

Stanley Hauerwas's Influence on Catholic Moral Theologians

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ONE MIGHT BEGIN considering the reception of Stanley Hauerwas's work in Catholic moral theology by asking: why did both *Commonweal* and *First Things* opt to publish reviews of Hauerwas's memoir *Hannah's Child*? What is it about Hauerwas's theological discussion of his own work that engages an educated Catholic audience of magazines putatively representing both ends of the spectrum? It is not only that both journals actively seek engagement with Protestant voices; nor is it only that Hauerwas has a degree of renown, thanks to *Time* magazine.¹ It is also exactly what Peter Steinfels alludes to in his review, that Hauerwas is at once disturbing and rewarding for Catholics.² Hauerwas is so strongly in support of certain "liberal" Catholic ideals (e.g., that ethics should not be about laws in the way it was perceived pre-Vatican II), so intensely in support of certain "conservative" Catholic ideals (e.g., that tradition and authority should be important aspects of Christian life), and so seemingly dismissive of natural law and state politics³ that Catholics cannot help but have a kind of unsettled fascination with him and his work.

¹ *Time Magazine* named Hauerwas "America's Best Theologian" in September, 2001. Ironically, the issue appeared on newsstands the day before September 11, 2001, so was quickly eclipsed by events. See Jean Bethke Elshatain, "Christian Contrarian," *Time Magazine* (September 17, 2001), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1000859,00.html>.

² Peter Steinfels, "A Bricklayer's Son: Stanley Hauerwas and the Christian Difference," *Commonweal* 137, no. 9 (May 7, 2010): 12-17.

³ Gilbert Meilaender, "A Dedicated Life," *First Things* (May, 2010), <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2010/04/a-dedicated-life>.

As a Catholic student of Hauerwas, part of my attraction to his work has been his ability to bridge intra-Catholic divides, such as that between “liberals” and “conservatives” or Magisterium and theologians. Even more, I think that Hauerwas helps us be more thoroughly “Catholic,” in the sense of being unified in the Body of Christ, because of the *way* he seeks to do theology. In this essay, I focus on Catholic reception of Hauerwas’s work in three distinct areas: ecclesiology, embodied Christian practices, and political theology. Each of these has been the source of both long-standing intra-Catholic debate and debate in the Catholic reception of Hauerwas’s work. So, each of these also becomes a way of seeing that Hauerwas bridges some intellectual divides. Catholics across the spectrum might be disturbed by Hauerwas’s work, but also find some reward in it as well, as the possibility for seeing Catholicism in a new light.

HAUERWASIAN ECCLESIOLOGY: FRIENDSHIP AND FORGIVENESS

It may sound odd to claim that Hauerwas’s ecclesiology is characterized by friendship and forgiveness given the perception that Hauerwas meets every argument with a fight and spreads discord wherever he wanders. Yet that is exactly the claim of this section, despite the vaunted charge against Hauerwas that he is sectarian. I begin by attending to the Catholic context of this sectarian charge, and then explain why Hauerwas is not susceptible to that charge, due to his emphasis on friendship and forgiveness. These ecclesiological emphases will be shown to be exactly why Catholics, particularly theologians in training, have turned to Hauerwas.

Though one of Hauerwas’s doctoral advisors, James Gustafson, is most often cited in making the accusation of sectarianism,⁴ numerous Catholic theologians have lobbed the charge as well. Richard McBrien describes how a sectarian approach produces both an overly narrow ecclesiology and a distorted stance toward the world outside the Church. For McBrien, sectarianism names an idea that the Church is “closed in on itself as a righteous minority, bearing the promise of salvation for those willing to subject themselves to it...”⁵ Sectarianism thereby divides the Church. McBrien worries that sectarians perceive themselves as “churches within and even over against, the Church,” like, for example, the Donatists.⁶

⁴ James Gustafson, “The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church, and the University,” *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 40 (1985): 83-94.

⁵ Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 363.

⁶ McBrien, *The Church*, 366.

The question about sectarianism (Hauerwas's or otherwise) connects to an internal Catholic debate about magisterial teaching and the hierarchy. Having some sense of the internal debate shows more clearly why Hauerwas comes across as troublesome, but also points toward why Hauerwas might bridge some of the divides in this debate. For example, McBrien sees a link between sectarianism and a centralized hierarchy; sectarianism operates against unity and collegiality, two of McBrien's concerns. Collaboration and direct input from local churches and bishops needs to be encouraged on pronouncements; otherwise, unity and ecumenism are at risk. A centralized hierarchy, like sectarianism, allows for a too-narrow account of the Church, for it lends easily to a view that some people are "real Catholics" while others are not. As McBrien notes: "Agreement with and obedience to all of [the pope's] teachings and practical decrees are readily taken as the measure of one's fidelity to the Church, if not also the integrity of one's faith."⁷ Such a view seems in line with the "people versus Magisterium" or "theologians versus Magisterium" motif, which figures frequently in recent Catholic discourse, and was most recently evident when the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote public letters against the works of Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler in the fall of 2010, and Elizabeth Johnson in the spring of 2011. Salzman, Lawler, and Johnson all saw themselves as reaching toward, and doing theology for, the people of God in an open and inclusive way. By contrast, the bishops' pronouncements against these theologians' works make the hierarchy seem quite ecclesiological sectarian in McBrien's eyes.

Given this Catholic context, Hauerwas's "sectarian" influence would seem to have come at a particularly bad time—just when Catholics are having a long discussion about the reception of Vatican II, the identity of the Church, and Christians' relationship to the world. On McBrien's view, for example, Hauerwas's students strive to create an enclave of perfect Christians, and to do so, they hearken back nostalgically to the worlds they perceive as necessarily better, especially the patristic and medieval periods. Their view of the Church, like that of the centralized hierarchy, is a faulty view on McBrien's account. They do not see the whole People of God, nor the Holy Spirit at work in the broad and diverse group of people called Christians. McBrien sums up this distaste of some Catholic thinkers⁸ toward Hauerwas and his students by saying:

⁷ McBrien, *The Church*, 306.

⁸ Lisa Sowle Cahill has written from a different, more positive view about Hauerwas and his "communitarian ethic," though she worries about the disconnection between "Christian community" and political life. However, Hauerwas would argue against a "communitarian view" as well, as he does in *In Good Company*, which at the least

[Stanley Hauerwas] has many Catholic disciples—former students at Duke—now teaching in various Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, none of whom has attained individual prominence but who have collectively had a marked influence on Catholic theological education, particularly in the field of moral theology. Like Hauerwas's, their views on Christian ethics are an expression of an underlying sectarian ecclesiological perspective, especially as it relates to the role of the Church in the world.⁹

McBrien is not the only one who sees Hauerwas's students as disciples.¹⁰ Jeffrey Stout uses the term "followers" in his book *Democracy and Tradition*.¹¹ Both terms conjure the image of a secret sect, much like the sectarianism that scholars from Gustafson to Gerard Mannion have sought to critique.¹²

The difficulty with parsing out Hauerwas's place in this conversation is, of course, that he is not Roman Catholic and he has a very different view of the Magisterium than either "liberal" or "conservative" Catholics would have, and his views on related questions do not fall neatly into one camp. In what follows, I discuss Hauerwas's approaches to theology, with the basic contention that Hauerwas's ecclesiology is best understood as rooted in friendship and forgiveness rather than as sectarian. These themes are readily evident in Hau-

suggests that all parties concerned are using language in different ways and lack some understanding of the differing Catholic and Protestant contexts from which they come. See Cahill's article at "L'éthique communautarienne et le catholicisme américain," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 95:1 (2007): 21-40. Hauerwas's discussion is found in *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

⁹ McBrien, *The Church*, 388.

¹⁰ McBrien's thoughts about Hauerwas students are surely affected by his role in the tenure decisions for Michael Baxter in the late 1990s. On this controversy, see Pamela Schaeffer, "Notre Dame Disputes May Signal a Shift," <http://www.nd.edu/~afreddos/papers/baxncr.htm>. However, apart from this, McBrien's thought is representative of many scholars in North America and Europe.

¹¹ He alludes to adherents of other authors, like Emerson or John Finnis, as followers as well, but Hauerwas's "followers" take on a different tone in Stout's work: "A cynic might say that the secret of Hauerwas's vast influence in the church in the 1980s and 1990s lay in the imprecision of the sacrifice he appeared to be demanding of his followers.... [I]n the absence of a clear statement of the price Christians must be willing to pay, his audience was able to indulge itself in fantasies of martyrdom without experiencing actual poverty or persecution at all." Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 157-8.

¹² Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation"; also, see Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Books, 2007).

erwas's work and in his training of doctoral students and their own commitments to seeking friendship and forgiveness.

Hauerwas is as positioned as any other thinker, being, as he is, American, Texan, and at least trying to be Christian.¹³ There are those who poke fun at what they perceive to be a Hauerwas pantheon: Barth, Yoder, and Aquinas, while Alasdair MacIntyre and Aristotle take on the role of demi-gods. Many other scholars then seemingly become demons: Rahner, Tillich, the Niebuhr brothers, liberal feminism, to name a few.

Yet Hauerwas's emphasis as a teacher is to encourage students to read people for their arguments rather than reading particular people who share certain sensibilities or who "have it right." Just before I left Duke University, having obtained my degree, I stopped by his office one last time to ask for some advice now that I faced the different challenges of teaching students while doing research. I knew that the graduate student days of being able to organize my time more or less freely were at an end; how was one to balance what would surely become a busier schedule in the days ahead? So I asked, "How do you sort out what to read and what to leave out?" "I can't tell you that," he answered. "You've got to read everything."

I should have known that would be his answer. We never read his own work in seminars,¹⁴ but we read the people who influenced him, and those people were wide-ranging and numerous. In a year-long seminar on Ludwig Wittgenstein,¹⁵ Hauerwas brought in Peter Hill's book *Stone and Stonemasons: The Making of a Cathedral*¹⁶ because

¹³ To say Hauerwas is "positioned" is not the same as saying he "has a position," which I discuss in the third section of this essay.

¹⁴ Indeed, when in the summer of 2010, I had a chance to meet with the other authors of Hauerwas's students' festschrift *Unsettling Arguments: A Festschrift on the Occasion of Stanley Hauerwas's 70th Birthday*, eds. Charles Pinches, Kelly Johnson, and Charles Collier (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), one thing many of us mentioned was that writing these essays had meant we had opportunity to go back and read his work.

¹⁵ In the seminar we read, among other things: the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), *On Certainty* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), Ray Monk's biography *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Penguin, 1990), Fergus Kerr's *Theology After Wittgenstein* (London: SPCK, 1997), Carl Elliot's *Slow Cures and Bad Philosopher: Essays on Wittgenstein, Medicine and Bioethics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), James Edward's *Ethics without Philosophy: Wittgenstein and the Moral Life* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985), Brad Kallenberg's *Ethics as Grammar: Changing the Postmodern Subject* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), G. E. M. Anscombe's *Intention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), and a number of essays and articles.

¹⁶ Published by Cascade for the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral, 1989.

some of the commentary seemed exactly to illuminate something Wittgenstein had said. Some of his students from the early 1990s tell a story of wanting to catch him out on reading: they would try to come up with the most obscure title they could and mention it in class; Hauerwas had often read it, but if he had not, he delighted in having another interesting book to study, returning next week with comments from his reading! Similarly, he often encouraged his students to take courses with faculty in other departments at Duke University, such as David Aers or Romand Coles, not as add-ons for students interested in English or Political Science as a kind of side dish, but as fully integral to the study of theological ethics. Through his own academic practice, Hauerwas encouraged his students to be interested in what they did not yet know or understand.

Because of this broad swath of reading, the experience of many of us in Hauerwas's seminars was that of a person who is seriously engaged with theology, teaching his students how to be seriously engaged with theology. He is humble enough to know that there are others who say it better, and he is fair enough to know that people with whom he has great disagreements are still often people with interesting things to say. As he liked to gently remind his students, "You may disagree with them, but remember that they are *friends*." Hauerwas tried to get his graduate students to think about and respect others' work *because* they can tell us something important about our presumptions.

Former students of Hauerwas do not agree him or with each other on many things, and they do not aim to live in some kind of pure, New Testament community, or that hearkens to a "traditionalist" view of church authority. Indeed, as Hauerwas and Charles Pinches write,

[I]nsofar as they believe that the God of the universe, who has extended Himself to us in the Jewish people and in Jesus, invites us to become His friends by sharing in His suffering, Christians cannot accept a vision of friendship which excludes (or overcomes) otherness in the friend, or which shelters her from sharing our sufferings or defeats.¹⁷

Friendship is one of the keys for understanding Hauerwas's discussion of church as much as understanding how his graduate students interact with each other and their colleagues in the field. As

¹⁷ 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), 44.

Therese Lysaught and David Matzko McCarthy describe in their introduction to the multi-author *Gathered for the Journey*, “we hope that the multiplicity of ways of expressing things (among the thirteen authors) points to the unfathomable mystery that is the God with whom we journey and to the ever-creative richness of the Christian life.”¹⁸ Friendships with many people truly demonstrate catholicity: a unity in God but with a multiplicity of voices. Christians need each other in part because we cannot be a church of one;¹⁹ such a position is ahistorical as well as opposed to Jesus’ great commandments.

Hauerwas’s focus on friendship also helped lead some of his doctoral students to form an “intentional Christian community” in 1990, known un-illustriously as “Iredell House” for the street on which the house exists. Catholic doctoral students John Berkman and David Matzko McCarthy were original members of the house; others, like William Cavanaugh, were connected to the house via a prayer group comprised of several of Hauerwas’s other students who could not live in the house because of marital status or other commitments. The activities at Iredell House centered on the community’s covenant which, among other things, asked community members to pledge to be a “community of Christian friends” who live together simply, who pray together and who practice hospitality toward each other and toward all who might visit the house. This house was no house-church; it was not an alternative to being a member of a church (also an expectation of Iredell House occupants), and the people of Iredell House have, to this day,²⁰ represented a wide range of Christian denominations: Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Friends, United Church of Christ, Lutheran, evangelical non-denominational, Baptist, and more. With such an array of divergence in practicing Christianity, there were often disagreements, and so another part of the covenant is: “Trusting in God’s grace, we are bound to each other in...confession and forgiveness, and hospitality to Christ in whatever guise he comes to us. May the Spirit lead us.”

¹⁸ “Introduction: The Course of Moral Thinking,” in *Gathered for the Journey: Moral Theology in Catholic Perspective*, eds. David Matzko McCarthy and M. Therese Lysaught (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 19. It is not only that this is a multi-author work; the essays in the volume also explicitly seek to overcome divides. For example, David Cloutier’s essay, “Human Fulfillment” (pp. 134-152), seeks to bridge a divide between understanding action in relation to individual conscience, on the one hand, and the necessity of community on the other.

¹⁹ That Christians need each other does not, by the way, negate that Christians also welcome and receive friends who are not Christian.

²⁰ Other Catholic doctoral students who lived in Iredell were Kelly Johnson, Dana Dillon, and David Cloutier. Michael Baxter lived in the front apartment of the house while at Duke, and was therefore associated with the house’s members.

It is not surprising that forgiveness is a crucial part of the covenant, for forgiveness is also central to what doctoral students have learned from Hauerwas. For Hauerwas, friendship goes hand in hand with forgiveness. One line that Hauerwas's students often heard was, "Sin is all the way down." That is to say, sin is deeply embedded in society, a point Hauerwas seems to retain from his reading of Reinhold Niebuhr.²¹ Yet this does not occasion despair or hellfire-and-damnation speeches so much as a recognition that we need to be constantly seeking forgiveness. In *The Peaceable Kingdom*, Hauerwas writes:

because we have learned to live as a forgiven people, as a people no longer in control, we also find we can become a whole people.... When we exist as a forgiven people we are able to be at peace with our histories, so that now God's life determines our whole way of being—our character. We no longer need to deny our past, or tell ourselves false stories, as now we can accept what we have been without the knowledge of our sin destroying us.²²

Hauerwas's account of church involves Christians recognizing that their journey toward friendship with God is about, among other things, seeking forgiveness, while "the world" continues as though sins are not sins. Hence the oft-misinterpreted Hauerwasian mantra, "The first task of the church is to be the church," which is unfortunately sometimes seen as sectarian withdrawal of a "perfect society" from the sin-ridden world. To the contrary, in a culture that is focused on individualism rather than friendship, on self-sufficiency and autonomy rather than the recognition of sin and need for forgiveness, Hauerwas' ecclesiology of friendship and forgiveness is an hospitable gift to, rather than a withdrawal from, the world.

If Hauerwas comes across as "disturbing" for Catholics in his discussion of the Church, I suspect that this is, in part, because there is a difference in what scholars mean by "church." McBrien clearly wants to name "church" as "more self-consciously catholic"²³ (with a lower-

²¹ Reinhold Niebuhr's account of Original Sin shows it as deeply intertwined through the whole of society. While Hauerwas critiques Reinhold Niebuhr in his Gifford Lectures, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001), for using sin as a way to develop a natural theology for non-Christians, he does not actually repudiate Niebuhr's view of sin, that it is inescapable and yet unnecessary.

²² Stanley Hauerwas, "The Peaceable Kingdom," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 135-6. Notably, in a footnote here, Hauerwas refers to H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Meaning of Revelation* (Louisville; Westminster John Knox, 2006).

²³ McBrien, *The Church*, 368.

case c) and willing to participate in dialogue with other religious traditions; it is not closed in on itself, not authoritarian, but is open, especially to lay leadership, leadership by women. Those people and movements who do not participate in McBrien's kind of vision, or who are perceived as speaking against that vision, disturb the (often important) notions he has about what church is.

Insofar as students of Hauerwas come from various churches and denominations, there is no common ecclesiology among them. Even if we narrow these students to Catholics, there are clear differences and disagreements. In a review of works by eight of these former students, four of them Catholic, Charles Pinches outlines clear disagreements in how ecclesiology functions in their moral arguments. He notes that there is a tendency in some toward a "narrative of decline."²⁴ Nonetheless, there is nothing within this spectrum of that excludes thinking of "church" in such a way that takes some of McBrien's comments into account. In general, students of Hauerwas to carry forward a tendency to see that American Christianity too often appropriates non-Christian ideals to its detriment, as I allude to above. Neither Hauerwas nor most of his students would maintain that one can separate from other Christians or the "world" in a sectarian way but would rather attempt to get people to see that embracing complicity with "the world" often leads to trouble. Thus it is that friendship and forgiveness provide means of moving toward God, even as Christians remain in the world and in a church that cannot separate itself from the world.

EMBODIED CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Another major theme of Hauerwas' work is his insistence that theology be accountable to the concrete embodied practices of the Church. The emphasis on embodiment and practices is not simply a matter of "following through" on what Christians preach; rather it recognizes that Christianity is not a set of abstract ideas or theories, but a particular way of life. An emphasis for many Protestant theologians, like Reinhold Niebuhr,²⁵ was to ensure that Christians began with the right ideas. If one only began with (and could find) the right principle, such as love or justice, everything else would follow. The difficulty with this, on Hauerwas's view, is that if the point is the principle, one really ought to follow the principle rather than Jesus; thus the concern is with not placing abstract ideas ahead of the in-

²⁴ Charles Pinches, "Hauerwas and Political Theology: The Next Generation," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 36.3 (September 2008): 513-42.

²⁵ See, for example, Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (New York: Scribner, 1953).

carnate God made known to us in embodied practices. Christian life needs to witness to Jesus Christ.

A Catholic subculture that was, in itself, a whole way of life, did not have to confront this Protestant concern in the same way or at the same time. So, surely some of the fascination with Hauerwas's work among Catholics is related to the sociological changes U. S. Catholics have experienced in the past four decades. Intellectually, Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni patris* ensured that the theological emphasis for the twentieth century would be neo-Thomism and a focus on a universal account of truth in relation to the Church.²⁶ Sociologically, anti-Catholicism and immigration were just two of the factors in the United States that generated Catholic sub-cultures, for both theologians and lay people. My colleague William Portier has helpfully discussed Catholics living in a sub-culture between World War I and the post-Vatican II era:

[W]hether they lived in New Jersey or Oklahoma, they participated in varying degrees in a shared religious culture. They learned similar practices of praying and thinking that added to their demographic distinctiveness. This Catholic world was surely not airtight. But it helped to protect generations of immigrants from Nativism and anti-Catholicism even as it schooled them in how to be Americans. As a result, most American Catholics never felt the full effects of their country's voluntary religious culture.²⁷

The Church and its prayers, sacraments, and processions—mostly in Latin, which served to reinforce a subculture—formed and shaped a view of one's world. Prior to Vatican II, Catholicism was embodied in the sense that it was a way of life, that no part of one's life could escape Catholic formation, which often existed in contradistinction to the surrounding liberal, often Protestant, culture.²⁸

However, this recognizably distinct set of lived practices has, in recent decades, been far less evident. Though there is debate about the extent to which Vatican II's reformulation of doctrine *caused* changes in Catholics' lived practices, the changes after Vatican II,

²⁶ See Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mystery* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) for an excellent survey. His first chapter discusses some of the theologians who were not working in neo-Thomist strains, such as Romano Guardini.

²⁷ William Portier, "Here Come the Evangelical Catholics," *Communio* 31 (2004): 35-66.

²⁸ Evidence for this is in the way Catholic joke books can make jokes about nuns, rulers and knuckles. But what is sometimes forgotten is that most Catholic students these days are not taught by nuns, nor are there likely to be rulers involved; the joke no longer makes sense.

along with sociological changes in the United States at the same time, resulted in important modifications in Catholic doctrine and practice. The changes are well-known: Latin was no longer the liturgical language; religious life was no longer to be highlighted as *the* major means of Christian witness and discipleship; meatless Fridays were no longer mandated except during Lent. These changes subsequently presented a challenge to American Catholics to ensure that, whatever the form, Christian discipleship was inextricably bound to concrete embodied practices. Yet this challenge had already been facing Protestants and therefore was one to which Hauerwas was responding.

When Hauerwas congratulates Catholics for thinking “of themselves as Catholics [because] they had no concept of what it meant to be individuals [and] in fact, they believed one couldn’t be free if one wasn’t ultimately loyal to the church,”²⁹ he responds to this kind of subculture that has slowly unraveled during the time Hauerwas has been a scholar. For theologians responding to the immediate aftermath of Vatican II, Hauerwas seems overly authoritarian. In another example, when Hauerwas’s Catholic interviewer says “I was under the impression that we should be more ecumenical and see the good in all faiths,” Hauerwas responds, “[Y]ou were being corrupted. I’m absolutely serious about that. You were corrupted because what that [move toward seeing the good in all faiths] did was put compassion in the place of the crucified Savior.”³⁰ Here Hauerwas exemplifies the importance of concrete embodiment, rather than generalizable concepts. Yet, in Catholicism, this seems retrograde. Why get too close to someone who seems to want to return to the “bad old days” of a pre-Vatican II church?³¹

Yet Hauerwas is actually decrying the effects of a certain kind of Christianity experienced in his own Protestant upbringing. His seeming collapse of the individual into the (hierarchical, no less) Church is prompted by experiences where Christians were no longer recognizably ecclesial in any way. Alongside this is what other Protestant theologians had seen in twentieth century theological trajectories: making theology (especially the Church’s metaphysical claims) appear relevant to a world focused on empiricism and demanding proof for beliefs.³² Yet conceiving theology as chiefly about

²⁹ Stanley Hauerwas, “Christianity: It’s Not a Religion: It’s an Adventure” in *The Hauerwas Reader*, 522-535, at 523.

³⁰ Hauerwas, “Christianity: It’s Not a Religion: It’s an Adventure,” 526.

³¹ Hauerwas, “Christianity: It’s Not a Religion: It’s an Adventure,” 523.

³² See Stanley Hauerwas, “On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological” in *The Hauerwas Reader*, 51-74. H.R. Niebuhr’s *The Meaning of Revelation* discusses this problem as well, though Hauerwas finds particular problems with Niebuhr’s approach.

justifying the faith grants too much to a world already suspicious of Christ; it already makes Christians irrelevant and even non-existent, because their claims get dissolved by other modes of thinking. Hauerwas therefore ignores the question of relevance for a world that doesn't care, in favor of worrying about Christians who are called to follow the way of Jesus, especially in the ways that they live their theology. Thus Hauerwas sees that the particular kind of embodiment Catholics had prior to Vatican II as something important that was lost, whereas some Catholics have seen it as something to escape.

The culture in which many of Hauerwas's Catholic students have grown up, or at least been profoundly influenced by, has been likewise voluntaristic, private, and disembodied. So, for example, a major liberal tenet is that people are free to worship whom and where they choose. Once that is a possibility, however, people then feel the need to account for their religious affiliations and since many lack the resources to discuss "reasons" for their faith (since faith in God is apparently irrational), they fall back on their own preferences as "reasons" and thereby have to push faith into privately-held corners. Faith then has no traction in the "public" arena because there is no way to adjudicate between peoples' "preferences." At the same time, Christians find themselves open to criticism from non-Christians because being a member of a church makes little or no difference to their lives.³³ When asked about the "Real Presence" of Christ, a Catholic these days is just as likely to say "Well, we don't really believe that" as she is to say, "Well, of course that's the Real Presence." With either answer, Catholicism gets dismissed, first because if adherents do not believe in their convictions, what point is there to "belonging," and second because such an answer does not adequately address modern concerns for epistemological certainty.

In a way, developing Catholic identity in this privatized cultural context exhibits a set of problems that Hauerwas sees as common to Christians in America.³⁴ I suspect that most of Hauerwas's Catholic students came to study with him because they already were asking themselves the questions he deals with as a Protestant theologian and they had already wondered about (or at least suspected) that embod-

See further Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 58.

³³ See, for example, William Portier's discussion of belief and participation in voluntaristic "religion" in *Tradition and Incarnation: Foundations of Christian Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 50-1.

³⁴ Though, of course, the Pew Forum Survey, which has often been cited as alarming by bishops and theologians both, already indicates that Catholics are experiencing the kind of disintegration that their mainline Protestant brothers and sisters have been seeing for decades longer. See <http://religions.pewforum.org>.

ied Christian practices might prove a way forward for Catholics and Protestants alike. They came from a secular, liberal culture in which it is hard to have faith; Hauerwas helps them learn to think about these questions in distinctive and often more helpful ways. Hauerwas's Protestantism and reaction to it, is precisely part of the influence he wields on Catholic moral theology and because of that, Catholic reception of Hauerwas's work is to some extent generational.³⁵

I mention friendship and forgiveness as two practices in the above section, but I think Catholics (twenty-six Catholic doctoral students at both Notre Dame and Duke) are drawn to Hauerwas partly because of his strong use of the Church's liturgy and sacraments as Christian practices.³⁶ On Hauerwas's account an alternative story is learned in ecclesial practices like baptism and the Eucharist, which embody the narrative of Christ's life, death and resurrection. Unlike mainline Protestants, who tend to exhibit more of an abstract religious tradition based on principles and abstract reasoning, Catholics, evangelical Protestants, and Anabaptists figure as examples in Hauerwas's writing of Christians who *embody* a particular story. What they have in common is not that they all exhibit the same kinds of practices nor the same views about doctrines, but that Christians from those traditions attempt to live in such a way as to focus centrally on the story of Christ and witness to the world a different way to see.

It may, partially, be this contrast between liberal Protestantism and other, more embodied Christianities that has led a few of his students to "convert" or come into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. While each of their stories about "becoming Catholic" are surely distinct, "being Catholic" is more about God's grace in and through embodied lives, and far less about the position of the Church in culture. In my own case, the weekly practice of the Eucharist, the embodied Christian practice of receiving Jesus' Body and Blood in order to be Christ for the world, was central to coming into full communion.

It might be seen as ironic, but it is true, that Hauerwas' approach to the liturgy looks a lot like David Tracy's "analogical" and Andrew Greeley's "Catholic" imagination, as the whole world filled with and "enchanted" by God's grace.³⁷ What Hauerwas does is help Christians reflect on practices that we might otherwise pass by or overlook out

³⁵ For example, William Cavanaugh, "Pilgrim People," in *Gathered for the Journey*, 88-105.

³⁶ I focus on Hauerwas's doctoral students in this essay; his influence on Catholic master's students is at least equally profound.

³⁷ See Greeley's use of Tracy in *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), especially in the introduction.

of hand. Baptism and Eucharist therefore become central to the work of many of Hauerwas's students, which is exactly why a charge of sectarianism or a related focus on a hierarchical church makes little sense.³⁸ If there is a definition of "church" toward which Catholic Hauerwas students tend, I think it is a *Lumen gentium* focus³⁹ on the sacrament of baptism that joins us to Christ's body, and the Eucharist that sustains us in that body, rather than a focus on a hierarchical church. So, for example, William Cavanaugh begins his essay "Pilgrim People" by discussing the common contemporary adage, that "I'm spiritual, but not religious," a phrase that suggests one's personal philosophy over against "organized" religion. Through reading Scripture and thinking about the sacraments of the Church, Cavanaugh showcases not a "personal philosophy" so much as a movement of pilgrim people; the Church *must* be organized in order to carry out its mission. Yet Cavanaugh does not then move to a discussion of authority and hierarchy, but to a discussion of practices, virtues and how Christians hand on the faith to other Christians.⁴⁰ Cavanaugh thereby sidesteps one common debate about the reception of Vatican II: that church authorities have tried to draw lines that support hierarchical authority, while theologians have focused on the church of the laity.⁴¹ Focusing on embodied practices like the Eucharist enables Catholics to bridge that gap.

Hauerwas's students often see that embodied practices are not limited to the sacraments and liturgy.⁴² If there is something that unifies nearly all Catholic students of Hauerwas, it is that we focus on

³⁸ Therese Lysaught writes about Eucharist and baptism as part of what it means to be Church. "In baptism, we are grafted into the church, which is the body of Christ.... Thus in the liturgy we gather as the church, the body of Christ, to dwell with the one whose identity we have taken." Therese Lysaught, "Love and Liturgy," in *Gathered for the Journey*, 24-42, at 35. Kelly Johnson, too, writes that "[l]iturgy, where the whole church joins through the Spirit in Christ's priestly prayer to the Father, is the closest we get to our End, this side of the beatific vision. Therefore the entirety of Christian life is preparation for liturgy." Kelly Johnson, "Worshiping in Spirit and Truth," in *Unsettling Arguments*, 300-314, here 312.

³⁹ See, for example, *Lumen gentium*, nos. 10 and 11, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

⁴⁰ Cavanaugh, "Pilgrim People," 100-1.

⁴¹ Note the differences between Giuseppe Alberigo's *The History of Vatican II* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006) and Matthew Lamb and Matthew Levering's volume *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴² So, John Berkman writes about the practices of penance and reconciliation. "Eucharistic Reconciliation: Penitence, Punishment, and Worship," *The Journal for Peace and Justice Studies*, 14:2 (Fall 2004): 179-196. Also reprinted as "Being Reconciled to God and One Another," *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 95-109.

embodied practices in some way, but we may discuss these practices in vastly different accounts. Hauerwas students write on topics as diverse as nonviolence,⁴³ child abuse,⁴⁴ begging,⁴⁵ and disability.⁴⁶ Though Hauerwas's Catholic students find themselves far from the days of a Catholic sub-culture that held some benefit against a voluntaristic culture, they are certainly trying not to retrieve that sub-culture but to respond to the needs of a culture that needs witnesses against child abuse and for hospitality. There are disagreements among his students about "embodiment," including pacifism, which is central in Hauerwas's own work.⁴⁷ But even in these disagreements, there are common commitments to the importance of embodiment, for, as Hauerwas argues, embodied practices are how Christians learn to say and show what it means to believe Christian convictions are true.

POLITICAL THEOLOGY AFTER HAUERWAS: NATURAL LAW AND NONVIOLENCE

But what is a Catholic supposed to make of Hauerwas's view of natural law and particularly his practice of non-violence vis-à-vis the state? Here is where Hauerwas seems especially sectarian, because he seems to reject both natural theology and statecraft, longstanding parts of Catholic tradition. This makes it seem all the more incredible that Catholic students should have chosen to study with him.

The misunderstanding that Hauerwas *utterly* rejects all natural law or all positive conceptions of the state relies on the misconception that Hauerwas has *a* position about things, including non-violence. Hauerwas is far less interested in holding positions than he

⁴³ For example, Michael Duffey, *Sowing Justice, Reaping Peace: Case Studies of Racial, Religious and Ethnic Healing Around the World* (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 2001).

⁴⁴ G. Simon Harak, "Child Abuse and Embodiment from a Thomistic Perspective," *Aquinas and Empowerment: Classical Ethics for Ordinary Lives*, ed. G. Simon Harak (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1997), 89-130.

⁴⁵ Kelly S. Johnson, *The Fear of Beggars: Stewardship and Poverty in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

⁴⁶ Among others: Carol J. Descoteaux, *Chronic Suffering: A Theological and Ethical Reflection on Brazil's Basic Ecclesial Communities and Jean Vanier's L'Arche* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).

⁴⁷ For example, David Matzko McCarthy, "Selective Conscientious Objection and Just War Theory," *Bridges: An Interdisciplinary Journal in Philosophy* vol. 14, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2007), 41-62. See also McCarthy's *The Good Life: Genuine Christianity for the Middle Class* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2004), chapter 13. Non-Catholic students of his have also written arguing against Hauerwas's non-violence. See Dan Bell, *Just War in Christian Discipleship: Recentring the Tradition in the Church Rather than the State* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009).

is in “understanding intellectual work as investigation.”⁴⁸ Thus, in many essays, he presents the task of Christian theology in terms of “learning how to go on” in the face of this or that turn in the world’s history.⁴⁹ Hauerwas’s own theology is decisively shaped by his placement within mainline American Protestant theology, and his own “story” is portrayed in his seminar on “Christian Ethics in America.”⁵⁰ Its digest is contained in the following aphorism: “How did a tradition that began with a book entitled *Christianizing the Social Order* end up producing a book entitled *Can Ethics Be Christian?*” Hauerwas’s concern is thus how Protestants learn to go on in the face of the fading idea that they are in charge of America. When he titles a chapter “Taking the Bible Away from North America Christians,” he doesn’t establish a “position” that private Bible reading is wrong.⁵¹ Rather, he intends this saying—as well as much of what he says about natural theology and statecraft—in terms of a therapy for mainline Protestants recovering from the illusions of America as Christendom.

It is this way of practicing theology that Hauerwas aims to show his doctoral students: the point is “learning how to go on” as faithful witnesses, not “learning how to defend one particular position as the right one.” Instead, his students—from quite diverse ecclesial positions—also “learn to go on,” making different moves than Hauerwas himself.

In terms of Catholicism, this way of practicing theology is perhaps best seen in how Hauerwas encourages students to learn the works of Thomas Aquinas. Most students are likely to have encountered “that seminar”, the one that features Aristotle and Aquinas in large quantities. Hauerwas has taught this seminar in various iterations since his time at Notre Dame. In the iteration I attended, we read the *Nicomachean Ethics* as well as the *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa theologiae*; Thomas featured in others of Hauerwas’s seminars as well. As Hauerwas writes in his memoir: “I read Thomas Aquinas as if he was conducting the kind of intellectual investigation I identified with Wittgenstein, but most of his commentators clearly assumed he had a position.”⁵² Thus, a way to read Hauerwas is that he has learned

⁴⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah’s Child: A Theologian’s Memoir*, 60.

⁴⁹ See, for example, chapters one and nine in *Wilderness Wanderings* with this formulation in the title. *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, “Christian Ethics in America (and the JRE): A Report on a Book I Will Not Write,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 25.3 (1997): 57-76.

⁵¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

⁵² Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah’s Child: A Theologian’s Memoir*, 61.

to do theology by seeking to emulate the “intellectual investigation” of Thomas’s unending questions in the *Summa*, by asking good questions and testing peoples’ arguments (including those of hierarchical authorities). His students have, by and large, learned to carry on that work by testing assumptions, including Hauerwas’s own, most evident in the festschrift *Unsettling Arguments*, but also in the ways his students have themselves learned to use Thomas Aquinas, beyond what Hauerwas taught.⁵³

Understanding that Hauerwas does not have “positions” in the terms commonly held in scholarship helps make his arguments about natural law and statecraft more clear. He notes that

for Aquinas, natural law serves neither as a principle that justifies a ‘universal ethic’ abstracted from a community’s practices nor as a substitute for agents’ character and virtues. Rather, natural law is an exegetical principle necessary for reading the Old Testament as well as for helping us understand that when confronted by God’s law we always discover that we are sinners.⁵⁴

Holding natural law as a set of timeless universal moral norms sets out natural law as an objective “thing” to use in theories. It becomes an immovable position rather than part of an ongoing intellectual investigation. Jean Porter suggests the way natural law has become a “position” in Catholic thought: “natural law is usually regarded as a universal morality, accessible to all rational persons whatever their particular metaphysical or religious commitments (if any), and there-

⁵³ A few of Hauerwas’s Catholic students have written directly on Thomas Aquinas in their dissertations. See, for example, Paul Wadell’s dissertation “An Interpretation of Aquinas’ Treatise on the Passions, the Virtues and the Gifts from the Perspective of Charity with God,” or Dana Dillon’s dissertation, “As Soul to Body: The Interior Act of the Will in Thomas Aquinas and in Accounts of Moral Action,” in which she discusses the interior act of the will in relation to proportionalist debate. Current Hauerwas student Miguel Romero is writing on Thomas and disability. Thomas’s influence is profoundly noticed in many more students’ other written work. For example, Paul Wadell’s *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) discusses Aquinas (and Aristotle); Fritz Bauerschmidt has written *Holy Teaching: Introducing the Summa Theologiae of Thomas Aquinas* (Chicago: Brazos Press, 2005), which discusses Thomas’s work as specifically theological, as well as edited the volume *Aquinas in Dialogue: Thomas for the Twenty-First Century* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), with James Fodor. One of Hauerwas’s most recent students, Sheryl Overmyer, wrote her dissertation in part on Thomas Aquinas and has presented several essays on Thomas, including “Aquinas on the Virtues: The Difference Aristotle Makes,” presented at New Wine New Wineskins, a conference for young Catholic moral theologians, July 28-31, 2011.

⁵⁴ Hauerwas, *In Good Company*, 96.

fore most appropriately studied through philosophical analysis.”⁵⁵ (Porter goes on to argue, rightly I think, that natural law is theological and, as she argues, related to virtue and Christian practice.⁵⁶)

It is this default description of natural law as an objective “thing” that Hauerwas rejects because it underwrites the development of a supposed universal ethic which turns out to be highly contested.⁵⁷ The difficulty with the default description of natural law is that it co-exists with continuing tensions in Catholic moral thought and forces people to take extreme “positions” perhaps in the ways Russell Hittinger claims: in some conversations, “[natural law] represented the conclusions of church authority” while in other conversations “it represented what every agent is supposed to know according to what is first in cognition.”⁵⁸ As Hauerwas notes, natural law as a supposed alternative to ecclesiastical authoritarianism

seems doubtful in light of the history of the use of ‘natural law’ by church authorities to support authoritarian positions. Indeed, I would suggest that part of the difficulty with the moral reasoning supporting some of the church’s sexual ethics is that by attempting to give them a ‘natural law’ basis devoid of their theological basis they appear arbitrary and irrational—thus requiring authoritarian imposition.⁵⁹

As in other debates, Catholic natural law ethics, especially in sexuality, looks like a debate between the Magisterium and the theologians, a debate in which Hauerwas refuses to take the “position” that marks him as on the “correct” side of the debate.⁶⁰

If Hauerwas concedes a kind of natural law (or so he argued in his doctoral seminar on Wittgenstein), it arises in relation to language and the way the Dominican Herbert McCabe has described law in

⁵⁵ Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 1.

⁵⁶ See especially chapters 3 and 4 in *Nature as Reason*.

⁵⁷ See Hauerwas, “In Praise of *Centesimus Annus*,” in *In Good Company*, 125-143. In this essay he writes: “By ‘methodological shortcomings’ I meant the abstract nature of encyclical pronouncements. The encyclicals by necessity must be written at a generalized level that makes their pronouncements seem platitudinous and/or irrelevant for policy decision. Moreover the encyclicals of the past have often been based on ‘natural law’ presuppositions that underwrite this abstract character” (125).

⁵⁸ Russell Hittinger, *The First Grace: Rediscovering Natural Law in a Post-Christian World* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2003), 21.

⁵⁹ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* 2nd edition (London: SCM Press, 2003), 64.

⁶⁰ See Richard McCormick, *Corrective Vision: Explorations in Moral Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1994), especially 28-30.

Law, Love and Language.⁶¹ McCabe sees that to be human is to be biological and linguistic. Because we are linguistic animals, our ways of living and our practical reasoning are shaped by the linguistic communities of which we are a part. Hauerwas's students Dana Dillon and David Matzko McCarthy develop this point: "Natural law reasoning is not a set of rules or formulas for determining moral norms, but a way of rationally engaging and evaluating a variety of sources (both sacred and secular) for understanding the common good of human life...."⁶² Hauerwas's Catholic students share, I think, his worries about universalizable natural law as a fixed "position," but go on to develop an account of natural law as a tradition, an enterprise they share with many Catholics who have not studied with Hauerwas, as well (Jean Porter and Russell Hittinger among them).

Statecraft works similarly as an apparently unmovable universal ideal; it is too often linked to an objective future reality toward which one aims. Once again, the (in)famous Hauerwasian invectives against the civil religious project called "America" must be seen in the context of Protestant "learning how to go on" as Christians rather than imagining, as they used to, that being American and being Christian are the same. On that collapsed view, the social order is the means by which Christians can save the world, and the chief social order in play is democracy, but this is idolatrous because it presumes human activity *saves*.⁶³ But there are other accounts of the good of the social order that can be affirmed in a questioning, open-ended way. An interview Hauerwas did for the journal *U.S. Catholic* is telling in this regard. Hauerwas asks his interviewer: "Why do you think that your first task as a Christian is to make society work?" The interviewer answers, "Because I want to eat."⁶⁴ The interviewer's answer is astute, and quite a Catholic answer: the point of statecraft is to best enable people to live well and flourish and involves the complexity of ideas like the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. Hauerwas concedes that eating is a social good, but then goes on to a different question: "The problem with affluent Christians in the United States today is that they want to eliminate the otherness of poverty. They say everybody can be rich. That is the vision of justice for Christians in the United States. It's an elitist vision that makes the lives of anyone

⁶¹ Herbert McCabe, *Law, Love, and Language*, (London: Continuum Press, 2003), especially chapter 3.

⁶² Dana Dillon and David Matzko McCarthy, "Natural Law, Law and Freedom," in *Gathered for the Journey*, 153-176, at 168.

⁶³ Stanley Hauerwas, "A Christian Critique of Christian America" in *The Hauerwas Reader*, 459-480. Hauerwas further treats this idea in more detail in a number of essays from *In Good Company: The Church as Polis*.

⁶⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, "Christianity: It's an Adventure," 527.

who isn't poor easier because they've already won."⁶⁵ While his Catholic interlocutor sees the good of a society struggling together to figure ways to eat, Hauerwas wants to keep raising questions, not allowing Catholics to rest easily on the supposed "success" of a social order without further interrogation.

Hauerwas's kind of theological interrogation is easily seen in Michael Baxter's critique and synthesis of both Hauerwas and Catholic intellectual thought. Baxter is concerned with the ways that Catholic theologians have tended to categorize Hauerwas as taking a "Protestant either/or approach to these matters whereas Catholics take a both/and approach,"⁶⁶ which marks out another dichotomizing tendency in Catholic theology. He suggests instead that it might be possible to include Hauerwas as part of the "both/and". For example, Catholics need not see church/state relations only as *either* "the politics of the world" *or* the Lordship of Christ but as "embracing *both* the Kingship of Christ *and* the politics of local community...."⁶⁷ At the same time, Baxter raises questions about Hauerwas's discussions of church/state and natural law that demonstrates the kind of traditioned conversation Hauerwas aims to develop. Baxter suggests that Hauerwas's view of the Church as "polis" neglects important, non-theological, reasons for why Catholics care about civil societies.

Instead of sustaining pretensions to a "Christian America," Baxter notes a different kind of church/state conversation, with a different strategy for "learning how to go on." He discusses a recent moment in the history of Catholic Worker in South Bend, Indiana, where the city of South Bend declared that the house was involved in code violations and the Catholic Worker house needed to defend itself, not theologically, but in terms of why it should exist in its particular neighborhood and house.⁶⁸ The advocates for Catholic Worker had to use non-theological language well in order to make their case. Seeing the Church as an alternate politic does not help Christians learn how to negotiate that there needs to be an energy company so that the light bulbs can be turned on. Thus Baxter argues for drawing more deeply from practical reasoning such that we learn to be both Christians witnessing to God in a world that does not always recognize God, as well as people who can have practical conversations with diverse others that are not antithetical to the gospel. Like Hauerwas, Baxter refuses a "position" in an entrenched conversation.

⁶⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, "Christianity: It's an Adventure," 527.

⁶⁶ Michael Baxter, "The Church as Polis?" in *Unsettling Arguments*, 132-150, at 147.

⁶⁷ Baxter, "The Church as Polis?" 147.

⁶⁸ Baxter, "The Church as Polis?" 143.

A BRIEF CONCLUSION

Hauerwas's students represent not a closed-off group of "disciples" but a cadre of people aware of, but questioning, the dichotomies and incoherences of contemporary ecclesial and civil life, glad to call each other "friends" as they practice their theology. They are willing to critique each other as well as their doctoral advisor, but only alongside participation in Christian life. As I write this conclusion, news of Father Thomas Weinandy's talk to the Academy of Catholic Theologians has made its way around the blogosphere. He mentions theologians as a "curse and affliction," if they are not grounded in the faith; his implied presumptions about who was faithful and who was not set off yet again a firestorm of comments about divisiveness in the Church.⁶⁹ Commenters suggested that Weinandy's comments highlight once again the divisiveness between the Magisterium and theologians, and between liberal and conservative. I wonder if Hauerwas's particular way of engaging traditions points a way forward.

Already some of Hauerwas's Catholic students have raised the question, wondering about how to have the kind of conversation that they learned from Hauerwas, that honestly interrogates people from across "sides"—in this case both Magisterium and theologians. Dana Dillon comments on the Weinandy speech by writing:

I do think that there are two...clusters that (loosely) line up somewhere like what is named by the labels conservative/liberal or right/left. I think that far too often, people in each of these clusters stay largely within their own cluster. They talk with other people in their cluster, they read and cite and engage with other people in their cluster.... I wonder if it is possible for theologians—in the midst of their different sets of assumptions—to have a genuine conversation about these differences. What would it be like if we began with the assumption that the other—as right or wrong as we might imagine his or her positions to be—was shaped by and wanted to be true to a genuine animating faith and a true desire to serve both the Gospel and the Church?⁷⁰

The timbre of the conversation makes it seem that both "sides" are closed off from each other, and each sees the other "side" as neither

⁶⁹ Fr. Thomas Weinandy, OFM Cap, "Faith and the Ecclesial Vocation of the Catholic Theologian," *Origins CNS Documentary News Service* 41.10 (July 21, 2011): 154-163. The speech was popularized via John Allen's article "Bishop's Staffer on Doctrine Rips Theologians as 'Curse,'" *National Catholic Reporter* (August 16, 2011), <http://ncronline.org/news/people/bishops-staffer-doctrine-rips-theologians-curse>.

⁷⁰ Dana Dillon, "Against Divisiveness in Theological Discourse," *Catholicmoraltheology.com*, http://catholicmoraltheology.com/against_divisiveness/.

listening nor inviting conversation. Into this mix, can Hauerwas's emphases on forgiveness, friendship, and open-ended theological reading and interrogation bring a better way forward for Catholic moral theology?⁷¹ **M**

⁷¹ I am indebted to conversations with Stanley Hauerwas, Dana Dillon, Sheryl Overmyer, Andy Grubb, David Cloutier, David Matzko McCarthy, and Michael Baxter, as well as with my colleagues at UD: William Portier, Dennis Doyle, Kelly Johnson, and Brad Kallenberg, in the writing of this piece.