freedom of the agent is the freedom to be shaped according to the life of the community that interprets and reinterprets the stories of the disciples who witness the narrative of God.

Hauerwas' reaction against the language of fundamental option seems largely dependent on his interpretation of the fundamental option as negating a person's historicity or the ongoing nature of the divine-human relationship. What is interesting about Häring's moral theology, however, is that even his discussion of the fundamental option considers the person as agent. Quite opposed to Hauerwas' view of the fundamental option, Häring insists that the fundamental option allows for decisions to have an important role in moral deliberations, for he views the person precisely as an agent that makes decisions based on the person as a self with a history and in relation to others. In that sense, Häring addresses Hauerwas' concerns from the outset, for the agent is a person formed by his participation in the divine-human dialogue, which is an ongoing and dynamic conversation between God and humanity that accounts for the person's basic decision for the acceptance of God's grace in history. Past decisions have formed the person to be who he is in the present, and decisions will further determine who the person is in the future in the ongoing divine-human relationship. This is the nature of agency in regards to the fundamental option in Häring's moral theology.

According to Häring, the virtues are developed according to the person's fundamental option that is directed toward responding to God's invitation to grace. For Häring, what is important about the fundamental option is that the person is committed to that which transcends the self and lies outside of the self, commitment to the Other and to

others. An authentic Christian morality, then, can be developed with decisions as fundamental to the ongoing divine-human relationship, despite Hauerwas reluctance to allow an important role for decisions for the person who views himself as being a part of an already ongoing story.<sup>105</sup>

Häring sees the fundamental option as necessary for conversion, just as Hauerwas sees the development of character as necessary for conversion. For Häring and Hauerwas, conversion is not an event that takes place at one particular moment in a person's history. Rather, conversion is an ongoing process that never reaches its summit of perfection. As Hauerwas contends, "conversion denotes the necessity of a turning of the self that is so fundamental that the self is placed on a path of growth for which there is no end."<sup>106</sup> Conversion is an ongoing journey that continues throughout one's life, and the need for constant development and growth requires that one's life be shaped by the virtues. For Hauerwas, character is essential for development in the moral life of virtue, while for Häring, the moral life of virtue is contingent upon the fundamental option through which the agent seeks to attain the supreme good. For both Häring and Hauerwas, however, the Christian moral life cannot be understood adequately apart from the life of virtue. A discussion regarding the moral life requires an adequate examination of the importance of character, because the virtuous life concerns the fundamental and substantive consideration of the self. Through the life of virtue, the person is able to see her life as one of continuous conversion to the life of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>105</sup> One should note that Häring's explication of the fundamental option is quite different from the model of the fundamental option presented in the works of Karl Rahner, as discussed in the previous chapter of this project.

<sup>106</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 131.

The importance of character in the life of virtue is evident throughout Hauerwas' Christian ethic. For Hauerwas,

the necessity of character for the morally coherent life is a recognition that morally our existence is constituted by a plentitude of values and virtues, not all of which can be perfectly embodied in any one life. Integrity, therefore, need not be connected with one final end or one basic moral principle, but is more usefully linked with a narrative sufficient to guide us through the many valid and often incompatible duties and virtues that form our selves. From such a perspective growth cannot be antithetical to integrity, but essential to it; our character, like the narrative of a good novel, is forged to give a coherence to our activities by claiming them as "our own."<sup>107</sup>

The claim that virtues can be incompatible seems foreign to a moral theology such as Häring's which consistently views the moral life of the person in terms of the unity of the virtues. What is important to Hauerwas is not that the virtues attain a special kind of cohesiveness, but that the person's character has integrity or unity. Hauerwas, thus, is keen to emphasize that the coherent sense of the self based on moral behavior requires "neither a single moral principle nor a harmony of the virtues but . . . the formation of character by a narrative that provides a sufficiently truthful account of our existence."<sup>108</sup> The truth of human existence is that one's character is a gift of others, and particularly a gift from God who forgives the person for past sins and places that history of sin in relation to the future in the kingdom of God. "Character, in other words, names the continuity of our lives, the recognition of which is made possible by the retrospective affirmation that our lives are not just the sum of what we have done but rather are constituted by what God has done for us."<sup>109</sup> Because Hauerwas explicates the character

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<sup>107</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 134.

<sup>108</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 136.

<sup>109</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997): 125.

of the person in terms of giftedness, the character cannot be understood apart from the community that forms the character. The character of the person is a gift from others in that we understand ourselves as in relation to others and locate ourselves within the story of the community comprised of the stories of others; but our lives are also, and more significantly, a gift from God as we locate ourselves within the narrative of God's story. One discovers his character within the story of God's relationship with humanity, depicted in the stories Israel and Jesus Christ. Specifically, the character is formed within the community through the development of the virtuous life that conforms to the moral life of the community, for "our capacity to be virtuous depends on the existence of communities which have been formed by narratives faithful to the character of reality."<sup>110</sup>

Although Hauerwas' focus on the narrative is central to his presentation of the Christian moral life, he reminds us that the descriptive ability that makes the person's story her own is not the only skill necessary for the life of virtue. Rather, Hauerwas claims, the person needs to be trained such that her emotions and reason work in conjunction with one another in order to live in accordance with the truthfulness of the story of the Christian community. Thus, Hauerwas defines the individual virtues as

specific skills required to live faithful to a tradition's understanding of the moral project in which its adherents participate. Like any skills, the virtues must be learned and coordinated in an individual's life, as a master craftsman has learned to blend the many skills necessary for the exercise of any complex craft. Moreover, such skills require constant practice as they are never simply a matter of routine or technique.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 116.

<sup>111</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 115.

Much like Häring, Hauerwas views the virtuous life as one that requires training in the imitation of others, and particularly in the imitation of Jesus Christ. Likewise, Häring and Hauerwas conclude that the virtues necessitate constant practice such that they become more than merely habits in the life of the person; rather, the virtues become almost an inner drive or impetus within the person, for the virtues are creative abilities within the person that enable the person to respond to unexpected circumstances in a manner that is consistent with who the person is as a moral being, in keeping with the character or personality of the individual. The virtues of the person are the coordination of passion and reason that guide the person so that she is able to respond to difficult tasks on her own terms. That is to say, rather than the virtuous person viewing “situations” as happening to her, she understands challenges as part of her ongoing story. Thus, Hauerwas concludes, “That is why an ethic of virtue always gains its intelligibility from narratives that place our lives within an adventure. For to be virtuous necessarily means we must take the risk of facing trouble and dangers that might otherwise be unrecognized.”<sup>112</sup> Because of the virtuous life, the person understands that challenges are opportunities for good, rather than seeing difficult experiences as burdens to be endured. For Hauerwas, then, freedom is not a choice for this action rather than that action. Freedom is the ability to have power over one’s own story such that each action or non-action is in keeping with one’s character, one’s story. More importantly, however, is the understanding that one’s story is not an isolated story, but a story within a larger ongoing story that is the narrative of God revealed in the people of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

The importance of virtues for Christian ethics is evident in Hauerwas' concern that the world we live in is filled with such irresolvable conflicts that we must be trained with virtues in keeping with the truthfulness of the narrative of the Christian community. In order to navigate the conflicts of the world, the Christian needs virtues that "can only be displayed by drawing on a particular community's account of the good, and that account necessarily takes the form of a narrative."<sup>113</sup> For Hauerwas, the person is trained in the life of virtue specifically in the community that is witness to the story of God, as passed down from generation to generation in the story of Israel and Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Thus, Hauerwas is not concerned with the moral life in general, but with the moral life formed according to the specifically Christian virtues of the Christian community. The narrative of God lived in the Christian community gives the person a pattern for moral growth. As such, "How persons of virtue or character act is not just distinctive: the manner of their action must contribute to or fulfill their moral character."<sup>114</sup> What is important in the character's development in the life of virtue, then, is not merely hearing the story, but living the story in a community in which "masters" of the story are seen as worthy of imitation, for their distinctive characters are a continuation of the story of God in the community.

Although the imitation of the masters of the Christian community will always be imperfect imitation, the Christian knows that the imitation of Jesus Christ, the Master of the universe, must be the aim of the Christian moral life. As such, the Christian moral life

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<sup>113</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 22.

<sup>114</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 113.

does not derive from some general conception of the good, nor even from an analysis of those skills or excellences that allegedly allow human nature to flourish. Rather, the moral life of the Christian is determined by their allegiance to a historical person they believe is the decisive form of God's kingdom. After all, Jesus did not say if you are to be a follower of his you must develop those virtues that will make you a morally impressive person. Rather he said, "Come and follow me." Moreover, it seems that such a following may require nothing less than that we be willing to die for his sake. The person of virtue may die rather than compromise his integrity, but here we are asked to die not for our own moral ideals but for the sake of another person.<sup>115</sup>

The Christian moral life cannot be based on universal norms or principles, for discipleship is central to Christian morality. All persons are capable of developing moral virtues that help them to understand the self as an integral being who is willing to sacrifice for the sake of maintaining one's integrity. Seeking the highest good and even the greatest good for the greatest amount of people, however, is not sufficient to claim discipleship in Jesus Christ. Even as concerns the life of virtue, we cannot begin with an examination of what is common to all persons for all times. We must start with what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Discipleship requires knowing one's location within the narrative of God, which is revealed in the life of Jesus of Nazareth whose life, death, and resurrection brings redemption for creation. Thus, Hauerwas insists, although "the way of life taught by Christ is meant to be an ethic for all people, it does not follow that we can know what such an ethic involves 'objectively' by looking at the human."<sup>116</sup> One's commitment to Jesus Christ cannot be developed merely by following the life of virtue available to all people. Christians and non-Christians alike can sacrifice themselves in order to preserve their personal integrity. The Christian whose life is truly lived in the imitation of Jesus Christ sacrifices herself for Jesus Christ, not for her own sake or her

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<sup>115</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues*: 29.

<sup>116</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 58.

own integrity. The virtues of the Christian disciple, then, are distinctive to the Christian community formed in the virtuous life of Jesus. The Christian knows Jesus' life to be more than merely a life of highest virtue, for the narrative of Jesus Christ teaches us that Christian virtue has a source outside itself – God.

The foundation of the Christian moral life is the story of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the self-revelation or self-disclosure of God's very nature. (As Hauerwas says, who God is, is what God does.) Christian ethics, therefore, requires that we become faithful imitators of God, because what God does in the person of Jesus of Nazareth reveals who God is in God's very self. God's faithfulness to humanity is revealed in God's constant call to humanity to remain faithful to God. The Christian, therefore, is most fully himself when he knows himself in relation to the story of God. We know who God is through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, through which God's faithfulness and love is revealed. In particular, Jesus' preaching of the kingdom makes known the possibility of our redemption because we understand ourselves as creatures and thus situate our lives within the story of God as lives that are ongoing and still worthy of giving service to God. Our lives are not our own, but are gifts from God who is the author of our stories. Therefore, Hauerwas says, "we Christians are not called on to be 'moral' but faithful to the true story, the story that we are creatures under the Lordship of a God who wants nothing more than our faithful service. By such service we become no 'moral,' it seems, but like God, holy."<sup>117</sup> For Hauerwas, as for Hring, the moral life of the Christian is described most aptly as the religious-moral life, for the Christian does

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<sup>117</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 68.

not seek only the good, but participation in the life of God, which is the divine life of holiness.

The role of the Christian in the world is to imitate Jesus Christ and thus to become like God. The imitation of Christ necessitates learning the life of Jesus, which can only be accomplished through the telling and retelling of Jesus' story in the Christian community. Because Hauerwas insists that the life of Jesus Christ is inseparable from the reality of the kingdom of God, the Christian life is inextricably linked to service to the kingdom of God through our imitation of Jesus in the development of the life of virtue in the Christian community. Thus, Hauerwas concludes that the "Christian claim that life is a pilgrimage is a way of indicating the necessary and never-ending growth of the self in learning to live into the story of Christ. He is our master and from him we learn the skills to live faithful to the fact that this is God's world and we are God's creatures."<sup>118</sup>

Because Jesus Christ is central to Hauerwas' Christian ethic, the most important aspect of the virtues that Hauerwas reiterates throughout his Christian ethic is that Christian virtues are not the same as the virtues naturally developed by non-Christians. To that end, Hauerwas is adamant that Christian ethics must begin by distinguishing the Christian understanding of growth in the moral life from the idea that moral formation occurs as the inevitable result of the potential of human nature common to all persons as persons. That is to say, the virtuous life of the Christian is not intrinsic to human nature.

Hauerwas claims that the "just person" is *not* everywhere and always recognizable as a just person because others who encounter the just person may not view the just person in relation to the particular sort of virtues she has come to develop through her position in

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<sup>118</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 95.

the narrative. Therefore, Hauerwas concludes that “any account of the virtues requires a teleological understanding of human existence articulated through a community’s narrative. For our purposes, the significance of this point is that an account of growth in Christian virtue cannot be generic.”<sup>119</sup> Rather, the Christian understands her life as an adventure, a journey with friends from the community that support her and whom she supports as pilgrims always on the way. The skills that we learn through the life of Jesus Christ are the virtues necessary to be worthy of belonging to the community that is on the journey with us, the community that witnesses to the life of Jesus Christ, the presence of the kingdom of God.

According to Hauerwas, we cannot understand Jesus’ story without being initiated into the narrative through the life of the community. The story of Jesus Christ cannot be separated from the community that seeks to live more faithful to God’s story, the Church. Rather than developing the skills and virtues common to all persons, Hauerwas contends that the Christian must develop specific virtues that are distinctive to the Christian community. The Christian needs to acquire the virtues of the Christian community that enable the Church to remember and tell the particular story of the historical person, Jesus. Rather than a basic reiteration of the traditional presentation of the virtues, then, Hauerwas insists that Christian ethics must espouse virtues distinctive of the Christian community, precisely because the Church requires particular virtues in order to tell the story of Jesus Christ as the truthful story. Because the untruthful story of the rest of the world is the story in which violence and illusion are the mainstays, the Christian virtues are directed toward telling the truthful story of the peaceableness of the kingdom of God.

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<sup>119</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 117.

For Hauerwas, the virtues that are the hallmark of Christianity will be the virtues which are directed toward living the truthfulness of the peaceable kingdom here and now. Hauerwas reminds us, however, that peace is not attained through our own power. “Rather peace is a gift of God that comes only by our being a community formed around a crucified savior – a savior who teaches us how to be peaceful in a world in rebellion against its true Lord. God’s peaceful kingdom, we learn, comes not by positing a common human morality, but by our faithfulness as a peaceful community that fears not our differences.”<sup>120</sup> The gift of our character from others teaches us not to fear the differences inherent in the stories of others who help to form our own story within the Christian community. Likewise, peace is a gift from God that is attainable only when we are able to embrace others in a relationship of trust, not fear, and peace, not violence. Such a relationship is possible only when the life of virtue is understood as the display of the actions that are in keeping with the skills developed in the Christian community that gives us the truthful narrative of peaceableness.

Common to all of the Christian virtues, then, is their relation to the peaceable kingdom. Although Hauerwas gives particular emphasis to the virtues of patience and hope as fundamental to the virtuous life of the Christian in order to tell the truthful story about the peaceable kingdom, Hauerwas also discussed other virtues that are distinctively Christian, as well. For instance, Hauerwas contends that faith, hope, and love do not have the same meaning for the Christian community as they do for other people. Hauerwas insists,

For Christians, the sense of what it is in which they have faith, in which they hope, and the kind of love that must be displayed among them derives from the

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<sup>120</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 12.

tradition that molds their community. Indeed, because of the character of that story, the nature and the meaning of the virtues are essentially changed. For Christians are the community of a new age which must continue to exist in the old age. Because of their existence between the times, because they are a people “on a way,” they require, or perhaps better, make central, certain virtues that other communities do not.<sup>121</sup>

Häring most certainly would agree with Hauerwas’ assessment that we are living in an eschatological age that still awaits the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and that such an eschatological viewpoint necessitates certain virtues that are distinctive of the Christian community. As Christians, we understand ourselves as creatures within the story of God, and we understand further that the redemption is made possible through Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom. Therefore, the justice of the Christian is unlike the justice of the non-Christian who does not recognize his location within the narrative of God. The Christian knows that he is made just before God through justification. The Christian understands that “something decisive has occurred in Jesus that has changed our status as God sees us. Put this way, we can see that ‘justification’ begs for narrative display: what were we before, what are we now, and where is this change taking us?”<sup>122</sup> The Christian recognizes that the journey within the story of God is an adventure of which the Christian is not the author. Unlike generic virtues, the Christian virtues do not stem from the Christian’s worthiness before God, but from the new history wrought by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian virtues are distinctive because the Christian community uniquely understands itself as in need of forgiveness and indeed as forgiven because of the redemption in Jesus Christ. Likewise, Christians are able to forgive precisely because we know ourselves as forgiven.

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<sup>121</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 103.

<sup>122</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 117.

Jesus Christ endured suffering not for his own sake, but for the sake of all sinners. When the Christian participates in Christ's suffering, he learns to endure suffering as Christ endured for us. In turn, the Christian not only imitates Jesus Christ, but indeed the character of Christ is produced within the Christian who participates in Christ's suffering. While the non-Christian may sacrifice for the sake of his own integrity, the Christian sacrifices for the sake of Christ, in imitation of Jesus Christ's suffering. The virtue of hope "places us squarely in a narrative in which our suffering can be endured and accordingly made part of our life. As we enter this narrative we are given the grace to see our suffering as leading somewhere; as a part of a journey that stretches before us toward a destination that includes sharing in the glory of God."<sup>123</sup> Hope cannot be realized in history, but hope "provides us with the means to persevere in our attempts to make our historical existence more nearly just and less violent."<sup>124</sup> Christian hope does not negate the existence of the history of sin, but places sin in relation to the new age in which Christians live, which is the new future in the kingdom of God. Christian commitment to Jesus Christ, then, is inseparable from commitment to living peaceably in the imitation of Jesus Christ who is the presence of the kingdom of God.

A comparison of the virtue theories of Häring and Hauerwas proves rather difficult. Although they discuss the virtues as central to the Christian life of discipleship in assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ, Häring and Hauerwas do not examine the virtues in the same language. Hauerwas does not provide a methodological explication of the virtues, and he appears not to categorize the virtues as theological or moral. Rather,

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<sup>123</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 122.

<sup>124</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 141.

Hauerwas' discussion of the virtues alludes to the kinds of virtues identifiable as distinctively Christian precisely because the Christian virtues enable the Christian to recognize her life as part of the ongoing narrative of God in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, all Christian virtues are tied to the virtue of charity for Hauerwas' Christian ethic. Unlike Häring, and other more traditional accounts of the virtues, Hauerwas does not provide a "list" of virtues that account for the broad categories of virtues that the Christian must develop in order to attain to participation in the divine life. From Hauerwas' perspective, the Christian virtues are only those which enable the Christian to live faithful to the truthful story of God that is the narrative of the peaceable kingdom. The virtues that seek and witness peace are the only authentic Christian virtues.

The peace that Christians seek requires that Christians live "out of control," according to Hauerwas. The Christian desire for peace creates instability in the world that uses violence as the greatest weapon against disorder and truth. Christian peace "is based on the truth that requires we be hospitable to the ultimate stranger of our existence: God. God is such a stranger to us because we have chosen to live as if we were our own masters. God thus comes challenging our fears of the other by forcing us to patiently wait while others tell their story."<sup>125</sup> The virtue of patience allows the Christian to hear the stories of others in a way that the Christian is able to acquire a self, her own story, based on trust in the other rather than fear, and thus based on peace and not violence. The Christian life of virtue cannot be sustained and continually developed without the guidance of the Christian community that lives the truthfulness of the story. Likewise, the Christian community witnesses to the tragedy that "resides in the fact that the peace

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<sup>125</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 144.

to which we Christians witness may well make the world more dangerous, since we do not give up our violent illusions without a struggle.”<sup>126</sup> The peace that the Church witnesses to is the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord of all creation. Therefore, Christian virtue lies “not in ‘the processes of history,’ but in the God whom we believe has already determined the end of history in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>127</sup> Christian virtue looks to Jesus Christ as the summit, source, and presence of the peaceable kingdom.

Hauerwas does not provide a systematic examination of the virtues in terms of a categorization of the virtues necessary to live a virtuous life in accordance with one’s discipleship in Jesus Christ. Because his primary focus is on the distinctively Christian aspects of the morally virtuous life, Hauerwas is not particularly concerned to explicate a methodological account of the traditional theological and moral virtues.<sup>128</sup> For this reason, a point-by-point comparison of the works of Häring and Hauerwas proves quite difficult. Although Häring and Hauerwas use similar terminology, the meaning of the terminology is quite distinct. While Häring and Hauerwas view the virtuous life as central to the imitation of Jesus Christ, the aspects of the virtues that each emphasizes are very different.

Häring’s highly systematic presentation of the virtues is in keeping with the traditional examination of the virtues throughout moral theology. While Häring

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<sup>126</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 145.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Indeed, one would not be incorrect to claim that most of Hauerwas’ work lacks systematic presentation. Despite his distaste for Christian ethics that emphasize quandaries, situation ethics, or casuistry, Hauerwas’ clearest presentation of his Christian ethic generally can be found in articles that he writes in response to current topics of interest which arise from “situations” happening within the world or the Church.

examines the Christian life of virtue in the language of the traditional seven virtues, he highlights the virtue of religion as central to the authentic imitation of Jesus Christ. Having already discussed Häring's understanding of the virtue of religion at some length in the previous chapter, let it suffice to say that the virtue of religion serves as the bridge between the theological and moral virtues and between God and humanity in the divine-human dialogue. The goal of all the virtues is to give glory to God through a virtuous life lived in the imitation of Jesus Christ. The development of the virtue of religion in the Christian life is distinctive for the Christian because, through the imitation of Jesus Christ, the Christian is enabled to participate in the priesthood of Christ, the High Priest and to give glory to God and service to fellow human beings. For Häring, the virtue of religion is the culmination of worship as public cult and service to others for the sake of Jesus Christ to the glory of God. The distinctively Christian life, above all, is the virtuous life that gives glory to God in all things.

As stated previously, Hauerwas is not concerned to provide a unified vision of the virtues. The harmony of the virtues has little relevance in light of Hauerwas' emphasis on the importance of the character of the agent who lives the virtuous life in accordance with the narrative of Jesus Christ witnessed in the Christian community. The unifying principle of Hauerwas' virtue theory is the Christian narrative of peaceableness. Whether he is discussing the specific concepts of Christian morality, virtue theory, or the imitation of Christ, Hauerwas insists that all aspects of the Christian life center on witnessing to and participating in the peaceable kingdom. Despite his insistence that the virtuous life requires growth for the pilgrim on the journey, Hauerwas bases his entire virtue theory on a very static notion of development in the virtues. Although he argues against absolutes

throughout his work, Hauerwas ultimately defines the Christian narrative of the peaceable kingdom of God in absolutist terms. The Christian narrative is the only true narrative, and the Christian who lives the virtuous life is the person who acts only in accordance with the narrative interpreted within the Christian community. Thus Hauerwas argues,

the very content of Christian convictions requires that the self be transformed if we are adequately to see the truth of the convictions – e.g., that I am a creature of a good creator yet in rebellion against my status as such. Talk of our sin, therefore, is a claim about the way we are, but our very ability to know we are that way requires that we have already begun a new way of life. That is why the Christian doctrine of sanctification is central for assessing the epistemological status of Christian convictions. Assessing the truthfulness of religious convictions cannot be separated from the truthfulness of the persons who make those claims.<sup>129</sup>

The truthfulness of Christian convictions is found in the truth of the Christian narrative of peaceableness. Peaceableness is the only right Christian vision of the kingdom of God, and all other “virtuous” ideals are essentially forms of denial of the truth of the story of God, the truth of God’s kingdom, and ultimately a denial of the true self.

Hauerwas contends that the metaphor of the journey, as opposed to the idea of a trip, is most useful for Christian ethic because the notion of journey implies the possibility for growth, “although what kind remains open for specification,”<sup>130</sup> while the concept of a trip indicates that we know where we are headed. I contend that the Christian ethic presented by Hauerwas is actually a trip. Through his notion of the virtuous life as that which is characterized by the truthfulness of the Christian narrative of peaceableness one knows what the ultimate destination is, the peaceable kingdom, and

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<sup>129</sup> Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*: 10.

<sup>130</sup> Hauerwas, *Community of Character*: 116.

finally the only means to reach the goal, displaying the actions in keeping with the truthfulness of the Christian narrative regardless of the circumstances that may arise. Häring, on the other hand, views the virtuous Christian life not in absolutist terms, but as the openness to respond to God's offer of grace through the development of virtues in a relationship of call and response between God and humanity. The purpose of the virtuous life of the Christian is to participate fully in the divine life through a life that is fundamentally oriented to God. Häring's dynamic vision of the Christian life of virtue is evident in his constant emphasis that God initiates the relationship with humanity and humanity responds in love. Thus Häring claims that the "theological virtues do not directly and immediately abide in the realm of the external act. Rather they belong to the inner spirit and the Word because they are directly and totally turned to God. More specifically they reflect the loving glance of God immediately directed to man and man's response to it, the movement of life and love between God and man."<sup>131</sup> Although his moral theology lacks the truly narrative character that is the emphasis of Hauerwas' Christian ethic, Häring's Christocentric ethic is truly dialogical in that the person participates actively in the divine-human relationship rather than merely displaying the behavior consistent with the Christian narrative. Häring's vision of the Christian life of virtue is authentically dynamic. I believe that Hauerwas' Christian ethic ultimately lacks that dynamism.

For Häring, the moral obligation for the Christian is to strive for the highest love toward God and neighbor, through striving for Christian perfection in the fulfillment of the great commandment of love in the assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ. The perfect

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<sup>131</sup> Häring, LC 2: 7.

response to God's offer of grace and salvation has already been given by Jesus Christ on the Cross. Because of Christ Jesus' death and resurrection, the human response to the divine offer of redemptive love of Jesus Christ is made possible and acceptable before God. Religion and morality are bound to one another through the virtue of love, the unifying principle of all the virtues. The central motive of Christian morality is obedient love. The Christian love of God is manifest particularly in the Christian life that glorifies God in all actions (or decisions to not act) as a response to God's love.

Häring says that the content of the virtue of religion is to give "a task for man in space and time, in the body and in the community, a task which belongs to it necessarily and immediately. Such is the nature of the virtue of religion by contrast with the strictly theological virtues."<sup>132</sup> While his language is reminiscent of Hauerwas' description of the virtues, Häring's vision of the virtue of religion serves as a corrective for Hauerwas' understanding of the role of the virtues in the moral life of the Christian. The task for the person in space and in time, in the body and in the community, for Hauerwas' Christian ethic is to place oneself in the truthful Christian narrative of peaceableness, but Hauerwas consistently claims that this task can only be appropriately accomplished in the Christian community. Häring contends that the virtue of religion necessitates responsibility for the world here and now, not only in the aim for the kingdom to come, but in the reality of the present world that needs the influence of the Church in moral conversation. Hauerwas concentrates so completely on the distinctively Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love, that the only task of the Church is to be Church so that the world can know itself as world. That is to say, the Church is so focused on witnessing to the kingdom of peace

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<sup>132</sup> Häring, LC 2: 122.

that the Church has little relevance to the life of the world outside of the Christian community. For Hauerwas, the moral virtues such as patience and courage are ultimately directed only to the peaceable kingdom, and are indeed connected more closely with the theological virtues than with the moral life of the Christian which is nothing other than living in accordance with the Christian narrative of peaceableness. In this sense, Hauerwas would agree with Häring's assessment that the Christian moral life is not either the moral life or the religious life, but the religious-moral life, for the moral virtues in Hauerwas' Christian ethic are inextricably linked to the virtue of the love of God in the striving for the peaceable kingdom.

For Hauerwas, all aspects of the Christian life that adhere to the narrative of God made known in the Christian community seek to witness to the peaceable kingdom of God in the distinctively Christian theological virtues that are the foundation for all moral virtues (such as patience and courage). God makes the peaceable kingdom known to creation through the story of God's care for the people of Israel and through the narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The significance of the Christian community lies in the Church's ability to witness to the reality of the presence of the peaceable kingdom. As such, Hauerwas' eschatological focus somewhat hinders a realistic view of the world as the already and not yet kingdom in favor of the already real kingdom made visible in the life of the Church. Hauerwas' Christian ethic could benefit from Häring's emphasis on the virtue of religion as central to the Christian life of virtue, particularly in terms of Häring's emphasis that the virtue of religion is directed toward the glory of God in this world rather than being immediately directed to God. Hauerwas' Christian ethic lacks the sense that Christian convictions are located within the present

world because Hauerwas is so focused on the eschatological kingdom. Häring's moral theology serves as a reminder that Christian morality is the glory given to God that is mediated through the means of the world in which we live. The worship of God requires not only public cult in the life of the Christian community, but the indirect praise given to God in the service of others in our communities.<sup>133</sup>

Like Häring, Hauerwas understands the primary concern of Christian ethics to be the religious-moral life of the Christian disciple. The difference between Häring and Hauerwas, however, is that Häring views the moral-religious life of the person as profoundly impacting the person's participation in the world at large, not only as a witness to "the story of" Jesus Christ, but as a disciple of Christ whose participation in the divine life includes active participation in the world. Hauerwas, on the other hand, views the moral-religious life of the person as having primary impact within the Christian community, as a witness to the story and as a member of the community that remembers the story within the community, with little concern for participation in the world that is a purveyor of self-deception and violence.

Häring seeks to address primarily the adult Christian seeking fuller development of a religious-moral response to God's offer of grace in this world. Hauerwas seeks to address all Christians who seek to be witnesses to God's kingdom of peace, and all persons who do not witness to the Christian narrative of peaceableness deny the truthfulness of the kingdom of God. Hauerwas does not view this as a withdrawal from the world, but as a way of specifically identifying oneself as a member of God's peaceable kingdom in the midst of the world at large. Hauerwas argues that this is a

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<sup>133</sup> One must note, however, that Hauerwas has begun to move in this direction in his later work.

political stance. From my interpretation of Hauerwas, however, it seems as though Hauerwas is addressing only those who seek peaceableness as the right way of life. Although Hauerwas insists that many people find his way of thinking a difficult pill to swallow, he contends that it is a necessary stance, one toward which each and every Christian must work, in order to truly live as witnesses to the story of God, made known in Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The most significant difficulty with Hauerwas' position is that he advocates a Christian ethic in which the reality of the kingdom is the heart of Christian morality, but at the same time, Hauerwas ignores (or relegates to the farthest margins) the fact that the reality of the world is the pluralistic dialogue necessary to communicate and live with one another. Hauerwas insists that, while we can work toward a common goal with those outside of the Christian community, we must start the conversation with the mutual understanding that the Christian community is the bearer of the truth and that those outside of the Christian community cannot reach the same truth, so the relationship is based on lies.

Häring and Hauerwas present different visions of the virtuous Christian life, but they are not completely at odds in their ethics, as both see Christian perfection and the call to holiness as essential for discipleship. Both theological ethicists contend that the faith (Häring's language) or Christian convictions (Hauerwas preferred term) of the Christian disciple shape the life of the Christian disciple who lives in the virtue of the life of Jesus Christ. Likewise, love and obedience are viewed together for Häring and Hauerwas, for obedient love is the essential attitude or disposition of the disciple of Christ. The imitation of Jesus Christ leads to friendship with God the Father through the

bond of love. Fellowship between God and humanity takes the form of peaceableness in Hauerwas' Christian ethic and the form of adoring love in Häring's moral theology. The moral obligation for the Christian life of virtue in Hauerwas' ethic is for commitment to the truth of the Christian narrative of peaceableness and resistance to violence. The Christian life of virtue in Häring's moral theology is concerned primarily with responding to God's offer of grace in the loving response of the disciple who seeks participation in the divine-life through acts of worship (public cult) and in service of others in the imitation of Jesus Christ. Häring and Hauerwas agree that discipleship requires understanding one's life as striving for participation in the life of God, whether through the response to God's offer of grace or through locating oneself in the narrative of the peaceable kingdom of God manifest in the life of the Christian community.

## VI. The Sacraments and the Imitation of Jesus Christ

I believe that Hauerwas' focus on the Church as the locus for Christian moral formation is important for this project because it provides one resolution to the tension between the universality and distinctiveness of Christian morality that Häring grapples with throughout his Christocentric moral theology. Häring eventually concedes that the Christian virtues are distinctive to the Christian community because their source, their norm, and their principle is the person of Jesus Christ. The person of Jesus Christ cannot be fully understood by the non-Christian person who has not been trained in the life of the Christian community. All non-Christian morality can be authentic morality only by analogy of faith, not genuine faith itself. Therefore, Häring says, Christian morality is

distinctive in its source for moral knowledge as well as the motivations that drive the Christian to act virtuously for participation in the divine life.

While ultimately I do not embrace completely Hauerwas' emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Christian story at the expense of conversation with those outside of the Christian community, I think that his reliance on the communal aspect of the formation of moral character is important for moral theology. Indeed, Hauerwas' insistence that the Church is the context for Christian morality serves to underscore the importance of the sacraments in Haring's moral theology. Although Hauerwas' discussion of the sacraments is not extensive by any means, he says that the sacraments are one of the "marks" of the Church that identify the Church as Church. The sacraments in Hauerwas Christian ethic, not surprisingly, are understood primarily in connection with the Christian narrative. Hauerwas states, "The sacraments enact the story of Jesus and, thus, form a community in his image. We could not be the church without them. For the story of Jesus is not simply one that is told; it must be enacted. The sacraments are means crucial to shaping and preparing us to tell and hear that story."<sup>134</sup> Hauerwas proceeds to explain that baptism initiates the person not only into the community, but into learning the story and becoming part of the Christian story. The Eucharist is the living reality of Christ in the world that allows us to become part of God's kingdom. Through our participation in the Eucharist we become part of Christ's sacrifice and suffering that saves us from sin and death. Through the sacraments we learn who we are, for they are the essence of the ritual participation in the Christian community and in the life of God.

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<sup>134</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 108.

As Häring explicates his sacramental moral theology at length throughout his work, he makes clear the idea that the moral-religious life of the Christian is indeed the sacramental life of the Christian who participates in the life of God as well as in the life of the world through the sacramental encounter with the other. This encounter does not take place only within the Church community, but within the world at large. The most significant difference between the sacramental ethics of Häring and Hauerwas is found, then, in Hauerwas' statement regarding the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. Hauerwas claims,

These rites, baptism and eucharist [sic], are not just 'religious things' that Christian people do. They are the essential rituals of our politics. Through them we learn who we are. Instead of being motives or causes for effective social work on the part of Christian people, these liturgies *are* our effective social work. For if the church *is* rather than has a social ethic, these actions are our most important social witness. It is in baptism and eucharist [sic] that we see most clearly the marks of God's kingdom in the world. They set our standard, as we try to bring every aspect of our lives under their sway.<sup>135</sup>

Hauerwas thus contends that the "work" of the Christian moral life is "done" in the sacramental liturgies of the Christian community. For Hauerwas, then, it seems that his presentation of the sacraments serves to emphasize that the Christian community, the Church, is set apart, or marked as distinct, from the rest of the world. Hauerwas does not claim that the sacraments call the person to go forth into the world to make present the kingdom of God. Rather, Hauerwas suggests that the work of the Christian people is accomplished in the sacraments that make God's kingdom more visible to the Christian community, not to the rest of the world.

Even Hauerwas' discussion of the invitation to the stranger to enter into the Christian narrative has separatist elements. Although the stranger is invited into the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

Christian community, and although we recognize that the stranger comes to the community with his own story to share, Hauerwas does not suggest that the Christian community learns truth from the story of the other. Rather, “[t]hrough the stranger’s reception of the story of Jesus (which may often take the form of rejection), we too learn more fully to hear the story of God.”<sup>136</sup> The story of the stranger is a challenge to not lose the power of the story of Jesus through our “conventionalizing” of the story. The Christian community, then, serves to share the truth. The Church, in Hauerwas’ ethic, cannot learn from the experience of or encounter with the other. What the Church learns from the stranger is not the truth of another experience of God in the world, but how our living of the story of God in the community can be richer. Thus Hauerwas claims, “We seek out the other because it is from the other that we learn how well or how poorly we have made the story of Jesus our story. For the church is finally known by the character of the people who constitute it, and if we lack that character, the world rightly draws the conclusion that the God we worship is in fact a false God.”<sup>137</sup> Ultimately it seems, then, the Church seeks out the other not to serve the person’s needs, but actually to fulfill our own longings to live more faithful to the Christian narrative of Jesus Christ. This is a very one-sided relationship indeed!

Häring, on the other hand, argues that moral theology is lived in the Christian religious-moral response to God, particularly as is evident in the sacramental life, but also in the everyday religious-moral life in activities in the life outside of the Christian community. Häring senses a greater involvement for Christians in the life with the world,

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<sup>136</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*: 109.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

not just with Christians or the Christian community, than Hauerwas allows. For Häring, the sacramental life of the Christian is inseparable from her moral-religious life. The life of worship and prayer in public acts of cult is inextricably linked to the moral acts within the community. Häring insists that the sacramental life of the Christian is the religious-moral life of the Christian whose worship of God includes activity within the moral order, not only in the liturgical life of the Church. The moral life of the Christian disciple extends beyond the life of the Christian community because all persons can serve as bearers of moral value. This means that the Christian encounter with the other can be an experience in which the other experiences the presence of Jesus Christ in a unique and inexplicable way. At the same time, however, Häring further allows that the Christian encounter with the other can be an experience of the Ultimate Value that is Jesus Christ through the encounter with the other, including one who is not a member of the Body of Christ. The call-response model for moral theology is not limited to the divine-human relationship in Häring's Christocentric ethic, for the Church contributes to moral conversations but also learns from the world at large as well.

In Hauerwas' Christian ethic, the Christian community lives the narrative of the peaceableness of the kingdom of God. From Hauerwas' presentation, the telling and living of the story is a duty or an obligation for the Christian person to develop his life in accordance with the truthful narrative of the Christian community. The Jesus Christ of Hauerwas' Christian ethic is the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. Hauerwas gives little attention, however, to "the Word" who exists from all time and creates the world. Rather, the Jesus who the Christian disciple follows is Jesus of Nazareth, who is the revelation of the presence of the kingdom of God. The Christian obligation is to fit one's

life into the story of Jesus Christ through the narrative of the Christian community. Only through initiation into the story through baptism and participation in Christ's sacrifice in the Eucharist is the Christian able to become part of God's story.

In Häring's moral theology, however, one gets a greater sense of the invitation to the sacramental life of the Church. The person is called by God and responds in the affirmative or the negative, but God continues to invite the person to participation in the divine life. The Word who creates is also the one who invites the person to participation through imitation of the life of Jesus Christ who is the revelation of God's abiding love. Häring, like Hauerwas, admits that we only know God through relationship, only because God and humanity have a relationship for all time, as made known in the story of Israel and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; but Häring goes a step farther and says that the life of the Christian is not relegated to the worship of God in the Church alone. Rather, authentic relationship with God invites the Christian to participation in the world and in the divine life in the same responsible religious-moral act that gives glory to God.

Häring provides a richer understanding of the sacramental life of the Christian and the Christian community than Hauerwas does in his Christian ethic. Nonetheless, his Christian ethic is beneficial for Häring's moral theology because Hauerwas suggests that a Christocentric ethic must recognize that the moral life of the Christian is shaped and developed most appropriately in the distinctively Christian community. The experience of Jesus Christ in the Christian community, Häring would agree, is the most authentic encounter with Ultimate Value. Häring, however, would argue that once the Christian person has been trained in the right religious-moral response to God's offer of grace

manifest most authentically in the Christian community, the Christian must go out into all the world to share the Good News in order to give glory to God in the life of the Church, not merely as a witness, but in acts of service that serve as worship and give glory to the triune God.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### JESUS CHRIST:

#### THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

Jesus Christ must be the starting point, the center, and the end of all Christian ethics and moral theology. Christian morality cannot be merely general morality, common to all persons, without specific reference to what makes Christian ethics and moral theology distinctively Christian, namely, the person of Jesus Christ. Whether Protestant or Catholic, moral deliberation must have Jesus Christ as central to the discussion. Common to all Christians is the conviction that Jesus Christ is the revelation of God in God's very self, and that Christian identity is based on one's being a disciple of Jesus Christ. How the Christian community understands discipleship determines Christian morality, for to be a Christian disciple means something significant about who we are called to be, not only what we do, as followers of Jesus Christ. At the same time, however, the distinctiveness of Christian discipleship does not require withdrawal from the secular contributions to the moral conversation. Rather, Christian discipleship in the imitation of Jesus Christ necessitates active involvement in the ongoing dialogue with the world in order to help the world to more closely reflect the kingdom of God on Earth. Likewise, the Christian community can benefit from the input of the secular world as

Christians negotiate the many communities to which they belong. In that sense, moral theology and Christian ethics can be both universal and distinctive at the same time.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and synthesize the chief elements of Häring's moral theology, in order to underscore what I view as the most significant aspects of Häring's ongoing relevance for contemporary Catholic moral theology.

Bernard Häring's Christocentric moral theology introduces a distinctively Christian approach to moral formation and development that is centered on the imitation of Jesus Christ, who is God's invitation to humanity and at the same time humanity's response to God. The concepts of response, responsibility, and dialogue that Häring uses throughout his moral theology are not distinctively Christian, and thus the non-Christian or non-religious person can still find relevance in Häring's work for their own moral development. At the same time, however, Häring insists that the person of Jesus Christ is central to authentic Christian morality, for Jesus Christ is the Word of God and the High Priest that invites human response to God's offer of grace. Häring's Christocentric moral theology is centered on the imitation of Jesus Christ as the central way of being and thus assimilation to the life of Christ is the fundamental way of acting in accordance with one's Christian convictions regarding discipleship in Jesus Christ. Therefore, although Häring recognizes the value in non-Christian moral systems, he ultimately espouses the distinctiveness of Christian morality over the universal aspects of moral formation and development. While some aspects of Häring's moral theology must be reconstructed in order to attain greater relevance in the contemporary conversation regarding the distinctiveness and universality of Christian moral theology, his emphasis on the

imitation of Christ as central to moral formation and development in the Christian community provides an important springboard for the conversation.

## I. Häring's Contributions to Catholic Moral Theology

Häring's influential role in the renewal of Catholic moral theology prior to the Second Vatican Council cannot be overstated. From the outset, Häring clearly identifies the aspects of Catholic moral theology that are in need of reform. He contends that the Scriptures must have a more prominent role in the development of Catholic moral theology. Häring focuses on moral theology as part of the whole project of theology; rather than viewing moral theology as separate and distinct from dogmatics or the liturgy, Häring insists that all aspects of theology complement one another in order to frame the Christian life as an expression of the integral human being and community. Häring's pastoral approach, as opposed to the more penitential focus, to moral theology demonstrates his conviction that moral theology is for all persons, not just theologians or priests, but all the laity who seek relationship with the triune God. These are just a few of the many contributions Häring's Christocentric ethic offers to Catholic moral theology. As this project suggests, however, Häring's greatest contribution to Catholic moral theology is the centrality that he gives the person of Jesus Christ in moral formation and development for the Christian person and for the Christian community. Häring's Christocentric moral theology serves as a bridge between the traditional Protestant focus on the Scriptures as central to Christian ethics and the traditional Catholic emphasis on natural law and natural reasoning as central to the moral endeavor; for Häring allows for

both Scriptures and natural law to have a role in moral formation, but always in relation to the person of Jesus Christ.

Throughout his work, Häring attempts to maintain a balance between the universal, catholic character of morality with the distinctively Christian aspects of a morality founded on the reality of the nature of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Because the imitation of Jesus Christ is fundamental to his Christocentric moral theology, however, Häring ultimately concludes that moral theology must be distinctively Christian precisely because Christian ethics has Jesus Christ as its source, center, and norm. We know who God is because we know who Jesus Christ is, through Scriptures and Tradition, but also through God's continuing presence in the community of the Church through the working of the Holy Spirit. Häring's Christological anthropology presents a moral theology focused not on human acts, but on human agency. The identity of the Christian disciple is derived not from the actions of the person alone, but from who the person is as a follower of Jesus Christ. To be a Christian, a disciple of Christ, means to be like Christ through the imitation of the attitudes and dispositions of Jesus Christ. Häring claims that Christians know who we ought to be because we know who Jesus Christ is, namely, the revelation of God's very self, God's very nature. Although Christians are not called to be identical to Jesus Christ, God invites Christians to be like Jesus Christ through the life of loving adoration and worship of the triune God made known in the person of Jesus Christ, the life of response to God's offer of grace. Who God is, the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ, is who Christians must be for others just as God is for creation. Therefore, Häring insists, Jesus Christ is the source, foundation, and center of moral theology. The Christian moral-religious life must have Jesus Christ

as its center, because the imitation of Jesus Christ is Christian morality. Häring thus contends that the imitation of Jesus Christ is inseparable from the Christian moral-religious life. The Christian cannot be a Christian apart from the assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ.

Häring's vision of the moral-religious life of the Christian views the Christian virtues as essential for the imitation of Jesus Christ in the life of the Christian community. The most significant virtue for the distinctively Christian moral-religious life is the virtue of religion that serves as the bridge between the theological and moral virtues. More than following the words, life, and deeds of Jesus Christ, Christian discipleship in the imitation of Jesus Christ is becoming like Christ for others in fundamental dispositions and attitudes which give glory to God. God initiates the relationship with humanity, and the Christian responds to God's invitation to grace through the life of worship and praise in the public cult of the Church and in moral acts of loving service to the neighbor. For Häring, then, the Christian moral life is distinctively the moral-religious life in which one's basic disposition is directed toward loving adoration in a life of worship, immediately directed toward God in public cult in the liturgical life of the Church, and indirectly and in a mediated way through acts of love in the moral life in the secular realm.

Through his emphasis on the virtue of religion, Häring underscores that all aspects of the Christian life are assimilated to the life of Jesus Christ, for all of Christian moral-religious life is directed toward giving adoring and loving worship and service to God. All Christian moral actions are religious-moral responses to the life of Jesus Christ: Christian morality is not either in the Church or in the world, but life in the Church for

the world. Worship in the sense of public cult takes place in the liturgical life of the Church, but the liturgy expresses the Christian conviction that our imitation of Christ in the liturgy contributes to participation in the life of the triune God. Likewise, our moral life in the secular world, outside of the liturgy, expresses the Christian belief that what we “do” in the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, has ramifications for our life with those outside of the Church. If we are to fully participate in the divine-human relationship, we must be first initiated into the life of the Church in which Jesus Christ most uniquely offers fellowship and communion, through Baptism. If we are to fully participate in the Eucharist, we must fully imitate the sacrificial obedience of Jesus Christ manifest most authentically in the Eucharistic celebration. Before we can attain to fellowship with God and the world, we must first recognize ourselves as being in need of forgiveness, and as forgiven, through the sacrament of Reconciliation. Through participation in all of the sacraments of the Church, Christians are given the most complete knowledge, the dynamic motivation, and the zeal for giving one’s entire person, one’s integral being, in response to God’s offer of grace. Häring argues that this religious life is also one’s moral life, for the two cannot be distinguished. The life of the Christian community manifest in the sacramental life of the Church likewise manifests itself in the ordinary moral-religious life of the Christian who lives and acts in the world in assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ.

## II. Prospects for a Reconstruction of Häring’s Christocentric Moral Theology

As I have already discussed, the problems with Häring’s Christocentric moral theology are the tensions inherent in any moral theology that seeks to maintain catholic

universality for moral formation and development while at the same time establishing the imitation of Jesus Christ as central to a distinctively Christian morality. Even an explication of the universality of salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection cannot have priority over the specificity of a moral theology in which assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ is central to Christian discipleship and therefore to Christian morality. Because of his emphasis on the imitation of Jesus Christ, however, Häring highlights the distinctive and common element of Catholic moral theology and Protestant ethics: Christian morality cannot be founded on natural reason or even the Scriptures alone, but must be centered on the person of Jesus Christ who is God's invitation to grace for all persons, and the response of adoring love to God's offer. Jesus Christ is both the call and the response in the divine-human relationship. Rather than focusing on the different approaches to Christian moral formation and development, Häring emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the foundation for the Christian religious-moral life, and indeed he specifies that the Christian moral life cannot be understood apart from the Christian religious-moral life lived in the imitation of Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ is none other than God in God's very self, inviting Christians to respond to the offer of grace with a life of worship and loving service to God and to others.

Although Häring's focus on the imitation of Christ as central to the Christian religious-moral life does not allow him ultimately to reconcile the universal and distinctive aspects of moral theology, his work opens the prospects for including non-Christians in the ongoing dialogue concerning moral formation and development. Through his value theory in which all persons have the capacity to be bearers of moral value, Häring suggests that non-Christians are able to participate in the divine-human

relationship. Using the “analogy of faith,” Häring claims that non-Christians genuinely are able to experience God as Ultimate Value, even if in an incomplete or limited way. The Christian has the most authentic or complete encounter with value in the experience of the other as a bearer of Ultimate Value, Jesus Christ, but the non-Christian can attain to a limited experience of ultimate value even if only in the form of an analogy of faith. In this sense, Häring maintains the importance of dialogue with those outside of the Christian community while still maintaining that the Christian experience of Jesus Christ leads to the most authentic encounter with the triune God as the source of the Christian moral-religious life.

Despite the centrality of Jesus Christ for his moral theology, Häring’s work does not attend fully to the narrative aspects of the life of Jesus Christ for the Christian moral-religious life. Häring’s ethic can benefit from Hauerwas’ focus on the importance of the narrative for Christian ethics. Häring focuses primarily on the Incarnation and Resurrection as the most significant aspects of the life of Jesus Christ for the Christian understanding of God’s unmerited offer of grace and humanity’s loving response in the divine-human relationship. Although the Incarnation and Resurrection are two important aspects of the life of Jesus Christ, a reconstruction of Häring’s moral theology must give greater attention to the life, teaching, and ministry of Jesus Christ as further invitations to the Christian community to participate in the life of Jesus Christ. While Häring correctly highlights the significance of the dialogical relationship between God and humanity, his moral theology can benefit from a more narrative focus on the Scriptures and Tradition which witness to the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Hauerwas’ Christian ethic contributes to Häring’s work a narrative context within which the Christian community can view itself

as participating in the divine-human relationship. God's relationship with humanity is made known through the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus handed down from His first disciples and continued in the life of the Church. Hauerwas' Christian ethic provides Häring's work with a more concrete social context for Christian discipleship in the imitation of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the increased emphasis on the importance of narrative for the Christian understanding of God's relationship with humanity, Häring's moral theology can benefit from the more inclusive role that Hauerwas attributes to the people of Israel in the formation of the Christian community as part of the narrative of God. The fundamental relationship between the community of Israel and the Christian community clearly is absent throughout Häring's moral theology. For Häring, the Israelites serve to foreshadow the coming of Jesus Christ. For Hauerwas, the people of Israel are the first participants in the story of God's loving care for creation. A more significant role for the people of Israel would certainly benefit Häring's moral theology that seeks to include all persons, particularly those of faith, in the conversation regarding moral formation and development.

Hauerwas underscores the importance of looking at the teaching and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth as providing a necessary foundation for the life of virtue, but particularly the virtue of peaceableness. Unlike Hauerwas, Häring rightly contends that the Church must not isolate itself from ongoing dialogue with the secular world in moral deliberation. Rather, the imitation of Jesus Christ necessitates a dynamic relationship between the Church and the world so that the Church can be the visible manifestation of God's ongoing presence in the world. Likewise, the world can contribute to the

increasing knowledge of the Christian community through interaction with non-Christian sources as legitimate sources of knowledge and value. Although his work can benefit from Hauerwas' insistence that the Christian life is distinctive and unique, however, Håring also reminds us that our distinctiveness must not lead to exclusion or isolation from other legitimate sources for the encounter with value outside of the Christian community.

A further critique regarding Håring's Christocentric moral theology is that some of his fundamental working theories are disconnected from the more specific applications of his theories. Despite the enormity of his writing, Håring remains rather vague throughout much of his work when theory is put to practice. Richard McCormick best describes the strength and weakness of Håring's work in his evaluation of one of Håring's articles regarding divorce. McCormick states, "His essay is vintage Håring, which is to say that it is characterized by obvious Christlike kindness and compassion, pastoral prudence, a shrewd sense of the direction of things, and a generous amount of haziness."<sup>1</sup> Håring's first concern is for discipleship in the imitation of Jesus Christ, and he primarily seeks to provide a Christocentric moral theology that gives guidance to the Christian community. Addressing morally problematic situations is of less relevance to Håring. Although Håring eschews moral theology that is understood only in terms of casuistry or "situation ethics," he does intend for his work to have relevance for practical ethics. The problem with Håring's work is that he does not adequately apply his fundamental value theory to specific moral problems. The relevance of Jesus Christ or the sacramental life, and even the motif of response and responsibility, have little

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<sup>1</sup> Richard McCormick, *Notes on Moral Theology: 1965-1980* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America: 1981): 340.

significance in the actual presentation of what is fundamental to Christian moral deliberation regarding particular moral issues. Häring assumes that the religious convictions of the person are already in place before the Christian person addresses moral situations or issues, but he never explicitly discusses how the person of Jesus Christ is fundamental to moral decision-making in particular circumstances. That is to say, what Häring presents in the first volumes of his two major works does not necessarily follow through to the specific situations addressed in the second volumes of *The Law of Christ* and *Free and Faithful in Christ*. Häring's work remains rather vague rather than giving specific details for Christian moral deliberation. Indeed, Häring's discussion of moral issues generally adheres to the teaching of the magisterium of the Catholic Church without specific reference to his own Christocentric approach to moral theology. Perhaps one can account for such discrepancies in the fact that Häring admittedly struggles to balance universality and distinctiveness in Christian moral theology. Indeed, Häring's moral theology is concerned with how the virtue of religion gives content and formation to moral virtue, but he does not move much beyond the formation stage of moral virtue in his work to show how the moral virtues are expressed in the secular world. A contemporary re-appropriation of his moral theology must provide a concrete grounding or location, such that Häring's work is not interpreted merely as a theoretical or speculative theology that lacks context and neglects the need for application into actual moral problems.

Nonetheless, such a critique does not detract from the significant contributions that Häring's Christocentric ethic can and must have for contemporary moral theology. The virtue of religion serves as the bridge between the theological and moral virtues.

Through the virtue of religion the Christian is able to understand herself in right relationship to God, but only through the development of the virtues is she able to understand her moral actions toward the neighbor as ultimately acts of worship directed in response to God's offer of grace. This aspect of Häring's moral theology is of utmost importance for contemporary conversations in moral theology, for the focus on the virtue of religion as the foundation for all the moral virtues reminds the Christian community that the life of worship is inextricably linked to the moral life. Just as the moral life of the Christian cannot be interpreted apart from the religious life of the person, Häring insists that the experience of value in the encounter with the other is at once a call for response and an obligation. Just as all religious acts are at the same time moral acts, the encounter with value is both gift and task. The integral Christian moral-religious life is thus understood as both gift and task – invitation of God and call to response from humanity. Such a recognition of the reality of the moral-religious life is inseparable from the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God and, by the same token, the revelation of humanity to itself.

Because Häring's Christological anthropology presents the person integrally considered as both personal and social being, one can understand the virtue of religion as both personal relationship with God in the private life of interior worship and prayer, and as social relationship of public cult in the Christian community that gives glory to the triune God. Likewise, all the individual moral virtues serve as an aspect of the worship of God, for each virtue is formed and categorized under the virtue of religion. Therefore, each moral virtue is able to give direct and immediate worship to God, but also indirect and mediated glory to God through loving service to the neighbor. Thus understood, the

moral virtues are the external response to God's invitation through the imitation of Jesus Christ, the perfect worshipper.

Although Häring seeks to maintain dialogue with others outside of the Christian community, he insists that the imitation of Jesus Christ is the heart of Christian morality. Therefore, he does not intend to present a virtue theory that will be adhered to by all persons for all times. Rather, Häring suggests that the Christian community distinguishes itself from other communities precisely in the life of ongoing conversion and the call to holiness in fellowship with Jesus Christ. The divine-human relationship is characterized by ongoing dialogue between God and humanity in a dynamic experience of relationality and responsibility. All encounters with others and the Other are religious and moral encounters in which the Christian person is able to attain to fellowship with the triune God. The gift and task of grace encountered in the experience with the other enables the Christian to be transformed, and continuously converted, into the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. God initiates the dialogue with persons, and persons respond in freedom and faithfulness to God's grace in the community in the imitation of Jesus Christ.

While Häring's work makes evident the need for ongoing conversion and continuous transformation, he provides little discussion of sin in relation to the life of virtue. One can intuit that the need for ongoing conversion indicates the reality of the presence of sin as an impediment to the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ, but Häring's work would do well to incorporate a greater consideration of sin and sinfulness as a concern for, and impediment to, Christian moral formation. Indeed, Häring's emphasis on the importance of ongoing conversion in the life of the disciple of Christ reminds us that the Christian community is a pilgrim people always on the journey toward

participation in the triune life of God. Therefore, the Christian moral life needs continuous formation and development within the life of the Christian community. The imitation of Jesus Christ requires the Christian disciple to recognize that Jesus' command, "Abide in me," can never be perfectly accomplished in this life, but that the development of the virtuous life can at least keep the person on the right path towards holiness and perfection. Häring wants to emphasize that Jesus Christ has conquered sin and death through His death and Resurrection, but this emphasis does not allow for a full development of the experience of sin in the Christian moral life.

A corrective to Häring's work comes from Hauerwas' emphasis on sin and tragedy throughout his work (almost to the extent that one could forget that joy is also a part of Christian life!). Hauerwas highlights the reality of the Christian life that is faced with challenges and adversity precisely due to the commitment to the narrative of Jesus Christ as the story of peaceableness. The imitation of Jesus Christ, according to Hauerwas' Christian ethic, necessitates conflict and tragedy and chaos because the world is unwilling to give up control and relinquish the life of illusions. Hauerwas rightly points out that such conflict can even exist within the person herself, not only in forces external to the person. Häring's moral theology can give Hauerwas' Christian ethic a more hopeful and optimistic view of the world, while Hauerwas can give Häring's work a more realistic evaluation of the inevitability, and even necessity, of the challenge of sin for those who seek to imitate Jesus Christ. A contemporary reconstruction of Häring's Christocentric moral theology can benefit from a greater accounting of the reality of sin in conjunction with an explication of the virtues for the Christian community. This is just

one way in which a contemporary retrieval of Häring's Christocentric moral theology can build upon the foundations which his work provides for Catholic moral theology.

What is most fruitful from Häring's Christocentric moral theology is his insistence that the Christian life cannot be adequately understood apart from the call to discipleship in the imitation of Jesus Christ. Particularly relevant for contemporary moral theology, in my view, is Häring's claim that the moral virtues are subordinate to the virtue of religion as the primary category for moral formation and development. This has important consequences for the sacramental life of the Church, for the religious life can no longer be considered apart from the moral life, and vice versa. The integral Christian life can be understood as nothing less than the religious-moral life in which one's entire being and all consequent actions are derived from one's identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ, a worshipper of God in the liturgical life of the Church and in the moral life in service to the neighbor. Authentic, perfect imitation of Jesus Christ necessitates that the Christian life of worship is at the same time the moral life of sacrificial obedience to God and to others for the sake of Jesus Christ.

For Häring the sacramental life is not limited to the sacraments of the Church. As participants in the sacramental life of the Church, Christians live in the presence of those outside of the Church in a way that is in keeping with our participation in the sacraments. That is, we are to those outside of the Church the sacramental presence of Jesus Christ's continuing fellowship with the world. The Christian is a sacrament to others, even to those outside of the Church. The imitation of Christ is the assimilation to the life of the Word of God and the High Priest, but also the life of the Sacrament. Christ is the Sacrament, the revelation of God's loving fellowship with creation. Just as Christ is

Sacrament for creation, our imitation of Jesus Christ necessitates living as sacraments for others, to the glory of the triune God.

The concern of this project has not been to examine how Häring presents the sacraments in the liturgical rites of the Church, but to explicate how Häring views the Christian moral life as the sacramental life of worship outside of the Church. The Christian who lives in the imitation of Jesus Christ is the visible sign of God's loving adoration for all of creation. Christian discipleship requires constant conversion to the way of life that acknowledges Jesus Christ as the beginning and the end of creation. As Jesus Christ is for Christians, the Word of God and the response of humanity, so Christians are for one another, both within and outside of the Church. All that we "do" in the liturgical life of the Church, in our public cult, is also what we do in our loving service for our neighbors, for the sake of Jesus Christ and in the imitation of Jesus Christ. From Häring's contribution to the conversation regarding moral formation and development in the Christian community, one can gain a greater understanding of the Christian life as the religious-moral life. The moral life of the Christian is a continuation of the religious life expressed in the life of worship in the Christian community. Likewise, the religious life of public cult cannot be understood apart from the moral life of the Christian engaged in responsible dialogue with the world. From Häring's work, one can see that the Christian life of worship can no longer be confined to the life of public cult in the liturgical rites of the Church. Rather, the Christian life of worship is the life in, with, and through Jesus Christ. Assimilation to the life of Jesus Christ is the life of worship evident in the loving service for others, inherent in the moral-religious life dedicated to the glory of the triune God.

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