

**A Critique of Postliberal Political Theology in the  
Writings of Stanley Hauerwas, and a Proposal for an  
Ecclesial Politics of Gathering**

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## Abstract

This study provides a critical examination of the characterization “postliberal” as used to describe the theological politics of Stanley Hauerwas. Of particular concern is the overall consistency of Hauerwas’ postliberal program from its genesis in his writings in the early 1980’s through the 21<sup>st</sup> century; where such consistency is lacking this study attempts to provide both critical analysis and opportunities for repair.

Through a critical evaluation of Hauerwas’ primary sources this study addresses the tension in Hauerwas’ writings between sectarian postliberalism and radical democracy. It then begins the work of offering a means of resolving this tension by recovering an ecclesial ontology of *gathering*. Inconsistency in Hauerwas’ work will be identified as due in part to his inability to reconcile the distance between politics-as-discipline and politics-as-love. This study ends by exploring gathering, not simply as another concept, but as the name for the ecclesial paradox between the dichotomies of theology and theurgy, reason and faith, inclusion and exclusion, discipline and freedom, already and not-yet, all of which are analogous to the paradox of a God whose being is gathering (three and one).

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## Introduction

The writings of Stanley Hauerwas span a wide array of topics in ethics, philosophy, and theology. Yet the mode of argumentation used to explore these topics is paradoxical: his method is sometimes unsystematic and occasional, while at others it is exhaustively detailed; it is aggressive in places and tentative in others; it is contextually American yet critical of its location; it is Roman Catholic and Anabaptist, Methodist and Anglican. While many readers of Hauerwas have tried to make sense out of this milieu, one of the original contributions of this thesis is to argue that there is a *style* and *telos* to Hauerwas' method: love.

To say that Hauerwas' method is love is not simply a rhetorical affectation, rather it places him within a broad tradition of early Neoplatonic, medieval, and eastern theologians whose method has been a (sometimes systematic and other times mystic) disclosure of *exitus-reditus* – a commitment to the notion that all things emerge from and return to God. Love, for Hauerwas, is the gift of oneself in response to the gift that God gives to humanity – Himself. It is about the erotic desire for the material – for friends, enemies, and strangers – that is prefaced, designed, and made possible by God's desire for Godself and for His creation. Love is God's grace conferred to the world. Hauerwas announces the constitution of not only humanity, but of God, as love. The God announced by Hauerwas is a God whose grace works within, and on behalf of, history – whose being is activity and whose activity is love – making possible within history a politics of love.

The nonsystematic nature of Hauerwas' writing has made the traditional structure of *exitus-reditus* difficult to detect, but that is principally because he believes that God is not patient and structured, but wild and unexpected, breaking into history anywhere and everywhere. It is this God whose very *being* in cosmic history changes everything. The celebration of, and call to participate in, love makes Hauerwas' writings obedient rather than schizophrenic. It will be the work of the first portion of this thesis to outline and explore the style of love in Hauerwas' writings, and the relationship it has with his more recognized designation of postliberal (which is

ultimately participating in the wild and untamed God). Everything that follows in this thesis is an attempt to disclose this style; to agree with Hauerwas' description of the God-of-love even when, due to his postliberalism (or its failure), he does not agree with himself; to begin thinking about the politics of love that God makes possible within history (through the gift of himself); and to expose those political imaginaries that locate a common good outside of the love of God.<sup>1</sup>

Hauerwas' popularity (which is an odd thing for a theologian to have) is due in part to his refusal to legitimate political arrangements not gathered around the figure of Christ. The most common criticism of Hauerwas' political theology is that he makes discipleship to the God-of-love (rather than democratic contract, or economic and physical security) the only basis for life together, and as such is perceived as exhorting the people of God to sectarian withdrawal and fideism. For some critics this makes the whole of Hauerwas' theology dismissible. Yet, Hauerwas is not alone in his recognition of discipleship to Jesus as constituting a "third way" between the American theological Left and Right. This position, of which Hauerwas' theology is a unique variation, is postliberalism. A full accounting of the evolution and development of postliberalism in the writings of Hauerwas will have to wait until Chapter 1, for now it is enough to note that the contention of this thesis is that Hauerwas' postliberalism can best be understood as a synthesis. It is a melding of the Yale School's (Barthian) rejection of philosophical foundationalism; John Howard Yoder's description of radical (Anabaptist) discipleship and his rejection of Constantinianism (i.e., a contractual compromise between the church and state); and Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of the modern liberal *imperium*, and the philosophies upon which it is based. The resulting synthesis *is* Hauerwas' political theology of the 80's and 90's, which at once rejects the liberal state and her politics (particularly in the form of democracy and capitalism), while at the same exhorts the church to become a community of virtue, that is to say, an alternative to the violences—

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<sup>1</sup> This reading of Hauerwas is taken directly from an article he wrote with Jim Fodor: "Performing Faith: The Peaceable Rhetoric of God's Church" in Hauerwas, S. 2004. *Performing the Faith*. pp. 75-109. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. In their essay, Hauerwas and Fodor draw primarily on the Trinitarian ontology of John Milbank (pp. 85-91) in order to begin describing a peaceable ecclesiology. Cf. Chapter 6.

economic, political and social—that govern the Fallen nations of the world. In short, it is Hauerwas’ unique reading of the postliberal that is responsible for his popularity, and which has generated a wide variety of responses from many theologians (both friendly and critical).

In recent years however, a number of challenges have been issued to Hauerwas’ postliberal description of non-Christocentric political arrangements. In 2004, Jeffrey Stout published *Democracy and Tradition*, which provided a striking defense of democracy, not as an intellectually fragmented politics of modernity, but as a vibrant discourse exacting certain habits of reasoning that both create and sustain virtuous communities of care. The book engaged Hauerwas’ pessimism toward the possibilities of democracy by rejecting liberal accounts of the state and reframing democracy as a grassroots tradition of dialectic republicanism. Hauerwas then responded to Stout and his supporters in a number of articles, and in 2006, began embracing the work of Romand Coles and Sheldon Wolin, two political philosophers who Hauerwas describes as the backbone of the “radical democracy” movement.

This thesis argues that Hauerwas’ concessions to the radical democrats are the result of three errors in his project: (1) his philosophical account of the problems of modernity is based primarily on writings of Alasdair MacIntyre; (2) his adoption of John Howard Yoder’s description of Constantinianism discipleship and the messianic community neglects to flesh out Yoder’s ontology of the powers; and (3) Hauerwas never explicitly rejects Yoder’s call to morally evangelize the powers, particularly in the form of the state. The result is that when faced with a new way of loving in the world, in the persons of Stout, Wolin, and Coles, Hauerwas betrays his own best insight, namely that radical politics without Jesus is like Christianity without Christ. In what sense might such a politics be radical at all (i.e., what could it be “rooted” in)? The only answer seems to be the acknowledgment of multiple communities of character, i.e., ways of living together not gathered around the God who is love. Hauerwas’ seeming embrace of the possibility of plural communities of character is still a long way from Milbank’s call to a “contractual” peace with the liberal state,

yet Hauerwas finds himself unable to answer: whose character, which memory? For the radical democrat the answer may be Christ, but it need not be.

This thesis concludes by proposing that the deficiencies in Hauerwas' postliberal political theology might be solved by pleonastically describing ecclesial politics, as gathering. Conversely, the shape of other political imaginaries should be identified as flight – dispersal. Just as the first four chapters proceed through the exhaustive exploration of Hauerwas and his primary sources, the final two chapters of this thesis explore new sources for creatively explicating: (1) the politics of love as ecclesial gathering (and being gathered), and (2) a description of creaturely participation in divine love. Chapter 5 does the work of the former, redefining politics as gathering, whilst Chapter 6 does the work of the latter, redefining the human act of loving as an acting-*with*-God.

### **Chapter Outline of Specific Contributions**

This thesis contributes to scholarship at the intersection of philosophy and theology, with particular emphasis on the relationship between ontology, ecclesiology, and social philosophy in the writings of Stanley Hauerwas and his interlocutors. It will be helpful to outline, more completely, each chapter in order to identify key arguments and specific contributions to scholarship.

The first chapter contextualizes Hauerwas within twentieth and twenty-first century theology in America, by providing a genealogy of Hauerwas' primary sources in the development of his peculiar brand of postliberalism. This begins with a description of the postliberalism of Frei, Lindbeck, and the Yale school, which provides Hauerwas with both an intellectual heritage and a methodological vehicle for his own theology. Yet, the postliberalism of Yale (Barthian Christocentricity combined with postmodern critiques of the modern) is given unique expression, and eventually transformed, by Hauerwas' synthesis of Yoder and MacIntyre. From MacIntyre, Hauerwas adopts both a critique of Enlightenment rationalism *and* a solution: a return to the pre-modern and to Aristotle in particular. The central philosophical

categories in Hauerwas' writings become virtue, dialectic, narrative, community, practices, tradition, and friendship. From Yoder, Hauerwas adopts a particular community, story, tradition, set of practices, and list of the virtues; in short, a specific history with which to clothe MacIntyre's philosophy: Christianity as experienced by the Anabaptists. For Hauerwas, Yoder's theology not only fleshes out the Aristotelian conceptuality as defined by MacIntyre, but it affirms and extends MacIntyre's critique of modernity (as de-particularization) as a non-identical repetition of an earlier heresy, i.e., (the de-particularization of) Constantinianism.

Chapter 2 identifies Hauerwas' methodological postliberalism (*theoria*) as simultaneously a theological politics (*praxis*), arguing that the two are inseparable because of his claim that the church does not have a politics but *is* politics. This chapter begins with a critical and original exposition of the political theology of Oliver O'Donovan, in order to provide a framework with which to organize Hauerwas' own scattered political insights (an approach made necessary by Hauerwas' lack of systematicity). O'Donovan's project begins with a set of concepts, such as politics, sovereignty, rule, and justice. He then undertakes a careful reading of Scripture and the Christian tradition in order to expose the concepts' true possibility and potentiality. Hauerwas on the other hand argues that political ideals and symbolic structures are not pre-existing transcendentals of human sociality which Scripture perfects and rehabilitates. Rather the activity of politics and the embodiment of justice both name co-operations with the activity of Christ. For O'Donovan all existing political arrangements are transformed by the Christ-event, while for Hauerwas, God is love, and the Christ-event makes politics-as-love possible for the first time in history. Thus for Hauerwas, what citizens of the *civitas dei* are referencing when they talk about politics, justice, equality, and liberty, is a disclosure of something new. It is not that the Christian use of terms like politics and justice is simply a perfection of the secular use of the same terms. For Hauerwas, the church does not transform the political, but it is the advent of God's politics in the world. Furthermore, the nature of the God whose politics the church constitutes is a God of love, vulnerability, weakness and peace. Therefore the church cannot set up

for itself walled cities, but must constantly be on the move—celebrating its out-of-place-ness, vulnerability and weakness.

Chapter 3 examines a recent shift in Hauerwas' political thought, i.e., the affirmation of the radical democratic project. This chapter argues that Hauerwas' sympathy for radical democracy undermines both his commitment to postliberalism and his identification of the church as God's politics in the world. The shift occurs partly because of Jeffrey Stout's recent critique of MacIntyre that identifies American democracy as a tradition rather than a vehicle for the destruction or fragmentation of tradition, and partly due to Romand Coles' appropriation of Yoder, which along with his deconstruction of Rawlsian liberalism is central to his account of practical radical democracy. Between the writings of Stout and Coles, Hauerwas' synthesis of Christian particularity and Enlightenment critique is called into question. Hauerwas' response is to make several key concessions to the radical democrats. He allows for: (1) the assumption of non-Christologically founded political language; (2) non-Christologically founded morality; the translation of Christian truth into secular truth; and non-Christological remembering as a mode of politics. This chapter goes on to argue that Hauerwas' support for radical democracy is due to radical democracy's ability to provide an alternative to liberal political arrangements. Ironically, in taking this position Hauerwas makes the same mistake that he criticizes in O'Donovan, namely that he is identifying politics as a category external to the community gathered around Christ. Thus, Chapter 3 argues that while there are lessons that the church can learn from outsiders (like Coles and Stout), such lessons only become intelligible because they are recognized as participating in the good of the God-who-is-love. The chapter ends by addressing the kind of problems that can occur when Christians identify political and philosophical categories as pre-existing the church's own narratives, through a reading of the American civil war in the writings of Mark Noll.

Chapter 4 is divided into two parts: the first attempts to creatively supplement Hauerwas' theological politics with Yoder's ontology of the powers; the second exposes Yoder's inconsistent description of the relationship between ecclesiology and powers ontology, which led him to make his own concessions to liberalism (and

which also explains why Coles is so easily able to appropriate his thought). The purpose is to provide Hauerwas with a more robust reading of Yoder that avoids the qualification of powers ontology via two kingdoms language, which rejects utilitarian descriptions of violence as policing, and that is equally suspicious of progress and democracy. This chapter argues that such a reading of Yoder is essential to Hauerwas' project because a consistently employed ontology of the powers would offer him a critical alternative to MacIntyre's attack on liberalism (which Stout at least partially debunked). Rather than rejecting Constantinianism as a form of liberalism, liberalism is rejected as a demonic and violent Constantinianism – a re-description made possible by the activity of Christ.

Chapter 5 begins to constructively plot a course past the problems in both Hauerwas and Yoder by introducing the concept of gathering as central to recovering and sustaining the Hauerwasian style of ecclesiology as love. In this chapter, the metaphor of gathering is explored through the writings of Gerhard Lohfink and Bernd Wannewetsch as simultaneously a critique of false gatherings, the call to exodus, and the hope of a place to rest. Chapter 5 argues that false gatherings are the communities founded on violence and sustained by coercion, which have found their *apotheosis* in globalization—the power that calls citizens of those communities to exodus, flight, and dispersal, leaving them with no place to gather. Following William Cavanaugh, the chapter argues that the only response to this *diaspora* is the reclamation of particular locality—the gathering of the church inaugurated and sustained in the gift of the eucharist. The viability of this reclamation is explored through the celebration and suffering of the Bridgefolk as an example of the brokenness of eucharistic communities. The chapter ends by returning to Hauerwas in order to explore whether or not the concept of gathering engages usefully with his body of work, and to discuss how radical gathering provides a properly Hauerwasian response to the radical democrats.

Chapter 6 moves beyond the question of the gathering's own constitution and self-knowledge, by moving beyond the concept of gathering. Just as the concept of ecclesial politics is redefined to mean gathering in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 explores

resources for redefining the love of the gathered as a participation in the activity of God-whose-being-is-love. This is necessary in order to describe the church's love for the world as a thing-itself, and to explain the temptation that Hauerwas finds in the radical democracy of Stout, Wolin and Coles. The hope is to move Hauerwas and his readers beyond a description of the gathered church as a politics of univocal love. In order to do this a pleonastic reading of the doctrine of analogy in Aquinas is applied to Marion's re-conceptualization of persons as constituted by love, in order to describe, with Milbank, a God who is more than an infinite lover whom we must imitate. God is not an-infinite-self-which-loves, but is love itself. Moreover, human love is only love in its God-likeness. Chapter 6 argues, with Giorgio Agamben, that the time of the now is the time of the messianic. The *parousia* is now, but it is not, as for Agamben, a dislocation, or an infinite division of person from primordially violent politics, but a re-gathering of persons into a new politics-of-love. A politics that is only possible because the God who is love remains in us (the ecclesial polis), allows for the loving of the world with, in and under His own activity. The Hauerwasian ecclesiology then must be conceived of as not just theological, but also theurgic. Gathering (and being gathered) is not just a way of *reasoning* about the politics of love, but the active, pleonastic, creative, constitution of God in the world through Spirit and sacrament. In short, the gathering is constituted by the sacraments, yet also constitutes a sacrament, despite itself, in and for the world.

## Chapter 1

### **The Genealogy of Hauerwas' Postliberalism The MacIntyre-Yoder Synthesis**

This chapter identifies and describes the scholarly context that this thesis dialogues with and contributes to, particularly in regards to the formulation of Hauerwas' distinctive brand of postliberalism. It begins by outlining the historical and ideological origins of postliberal theology, including those associated with the movement and their contributions to it, and perhaps most importantly seeks to establish an account of the instability of the definition as used by a variety of postliberal scholars. It may seem odd to begin with an account of the history of postliberal thought rather than with a definition of what postliberal thought actually is. Yet, it is usually the case that those involved in something new rarely agree upon stable definitions before they begin writing. Often it is not only the validity and effectiveness of a new idea that is tested with time, but also its consistency and parameters. Postliberal thinkers rarely meant the same thing when they used the term, and so it is the task of later generations to try to identify the foundational strictures, convictions, and parameters held in common by those involved in the movement—a process that is all at once clumsy, *ad hoc* and necessary. While the varying definitions offered in this chapter were, and continue to be, controversial (particularly because in many cases thinkers do not agree on the liberalism that postliberalism is post), they are necessary if one is to understand the context and reasoning by which Stanley Hauerwas develops his political theology in terms of his own account of postliberalism (as well as the myriad of thinkers with whom he has dialogued). Thus the second half of this chapter explores two thinkers in particular, Alasdair MacIntyre and John Howard Yoder, the synthesis of which makes Hauerwas' definition of postliberalism possible.

#### **History and Ideology: Frei and Lindbeck**

Hans Frei and George Lindbeck authored the principal texts of the postliberal movement at Yale University. In 1974, Frei published *The Eclipse of Biblical*

*Narrative*, in which he observed that the tendency of modernity was to make more basic to the reading of Scripture a particular perspective, doctrine, or form of rationality—a hermeneutic—that is ontologically prior to Scripture’s own narratives. That is to say, according to Frei, the problem with the Enlightenment was that it encouraged the formation of foundational hermeneutics that undermined the authority of Scripture by illuminating a prior truth. Such prior truths shaped the possibilities of meaning when it came to reading Scripture. Prior to the Enlightenment, Scripture was viewed as a realistic narrative, i.e., both literal and historical; the “words and sentences meant what they said, and because they did so they accurately described real events and real truths that were rightly put only in those terms and no others.”<sup>2</sup> The most eminent reading of Scripture to the pre-modern “preacher or theological commentator” was that which identified all the little narratives and stories of Scripture as “making...a single storied...historical sequence.”<sup>3</sup> This overarching historical narrative “covered the span of ages from creation to the final consummation to come” and placed within its purview the real world of the reader of Scripture, including not only human beings but also their environment and culture.<sup>4</sup> The reader’s participation in the world of Scripture was assumed by its temporal placement between ascension and *parousia*. With the celebration of universal rationalism in the Enlightenment, common sense and experience identified a reality in opposition to that found in Scripture. As a result, Scripture could only be meaningful when it was prefaced and critiqued by the possibilities of the modern imagination. There were still truths in Scripture, but they required translation into the world of the reader. To do this the reader was forced to excise narrative context in the hope of uncovering the moral of the story. To the Enlightenment reader of Scripture, “the Bible generally no longer authorized what one believed—by providing either the reliably informative contents or the warrants for believing them—it had to provide...the indispensable, factually informative, and

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<sup>2</sup> Frei, H. W. 1974. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 1

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

religiously meaningful.”<sup>5</sup> Thus Frei sums up the theological transformation that took place between the pre-modern and modern reader noting that: “interpretation was a matter of fitting the biblical story into another world with another story rather than incorporating that world into the biblical story.”<sup>6</sup> Scripture became unintelligible for all but the elite. The Bible no longer preserved the logic of history; it became a window into an alien time and location. For those on the Left, its only use was as a site of excavation for cultural-affirming transcendentals. For those on the Right, it was the eternal handwriting of God – all semantic inconsistencies required “artificial harmonizations...not found in scripture at all.”<sup>7</sup> Frei’s contribution to the theological origins of postliberalism consists, therefore, in his call to name, and reject, the philosophical universalism and rational-hermeneutic methodologies for the reading of Scripture—in favor of a return to emphasis on the pre-modern reading of Scripture as a realistic narrative. For Frei, prior authorities, sources, and contexts outside the narrative can no longer mandate the meaning of Scripture. In the Enlightenment “[m]eaning came to be detached from the stories and located externally to it.”<sup>8</sup> For Frei, meaning must be seen as a function of the text itself.

Frei’s writings, including *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, are indebted to a variety of intellectual traditions. Pivotal to Frei’s project is its reliance on, and extension of, Karl Barth’s neo-orthodox Protestantism, the central tenet of which is that the “Christian faith rests not upon universal reason or human self-consciousness, but is sustained through and as commitment to a story.”<sup>9</sup> Gerard Loughlin identifies the interrelationship between Barth and Frei as primarily the shared commitment to the notion that the Christian story is a story. A story which:

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 130

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Dorrien, G. 2001. “The Origins of Postliberalism.” in *The Christian Century*. (July 4-11). pp. 16-21. p. 18

<sup>8</sup> Vidu, A. 2005. *Postliberal Theological Method: A Critical Study*. Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press. p. 49

<sup>9</sup> Loughlin, G. 1996. *Telling God’s Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 33

is not supported by anything else, by another story, theory or argument. The story is simply told, and faith is a certain way of telling it, a way of living and embodying it; a habit of the heart. But it is not the way of modern theology whether liberal or evangelical.<sup>10</sup>

The influence of Barth on Frei was far-reaching, extending beyond a shared skepticism of modernity and liberalism to a mandatory reevaluation of both classical theological language and doctrine, including: Christology, revelation, a doctrine of history and providence, and also a call for theology to regain its ability to speak in public and toward practical issues. The theological relationship between Barth and Frei has been well documented and need not be repeated in full here.<sup>11</sup> For now it is enough to point out that Frei's account of Scripture as a realistic narrative is possible, in large part, thanks to the work of Barth, and to briefly illuminate the reading of Barth peculiar to Frei's enterprise.

The question that Frei posthumously asks in (1994) *Types of Christian Theology*, is whether Christian theology is a self-descriptive or externally-descriptive discipline. That is, can theology be not only evaluated and critiqued, but also given identity by outside philosophical disciplines, or is it a dialectical tradition internal to the church? Is theology subject to reason and therefore a proper subject for the academy, or is it subject only to Christian experience and so subject to the church? Yet, these polar opposites are not the only options available on Frei's typology; indeed that to which he is most sympathetic is Type 4 (on a 1-5 scale), the category into which he places Karl Barth. Type 1 is the Kantian project in which the academic discipline of philosophy stands as a rubric for the method of proof in every theological endeavor (for example, radical evil replaces original sin). In this case valid philosophical proofs demand Cartesian starting points in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics; that which exists is that which is knowable to, and with, human reason. Type 5, on the other hand, represents a Christian theology which is entirely self-descriptive and whose proof lies in the grammar of its own internal logic. Dismissed out of hand is

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See Higton, M. 2004. *Christ, Providence & History: Hans W. Frei's Public Theology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark International.

any externally applicable rational method for the adjudicating of doctrinal differences. Barth's Type 4 approach, which is the category into which Frei would place himself, uses general philosophical principles to provide an *ad hoc* interpretation of the church's experience. For Barth, because human existence is finite while faith is often times mysterious, human "reasoning is not absent but fragmentary."<sup>12</sup> As Frei puts it:

Even the meaningfulness, to say nothing of the truth of Christian statements, is a matter of faith seeking understanding rather than faith arising from the statement of general meaning. Until we do know what can now only be the content of faith, its internal logic has the shape of a limiting rule rather than a testable position.<sup>13</sup>

The character of general philosophical principles is interpretative, insofar as technical philosophical concepts do not provide explanations (truth-claims), but re-descriptions. There is no sense here in which philosophy and theology meet as equals, as there is in Schleiermacher (Type 3), or by which theology is the hermeneutic (Type 2) through which human experience, and philosophy, can be re-imagined.

The irony of Frei's typology, of course, is that while he sides with Barth that methods outside the Christian discourse must always be *ad hoc* and interpretive, he claims the book is "a piece of conceptual analysis—that is, in principle an exercise chiefly *about* rather than *in* theology."<sup>14</sup> Frei's position, adopted from Barth, is that:

[p]hilosophy...is not excluded from theology but firmly subordinate to theology as normed Christian self-description or critical self-examination by the Church of her language concerning God, in God's presence.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Frei, H.W. 1994. *Types of Christian Theology*. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 81. Unfortunately, this kind of typological approach is necessarily explanatory rather than interpretive, and Frei ends up providing a Type 2 ideological *Wissenschaftslehre* (epistemology).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 1

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 42

For both Frei and for Barth ontological truth claims are secondary to discussions of meaning. The truth question is eclipsed, but not obscured altogether, by the catechized immersion of the individual into the communal context: rituals, practices, language, concepts, and beliefs. It is with Frei's reading of Barth in mind that we turn to the second founder of the postliberal movement, George Lindbeck.

In 1984, Lindbeck published *The Nature of Doctrine*, an analysis of the concept of doctrine within religious—particularly Christian—settings and the work doctrine does to reconcile, or divide, traditions within such a setting. Lindbeck's analysis of doctrine draws primarily on Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of language and grammar, and Clifford Geertz's cultural anthropology. Lindbeck identifies his "cultural-linguistic" model for understanding religion as standing in opposition to the two most common alternatives: "cognitive-propositional" and "experiential-expressive." The propositional model reflects the position held by the Right (fundamentalists and conservatives), whereby doctrine represents a truth-claim about objective reality. Religion on this model is "thought of as similar to philosophy or science as these were classically conceived."<sup>16</sup> Religion becomes an explanation of the whole of what really is. The experiential-expressive model, on the other hand, "interprets doctrines as noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations."<sup>17</sup> This approach tends to be appropriated by liberal theologians who see in religion the reaffirmation of general truths about the world. Subsumed within these two approaches is a variety of hybrid positions that emphasize the importance of both, or limit the one with the other. The propositional and expressive-experiential models make reconciliation between traditions either impossible or irrelevant. In the first case "if a doctrine is once true, it is always true, and if it is once false, it is always false. This implies, for example, that the historic affirmations and denials of transubstantiation can never be harmonized."<sup>18</sup> Agreement can only be reached with the abandonment of doctrine on one side or the

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<sup>16</sup> Lindbeck, G.A. 1984. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. p. 16

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

other. Within the expressive-experiential model, doctrines stay the same while the meaning of the doctrine changes, so that while reconciliation may happen, such a move is arbitrary because the doctrine must become meaningless if reconciliation is to occur—a move which amounts to the abandonment of doctrine. Hybrid theories, on the other hand,

[a]re superior in that they do not *a priori* exclude doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation as do simple propositionalism and simple symbolism, yet their explanations of how this is possible tend to be too awkward and complex to be easily intelligible or convincing.<sup>19</sup>

The alternative, as proposed by Lindbeck, is the cultural-linguistic, or rule theory, of religion. Lindbeck describes the function of doctrine in the rule theory, noting that the most prominent aspect of doctrine in this case is “their use, not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action.”<sup>20</sup> With Lindbeck’s approach, differing doctrines of Eucharistic practice can be resolved by noting that:

Both transubstantiation and at least some of the doctrines that appear to contradict it can be interpreted as embodying rules of sacramental thought and practice that may have been in unavoidable and perhaps irresolvable collision in certain historical contexts, but that can in other circumstances be harmonized by appropriate specifications of their respective domains, uses, and priorities.<sup>21</sup>

Thus for Lindbeck, the reconciliation of doctrinal disagreement need not involve the capitulation of one side to another, but merely the careful analysis of cultural and historical context in order to determine whether previous rules are valid or whether they need to be recontextualized within their new setting.

The connection to Frei’s work, and his reading of Barth, should be readily apparent, insofar as maintaining the consistency of the internal logic of Christian self-description is exactly what Lindbeck is trying to accomplish. Lindbeck’s cultural-

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 17

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 18

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

linguistic approach, and thus his appropriation of Wittgenstein and Geertz, relies on Frei and Barth's apologetic for the incorporation of external logics, put to the task of interpretation, within the Christian context. Thus Lindbeck would argue that the cultural-linguistic approach should not be viewed as the starting point for explaining doctrinal disagreement between traditions, but as a tool for navigating, and ultimately reconciling, complex contexts which span history and culture.

The peculiarity of Frei's reading of Barth, mixed with Lindbeck's appropriation of postmodern concepts and tendencies (including "otherness," "genealogy," Wittgensteinian grammar, and a preoccupation with context), created a seemingly postmodern brand of neo-orthodoxy that was dubbed postliberalism. While Frei and Lindbeck were responsible for the source texts of the postliberal movement, the movement itself was continually shaped and reinvented by their students at Yale: George Hunsinger, Stanley Hauerwas, William Placher, Bruce Marshall, Ronald Thiemann, David Yeago, George Stroup, and Garrett Green. Moreover, following the initial work of the abovementioned Yale-trained theologians, later generations of Yale students, and students of those students, continue to contribute to the movement.

Following the initial acclaim accorded to Frei and Lindbeck's work, real notoriety for the movement began as mainstream Protestant theology began to take note of "a satellite project"<sup>22</sup> in Durham, N.C. embodied in the writings of Stanley Hauerwas. Hauerwas and his students at Duke developed a brand of postliberalism very different from that found at Yale, thanks in large part to the influence of John Howard Yoder and Alasdair MacIntyre. Before addressing the particulars of that synthesis, it will be useful to look, in a general way, at Yoder's reading of Barth, Frei, and Lindbeck, in order to understand how Yoder helps move Hauerwas away from the sociological explanatory critique of liberalism in the Yale school and towards Christological pragmatic theology.

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<sup>22</sup> Smith, J. K. A. 2004. *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press. p. 39

So, what exactly is the relationship between Yoder and Yale in the writings of Hauerwas? The answer lies partly in how one parses the influence of Barth on each. James Smith has observed the curious relationship between Barth and Yoder, writing that

the possibility of the synthesis is found in Barth and Yoder's shared emphasis on the antithesis of revelation vis-à-vis given cultural forms. Both deeply resist the correlational and Constantinian projects of modern theology, and both emphasize the practices of *being* the church, informed by the narrative of Scripture, constituting an alternative community and a peculiar people. Echoing Barth, Yoder emphasizes that the norm for Christian existence—and hence theology and proclamation—must derive from the gospel as modeled by Jesus, not from the supposedly neutral norms of a public social ethics independent of revelation.<sup>23</sup>

So how does Yoder's reading of Barth-as-realist jive with Yale's description of Barth-as-Wittgensteinian? To begin with, it should be noted that Yoder was a contemporary of Lindbeck and Frei, writing about and studying under Barth during the same period as they. In 1962, Yoder received a Dr. Theol. from the University of Basel.<sup>24</sup> During his time at Basel, Yoder not only studied under Karl Barth in dogmatics, but also began to read him sympathetically and even wrote a book on Barth during this period, i.e., *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* (published in 1970 but written before 1957). The influence of Barth on Yoder has been explicated at length by Craig Carter<sup>25</sup> and need not be rehearsed fully here. For now it is enough to note that Yoder identified the shape of ecclesiology as cruciform, while Yale identified it as contextually/communally utilitarian. Carter notes symptoms of this when he observes:

Yoder has engaged biblical texts more extensively than they have, even though postliberals tend to criticize revisionists for being preoccupied with prolegomena and strongly advocate the constructive engagement of Scripture...Yoder's theological realism is much more clear cut... [because]

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Nation, M.T. "John H. Yoder, Ecumenical Neo-Anabaptist: A Biographical Sketch" in Hauerwas, S., Huebner, C., Huebner, H. and M. T. Nation (eds.). 1999. *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder*. pp. 1-23. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. p.11

<sup>25</sup> See Carter, C. 2001. *The Politics of the Cross: The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Yoder's nonfoundationalist approach to epistemology does not lead him to a relativist position when it comes to affirming the ontological reality of God.<sup>26</sup>

For readers of Stanley Hauerwas, the above comparison between the attributes of Yoder's Barthian theology versus that of the Yale school would seem to place Hauerwas firmly within the Yale camp. Hauerwas has never consistently used specific texts of Scripture in his theological reflections and even Yoder criticized his earliest writings for an over-preoccupation with sociological descriptions of community dependency.<sup>27</sup> For Yoder, Hauerwas, along with the rest of the Yale school, placed too high a priority on the sociological transmission and maintenance of narrative within community (utilitarianism). This led Hauerwas and Yale to read in Barth a methodological or sociological realism as opposed to an Incarnational realism.<sup>28</sup> That is to say, ontological priority was given to the function of narrative itself rather than to the truth of the particular narrative of Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup> That is why Nigel Biggar is able to complain that Hauerwas' early work is more concerned with affirming the reality of the ecclesial space and method by which that story can be heard, than in asserting that "the [heart of the] moral life consists in responding to the address of a reality beyond ourselves."<sup>30</sup> In Hauerwas' middle and later work he does not suffer from the same problem, which is due primarily to the influence of Yoder. Yet, as we will see, Hauerwas never stops arguing that the response to which the reality of the cross calls humanity is the communal-political work of the church.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 25

<sup>27</sup> See Yoder, J. H. "Absolute Philosophical Relativism is an Oxymoron." (1983). Unpublished.

<sup>28</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion of the differences between Yoder, Barth and Hauerwas, see: Cartwright, M. 2006. *Practices, Politics, and Performances: Toward a Communal Hermeneutic for Christian Ethics*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock. Also: Carter, *Politics of the Cross*, p. 61-90.

<sup>29</sup> Hauerwas has shifted away from a sociological realist account of narrative in his most recent writings (such as Hauerwas, S. 2005. *Cross-Shattered Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press). Yet in many places, particularly where he draws on the writings of John Milbank (as in Hauerwas, S. 1997. *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy*. London: SCM Press.) (and in Chapter 3 of Hauerwas, S. 2004. *Performing the Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.) Hauerwas moves back toward a metanarrative realism, which if not sociologically realist is, at the very least, aesthetically so. In both cases he over-prioritizes contingency at the expense of the ontological reality of the Christ event.

<sup>30</sup> Biggar, N. 1995. *The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics*. Gloucestershire: Clarendon Press. p. 143

While there are clear differences in the way that Hauerwas and Yoder respond to Barth, there are also distinct similarities—similarities that set Hauerwas apart from the rest of the Yale school. Hauerwas follows Yoder in his re-description of politics, which entails a rejection of both Constantinianism and (thanks to Alasdair MacIntyre) what Hauerwas identifies as its modern counter-part, liberalism. In place of Constantinian and liberal descriptions of politics, Hauerwas develops a description of the authentic politics of the church as discipleship. Drawing on Yoder’s careful Scriptural exegesis of the political character of the incarnation, ministry, cross, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, Hauerwas forays into territory previously claimed by moral philosophy and secular ethics. He addresses issues including: medical and bioethics (reproduction, the treatment of the sick, handicapped, elderly and dying); sexual ethics (who to sleep with, how, and when); and, most extensively, the relationship between Christians and the nations they are born into. In so doing, Hauerwas reclaims moral territory by asserting, with Yoder, the authority of the Lordship of Jesus over all other authorities, allowing theology to say something intelligible to Christians. Such Christians, according to Hauerwas, have lived too long with moral analytic autonomy—in other words, Christians have been separated from their moral contexts, and/or embedded in moral contexts to which they ought have no allegiance.

The specifics of Hauerwas’ enterprise will be discussed at length throughout this thesis; for now it is enough to realize that postliberalism gained a wider audience in large part due to the writings of Hauerwas and his students, and that his version of postliberalism is peculiar to him, thanks in large part to the influence of John Howard Yoder.

## **Definitions**

In the above sketch of the genesis of postliberalism in the work of Frei and Lindbeck, several broad characteristics of postliberalism became evident. First, postliberalism leans heavily upon neo-orthodoxy and in particular on the writings of Karl Barth. Barth’s Christocentricity and account of revelation, and the postliberal rejection of

grand narratives, become tentative allies in the writings of Frei and Lindbeck. Barth provides a theological exposition on the unintelligibility of any attempt to identify a foundation (particularly human rationality) that exists prior to the claim that Jesus Christ is Lord. Thus, any attempt to provide a framework or starting point, either ontological or epistemological, which is prior to Christ is ultimately heresy. The first tenet of postliberalism is the confession of the epistemological priority of the Lordship of Christ and the rejection of alternative foundational accounts of human knowing, including modern rationalism. It is important to remember however, that for Barth and Frei, the rejection of foundations is not the rejection of external contexts. Indeed, external frameworks (including human rationality) are important as interpretative tools. These tools help Christians come to grips with what it means for Jesus Christ to be Lord, and when used in this way the product is theological reflection. The second major tenet of postliberalism is demonstrated most clearly in Lindbeck's early work, as described above, namely his emphasis on community (learned primarily from Geertz, but also from Wittgenstein). The whole reason for Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach is to maintain the consistency of logic internal to Christianity. Doctrinal disagreements need to be reconciled because theology, at its most basic level, is communal self-description. The church's theological reflection begins with the claim "Jesus is Lord," a claim that for Lindbeck involves the rejection of all other foundations. From this starting point Christians draw on a variety of interpretive tools, beginning a conversation about what it means to be a community of people who found their lives upon that claim.

Despite the two most general attributes of postliberalism described above, there is still a post-ness to postliberalism that does not quite take into account what liberalism is, or in what sense it is post. Liberalism, for Frei and Lindbeck, was synonymous with the identification of external logics as primal, as well as the attempt to atomize individuals from community via differences in the Christian conversation and ultimately dogmatic inconsistencies between those involved in the discourse. Postliberalism is post, in the sense that external logics and atomistic individualism no longer go unnoticed as enemies of honest Christian theological dialogue. In order to help understand liberalism, as characterized by postliberals, as well as to show points

of connection and disconnection between Hauerwas, Frei, and Lindbeck, it will be useful to look more fully at the way in which John Yoder and Alasdair MacIntyre talk about liberalism and the role of the church in resisting its tendencies. Indeed it is the synthesis of MacIntyre and Yoder that leads Hauerwas to his distinctive description of postliberalism, and the political activity (what he calls church) that such a position entails; a position that has been consistently described as sectarian by a host of critics. As Jeffrey Stout puts it, “it is Hauerwas’s amalgam of themes from Yoder and MacIntyre that generates the controversy.”<sup>31</sup> For Stout, and many critics of Hauerwas, the relationship between Yoder and MacIntyre in Hauerwas represents an “unholy alliance”<sup>32</sup> in which Hauerwas synthesizes “Yoder’s emphasis on the church/world distinction with MacIntyre’s critique of liberal modernity”<sup>33</sup> resulting in “a rigid and static line between Christian virtue and liberal vice.”<sup>34</sup>

### **MacIntyre’s Critique of the Enlightenment and Proposal for a Return to Aristotle**

The primary work of the next two sections is the exposition of Alasdair MacIntyre’s anti-liberal ontology and John Howard Yoder’s Christology (ecclesiology and description of Constantinianism), an effort that seeks to understand the synthesis of the two within the writings of Stanley Hauerwas. What follows works to illuminate the general philosophical, and particular theological, arguments that make possible Hauerwas’ description of postliberal politics. The exploration of the reflexive use to which Hauerwas puts MacIntyre and Yoder’s respective definitions of liberalism and Constantinianism will be of particular importance. This section lays the groundwork for understanding the inconsistent assertions made by Hauerwas in his later writings, which will be the focus of chapter 3.

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<sup>31</sup> Stout, J. 2004. *Democracy and Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. p. 148

<sup>32</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p.223

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 154

I begin with the exposition of MacIntyre’s meta-ethical critique of the moral and contextual fragmentation caused by liberalism—and his attempted recovery of the virtue tradition as a way forward—as found in his magnum opus *After Virtue*.<sup>35</sup> Next, I will explore John Howard Yoder’s theological description of the church as a story-formed, socially-embodied, community of the virtues, as well as the external enemy to that tradition found in the Constantinian project. Finally, this section will conclude by beginning the process of illuminating the synthesis and qualification of these two thinkers in the postliberal political theology of Stanley Hauerwas. Yet, the peculiar shape of Hauerwas’ postliberal politics will be demonstrated fully in the next chapter, via his polemic against Oliver O’Donovan, particularly in terms of their disparate use of eschatological metaphors surrounding the reign of Christ.

In her (1997) “Introduction” to *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre*, Nancey Murphy argues that MacIntyre “has accomplished three things of great value to Christian ethicists:” “he has revived the *virtue* tradition of moral inquiry;” he has provided a “critique of Enlightenment theories of ethics;” and he has rejected “universal judgments” in favor of “particularity.”<sup>36</sup> As will be shown throughout the duration of this thesis not only have such contributions been adopted by Stanley Hauerwas, but following the publication of *The Peaceable Kingdom*, they are *the framework* upon which all of his theological claims rest. That is to say, MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* provides Hauerwas not only with the philosophical schema and tools by which he produces later arguments, but also lends his work a sense of consistency, direction, and style.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> MacIntyre, A. 1984. *After Virtue*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Southbend, IN: Notre Dame University Press.

<sup>36</sup> Murphy, N., Kallenberg, B. J. and M. T. Nation. 1997. *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International. p. 1. It is important to note that in Murphy’s analysis of MacIntyre’s influences on the field of Christian ethics she identifies his contribution to philosophy in terms of the way those contributions have been utilized and extended by Hauerwas and his students. Thus it is no surprise that the volume’s editors consist of two students and one colleague of Hauerwas, while both Hauerwas and Yoder have articles included in the volume.

<sup>37</sup> In the “Introduction” to *A Better Hope* (Hauerwas, S. 2000. *A Better Hope*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos.), Hauerwas remarks on the often polemical nature of his work, and his desire to be less combative (a suggestion from Yoder), leading him to write a book that he hopes defines what he is for rather than what he is against. Yet in many ways Hauerwas’ style of rhetoric, polemical though it may be, is but the practical application of (Marxist) dialectical reason (Aristotle’s “practical reason”) as

MacIntyre begins *After Virtue* with “a disquieting suggestion” about the state of moral language and discourse in contemporary society. MacIntyre helps elucidate what he reveals to be the inconsistent and fragmented nature of moral language by making an analogy with a fictitious world in which science is blamed for a great catastrophe and epistemically obliterated: books are burned, scientists lynched, and equipment is destroyed. Many years after this systematic destruction of the scientific occurs, a group of “enlightened people seek to revive science” but unfortunately

all that they possess are fragments: a knowledge of experiments detached from any knowledge of the theoretical context which gave them significance; parts of theories unrelated either to the other bits and pieces of theory which they possess or to experiment; instruments whose use has been forgotten; half-chapters from books, single pages from articles, not always fully legible because torn and charred.<sup>38</sup>

Yet still, the “enlightened people” attempt to reconstitute physics, chemistry, and biology as meaningful practices. The adults debate partially understood theories one against another (without comprehension of which are compatible and which are mutually exclusive), while the children ritually recite the theorems of Euclid. In MacIntyre’s world:

Nobody, or almost nobody, realizes that what they are doing is not natural science in any proper sense at all. For everything that they do and say conforms to certain canons of consistency and coherence and those contexts which would be needed to make sense of what they are doing have been lost, perhaps irretrievably.<sup>39</sup>

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described by MacIntyre. It is the means by which Hauerwas attempts to identify what MacIntyre dubs the “ultimate end”—a hierarchical ordering of goods toward which all right actions move in a particular social context. One might argue then that Hauerwas’ polemics is the right response to alternative voices *within* a community of care (like the church) but is the wrong response to voices outside that tradition; such as with other tradition based communities (like America), where definitions of “the good” or “life in common” will often conflict with the definitions provided by the church, due to the absence of a common context. (See MacIntyre, A. 1988. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. p. 132. For a critical discussion of MacIntyre’s position see Dahl, N. O. “Justice and Aristotelian Practical Reason” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 51:1. (March 1991). pp. 153-157. p. 153.

<sup>38</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 1

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Moreover, the disorder and meaninglessness of the reconstituted practices of science could never be exposed by analytic or existential philosophy. Analytic philosophy is exposed as mathematics and logic in MacIntyre's world. While the argumentative grammar may be intact, the semantic content of the terms/elements has been lost. Validity remains, but there is no epistemic access to the true by which one could ascertain the truth of premises, and so every argument, absurdly, is unsound. Existentialism is exposed as always already nihilism. Existentialist philosophy fails to identify the fragmentation of science because its concern is with subjective meaning-making and so already presumes either the metaphysical absence of the objective, or the lack of epistemic access to it – the nihilistic void, which is the infinite distance between what is and our knowledge of it.

MacIntyre argues that this foray into the genre of science fiction creates an unlikely analogy for the fragmented state of morality of which we are all a part. Not only is moral language fragmented, but our memory of how to use moral terms, and the contexts and roots of those terms, has been lost to us. MacIntyre states, "What we possess, if this is...true, are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived. We possess indeed simulacra of morality, we continue to use many of the key expressions."<sup>40</sup> However, according to MacIntyre, we have lost our comprehension of the theory and practice necessary for such expressions to make sense. If MacIntyre's analogy holds up, the philosophers—analytic and existential—will not be able to help us realize the grave state of our disorder, as their analysis of the structures of morality, both conceptual and intentional, will be unchanged regardless of the context in which moral language is used. The true test of the analogy, according to MacIntyre, is with the historians. Surely, a catastrophe of such proportions would be remembered, yet there is no record of such an event occurring within the history of our world. The only way such an event could occur, according to MacIntyre, is if "the catastrophe... [was]...of such a kind that it was not and has not been—except perhaps by a very few—recognized as a catastrophe."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 3

MacIntyre argues that such an event is possible, plausible even, if one addresses the origin and nature of the discipline of academic history. As the discipline of academic history is less than two centuries old, MacIntyre proposes that the disorder of moral language in contemporary culture must have occurred before the inauguration of that discipline and thus academic history itself is a system of that disorder. According to MacIntyre, the trademark of academic history is its focus on the importance of value-neutral observation. As this is the case, the very notion of moral disorder is unintelligible:

[a]ll that the historian...will be allowed to perceive by the canons and categories of his discipline will be one morality succeeding another: seventeenth-century Puritanism, eighteenth-century hedonism, the Victorian work ethic and so on, but the very language of order and disorder will not be available to him.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, if MacIntyre is correct, any moral disorder would *have* to be all but invisible to the academics of many disciplines as those very disciplines are defined by value-neutral evaluation and observation—on an epistemological foundation that prizes human faculties for reason alongside human experience and perception. Moreover, on MacIntyre’s analysis the existence of such disciplines is but a symptom of the disorder itself.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre treks through the history of ideas identifying the eighteenth-century as the time during which moral language becomes disordered. The nature of this disorder, according to MacIntyre, is one of dislocation, that is to say, the modern moral self has been “totally detached from all social particularity.”<sup>43</sup> This detachment of moral language from social context is *the* trademark of modernity, and to understand it one must address the period from “1630 to 1850”

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Conversely, ancient and medieval historians were committed to making judgments through the narrative interpretation of events. See Breisach, E. 2007. *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*. Third Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 32

during which attempts were made “to provide a rational justification for morality.”<sup>44</sup>

MacIntyre states:

In that period morality became the name for that particular sphere in which rules of conduct which are neither theological nor legal nor aesthetic are allowed a cultural space of their own. It is only in the later seventeenth...and eighteenth century, when this distinguishing of the moral from the theological, the legal and the aesthetic has become a received doctrine that the project of an independent justification of morality becomes not merely the concern of individual thinkers, but central to Northern European culture.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, the culture of the eighteenth century is the Enlightenment, while the agenda of that culture is the Enlightenment project. It is the failure of this project that makes intelligible, according to MacIntyre, our own situation.

For MacIntyre, the philosophical attempt to provide a space for practices disassociated from their context is but a derivation of the Enlightenment project’s (thanks largely to Kant) primary role: to define a human as, first and foremost, an autonomous individual. To ground, with Descartes and Kant, human existence and certainty in the reasoning thinking-thing, is to separate the practices of humanity from the contexts in which those acts take place. The result: that questioning what a thing is for (Aristotelian *telos*) becomes unintelligible, while asking whether a thing exists and how such an existence is knowable becomes the sole focus of philosophical pursuit. The problem, as put by Brad Kallenberg, is that “[h]aving rejected the received account of *telos*, the only remaining option upon which moral principles might be grounded was the *untutored* human nature—the very thing in need of guidance and, by nature, at odds with those guiding principles!”<sup>46</sup> The problem is particularly evident in Kant, as knowledge of the self is limited by what can be reasoned about the self prior to context, so too human practice can only be

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 39

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Kallenberg, B. J., “The Master Argument of MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*” in Kallenberg, B., Murphy, N., and M. T. Nation (eds.). 1997. *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics After MacIntyre*. pp 7-29. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International. p. 11

judged reasonable or unreasonable in terms of the contextless actor.<sup>47</sup> As MacIntyre puts it:

To be a moral agent is, on this view precisely to be able to stand back from any and every situation in which one is involved from any and every characteristic that one may possess, and to pass judgement on it from a purely universal and abstract point of view that is totally detached from all social particularity. Anyone and everyone can thus be a moral agent, since it is in the self and not in social roles or practices that moral agency has to be located.<sup>48</sup>

Yet for MacIntyre, *all* the key Enlightenment philosophers (he includes in this list Kant, Hume, Diderot and Kierkegaard) share a formula for attempting to account for morality while at the same time dismissing *telos* and the particular contexts that might provide it. MacIntyre notes:

all these writers share in the project of constructing valid arguments which will move from premises concerning human nature as they understand it to be to conclusions about the authority of moral rules and precepts. I want to argue that any project of this form was bound to fail, because of an ineradicable discrepancy between their shared conception of moral rules and precepts on the one hand and what was shared—despite much larger divergences—in their conception of human nature on the other. Both conceptions have a history and their relationship can only be made intelligible in the light of that history.<sup>49</sup>

For MacIntyre, the Enlightenment project was bound to fail precisely because the philosophers involved attempted to use moral language with certitude without having definitions for the terms involved. Without acknowledging the conceptual and historical traditions, which define moral vocabulary, any use of terms like *good*, *justice*, and *rights* become arbitrary utterances. It is precisely for this reason that MacIntyre claims we should not be surprised at the shrill tenor of modern moral debate, because “modern moral utterance and practice can only be understood as series of fragmented survivals from an older past and the insoluble problems which they have generated for modern moral theories will remain insoluble until this is well

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<sup>47</sup> See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 43-47

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 30

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 52

understood.”<sup>50</sup> That is to say, there can be no winner in a modern moral debate when both sides use a different definition of *good*, nor when the debate requires those involved to judge between two competing goods—there is simply no way to weigh between them.

Furthermore, the attempt to substitute reason alone as a foundation for scientific enquiry into the nature of the self (or morality) is ultimately an attempt to respond to this fragmentation, while the cause of that fragmentation is the assumption that such an enquiry is possible. The necessary failure of enlightenment thinking, for both MacIntyre and Hauerwas, is that when the Enlightenment philosophers were “[c]onfronted by the fragmented character of our world... [they] undoubtedly tried to secure a high ground that... [could] provide security, certainty, and peace.”<sup>51</sup> It was, according to Hauerwas, “a worthy effort, but one doomed to fail, for such ground lacks the ability to train our desires and direct our attention; to make us into moral people.”<sup>52</sup> MacIntyre’s alternative, which is essential to Hauerwas’ program (albeit in a much modified form), is a return to Aristotle—i.e., an uncovering of that “older past” and its pre-modern moral sensibilities.

Upon realizing the failure of the Enlightenment project, MacIntyre argues that the moral philosopher is left with two options: either dismiss, with Nietzsche, the very possibility of morality, embrace the will to power and discard terms such as *good*, *justice*, and *right*; or return to pre-modern modes of philosophy by excavating past uses of moral terms, their function, and the particular contexts which gave them meaning. MacIntyre opts for Aristotle.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. pp. 110-11

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 11

<sup>52</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 11. See Wolterstorff, N. 1984. *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; and Bernstein, R. J. 1983. *Philosophical Profiles: Essays in a Pragmatic Mode*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Wolterstorff identifies foundationalism as “mortally ill,” (55) whilst Bernstein rejects that a choice need even be made between foundationalism and non-foundationalism, dubbing the former a “dead option.” (91).

<sup>53</sup> While Oliver O’Donovan is sympathetic to MacIntyre’s overall critique of modernity, he argues against MacIntyre’s claim that the only premodern inheritance capable of repairing modernity is to be found in Aristotelian philosophy. When MacIntyre says: “If a premodern view of morals and politics

According to MacIntyre, the only way to understand Aristotle is by acknowledging that particular context from which his philosophical enquiry into the nature of morality, self, and society arises—i.e., the society of ancient Greece embodied in Homeric literature. MacIntyre’s apologetic for using literature, as opposed to academic historical accounts of what “ancient Greece was really like” is two-fold: (1) accounts of history provided by academic historians are always already internally flawed due to their attempt to situate themselves as value-neutral observers of the past, and (2) that the “chief means of moral education [among classical cultures] is the telling of stories.”<sup>54</sup> As MacIntyre puts it,

What matters for my own argument is a relatively indisputable historical fact, namely that such narratives did provide the historical memory, adequate or inadequate, of the societies in which they were finally written down. More than that they provide a moral background to contemporary debate in classical societies, an account of a now-transcended or partly-transcended moral order whose beliefs and concepts were still partially influential, but which also provided an illuminating contrast to the present.<sup>55</sup>

Within the Homeric literature the basic values of society are already given, along with the place, privilege, and duty of everyone within the social caste. The particular social model evidenced in Homer is, according to MacIntyre, the heroic society. In this society, each individual (self) is coterminous with his or her work (actions). To judge a person as good or bad is to judge their performance within the social caste, and the warrant for judgment is “his virtues and vices; for the virtues just are those qualities which sustain a free man in his role and which manifest themselves in those

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is to be vindicated against modernity, it will be something like Aristotelian in terms or not at all” (*After Virtue*, p. 111), O’Donovan responds by noting that “the earliest tradition of Christian moral thought, owing comparatively little to Aristotle, was formed nevertheless, in a realist mould.” (O’Donovan, O. 1986. *Resurrection and the Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company. p. 18). While there were clearly Platonic influences present in early Christian thought, the “debt to these sources” is secondary to what was received “predominately from the reading of the Bible.” (Ibid). Indeed, Scripture, including *Torah*, provided the people of God with more than a list of commands and precepts; but also it created and sustained a story-formed moral community that, despite its scattered character was able to live side-by-side with pagan Greek (and Roman) storied-communities, while retaining its own distinctive identity and practices.

<sup>54</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 121

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

actions which his role requires.”<sup>56</sup> Virtue, therefore, is excellence in fulfilling one’s role within the larger polity. Moreover for those situated within the context of Homeric society, the moral or virtuous choice was never in question. A meta-ethical critique of the moral framework was impossible; an Athenian could never judge their framework as good precisely because the description of “good” arose from within the framework. That is to say, there was no way to “step outside” Homeric society in order to launch a critique of it, because as MacIntyre notes, any person attempting to do so “would be engaged in the enterprise of trying to make himself disappear.”<sup>57</sup>

It will be useful now to take a brief look at the principle modifications to a description of *telos*, virtue and the virtuous life as provided by Aristotle. But first we must address MacIntyre’s understanding of Aristotle’s “practical reason” which is central not only to MacIntyre’s project, but to Hauerwas’ understanding of discipline (discipleship), habit, and tradition.

According to MacIntyre, Aristotelian practical reason designates an argument that terminates in an action. Practical reason understood in this way stands not in opposition to theoretical reason, but as a partner to it. For Aristotle, theoretical reason anticipated the speculative and contemplative moment, while practical reason arrived principally in the *polis*. MacIntyre demonstrates the nature of this interconnectedness most clearly by explaining the activity of practical reason as performance toward a *telos*—with *telos* being knowable only through reasoned contemplation on the nature of the good. As we will see, MacIntyre’s example illustrates what should happen if a disconnection between practical and theoretical reason was to occur, namely unintelligibility of action between those in the polity and the disconnected actor:

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 122

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 126. This notion is reflected in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s reading of Giambattista Vico, namely that: “history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live...The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life.” (Gadamer, H-G. 1994. *Truth and Method*. New York, NY: Continuum. p. 276-7).

We should be puzzled for example by someone of whom we knew three things: first that he wanted to keep healthy, secondly that he had sincerely asserted *both* that to get cold *and* wet could be bad for his health and that the only way to keep warm and dry in winter was to wear his overcoat, and thirdly that he habitually in winter went out without his overcoat. For his action appears to express a belief inconsistent with his other expressed beliefs.<sup>58</sup>

Habitual or systematic inconsistency between act and belief illumines therefore a disconnection of the relationship between contemplation and practice. Thus for MacIntyre, we must say not only that practical reasoning moves one toward the right action in a given situation, while theoretical reasoning illuminates a particular course of action as right, but that the ability to form a habitually intelligible connection between theoretical and practical reason constitutes moral judgment; yet the nature of such judgment is entirely dependent upon the “moral virtues and vices [that] compose his or her character.”<sup>59</sup> For Aristotle, the precise relationship between reason and the virtues is elliptical insofar as contemplation provides a notion of *telos*; practical reason exhorts an actor within the social context to move toward that previously acknowledged account of *telos*, and yet the end of theoretical reason’s contemplation is always already affected by the virtuous or vice-like character of he or she who is doing the contemplating. In short, she who contemplates always does so already within not just the social context but within her place in that context—a non-virtuous person *will* engage in theoretical reasoning (contemplation), and in so doing make moral judgments, but such judgments will already be skewed by the character of she who is doing the reasoning. This stands in direct contrast to a Rawlsian reading of Aristotle, wherein theoretical reason is value-neutral contemplation from “outside” while practical reason is the social implementation of neutral-judgment.

Having outlined the teleological, practical (action-ended reason), and social dimensions of moral judgment, practice, and thought in terms of Aristotelian virtue language, MacIntyre extends the Aristotelian account by arguing for the existence of

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<sup>58</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 161

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p. 162

three conceptual stages necessary for virtue formation within any social context: practice, narrative, and tradition. MacIntyre explains these stages, saying:

[t]he first stage requires a background account of what I shall call a practice, the second an account of...the narrative order of a single human life and the third an account...of what constitutes a moral tradition...Each earlier stage is both modified by and reinterpreted in the light of, but also provides an essential constituent of each later stage. The progress in the development of the concept is closely related to, although it does not recapitulate in any straightforward way, the history of the tradition of which it forms the core.<sup>60</sup>

Kallenberg has helpfully noted the Wittgensteinian nature of the interrelationship between these concepts and how they reflexively work to illuminate one another as well as the form and function of the virtues. He points out that “getting a handle on his [MacIntyre’s] explanation is not like building a house (which progresses incrementally, brick by brick) but like watching the sun rise—the light draws gradually over the whole.”<sup>61</sup> It will be useful to look at the way in which MacIntyre defines each of these terms in order to see how Hauerwas modifies them in light of Yoder.

MacIntyre defines a practice as:

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 186

<sup>61</sup> Kallenberg, “The Master Argument,” p. 20. It should be noted that Kallenberg’s reading of Wittgenstein, most notably in his defense of Hauerwas’ brand of Wittgensteinianism (Kallenberg, B. J. 2001. *Ethics as Grammar: Changing the Postmodern Subject*. Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press) has been heavily criticized by R. Scott Smith (Smith, R. S. 2003. *Virtue Ethics and Moral Knowledge: Philosophy of language after MacIntyre and Hauerwas*. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company). Smith argues that the “linguistic constructivist” reading of Wittgenstein, present also in MacIntyre and Hauerwas, “beg[s] the most important questions of all” by presupposing “the very things they [linguistic constructivists] deny, such as epistemic access to an extra-linguistic realm that exists independently of our linguistic characterizations of it.” (5).

<sup>62</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 187

Thus architecture, the sciences, farming, the arts, and chess are practices whereas pouring cement, lighting a Bunsen burner, planting turnips, scribbling and tic-tac-toe are not. The former have goods particular (internal) to those activities, which given proper motivation and sufficient training (i.e., *practice*), a person may excel at; while the latter may be performed with skill, they do not have goods internal to the activity itself. The latter are technical skills; such skills are necessary for the performance of practices, yet a practice is more than the sum of its parts. It should be noted therefore that any goods arising from participation in technical skills are “externally and contingently attached...by the accidents of social circumstance.”<sup>63</sup> This is to be contrasted with practices that not only have certain goods internal to their activity, but also standards of excellence and obedience already attached to that activity. These standards are social prolegomena to the practice (even if they are not represented in the society, they are knowable through the stories told by that society, as illustrated by the moral discrepancies between Aristotle’s and Homer’s Greece). Thus, “[t]o enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them.”<sup>64</sup> Finally, practices do not occur as single events, but as part of a social-historical tapestry. Over time, practices evolve, as do standards of excellence and a society’s understanding of the goods internal to those practices; this evolution often will require the acquisition of different skill sets, along with alterations in training and discipline.

According to MacIntyre, the second concept necessary for a proper understanding of the virtues is narrative. Narrative, according to MacIntyre, is the tool by which the pre-modern self was unified: “birth to life to death...beginning to middle to end.”<sup>65</sup> Narrative provides consistency and context for the self, making intelligible the inseparable relationship between a person, his or her social (and natural) environment, and the roles he/she plays in that environment (i.e. one’s activities). Thus for MacIntyre, many narratives are embedded in other narratives, just as people

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 188

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 190

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 205

are embedded in one another's lives. For MacIntyre, questions about who a person is cannot help but be answered by appealing to his/her broader social-historical context. For MacIntyre, the characters in a story cannot help but have a moral dimension; habit, and consistency of act, illuminate patterns of behavior, and in so doing, the character of a character. Thus, any person can be identified as virtuous or vice-oriented by comparing his/her personal story, and in particular, the practices and activities embodied within that story, to the larger stories in which he/she is embedded. If the practices of the individual are in line with the teleological good of the society as a whole, then his/her exemplary practices will be judged virtuous.

For MacIntyre, the historical memory of a society is embodied in its tradition. Just as narrative is the storied unity of the self over time and space, tradition provides narrative unity to society as whole. Therefore, MacIntyre defines tradition as a "socially extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute the tradition."<sup>66</sup> MacIntyre expands on this definition in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* noting that disputes over what constitutes the social good, and the most exemplary practices for ensuring that good, have two locations: (1) "internal interpretive debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted," and (2) conflicts "with critics and enemies external to the tradition."<sup>67</sup> Indeed, tradition *does* represent the historical evolutionary record of argument within a particular community, both with past generations as well as with other traditions, but it is important to remember that it is a context which extends not only backwards, but also into the future. That is to say, traditions do sustain continuity between persons, their practices, history and social contexts, but traditions are also sustained by the continued participation (individual

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 222

<sup>67</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 12. Milbank's chief complaint about MacIntyre at this point lies in MacIntyre's seeming commitment to the idea that one tradition can and should offer a better rational argument than other traditions. For Milbank, this is much too close to a liberal/positivist/foundational apologetic. The better course, according to Milbank, lies in out-narrating the other traditions—i.e., offer the world a better story than the others. See the final chapter of Milbank, J. 2006. *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

and communal) of new generations in that shared context. The relationship between the individual with her socially embodied historical history has two aspects: “On an ontological level tradition contributes to the creation of agents’ identity, while on the epistemological level it determines the conditions for knowledge.”<sup>68</sup> For MacIntyre, the only real “success” of the Enlightenment was the efficient disassociation of present generations with the traditions from which they arose, leaving individuals in the modern world in a state of context-less unintelligibility.

### **Yoder’s Messianic Community and the Politics of Jesus**

Perhaps the most famous passage of *After Virtue*—and definitely the most illuminating for those attempting to understand the relationship between Yoder and MacIntyre—occurs at the end of the first edition, where MacIntyre announces:

A crucial turning point in that earlier history occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman *imperium* and ceasing to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that *imperium*. What they set themselves to achieve instead—often not recognizing fully what they are doing—was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness. If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we too have reached that turning point. What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and the moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time.<sup>69</sup>

Yoder’s theology, when read through the lens of MacIntyre, can be most clearly understood as an attempt to identify, sustain, and correct a community of virtue. The moral community which he appeals to is not exactly new; Yoder’s task is not one of construction therefore, but of recovery. In particular, this recovery involves the

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<sup>68</sup> Vidu, *Postliberal Theological Method*, p. 23

<sup>69</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 263

excavation of authentic (i.e., faithful) forms of *community* capable, at the very least, of having a conversation about the moral life as illumined by the Christ narrative. In the first part of what follows I will look at Yoder's account of the self, society, social practices, and the way narrative operates within the Christian tradition; the second part of this section acknowledges Yoder's commitment to a moral community who is already held captive, politically, by the barbarians.

During his lifetime, Yoder eschewed attempts to systematize his work. He wrote occasional essays rather than systematic treatises, and did not think that theology could begin "from scratch" or by laying "a foundation;" that is to say, Yoder did not believe that theology could begin "with a *tabula rasa*" in the "mind or in society." Rather, Yoder, like the Yale School, opted to do theology nonfoundationally; this consisted of rejecting, like MacIntyre, the "methodologism" inherent in scholastic and Cartesian foundationalism, as well as modern rationalism.<sup>70</sup> Yet Yoder's theological nonfoundationalism, i.e., his rejection of systematic and rational analyses of revelation, was not a call to relativism. For Yoder, theology and Scriptural exegesis were neither irrational nor unsystematic. Rather, he desired to let Scripture say what it meant without "subjecting it to the superior authority" of the "contemporary hermeneutic framework."<sup>71</sup> Harry Huebner puts it nicely, noting that Yoder does not take the view of method that

is typical among scholars—namely, as universal form housing particular content. Yoder offers an alternative to this understanding, something one might call an epistemology of peace or a methodology of patience. For Yoder, discipleship is not the deduction of a method properly applied; rather, discipleship informs the method appropriate to knowing Jesus Christ. Alternatively, the legitimation of violence is not the conclusion of a neutral way of thinking about the world as it is, but rather it is the outworking and inevitable result of controlling and manipulative epistemologies.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> See Yoder, J. H. "Walk and Word: The Alternatives to Methodologism" in Hauerwas, S., Murphy, N., and M. T. Nation (eds.). 1994. *Theology without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth*. pp. 77-90. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 81

<sup>72</sup> Huebner, H. "The Christian Life as Gift and Patience: Why Yoder Has Trouble with Method" in Ollenburger, B. C. and G. G. Koontz (eds.). 2004. *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*. pp. 23-38. Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House. p. 23

It is precisely this redefinition of method in terms of Christology and discipleship that is central to understanding both Yoder's, and in turn Hauerwas', writings. As Huebner observes, "Yoder does not mean that method doesn't matter," rather "it is precisely because it matters that we must examine and critique the way it gets cast in Enlightenment foundationalist epistemologies."<sup>73</sup> Thus for Yoder, epistemic access to the truth is not limited to revelation (in the form of Jesus or in Scripture), rather Yoder argues that it is simply the case that the truth which is in Jesus, "is the truth that matters the most, which must therefore regulate our reception and recognition of other kinds and levels of truth rather than being set in parallel or subordinated thereto."<sup>74</sup>

Rejecting Enlightenment modes of theology and philosophy (those that began with the alienated human subject or the state of nature), Yoder argues that all theology was a dialogue—a part of an ongoing conversation within history. According to Yoder, the nature of that historical collaboration is dialectical and argumentative, and limited by the linguistic capabilities and rational prowess of each generation. Thus, Yoder rejects attempts to talk about universal and metaethical norms in moral theology, preferring instead to discuss the day-to-day practice of specific historical communities: particularly those of Jews and Christians. Moreover, Yoder identifies this nonfoundationalist account of theology as "Biblical Realism." According to Yoder, it is his commitment to Biblical Realism that qualifies his analysis of the form and function of theology, placing theology first in the service of the canon. (Of particular interest is Yoder's exaltation of the canon as the standard bearer of Christian virtue, which is extremely reminiscent of MacIntyre turning to the Homeric literature in order to understand the narrative context of Aristotle's Greece).

In order to understand the practice of theology, Yoder first addresses the role of the theologian within the traditional social context of the church. Drawing on the role of the teacher (*didaskalos*) in the New Testament church, Yoder begins to lay out a list

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

of skill sets, standards, and practices of discipline involved in being an exemplary theologian. According to Yoder, in Scripture there are two seemingly different notions as to what the role of the teacher should be: the first belongs to that of St. James the brother of Jesus, the second to St. Paul. According to James, the role of the *didaskalos* “is a risky function which not many should seek to discharge” while Paul encourages all Christians to seek all of the gifts.<sup>75</sup> Both nuance the account of the theologian that Yoder develops.

James’ cautionary to the Jewish Christian churches in Palestine regarding the role of the *didaskalos* is as follows:

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle (3:1-3).<sup>76</sup>

The danger for the teacher, and for all Christians, is the unruly nature of the tongue. Yoder points out that in many Bible-based traditions the tongue signifies the speech of an individual Christian, while the unruliness signifies a lack of piety: i.e., gossip, cursing, or unkind speech. Yoder argues that it is a mistake to modernize James in this way, rather:

The “tongue” in any Aryan language means the language, the phenomenon of language, and the social reality of communication. Language is unruly in that playing with issues by defining terms is a constant source of contestation and confusion.<sup>77</sup>

Yoder affirms this by pointing to the Pauline warning, namely that Timothy must hold to “the standard of sound teaching” (2 Tim 1:13) and avoid “wrangling over words” because it “only ruins those who are listening” (2 Tim. 2:14). This warning, like that offered by James, cautions the teacher to take care regarding constructed verbal formulations. In the words of Yoder:

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<sup>75</sup> Yoder, “Walk and Word,” p. 75

<sup>76</sup> Holy Bible (NRSV). All Biblical citations found in this are taken from NRSV unless noted otherwise.

<sup>77</sup> Yoder, “Walk and Word,” p. 75

It is with language as it is with the rudder of a ship, the bit in the horse's mouth, or the flame igniting a forest: there is a multiplication effect whereby any mistake in balance or aim produces greater damage through the leverage of language.<sup>78</sup>

Moreover:

The wording of the Bible is not an empowering ratification giving the theologian a special advantage in the knowledge of truths qualitatively different from the truths other people can know. The Bible is, rather, the victim of the corrosive and distorting effect of the leverage of language, and the theologian is its defender.<sup>79</sup>

It is important to note that for Yoder, the difference between Paul and James is the difference between two separate yet similar types of theology: catechetical and corrective. They are similar in the sense that both Paul and James offer a caution regarding the role of the teacher. They are separate in that Paul identifies teaching, i.e., indoctrination into the new community, as an ongoing day-to-day occurrence in the life of the believer. Yoder describes this Pauline formulation as that which encourages all Christians "to read the Bible...and...to be free to interpret it soberly in relevance to their own situations."<sup>80</sup> Indeed, Yoder would argue that for Paul, both witness and evangelism require every Christian to teach basic theology to all converts. This theology is ultimately realized as the most fundamental level of Christian culture that permeates the community of believers.

Supplementing the catechetical theology that is the gift and rule of life for the church catholic, there is a vocational role held by specific individuals within the church: the *didaskalos*. The function of the *didaskalos* is that of defender and corrector. Yoder argues:

It is...the abuse to which canonical texts are subject that calls upon the teacher to be more restrained than the poets and prophets in the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 76

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

interpretations which he or she allows people to commend toward one another...

What we need the *didaskalos* for is to defend the historical objectivity of what the text said in the first place against the leverage of overly confident or “relevant” applications. Already in the early church this was a task that called for linguistic sophistication... There are forms of articulation which are fruitlessly speculative, destructively relativizing, or unwholesomely accommodating. The task of the *didaskalos* is to defend the difference between the organic fidelity of our interpretation now and the meaning of the message then, as well as to oppose other “adaptations” or “applications” which constitute betrayal.

The fact that people are tempted to abuse Scripture by calling upon it to support whatever they believe is one of the reasons it is inappropriate most of the time to think that the primary theological debate is about whether the biblical text is authoritative or not... The theologians’ task is more often to defend the text against a wrong claim to its authority than to affirm in some timeless and case-free way that it has authority.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, while it is good for every Christian to teach and theologize to both unbelievers and in the midst of the peculiarly Christian culture of the church, it is the job of the *didaskalos* to ensure that the theology used for catechism and within the culture is faithful to Scripture and not tainted by contemporary circumstances. The *didaskalos* ensures the faithful collaborative embodiment of Christian life

...construed as the interpretative performance of Scripture...[because] The poles of Christian interpretation are not, in the last analysis, written texts...but patterns of human action: We talk of ‘holy’ scripture, and for good reason. And yet it is not, in fact the *script* that is ‘holy’ but the people: the company who performs the script.<sup>82</sup>

This is true for Yoder because, “[t]o ask how the Bible functions in theology is like asking how the ground floor functions in a house.”<sup>83</sup> Teachers and theologians must correct any theology which is not faithful to the canon of Scripture, i.e., in the communal performance of that Scripture. Yet by far the most common teaching of theology happens in the catechism of Christian culture.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 76-77

<sup>82</sup> Lash, N. “Performing the Scriptures,” in Lash, N. 1986. *Theology on the Way to Emmaus*. London: SCM Press. pp. 37-46. pp. 42-3

<sup>83</sup> Yoder, “Walk and Word,” p. 71

<sup>84</sup> Hauerwas has extended and qualified Yoder’s description of the *didaskalos* (See *Performing the Faith*, p. 219n8) by drawing on Milbank’s argument (Milbank, J. 2003. *Being Reconciled: Ontology*

Yoder's ability to rationalize nonfoundationally becomes apparent via his description of the authority of Scripture. For Yoder, "there is no need to theorize about *why* the Bible has authority when one finds oneself living in a community in which that authority is presupposed and which is constantly being renewed through the simple experience of its operation."<sup>85</sup> There is no need to confirm the authority of Scripture via philosophical or genealogical argumentation rather one can find evidence for its authority in the middle of the community which that authority guides. Thus the authority of Scripture is both dogmatically and practically assumed. (Wolfgang Schrage reflects this perspective, noting that "The real subject of New Testament ethics is neither society nor the individual, but the community."<sup>86</sup>). Yoder's account of the *didaskalos* rests on the basis of that assumed authority. Thus the theologian limits and corrects the practices and language of the community by appealing to and arguing from the basic authoritative canon. Yet the necessity for the theologians work, either polemical or irenic, should be a rarity in the life of a church that is properly founded in Scripture. For Yoder, it is "simply and descriptively the case that Christians gather around the words of the Word and its message bears fruit...without needing constantly to be pulled up by the roots in order to see why it should be working that way."<sup>87</sup> When the corrective task of the theologian becomes necessary, it is response to a brokenness, corruption, or failure within the community to faithfully live the Word. Yoder observes:

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*and Pardon*. London: Routledge.) that the theologian does not have the last word, nor is he/she the highest in the ecclesial hierarchy. Milbank has noted that theologians are answerable to bishops, not in terms of "spatial hierarchy" but, "a hierarchical, educative *manductio* of the faith down the ages. Equally the theologian is answerable to a specific location, or even multiple specific localities, such that his or her sense of perpetuating a history must be combined with a sense of carrying out an archaeology and mapping a geography. Finally, s/he is also answerable to the mode of the reception of sacrament and word by the congregation, even if this is now in the early twenty-first century frequently impossible and the theologian must exercise what is an excessive critical function by ideal standards."(126). Yet Hauerwas admits to finding the "excessive critical function" of the theologian as "worrisome" because, he argues, that "the last thing we need is for theologians to try to be heroes." (Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 219n8). It is the job of the bishop, then to keep them humble.

<sup>85</sup> Yoder, "Walk and Word," p. 77

<sup>86</sup> Schrage, W. 1987. *The Ethics of the New Testament*. Trans. D. E. Green. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress. p. 5

<sup>87</sup> Yoder, "Walk and Word," p. 77

This is true of the theologian serving the readers of a particular culture and class. When a culture is preoccupied by fear of the dark powers which rule the world, one will especially find the message of release from that fear. When a society is preoccupied with death, one will hear the message of resurrection and eternal life. When a society is anomic it will be open to be illuminated and disciplined by Torah.<sup>88</sup>

For Yoder, this emphasis on particular Scriptural and theological correctives within particular situations can be identified as a canon within the canon. Yet for Yoder, “[t]he ultimate canon within the canon must...be the person of Jesus and, in a broader sense, the narration of the saving acts of God”<sup>89</sup> – God’s love in and for the world.

The connection that Yoder draws between Jesus as the “canon within the canon” and the church is illustrated perhaps most clearly in the relationship between his books (1972) *The Politics of Jesus* and (2002) *Preface to Theology*. *Preface* remained unpublished until 2002, yet was developed as a series of lectures to students at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Indiana in the 1960’s (before *Politics*). In the “Introduction” to *Preface*, Hauerwas and Sider observe that:

[i]t is important for him [Yoder] that we understand the work the creeds should do. Christians do not become “creedal” because we need to get our theology straight as an end in and of itself. Rather, in *Preface to Theology* Yoder helps us see that Christians become creedal because of the kind of life they must lead to be faithful disciples of Jesus. The early “Christologies” developed in the New Testament were expressions required when followers of Jesus confronted the challenge of making their way of life, a way of life shaped by following Jesus’ teachings, intelligible in contexts that had no way of imagining how God could be found in this Galilean.<sup>90</sup>

*Preface to Theology* is exactly that, a discussion of what criteria theology must fit in order to be faithful theology, and a description of the way in which Christianity has historically flourished and failed in its pursuit of talking about God and his people in

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Hauerwas, S. and A. Sider. 2002. “Introduction.” In Yoder, J. H. 2002. *Preface to Theology*. Hauerwas, S., and Sider, A. (eds.). Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

faithful ways. In *Preface*, Yoder elucidates a narrative description of the theological moves made by the *didaskalos* of the early church, noting why theological correction was required in each instance and whether it was faithful and effective. Hauerwas and Sider have rightly pointed out that for Yoder the criteria and key to faithfulness in the practice of theology is always already qualified by the claim that the theological endeavor must make possible faithful discipleship within the church. Theology flourishes in the day-to-day life and practices of the church. Furthermore, theology *qua* Yoder *is* itself a practice of the church. As such, when undertaken by the *didaskalos* (i.e., theology in its formal form), the practice of theology not only sets standards of excellence but also obedience; a central facet of formal theology then is corrective (or disciplinary) character. It should be no surprise therefore, that in many of Yoder's works—and this is particularly true for *Politics*—he proceeds in a formal manner offering the informal-catechetical-cultural theology of a particular (local) church opportunity for correction and repair.<sup>91</sup> According to Yoder:

When the later, more “theological” New Testament writings formulated the claim to preexistence and cosmic preeminence for the divine Son or Word (John 1:1-4; Col. 1:15ff.; Heb. 1:2ff.) the intent of this language was not to consecrate beside Jesus some other way of perceiving the external Word, through reason or history or nature, but rather to affirm the exclusivity of the revelation claim they were making for Jesus. The same must be said for later development of the classic ideas of the Trinity and the Incarnation. “Incarnation” does not originally mean (as it tends to today in some theologies of history, and in some kinds of Anglican theology) that God took all of human nature as it was, put his seal of approval on it, and thereby ratified nature as revelation. The point is just the opposite; that God broke through the borders of our standard definition of what is human, and gave a new definition in Jesus. “Trinity” did not originally mean, as it does for some later, that there are three kinds of revelation, the Father speaking through creation and the Spirit through experience, by which the words and example of the Son must be corrected; it meant rather that language must be found and

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<sup>91</sup> This distinction between formal/informal theological practices answers most succinctly the charge leveled against Hauerwas by Duncan Forrester, namely that Hauerwas' ecclesiology has the tendency to blur the distinction between church in the eschatological sense and church in the present tense. Hauerwas could respond to Forrester by appealing to this formal/informal dichotomy in Yoder, thus making a distinction between church theological practice in desperate need of *imperative* correction, and nagging *interrogation* by the Texan gadfly: “are we there yet?” (Forrester, D. B. “The Church and the Concentration Camp: Some Reflections on Moral Community” in Nation, M. T., and S. Wells. 2000. *Faithfulness and Fortitude: In Conversation with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*. pp. 189-210. Edinburgh: T&T Clark. p. 206)

definitions created so that Christians, who believe in only one God, can affirm that God is most adequately and bindingly known in Jesus.<sup>92</sup>

There are three important characteristics of Yoder's claim that should be mentioned: (1) creedal affirmations are not merely dogmatic assertions but illustrations of historical corrective action, implemented in order to discipline certain voices internal to the tradition; (2) the creeds demonstrate that in many cases theology invents new and creative ways of thinking in order to resolve conflicts within the tradition; and (3) the creeds illustrate the connection between dogmatics and ethics. For Yoder therefore, all theology, including creedal theology, can only be considered faithful if it ensures that no separation is placed between belief and discipleship. Informal/catechetical/cultural theology is a kind of Aristotelian practical reason insofar as it ends in an act. Yet all theology is act-oriented in that even if it is not engaged in the task of inventing it is at the very least correcting belief or practice. Just as there can be no disconnection between theoretical and practical reason, there can be no disconnection between belief and practice; beliefs inform practices just as practices shape belief. Thus Hauerwas and Sider are able to note that any attempt to see *Politics* as merely the recitation, or qualification of dogmatic belief, would be mistaken insofar as "belief is [un]intelligible apart from a faithfully lived life."<sup>93</sup>

Yoder goes on to note that the "canon within the canon" the *didaskalos* argues from is Jesus, and the purpose of this argument/teaching is to make more faithful the theological life and culture of the church that is already worshipping. Yoder explains that teaching from Jesus and Christology is teaching in the Spirit, and a much better alternative than the scholastic practice of deriving from Scripture a set of deontological propositions that must be contemporized every few years:

It is most lively and productive to think of one body of literature, the Bible, representing in any time and place the testimony of the narrative stretching from Abraham to the Apostles, which can be juxtaposed to any other age by its psalms being sung again, its letters being read again, its stories and

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<sup>92</sup> Yoder, J. H. 2005. *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company. p. 99

<sup>93</sup> Hauerwas and Sider, "Introduction," p. 17

parables being retold. Then in the juxtaposition of those stories with our stories there leaps the spark of the Spirit, illuminating parallels and contrasts, to give us the grace to see our age in God's light and God's truth in our words.<sup>94</sup>

In short, the corrective work of the *didaskalos* ought not to be seen as top-down dictation, but as the fulfillment of one role within Christian polity; indeed, Yoder prefers the language of ministry, noting that the systematization of theology is not valuable in its own right as, "consistency or completeness are only valuable" insofar as they make the life of the Body more healthy—more faithful to the overall narrative account of who Christ is.<sup>95</sup> The work that the creeds do was, and is, valuable precisely because they help constitute and sustain the tradition by continually correcting, ministering to, and disciplining the Body into more faithful forms.

Moreover, the Scriptural canon upon which theology is based is able to be corrective not just in terms of content but also in terms of method. In the words of Yoder:

The Bible itself can be a safeguard against theology as a system becoming idolatrous or an end unto itself, since the Bible itself is not what we would call theological in its style. It speaks about God faithfully in pastoral, ministerial, and argumentative contexts, not in systematic or historical or expository ways.<sup>96</sup>

While theology can still be done in systematic ways, such systematicity is not done in an effort to figure it all out but to "remind us to keep those operations...subordinate" to the reason that theology is being done in the first place.<sup>97</sup> Yoder's criticism of theologians, or types of theology (like Scholasticism) that attempt to lay foundations, write metanarratives, or create elaborate ontological systems, is *the* philosophical point of connect for Hauerwas between Yoder and MacIntyre. That Hauerwas adopts this position sets him on a very particular side of

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<sup>94</sup> Yoder, "Walk and Word," p. 79

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

the Christian tradition's argument over the character of theology. It will be worthwhile to quote Yoder at length:

We are accustomed to considering as “theological” those forms of expression that seek abstraction and generality. The Bible itself was not written that way. I do not argue that the reflexes of abstraction and generalization have no function at all, but we need to be more honest about their derivative quality and about the normalness of narrative or hortatory genres as good theology. The scandal of particularity and the vulnerability of faith as not being coercive are intrinsic to the gospel, and they are made more evident by the occasionalistic quality of the literature. When for the sake of apologetic or missionary comprehensibility or for the sake of internal coherence, we step back from that concreteness and express ourselves in more general terms, it must not be with the thought that this will make the faith more credible...

The real foundation, both formally and materially, for Christian witness is the historic objectivity of Jesus and the community he creates.<sup>98</sup>

Such a position is central to Hauerwas' pragmatism and yet it makes enemies of other non-foundationalist, or seemingly postliberal thinkers, such as Lindbeck and Milbank. For Yoder as well for Hauerwas, theological contemplation for its own sake—abstracted from the historical incarnation of Jesus in history—is not theology at all. Without the narrative context of the canon, reason is divorced from act across both time (historical extension of the narrative) and space (local social embodiment). One key feature of holding the practice of theology so close to its canonical origins (in Jesus) is that it keeps theology humble. By constantly, consistently, and habitually recounting the historical narrative of the church, the church is able to remember that historically a great deal of theology has been needed. That is to say, much correction and discipline have been required because of historical tragedies perpetrated (or allowed) by churches—a list of failures that include the Crusades and the failure of the churches in Germany to name the Holocaust for what it was. For Yoder, Christian historical humiliation ought to lead, at the very least, to a sense of humility among the informal theological culture of the church, as well as those formal practitioners of correction and ministry.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 80

In later chapters it will become obvious that the difference between the formal theology of Yoder and Hauerwas, when compared to that of other theologians like O'Donovan and Milbank, is the difference between modesty and triumph. For Yoder:

[s]uch modesty leads appropriately, in the face of the choice which God obviously made to become manifest through a multiplicity of literary forms that are mostly narrative in framework and doxological in tone, to skepticism about the adequacy of any system-building of our own. Only in that way can the Bible be served and not become the servant in a communication event.<sup>99</sup>

Milbank and O'Donovan, on the other hand are Christendom theologians who begin with an account of eschatological triumph. Indeed, discrepancies in the use of eschatological metaphor and the implications for the differing political theologies of Hauerwas and O'Donovan will be the subject of the next chapter; for now it is enough to note that Milbank's theology is peculiarly Anglican in that the legs of the tripod of theological method—Scripture, Sacred Tradition and Reason—work together in order to provide a single, grand, comprehensive story: a Christian metanarrative. The story of Christ (and the continuation of the story of Christ in the church) is a story that locates and subordinates all the other little narratives of the world beneath the Kingship of Christ. *Yoder differs from Milbank in that his description of the royalty of Christ centers not on narrative domination but on the redefinition of power by the Prince of Peace.* Yoder rightly remembers that the Bible is *ta biblia* (the little scrolls). They do not represent a grand all conquering narrative but a modest collection of occasionalist writings about those men and women who experienced the historical working of the God-who-is-above-all-other-gods. For Yoder, the little narratives of Scripture do not provide us with a comprehensive and systematic vision for conquering the philosophies of the world. Jesus is not a metanarrative that positions other lesser narratives, but is a hermeneutic for understanding the grain of the universe.

For Yoder, the chief external rival to the maintenance of peculiarly Christian, narrative-formed moral communities is Constantinianism. Yoder defines Constantinianism as the name given to the restructuring of the state around the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. But as we will see in the next chapter, as well as in chapter 4, there are clear and important differences between what Yoder and Hauerwas believe constitutes the Scriptural service to the world.

church, as well as the effect such a restructuring of the state has had historically (and continues to have) on the church itself. Reimer notes of Yoder's use of the term, that his definition "reflect[s] in good part the historical Radical Protestant position: the identification of the Fall of the church with the Constantinian synthesis of church and state."<sup>100</sup> It is important to note that Yoder's

concern is not with Constantine the man—how sincere his conversion was, what he believed, how he intended to use the church. Nor do we suggest that the year 311 represented an immediate reversal without preparation or unfolding. The great reversal certainly began earlier and took generations to work itself out... What this means, of course, is that the meaning of the word "Christian" has changed. Its moral, emotional, and even intellectual meanings were changed by the reversal of the sociological and political pressures.<sup>101</sup>

For Yoder, the restructuring manifested in Constantinianism is the practical result of an eschatological heresy, which has, at various times in history (and most memorably in the fourth century) simultaneously captured the imagination of both church and world.

That Constantinianism is a heresy, according to Yoder, means that the correction of that heresy within the life of the community is the work of the *didaskalos*. When placed against the backdrop of MacIntyre's analysis, Constantinianism names that shift away from the maintenance of the moral tradition and toward the subversion of community life by external forces, ending in the fragmentation of a consistent account of the moral life.

The theological nature of this heresy will be addressed at length in later chapters—there filtered through the lens of Hauerwas—but for now it is enough to recognize the *telos* of Constantinianism, is for Yoder, the dissolution of the faithful community;

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<sup>100</sup> Reimer, A. J. "Trinitarian Orthodoxy, Constantinianism, and Radical Protestant Theology" in Reimer, A. J. 2001. *Mennonites and Classical Theology: Dogmatic Foundations for Christian Ethics*. pp. 247-71. Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press. p. 259

<sup>101</sup> Yoder, J. H. 1984. *The Priestly Kingdom*. Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, p. 137

that is to say, it represents a replacement of the particular with the universal.<sup>102</sup> Putting it in a phrase, Yoder says,

[b]efore Constantine, one knew as a fact of everyday experience that there was a believing Christian community but one had to “take it on faith” that God was governing history. After Constantine, one had to believe without seeing that there was a community of believers, within the larger nominally Christian mass, but one knew for a fact that God was in control of history.<sup>103</sup>

Jacques Ellul describes the chief sociological characteristic of this shift as the “subversion of...Christianity into the very opposite of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.”<sup>104</sup> For Yoder, as for Ellul, it is the very success of the church that results in its abolishment.<sup>105</sup> When the masses of the Roman Empire were named Christian, Christianity as a sect was forever abolished. Rather than question the most faithful method by which to be “the leaven in the dough, the salt in the soup, [or] the sheep among wolves,”<sup>106</sup> the church was forced to ask: “How to incorporate them [the masses]? How to verify their seriousness?”<sup>107</sup> The result was the construction of a religion with a well-ordered hierarchical structure so that eventually “Christianity...became the most solid buttress of the Roman world.”<sup>108</sup> The church solidified the Roman Empire and provided “social cohesion” in the form of a “moral system.”<sup>109</sup> Ellul notes: “[c]onstantly in what became Christendom...an effort is made to achieve objective conduct without reference to the spiritual life.”<sup>110</sup> The result, according to Ellul, is that

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<sup>102</sup> Yoder, J. H. 1979. *The Stone Lectures*, at Princeton Theological Seminary. Cited in: Wright, N. G. 2000. *Disavowing Constantine: Mission, Church and the Social Order in the Theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jürgen Moltmann*. Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press. p. 63

<sup>103</sup> Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, p. 137

<sup>104</sup> Ellul, J. 1986. *The Subversion of Christianity*. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p. 38

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* p. 35

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41

Christianity became what one might call the structural ideology of this particular society. It ceased to be an explosive ferment calling everything into question in the name of the truth that is in Jesus Christ, in the name of the incarnation. It gave a new basis and vitality to what was in difficulties in the empire. It restored the taste for life and culture. The problem is not merely that of the transformation of Christianity into a state religion but the diffusion of this faith that has stopped being a faith and has become a collective ideology, a kind of manifestation of thought that collects all the commonplaces, the legends, the miracles, the “prophecies,” the apocalypses, the thaumaturgies, and formulates for the people a facile, moralistic, and constructive set of beliefs.<sup>111</sup>

Thus the distinction between church and world blurs, each accommodating the other: the mechanisms of the state (particularly violent and economic) which the church (by virtue of its narrative canon) ought to oppose are adopted and put to work defending and sustaining both church and state; power, coupled with conviction, leads the church to attempt the task of making history (and society) come out right. In short, for Yoder, the Constantinian shift represents “a fundamental flaw of structure and strategy”<sup>112</sup> in the very make-up of the church.

Finally, it is important to note the similarities between the role of the Enlightenment in MacIntyre’s description of the contemporary state of moral fragmentation and confusion—a dislocation of individuals from the contexts that they inhabit—and the similar confusion resulting from the dilution of particularity in Constantinianism. A dilution that occurs when a Christian, embedded within his/her social and narrative context, is simultaneously embedded in a competing socially embodied narrative context. The resulting actions are unintelligible not only because the individual’s activities are informed by competing accounts of the good, competing lists of the virtues, etc., but also because the hermeneutical criteria by which a person’s actions can be judged are similarly convoluted and competing. As Yoder puts it, “‘Syncretism’ is probably not the best label for the resulting mixture, since there is

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. pp. 39-40

<sup>112</sup> Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, p. 107

not so much genuine fusion and reconception as there is an overlaying of two cultures.”<sup>113</sup>

### **Hauerwas’ Synthesis**

Up until now in this section I have gone about the task of expounding, first the philosophical critique of liberalism in MacIntyre (which names liberalism as the fragmentation of individuals from their social and narrative contexts), and second, Yoder’s description of a Christologically centered moral community (called church) capable of offering a consistent social embodiment of the narrative which stories that community. In the remainder of this chapter I will offer a description of the specific shape that a synthesis of the two takes in the early writings of Hauerwas—a description of postliberal politics that will be demonstrated fully in the following chapter.

Sam Wells has described this Hauerwasian synthesis, albeit problematically, noting that:

Yoder’s work encourages Hauerwas to maintain that the distinctive Christian ethic rests on its distinctive community and corresponding practices. [And] In a curious way the philosopher MacIntyre has created the space for Yoder, the unashamed theologian, to be taken seriously on sociological grounds.<sup>114</sup>

According to Wells, Yoder is read through the philosophical lens provided by MacIntyre in order to provide a systematic meta-ethical framework or ontology, upon which the particular analysis of Christian moral community in Yoder is validated. This is problematic precisely because it is not entirely clear that Hauerwas or Yoder would want, or should want, to be taken seriously by a discipline grounded on something other than Christological truth claims. (This aspect of Hauerwas’ self-proclaimed sectarianism will become clear when read against his arguments in *After Christendom* and *Against the Nations*). In the Hauerwasian synthesis, a clearer

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<sup>113</sup> Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, p. 137

<sup>114</sup> Wells, S. 1998. *Transforming Fate into Destiny: The Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*. Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press.

benefit occurs via the Yoderian particularization of MacIntyre's thought. Yoder's description of a specific literature, a particular community, and a common antithesis, fleshes out the Aristotelian philosophical framework provided by MacIntyre. Thus in Hauerwas, MacIntyre's meta-ethical program becomes particularized so that, upon acknowledging the need for thickly descriptive moral language, a person/community is able to actually define words like *good*, *right*, and *justice* in light of the stories that tell him/her/them "who they are supposed to be" and "what their role is."

Yet it is not clear *why* Hauerwas needs MacIntyre's philosophical account at all. MacIntyre's meta-ethical critique of modern liberalism ends with an exhortation to particular forms of moral community whose individual members cannot imagine the possibility of meta-ethical critique because they are incapable of stepping outside the system of which they are a part. As we saw earlier, Yoder is able to make critiques of external competitive narratives (Constantinianism) but always from a place already inside his particular social context. The *only* reason to adopt MacIntyre is if a systematic (meta-ethical) critique of external narratives (or at the very least an internal apologetic) is desired. Yet Hauerwas has judged the work of MacIntyre as "substantial and frequently brilliant" noting that "as theologians...we have a duty to take up the conversation about ethics these philosophers have begun."<sup>115</sup> The unique aspect of Hauerwas' synthesis then is that *philosophical method* is adopted from MacIntyre and paired with the *theological particularity* of Yoder. Hauerwas agrees with John Milbank's critique of MacIntyre, namely that "the *arguments* put forward against nihilism and a philosophy of difference are made in the name of virtue, dialectics and the *notion* of tradition in general."<sup>116</sup> For MacIntyre, dialectics represents a "general mode of procedure"<sup>117</sup> that might be used to develop a viable Aristotelian, Augustinian, Thomist, or Humean account of the virtues.<sup>118</sup> As Milbank puts it, in MacIntyre's analysis all of these are "'traditioned' discourses, over against

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<sup>115</sup> Hauerwas, S. and C. Pinches. 1997. *Christians Among The Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*. Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. p. ix.

<sup>116</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 328

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* p. 330

<sup>118</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 401

foundationalist versions of liberalism on the one hand, and nihilism on the other.”<sup>119</sup> Yet for Hauerwas any “move toward universality” that gives pride of place to dialectic *qua* an account of the virtues must necessarily be a mistake.<sup>120</sup> What is required then, is not an account of virtue, as such, but an account of Christian virtue (*à la* Yoder), which is central to maintaining the moral integrity of the church.

MacIntyre’s affirmation of dialectic as a universal principle, external to any particular narrative, outlines one chief attribute of his philosophical enquiry into the nature of tradition that has yet to be discussed, namely the relation between incommensurability and rationality as it relates to dialogue between rival traditions. In a paper on the differences between MacIntyre’s and Imre Lakatos’ enquiries into theory-change, Robert Miner has described the partial incommensurability of MacIntyre’s thesis, arguing that MacIntyre affirms the incommensurability of meaning insofar as there is “no shared criteria that enable[s] rational adjudication.”<sup>121</sup> Yet MacIntyre *does* posit “a higher-level language in which a common subject-matter” makes certain terms and goals intelligible between disparate communities in which the criteria for determining the *worth* of those (shared) goals is “too weak” (or absent) “to provide ground for rational choice between them.”<sup>122</sup> In MacIntyre, that higher level language is manifested most clearly in his description of dialectic, but also in terms such as *tradition*, *virtue*, *narrative*, etc. For MacIntyre these are conceptual sociological (univocal) structures prior to the social communities (and the practices of those communities) themselves. Partial incommensurability is mandatory for MacIntyre because he wants to *both* affirm contextual particular goals while at the same time provide a meta-ethical critique of modernity based upon its failure to meet particular criteria necessary for establishing goals in the first place. Indeed, many of the differences between post-liberal (in the chronological sense) theologians

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<sup>119</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 330

<sup>120</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians Among The Virtues*, pp. 61-2

<sup>121</sup> Miner, R. “Lakatos and MacIntyre on Incommensurability and the Rationality of Theory-change.” Available, <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Scie/ScieMine.htm>. Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

can be attributed to the varying degrees to which they accept (or deny) the incommensurability of Christianity in relationship to the world. Enlightenment theologians and philosophers, and those working within that vein, deny incommensurability altogether while others (among whom I will argue Hauerwas numbers, at least in most of his work) adopt it as *the* chief characteristic of Christian particularity—most fall, like MacIntyre (and as we will see, O’Donovan) somewhere in the middle of Frei’s scale. Hauerwas’ brand of incommensurability theory will be demonstrated fully in the next chapter via his critique of O’Donovan, and his alternative description of Christian particularity. What will be important to understand as this thesis proceeds is that postliberalism, for Hauerwas, is more than anti-liberalism, it is the complete incommensurability of language between the church and the world. Yoder’s contribution to Hauerwas’ description of incommensurability theory will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

It should be noted however that “incommensurability” as I am using it, is to be distinguished from both MacIntyre’s account of “perspectivism” and “relativism.” MacIntyre notes:

The first [conclusion] is that at any fundamental level no rational debate between, rather than within, traditions can occur. The adherents of conflicting tendencies within a tradition may still share enough in the way of fundamental belief to conduct such debate, but the protagonists of rival traditions will be precluded at any fundamental level, not only from justifying their views to the members of any rival tradition, but even from learning how to modify their own tradition in any radical way.

Yet if this is so, a second conclusion seems to be in order. Given that each tradition will frame its own standpoint in terms of its own idiosyncratic concepts, and given that no fundamental correction of its conceptual scheme from such external standpoint is possible,...a social universe composed exclusively of rival traditions, so it may seem, will be one in which there are a number of contending, incompatible, but only partially and inadequately communicating, overall views of that universe, each tradition within which is unable to justify its claims over against those of its rivals except to those who already accept them.<sup>123</sup>

Relativism on the one hand, responds to the Enlightenment project’s failure to find a universal truth by asserting that no such truth is possible, while perspectivism, on the

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<sup>123</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?*, p. 348

other, understands truth to be available, but only as mediated through the particular worldviews of individual communities. Such accounts of relationship between truth, community, and narrative are found predominately in French postmodern philosophy, demonstrated originally in Lyotard's account of the *petit récits* (little stories), whose truths, characters, contexts, and languages, now freed from the organizing logic of the Enlightenment, bump into one another arbitrarily, locally, and accidentally. Milbank's response to this has been to construct an organizing, premodern Christian logic to replace that of modernity—the evangelical draw of which is its beautiful aesthetic. Hauerwas on the other hand, takes a less triumphant position, speaking of incommensurability in terms of language rather than truth. For Hauerwas, Jesus Christ is truth, but because Christian language is always first the responsive confession, “Christ is Lord,” there can be no Christian understanding of languages that do not proceed from that confession. What Christians are left with, in Hauerwas' account, is not an agreement to disagree on matters of belief, “[i]nstead we are left with the very character of our lives, which...gives us a basis for thinking that Christians might be creatures with purposes we ourselves did not create.”<sup>124</sup> While such references to “the very character of our lives” may sound like Milbank's reliance on aesthetic to understand the attractive character of tradition-change, i.e., witness/conversion, Hauerwas prefers to ground witness in the practical reality of the church: “that our lives are at once...captured by sin and yet sustained by a hope.”<sup>125</sup> The kind of witnesses we need, according to Hauerwas, can be best understood by examining lives lived like those of the Brethren German “Dunkards” and their witness to the Indians in Morrison's Cove, Pennsylvania, during the French and Indian Wars. Drawing on Rufus Bowman's reading of U. J. Jones's *History of the Early Settlement of the Juniata Valley*, Hauerwas notes with Bowman the unintelligibility, indeed irrationality, of the Brethren response to the threat of imminent extinction. Jones describes one raid in particular noting that:

On their first expedition they would have few scalps to grace their belts, had the Dunkards taken the advice of more sagacious people, and fled, too; this,

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<sup>124</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 157

<sup>125</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 157

however, they would not do. They would follow but half of Cromwell's advice; they were willing to put their "trust in God," but they would not "keep their powder dry." In short, it was a compound they did not use at all.

The savages swept down through the Cove with all the ferocity with which a pack of wolves would descend from the mountain upon a flock of sheep. Some few of the Dunkards, who evidently had a latent spark of love of life, hid themselves away; but by far the most of them stood by and witnessed the butchery of wives and children, merely saying, "Gottes wille sei getan." How many Dunkard scalps they carried to Detroit cannot now be, and probably never has been clearly ascertained—not less than thirty, according to the best authority. In addition to this they loaded themselves with plunder, stole a number of horses, and under cover of night the triumphant warriors marched bravely away.<sup>126</sup>

Bowman and Hauerwas point out that Jones ends his account with a brief aside, "the significance of which Jones completely missed."<sup>127</sup> During the massacre, the Brethren cries of "*Gottes wille sei getan*" were so often repeated that the Indians believed that "strange tribe" to have been called "Gotswiltahns." The Brethren must have left quite an impression on the Indians for, later, when some of those involved in the raid were captured they asked whether the "Gotswiltahns" still inhabited that region. For Hauerwas, the witness performed by the Brethren *is* different from that imagined by Milbank. There *is* true beauty in such examples and yet it is a beauty only knowable through the person of Christ. Perhaps the greatest difficulty for Hauerwas in accepting Milbank's call to tell a better story than that offered by the world, is that such a position assumes that beauty is a category, an instance of a higher-level language, prior to the revelation of Christ.<sup>128</sup>

Finally it should be noted that, while Yoder's Christological foundation is central to Hauerwas' own account, Yoder's broader philosophical framework (an ontology of Fall and Redemption) is the prolegomena to Hauerwas' description of the timeful location of the church. For Hauerwas, Constantinianism (and powers language as we

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<sup>126</sup> Bowman, R. D. 1944. *Church of the Brethren and War, 1708-1941*. Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing House. pp 74-5

<sup>127</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 196

<sup>128</sup> Milbank could avoid this perception by always distinguishing between human conceptions of beauty and the God who *is* beauty. The tool for doing this is worked out in Chapter 6 in Milbank's own description of pleonastic analogy.

will see in chapter 4), is a kind of missing link in the historical evolution of Christian tradition; it is the analogical precursor to the battle taking place in modern circles (both academic and lay) between the liberals and the postliberals. What is extremely important to note here, is that for Hauerwas, Yoder's description of the early church's accommodation to Rome (a loss of particularity) finds its *apotheosis* in MacIntyre's description of liberalism's attempt to destroy particularity altogether. That is to say, the *telos* of both Constantinianism and liberalism is generalization (to disrupt particularity), while the chief virtue is accommodation—this is historically demonstrated first by accommodation to a violent state and second by accommodation to a violent philosophy. For Hauerwas, liberalism *is* the new Constantinianism. Indeed, the much noted tendency in Yoder's writings, that is, to use Constantinianism as a catch-all phrase or “shibboleth for all that is bad”<sup>129</sup> has been appropriated by Hauerwas as well. The only major difference is in the naming: in Hauerwas, Constantinianism (or neo-Constantinianism) too falls under a still broader umbrella, (pre)liberalism.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, this will be shown to be due to his implicit reliance on complete incommensurability—the church cannot help but be unintelligible to the world in its language, practices, goals, and in its criteria for defining each.

In the next chapter I will critically examine the details of Hauerwas' description of Christian postliberal politics, wherein it will become clear that the chief characteristic of liberal theology, on Hauerwas' account, is the tendency to accommodate, justify, and legitimate the state—and this legitimating is precisely what he is *post*, or perhaps more properly *anti*. This definition of a Hauerwasian political theology will be demonstrated through the polemical dialogue between Hauerwas and O'Donovan in terms of their contrasting use of eschatological metaphors concerning the reign of Christ.

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<sup>129</sup> Reimer, “Mennonites, Christ, and Culture: The Yoder Legacy.” *Conrad Grebel Review*. 16. (Spring 1998). Pp. 5-14. p. 10

<sup>130</sup> In this way liberalism, like postliberalism, does not necessarily refer to a chronological period of thought, but to a mode of thought and action antithetical to Christianity.

## Chapter 2

### **Between Triumph and Reticence “Politics” and Eschatological Metaphor in Hauerwas and O’Donovan**

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize Hauerwas’ occasional rhetorical expositions of the shape of postliberal politics, and to juxtapose this summary alongside the brilliant and exhaustive study of political theology undertaken by Oliver O’Donovan. The reasons for such a pairing may not be obvious at first. One might wonder: why not, in a study of Hauerwas, focus only on developing an understanding of Hauerwas’ theology? Why invite O’Donovan to the discussion at all, when by definition the kind of work undertaken in this study should be (if done well) the exposition of a narrow and creative expertise? The answers are numerous. First, while there *are* many places in Hauerwas’ work that provide insight into what a loving postliberal politics involves, his work on the whole is amethodological, occasional, and unsystematic (the frustrating importance of which he learned from Yoder). Second, Hauerwas’ writings are almost always polemical. (There is an argument to be made that he also learned polemic from Yoder). For Hauerwas the task of the theologian is part *didaskalos* (corrector and disciplinarian) and part *myops* (gadfly). Anyone who has read three of Hauerwas’ essays in a row should be able to attest to the fact that he works out his own commitment to the peace of Christ by posing irritating questions and making novel distinctions. It is as if, for Hauerwas, a commitment to speaking the truth, when coupled with a rejection of violence and coercion, can only work itself out through prolific dissent. Third, O’Donovan and Hauerwas have engaged each other directly, and while there are striking similarities (particularly insofar as each rejects the Enlightenment project as described by MacIntyre), there are also crucial differences. The differences may be due in part to the fact that Hauerwas writes (for the majority of his career) from within the tradition of American Protestantism (although more recently has formally become an Episcopalian), while O’Donovan is English and an Anglican (which historically was more of a rejection than a protest). Whatever the cause, Hauerwas’ work rejects the Constantinian impulse, whereas O’Donovan celebrates it (the ecclesial desire if not the historical form). Finally, O’Donovan’s treatment of political theology is

extensive and plumbs not only the Christian tradition, but also Christian Scripture. This is useful because Hauerwas often draws upon the tradition but rarely upon the Bible (a trick he learned from the Yale school in opposition to Yoder). It will be useful to have O'Donovan's masterwork as a backdrop against which to judge Hauerwas' own project. The key will be in distinguishing between O'Donovan's exposition of Scripture and tradition and O'Donovan's own reasoning as to what both mean for the Christian ecclesiological imagination. It will also be useful, in the final chapter, to analyze the concept of gathering (and the church as God's politics-of-love) as a constructive (as opposed to polemical) Hauerwasian response to O'Donovan's political theology.

In this chapter I begin with a brief discussion of the Hauerwasian claim that the church is politics, and then moves on to provide a careful reading of Oliver O'Donovan's systematic and comprehensive treatise on political theology: *Desire of the Nations*. I then rehearse Hauerwas' specific response to O'Donovan and use that response as a means of framing many of his other more scattered insights and examples, in order to show where differences in reasoning between the two arise. In short, I put flesh to the Yoder/MacIntyre synthesis discussed in the last chapter by analyzing the polemic between Hauerwas and O'Donovan as a means for coming to grips with what Hauerwas means (and does not mean) by the phrase postliberal.

### **The Church is Politics**

In 1998, Sam Wells published *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, a critical evaluation of Hauerwas' work from 1969 to 1997. Wells' book charts the theological development of Hauerwas' move from virtue ethics (questions regarding moral formation and the character of the self) to narrative (story-based) theology, and the practices of, and challenges to, the Christian community that attempts to perform that story in the midst of the world. Moreover, Wells goes beyond Hauerwas' own account by providing interesting responses to a variety of criticisms of Hauerwas' work. Whether or not Wells successfully responds to charges of sectarianism, fideism, and a neglect of creation theology will be addressed at greater length in what

follows. For now it will be useful to look at Wells' description of Hauerwas' account of "politics" at this point in his career.

Wells argues that the best summary of the ethical foundations of Hauerwas' work can be found in Hauerwas' claim that

[t]he first social ethical task of the church is to be the church – the servant community. Such a claim may sound self-serving until we remember that what makes the church the church is its faithful manifestation of the peaceable kingdom in the world. As such the church does not have a social ethic: the church is a social ethic.<sup>131</sup>

According to Wells, this may sound like a typically Hauerwasian play on words, but it would be dangerous to dismiss it as such. What is really going on, in Wells' estimation, is a deft theological move that only becomes intelligible if one takes into account the three-fold political nature of the polity called church—a framework that structures the whole of Hauerwas' project. Wells explains that for Hauerwas, there are three activities that the church dubs "political": (1) politics inside the church, (2) politics between the church and the world, and (3) politics between various parties within the world.<sup>132</sup> Before discussing the merit of this three-fold distinction, and each in greater depth, it should be said that Wells is right to move from the language of "social ethic" to the language of "politics." Hauerwas leaves behind the language of social ethics in his middle and later writings primarily because "the phrase reproduces the liberal distinction between personal and social."<sup>133</sup> If every use of "social ethic(s)" is replaced with "politic(s)" then the church does not have a politics, it is a politics. It is from this reconstruction that Wells' three-fold distinction arises.

The problem however, is that the framework that Wells imposes on Hauerwas in order to make sense of the quote describes three different *types* of politics: church-church, church-world, and world-world. As we will see, O'Donovan would be more

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<sup>131</sup> Quoted from Hauerwas, S. 1983. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press in Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, p. 99.

<sup>132</sup> Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, p. 98-99

<sup>133</sup> Hauerwas, S. telephone conversation, 8:00 AM. March 05, 2007.

sympathetic to this kind of framework than Hauerwas. For O'Donovan, politics is a (ontologically) prior category to church, while for Hauerwas (who claims to be following Augustine and Yoder at this point) politics *is* (ontologically and numerically identical to) the church. Here it is important to note that for Hauerwas, it is not that politics between different authorities (or powers) in the world is uninteresting,<sup>134</sup> it is that such activities are not really politics at all. As Hauerwas puts it, “[w]hat the world calls politics is a simulacra of the church, if we understand that the church is the only true politic, a politic founded in worship, then the church cannot help but stand in judgment on what the world calls politics.”<sup>135</sup> Wells touches on this when he notes that if Hauerwas

[d]oes address such issues – for instance in some of his essays on medical ethics –he often does so in order to show the poverty of the ‘politics of the world, particularly when it is based on liberal-democratic principles...this appears to some like a sectarian concentration on the Christian community and downgrading of the world in general.’<sup>136</sup>

Indeed, if the first task of the church is to be the church, i.e., to be politics, then the church, as the only true politic, must stand in judgment not only on the activities of worldly politics, but on the political terminology of the world as well. O'Donovan, as we will see, argues that the church must embrace its political nature because Christ is reigning over all the nations of the earth, and so must begin to think carefully about what it means to be part of God's kingdom. Yet if Hauerwas is correct, then the church's definition of politics cannot help but be rooted in more than a Christological affirmation of the triumphant reign of God. Indeed, every political notion, including “triumph” and “reign” must be reevaluated by the transformed description of politics found in the church, and the God that the church worships. In summary, it is important to note that perhaps the most fundamental difference between O'Donovan's description of political theology and the theological politics of Hauerwas comes from whose definition of politics is being used. Is politics something that the world and church must participate in (the church being the people

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<sup>134</sup> Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, p. 99

<sup>135</sup> Hauerwas, telephone conversation, *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, 99

who point to the correct authority), or is the church the true form of politics given to a world that does not know how to relate to itself?

The debate between Hauerwas and O'Donovan that follows will begin by addressing how each of them reads Scripture, with emphasis given to the eschatological metaphors adopted by one or the other. Furthermore, this chapter works to illuminate the ways in which the reticence of Hauerwas' approach stands in stark contrast to O'Donovan's description of the triumphant reign of God. As alluded to above, it should become clear that Hauerwas spends his time redefining the language of Christian discourse (and the possibilities of knowledge) by identifying Lordship with Martyrdom, instead of Caesar-like sovereignty. On the other hand, O'Donovan attempts to recover the notion of authority for political theology, and provides an account of obligation, responsibility, and judgment, when faced with competing, or shared, authorities. The first section outlines O'Donovan's description of Christian politics in full. The second focuses on Hauerwas' reading of O'Donovan as well as the difference in the definitions provided by each when faced with similar Christian vocabulary – definitions based in alternate structures of eschatological knowing.

### **The Word Made Strange**

In 1994, Arne Rasmusson published his Ph.D. through Lund University Press entitled *The Church as Polis*.<sup>137</sup> In his book, Rasmusson describes political theology as:

the attempt to positively meet the challenges of modernity, characterized by industrialization, urbanization, science, technology, market economy and a growing state and its various ideological backbones in liberalism and socialism, with their common beliefs in progress and in politics as a means for consciously forming the future".<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Rasmusson, A. 1994. *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas*. Lund: Lund University Press.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11

Rasmusson defines political theology as just another mode of apologetics taken up by the church in order to make her faith more comfortable to the modern world. Dissatisfied with both modernity and political theology, Rasmusson seeks an alternative in the writings of Stanley Hauerwas. According to Rasmusson, the Hauerwasian difference is in the prioritization of the theological over the political. Instead of a political theology, the church should have a theological politics. For Rasmusson, Hauerwas' theological politics provides a description of the church as a counter *polis*, or *civitas*, which is constituted "by the new reality of the kingdom of God as seen in the life and destiny of Jesus. [Hauerwas]...therefore understands the politics of the world, and relates to it, in light of this new politics."<sup>139</sup> Thus, a theological politics does not allow itself to be situated and interpreted within a pre-theological story about the political struggle for emancipation, rather it makes the church's story a counter story, situating and interpreting the politics (and political arrangements) of the world. In short, the move from political theology to theological politics requires the redefinition and relocation of politics by (and in) the church. Rasmusson's argument that Hauerwas' writings constitute a shift from political theology to theological politics is a reading explicitly approved (in 1995) by Hauerwas in a collection of essays titled, *In Good Company* (a collection which identified itself as a direct response to Rasmusson).<sup>140</sup>

In 1996, one year after Hauerwas released *In Good Company*, Oliver O'Donovan published his stunning defense of political theology entitled, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the roots of political theology*.<sup>141</sup> O'Donovan begins his

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid. pp. 187-88

<sup>140</sup> Hauerwas, S. 1995. *In Good Company: The Church as Polis*. Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

<sup>141</sup> It should be noted that O'Donovan places *Desire of the Nations* (O'Donovan, O. 1999. *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) in direct conversation, by purview of his title, with Hauerwas' *Against the Nations* (Hauerwas, S. 1992. *Against the Nations: War and Survival in a Liberal Society*. Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press) and Yoder's *For the Nations* (Yoder, J. H. 1997. *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing). Although Yoder is usually seen to be on Hauerwas' side, or perhaps it is the other way around, upon reading chapter 4 it will be clear that O'Donovan's book is almost an apologetic for Yoder's own political theory, although it is doubtful that he would ever describe it as such.

argument with a definition of political theology (to avoid its caricature). According to O'Donovan, political theology does *not* suppose a “literal synonymy” between soteriological political language and the secular use of the same political terms. Rather,

[i]t postulates an analogy – not a rhetorical metaphor only, or a poetic image, but an analogy grounded in reality – between the acts of God and human acts, both of them taking place within the one public history which is the theatre of God's saving purposes and mankind's social undertakings.<sup>142</sup>

In the prologue to *Desire*, O'Donovan begins by noting the plethora of political theology present within the second stanza of the *Te Deum*, pointing out that it is not the case that words like “king,” “judge,” “glory,” and “overcome” reduce the “semiotic range of speech about God” to the vernacular of political commentary, but that political theology pushes “back the horizon of commonplace politics and open[s] it up to the activity of God.”<sup>143</sup> According to O'Donovan, political theology must look eschatologically to the “horizon of God's redemptive purposes,” for it is only in sight of the exalted Christ that both politics and theology can find their *telos*. In order to understand the totality of God's saving work, a conceptual system is needed that takes into account God's redemption of human sociality and the structures that govern it:

Theology needs more than scattered political images; it needs a full political conceptuality. The two are concerned with the one history that finds its goal in Christ, ‘the desire of the nations’.<sup>144</sup>

The criticism of occasional and non-systematic theologies of the political is clear. At this point the criticism is not of Hauerwas *per se*, but more generally of those unwilling to think about the public consequences of Christ's redemptive act. While O'Donovan acknowledges the truth of individual salvation, he is concerned that the imagery of “kingdom” and “reign” has been lost. Salvation has been sequestered and privatized; it has lost its transformative and conceptual power for shaping the public

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<sup>142</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 2

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

life – life together. O’Donovan’s enterprise rejects modernity insofar as it is the antithesis of political theology. For O’Donovan, the task of political theology is the redefinition of the *possibilities* of politics. Where modernity goes wrong is in its attempt to limit those possibilities by confining politics to the sphere of private human reason, making theology and politics utterly separate (an attempt that O’Donovan describes as “forced and unnatural”).<sup>145</sup>

While O’Donovan and Hauerwas both follow MacIntyre in rejecting modernity, they disagree about what “politics” and “possibility” mean. The Hauerwasian question posed to O’Donovan’s project is: if the horizon of commonplace politics is forced to find a new *telos* in the eschatological activity of Christ, what provision is O’Donovan willing to make to ensure that political language (like “king,” “reign,” etc.) is defined in distinctively Christian terms? That is to say, in what way does the notion of the “Kingdom of God” imitate or differ from the meaning and uses of “kingdom” as found in commonplace political commentary? As we will see, for Hauerwas the Christ-event exposes the impossibility of politics (life in common) in the world; where politics becomes possible (where salvation is located) is in the church – a new sociality that replicates, participates in, and is sustained by the God-who-is-love. For O’Donovan, God’s redemption opens up new possibilities for every human relationship, every sociality, and every politics. The difference between them is the difference between political theology and theological politics. These designations do not represent merely a preference in phrasing, rather they underscore fundamental difference in the way each understands the character of God and His activity in the world. Finally it should be noted that the account of O’Donovan’s failures and successes that follows is crucial for the project to which the second half of this thesis is committed: the construction of a (Hauerwasian) gathered politics-of-love – a politics whose own life together is a participation in the life of the Trinity *qua* peaceable difference and being-in-communion.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 3

## O'Donovan: Exaltation, Authorization, Christendom

In the first chapter of *Desire*, O'Donovan sets as his central thesis the recovery of the concept of authority for a theological account of the reign of God.<sup>146</sup> According to O'Donovan, if the reign of God is to be the starting point for political theology, then political history, generally, must be subsumed within the history of God's reign particularly.<sup>147</sup> That is to say, there is no history of politics separate from the story of God's reign, i.e., the history of salvation. Therefore O'Donovan's hermeneutic for reading Scripture, i.e., for reading salvation history, begins with the recovery of

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<sup>146</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 19. O'Donovan notes that this is more particularly an account of "kingly" authority. Thus, both Yoder and O'Donovan start in the same place, with the Lordship of Christ and his reign.

<sup>147</sup> This is O'Donovan's claim for the last third of the first chapter as he discusses the inclusion of all political history in redemption history by looking closely at what it means for Israel's political categories to become normative for the whole world. This claim runs parallel to that made by Cullman, as will be discussed in chapter 4, namely, that the redemption of the nations is reliant upon the reintegration of the general timeline and the redemptive timeline. For O'Donovan, the general timeline can only begin to cross back into the redemptive timeline if it begins to see itself as a derivative of Israel. That is to say, for O'Donovan the separation between Fallen and redeemed politics begins in the Fall, and it is through God's working in history that redeemed politics begin to come to the fore in Israel. Moreover, after Christ it can only be the case that the church begins to see "Israel's political categories" as "the paradigm for all others. Jesus belonged to Israel; and Israel was, for him as for his followers, the theatre of God's self-disclosure as the ruler of nations." (23). Therefore, for O'Donovan, the Lordship, or exaltation of Jesus, can only be interpreted in light of Israel's own political categories, namely that, "the hope of a new national life for Israel was the hope of a restored world order." (Ibid). The history of redemption, begun in Israel and realized in Jesus, is mirrored, albeit darkly, in the fragmentary, clouded, political categories that though annexed by the world and the general timeline, are nevertheless critical if theology is to begin to recover an authentic account of itself as political. For O'Donovan, this task cannot help but include evangelism, which is of course reminding the world of the theological underpinning of their political terminology. Helping the nations to honestly reflect on the historical origins of their own political terms can point nowhere but to Israel and Jesus. Thus the evangelical work of *Desire* begins by exhorting the nations to be better than they are and to "make [the] politics [of the nations] more honest without presuming to make... [their politics] more divine." (3).

The difficulty with all of this is that it is founded on O'Donovan's claim that: "Theology needs more than scattered political images; it needs a full political conceptuality. And politics, for its part, needs a theological conceptuality." (2). Here O'Donovan reinforces the modern separation between politics and theology (whilst arguing against that separation), on the grounds that theology and politics really do need one another. The problem is not that they need one another, yet have been separated; it is that theology and politics are seen to be referring to two different activities, or perhaps a general activity and a more particular use of that activity. Rather as will be argued throughout this thesis, theology doesn't need politics because theology *is* politics. Any politics that does not have the shape of theological orthodoxy, or for that matter Jesus Christ, *is still theological* insofar as it merely adopts a different theology (possibly secular). This is the point that Milbank makes against philosophy and sociology in *Theology as Social Theory*. Conversely, any theology which is not political, falls, as O'Donovan notes, into the modern Kantian trap (2). Yoder's account of the theological task as *didaskalos* is particularly helpful in establishing every theological articulation as a political act, either as evangelism (to the nations) or discipline (within the church).

political concepts within Scripture itself. According to O'Donovan, the only way to construct the full political conceptuality needed by theology is via the authorization of Scripture. Thus political theological concepts cannot be arbitrary, but must reflect the revealed character of the kingdom of God.

The exegesis of these concepts begins in the analogy between God's rule and human rule—the reign of God. This analogy, according to biblical scholar Gerhard Lohfink, is implicit in the very logic of creation, describing the salvation of the whole world which begins with a particular people:

[H]ow can anyone change the world and society at its roots without taking away freedom? It can only be that God begins in a small way, at one single place in the world. There must be a place, visible, tangible, where the salvation of the world can begin: that is, where the world becomes what it is supposed to be according to God's plan. Beginning at that place, the new thing can spread abroad, but not through persuasion, not through indoctrination, not through violence. Everyone must have the opportunity to come and see. All must have the chance to behold and test this new thing. Then, if they want to, they can allow themselves to be drawn into the history of salvation that God is creating... What drives them to the new thing cannot be force, not even moral pressure, but only the fascination of a world that is changed.<sup>148</sup>

It is therefore from the analogy between God and the world that O'Donovan begins to draw the political concepts of the kingdom of God; a kingdom embodied in Israel and fulfilled in Jesus.<sup>149</sup> So it is that O'Donovan's argument deftly moves between reading Scripture as revealed history “and the formation of political concepts aimed at the distinct theological task of providing an account of God's will and way.”<sup>150</sup> The *method* for O'Donovan's project is the formation of a “unifying conceptual

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<sup>148</sup> Lohfink, G. 1999. *Does God Need the Church? Toward a Theology of the People of God*. Trans. Maloney, L. M. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, p. 27

<sup>149</sup> As noted by Colin Greene (Greene, C. J. D. “Revisiting Christendom: A Crisis of Legitimization” in Bartholomew, C., Chaplin, J., Song, R., and A. Wolters (eds.). 2002. *A Royal Priesthood? The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*. pp 314-40. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.): “O'Donovan's riposte to those who complain that his story of Israel is a hermeneutical construct that we should not necessarily be too enamored with would be, ‘what story would you put in its place?’ For surely a nineteenth-century history of religions story or an ideologically contaminated modern story is equally a hermeneutical construct” (319).

<sup>150</sup> Schweiker, W. “Freedom and Authority in Political Theology: A Response to Oliver O'Donovan's *The Desire of the Nations*.” *Scottish Journal of Theology*. 54.1. (2001) pp. 110-26. p. 117.

structure” which connects political themes with both eschatology and salvation history.<sup>151</sup> O’Donovan’s search for “true political concepts” begins with the notion of authority and extends to the manifestation of that authority in the history of God’s reign.

According to O’Donovan, the concept of authority has “wasted away into unintelligibility, and with it the idea of political activity as kingly.”<sup>152</sup> And it is this notion (that the reign of God actually describes God’s ruling over the lives of men) that O’Donovan notes is so appalling to Western sensibilities. This is precisely why William Schweiker, in “Freedom and Authority in Political Theology,” begins his exploration of O’Donovan’s work with the words: “it is hard to imagine in the light of biblical claims about God’s reign that any legitimate authority could be tyrannous. God is free and God rules, but the divine Lordship can only be understood in non-tyrannous ways.”<sup>153</sup> Schweiker’s disagreement with O’Donovan revolves around O’Donovan’s lack of attention to the “experience” of the church and its members. For Schweiker, it is dangerous to: (1) make monolithic statements about the nature of secular politics, and (2) make dogmatic assertions about orthodox Christian belief in such a pluralistic age. Interestingly, Schweiker ascribes this conservatism in O’Donovan as being reducible to his lack of concern for “individual” experience. Yet as O’Donovan notes in his response to Schweiker entitled “Deliberation, History and Reading,” the objections Schweiker raises are rooted in the very modernity that seeks to separate theology from politics. According to O’Donovan:

[E]xperience cannot be our starting-point, since experience is what is *problematized* in a deliberative enquiry. We do not know *how to experience* events. That is to say, we have to learn to conceive what we live through. Experience is mediated through conception; but in late-modern political culture the conceptions are either lacking or in disarray. So political experience needs to be puzzled over...in conceiving of theology as deliberative reasoning, encountering experience where philosophy has always

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<sup>151</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 22

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19

<sup>153</sup> Schweiker, “Freedom and Authority,” p. 111

encountered it, not as ‘source’ but as *quaestio*, a puzzle that insists on being addressed.<sup>154</sup>

The danger with encountering experience “where philosophy has,” is the danger of attempting to step “outside” or “behind” one’s experience. This is also the danger of modernity. The more modest approach that O’Donovan seems to suggest in *Desire* ought to be the mediation of our conceptions via our experience—a kind of epistemological constructionism. Yet such a position requires an account of collective experience or tradition that surely extends beyond that of the individual. To put it more bluntly, if O’Donovan wants redemptive history to be the truth-tester of political concepts, then one cannot begin to puzzle at that historic experience of God’s working, except from in the middle of it.

In his attempt to recover authority as the foundation of God’s kingly activity, O’Donovan contrasts “historicism” with “historical.” Historicism, O’Donovan states, is the concept that “makes the process of history the sole content of history.”<sup>155</sup> It looks forward to the resolution of human aspirations within the history of the world; it dubs progress as real.<sup>156</sup> The past, therefore, can have no meaning for those in the present, except as a memory of what the present has escaped from. This Hegelian historicism recalls past memory merely to justify the present, vindicating all progressive moves toward the future. To escape this, O’Donovan places political history within the history of God’s kingly reign so that three elements are added that remove politics from the grasp of historicism: (1) politics becomes an activity within the order of an eschatological creation;<sup>157</sup> (2) political content is removed from institutions and authority is given to the political act (the political act, i.e., “the divinely authorised act,” becomes the subject of political theology rather than

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<sup>154</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, pp. 128-130. O’Donovan’s notion of puzzle needs to be sharply contrasted with the description of mystery (as a reality with inexhaustible depth) developed in Chapter 6. O’Donovan’s notion that concepts necessarily mediate experience is a recapitulation of both Kant’s transcendental idealism and Descartes *cogito*. As such, Marion’s critique of the philosophical self, as explicated in Chapter 6, is a critique of O’Donovan.

<sup>155</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 28

<sup>156</sup> Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, p. 159

<sup>157</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 19

divinely authorized institutions<sup>158</sup>); and (3) politics is given a starting point (namely the revealed history of Israel).<sup>159</sup> Thus for O'Donovan, it is the goal of political theology to be historical. By attending to the history of divine rule, and attempting to situate that rule within the logic of the particular history of God's people, it becomes possible for O'Donovan to treat the historical political experience of God's people as normative.

By carefully examining the narrative shape of the Old Testament, O'Donovan begins to trace out the unifying political concepts employed by the various authors, using these to interpret the narrative and make it politically intelligible. Indeed, "O'Donovan develops his analysis of the kingdom of God by identifying four leading political terms associated with it—salvation, judgment, possession and praise (Israel's response)."<sup>160</sup> Moreover, according to O'Donovan, the full conceptuality of these four terms begins to provide the framework necessary for exploring the questions (and misgivings) about authority posed by the Western tradition.

Nicholas Wolterstorff has noted several important characteristics of the kingship of YHWH in explication of O'Donovan's four terms. Firstly, one of the manifestations of YHWH's kingship was the execution of judgment in Israel, the medium of which was two-fold: "the emergence of a body of law, understood as YHWH's law, and the work of those who decide cases in accord with the law."<sup>161</sup> Secondly, the refrain "YHWH, King of Israel" was understood as denoting YHWH not only as deliverer but also protector of Israel. And thirdly, "the refrain was understood as proclaiming that YHWH had secured to Israel those fundamental possessions whose handing-on made its life as this particular people possible—namely, law and land."<sup>162</sup> From this

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p. 20

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p. 21

<sup>160</sup> Bartholomew, C. G. "Introduction" in Bartholomew, C., Chaplin, J., Song, R., and A. Wolters (eds.). 2002. *A Royal Priesthood? The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*. pp 1-45. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. p. 28

<sup>161</sup> Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds*, p. 91

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

discussion, Wolterstorff accurately summarizes O'Donovan's use of the concept of authority which becomes the over-arching framework upon which *Desire's* political theology ultimately rests.<sup>163</sup> As Wolterstorff puts it, O'Donovan's definition of authority has four parts: (1) political existence rests upon structures of command and obedience;<sup>164</sup> (2) the political rule obeyed must first be authorized; (3) the human political act can only be divinely authorized;<sup>165</sup> and (4) authorized political rule over a people must protect them from danger, promote their heritage, and judge cases which arise among the people.<sup>166</sup> Therefore the covenant between YHWH and Israel is the rubric upon which any discussion of authority and divine rule must be based. This is true for O'Donovan precisely because, "Out of the self-possession of this people [Israel] in their relation to God springs the possibility of other peoples' possessing themselves in God."<sup>167</sup> This is the heart of the Isaiahic proclamation: "YHWH is our judge! YHWH is our lawgiver! YHWH is our king! He it is that will save us" (Isaiah 33:22). This proclamation must be acknowledged not as belonging to Israel alone, but to the heart of all political conceptuality, including that of the nations.

Upon his exegesis of these four biblical concepts, O'Donovan goes on to articulate six theorems which he claims summarize Israel's political experience under the reign of YHWH, and which can be extrapolated to articulate the truth of politics among the nations as well. According to O'Donovan, these theorems provide the necessary

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<sup>163</sup> O'Donovan eventually argues that this notion of authority is *the* hermeneutic via which the exegesis of Scripture should occur. As noted by Colin Greene, "It is the primacy of such a notion of authority based on the idea of divine rule that O'Donovan vigorously defends as both ontologically prior and superior to other possible Old Testament political categories such as covenant, law and land." (Greene, "Revisiting Christendom," p. 316). For O'Donovan, authority is prior precisely because it is the category into which all other concepts are subsumed. That is to say, it is only through the notion of political authority under divine rule, i.e., in salvation history, that covenant, law and land become meaningful rather than arbitrary. If O'Donovan used the language of the Lordship of Christ he would be encouraging an almost Anabaptist reading of the Old Testament.

<sup>164</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 18

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20

<sup>166</sup> Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds*, p. 91

<sup>167</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, pp. 45-6

“framework for exploring the major questions about authority posed by the Western tradition.”<sup>168</sup> The six theorems are as follows:

1. Political authority arises where power, the execution of right, and the perpetuation of tradition are assured together in one co-ordinated agency.<sup>169</sup>
2. That any regime should actually come to hold authority, and should continue to hold it, is a work of divine providence in history, not a mere accomplishment of the human task of political service.<sup>170</sup>
3. In acknowledging political authority, society proves its political identity.<sup>171</sup>
4. The authority of a human regime mediates divine authority in a unitary structure, but is subject to the authority of law within the community, which bears independent witness to the divine command.<sup>172</sup>
5. The appropriate unifying element in international order is law rather than government.<sup>173</sup>
6. The conscience of the individual members of a community is a repository of the moral understanding which shaped it, and may serve to perpetuate it in a crisis of collapsing morale or institution.<sup>174</sup>

For our purposes it is most important to look at the combination of theorems 2, 4, and 6 as they relate to Israel’s exile, because it is in the exile that O’Donovan first locates the biblical conception of dual authority. While all of the theorems disclose something specific about Israel’s experience of YHWH’s reign, it is during the exile that 2, 4, and 6 especially represent Israel’s attempt to make intelligible “two

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p. 46

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p. 47

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. p. 65

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. p. 72

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. p. 80

authorities, two rules, indeed two conflicting political realities – Jerusalem and Babylon.”<sup>175</sup> As noted by O’Donovan:

Augustine did not misread the text in taking it as the model for his conception of two political entities coexistent in one time and space (*C. Faustum* XII.36; *City of God* 19.26). We need only enter the caveat that there are two ways of identifying the duality in this situation: on the one hand, there are two ‘cities’ the social entities of Israel and Babylon which live side by side; on the other, there are the two ‘rules’ under which Israel finds itself, that of Babylon and that of YHWH.<sup>176</sup>

For O’Donovan, this perception of dual authority will persist among the people of God until the *Eschaton*.<sup>177</sup> In opposition to O’Donovan’s view, Craig Bartholomew points out that there are Old Testament texts, such as Second Isaiah, which describe a return to Israel, “a recovery of one kingdom under one rule – that of Yahweh.”<sup>178</sup> While theorems 2, 4, and 6 particularly reflect the relationship between Israel and the nations during the exile, it is clear by his generalized phrasing of the theorems that O’Donovan intends to use them as the basis for the way the church acts towards the nations. There may of course be changes insofar as the church has, at various times, found itself sometimes in exile and sometimes in Christendom. At least it should raise suspicions, insofar as to some extent O’Donovan seems to be, as Yoder would put it, getting an “ought” from an “is.” While this could be argued in many respects, it is clearly true in O’Donovan’s implied claim in 2, 4, and 6, similar to that found (as we will see in Chapter 4) in Cullman and Yoder, which says that God’s providence ensures, or at least vindicates, the divine right of rulers, outside the community identified as God’s people, precisely because they are ruling.

For O’Donovan, the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy is realized in Jesus Christ, for it is in him that “the kingdom of God has come near” (Mark 1:15). Thus the disclosure

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<sup>175</sup> Greene, “Revisiting Christendom,” p. 316. See Jeremiah, Esther, and Daniel.

<sup>176</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 83

<sup>177</sup> Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds*, p. 93

<sup>178</sup> Bartholomew, “Introduction,” p. 30

of the reign of God is both proclaimed and embodied in Jesus.<sup>179</sup> It is Jesus of Nazareth who completely reconfigures the political landscape of Israel's "Two Kingdom's" conception via His proclamation of a new order—an order which completely sweeps away existing forms of government.<sup>180</sup> If Christ is the embodiment of God's authority, then His existence relativizes all other forms of governance. For O'Donovan, the mediation of God's political authority in Jesus is manifested in four central themes of the Christ-event: Advent, Passion, Resurrection, and Exaltation. As noted by Greene:

advent exemplified not primarily by the birth narratives found only in Luke and Matthew, but by the baptism of Jesus common to all the gospels, discloses that this 'event is focused upon the divine act of authorisation'. Not surprisingly the passion constitutes the confrontation of divine authority, representatively expressed in the person of Jesus, with all other authorities and rulers who challenged his embodiment of the sovereignty of God's kingdom.<sup>181</sup>

In *Desire's* prequel, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, O'Donovan notes that it is through Christ's "triumphant rising from the grave" in the resurrection, that God's created order is vindicated (and restored).<sup>182</sup> It is the "invisibility of the ascension [exaltation]" that "reminds us of what is still to come."<sup>183</sup> Just as creation is vindicated, so also is Jesus (as the mediator of God's authority in heaven and on earth), by the coronation language used to describe His exaltation. For, according to O'Donovan, "It was not a private vindication but a public one; it was the fulfillment of the political promise which Jesus had come to bring, and his own authorisation as the representative of the Kingdom of God."<sup>184</sup> Thus, Christ subdues the nations.

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<sup>179</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 89

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* p. 137

<sup>181</sup> Greene, "Revisiting Christendom," p. 317

<sup>182</sup> O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, pp. 13-37

<sup>183</sup> Bartholomew, "Introduction," p. 32

<sup>184</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 145

Yet O'Donovan resists the urge to let the story end in the Gospels, and so turns to the rest of the New Testament. He begins by quoting St Paul's proclamation that God has "disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public show of them in Christ's triumphal procession" (Col 2:15). According to O'Donovan, there are two eschatological assumptions made by Paul about these principalities: (1) the authorities of the world have been made subject to God's sovereignty in the exaltation; and (2) the truth of this is apocalyptic, awaiting the final *parousia* of Christ to become fully visible. It is, O'Donovan continues, "Within the framework of these two assertions" that there opens up "an account of secular authority which presumes neither that the Christ-event never occurred nor that the sovereignty of Christ is now transparent and uncontested."<sup>185</sup> For O'Donovan the fine line between "already" and "not yet" is made manifest in the post-Easter proclamation, not that the kingdom was at hand, but that the kingdom had come in Christ. Moreover for O'Donovan, all descriptions of secular authority in the New Testament must spring forth from the primacy of Christ's authority, the annunciation of which, in word and deed, is the mission of the church; conversely, Christ's dispensation of authority to the nations is his authorization of a particular task. Thus O'Donovan poses the question: is secular authority compatible with the church's mission, *and assuming it is*, in what sense is that authority reauthorized by it? The answer: "If the mission of the church needs a certain social space, for men and women of every nation to be drawn into the governed community of God's Kingdom, then secular authority is authorised to provide and ensure that space."<sup>186</sup> In defense of his claim that the Two Kingdoms conception has been reauthorized, with the caveat that all authority is now under Christ, O'Donovan turns first to 1 Timothy 2:1, and then to Romans 13:1-7.

While O'Donovan's account sounds extraordinarily similar to that provided by Yoder in *The Politics of Jesus*, it should be noted that there is one important difference between them, namely, O'Donovan does not believe that all the powers are demonic.<sup>187</sup> O'Donovan's discussion of the powers prefers to use the word

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. p. 146

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

“authorities,” and notes that there are at least two kinds, “political and demonic.”<sup>188</sup> That is not to say that an authority cannot be both political *and* demonic, but that the possibility exists that an authority be either/or. What this seems to imply is that not all the powers, or authorities, were Fallen; at the very least, not all of the authorities usurp or supplant the good of God after the exaltation. This is made clear in O’Donovan’s objection to Yoder’s *The Christian Witness to the State*, where he notes an absence of reference “to Christ’s triumph and the state’s subjection, or semisubjection.”<sup>189</sup> Rather, “[t]he language of principalities and powers was invoked solely to point up the demonic character of the state, requiring ‘at best acquiescence’.”<sup>190</sup> For O’Donovan, the subjection of the state, or its semisubjection, results in the state no longer possessing demonic (or Fallen) qualities. Rather the self-positing demonism of the authorities/powers has been replaced by divine authorization. In this way the authorities/powers cease to be demonic, and in light of their new task become political tools of the exalted Christ. Yet if God reauthorizes the authorities/powers *as they are*, then it is unclear what was Fallen about them in the first place.<sup>191</sup> There is never a time when the authorities voluntarily give up their authority to the exalted Christ, who then reauthorizes them for a particular task. Rather it seems that on O’Donovan’s analysis, the powers are authorized to do a

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<sup>187</sup> This is not to make a differentiation between privative and positive accounts of evil. When I use the word “demonic” it refers to the usurpation of authority.

<sup>188</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 146

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* p. 151. First, as we will see in Chapter 4, Yoder’s argument involving the nature of the powers and the Christian witness to the nations will help make clear that O’Donovan is wrong when he says that an account of Christ’s triumph is absent in Yoder. Indeed, it is a description of the powers, as framed by the Lordship of Christ, which shapes Yoder’s whole enterprise. O’Donovan’s concern with Yoder is that he supposedly does not incorporate an account of the subjection of the state to the Lordship of Christ in his reading of Romans 13. Second, it is not at all clear how the language of semisubjection provides any clarity whatsoever regarding the “almost but not yet” character of the reign of God. In what way are the nations “sort of” subjected to the reign of Christ? To accuse Yoder of not using an imprecise term seems strange, when what is called for is a clear description of the relationship between the exalted Christ and the nations in the time between the ascension and *Eschaton*. The term semisubjection adds nothing to such a discussion, and neither does subjection for that matter; this is true particularly if the word subjection is not qualified as what constitutes subjection in the first place.

<sup>190</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 151.

<sup>191</sup> Here one has to wonder if Yoder’s description of Anglican theologies (that rubber-stamp nature as creation) is an anticipation of O’Donovan.

particular task in their Fallenness. That is to say, the means/methods of the authorities, i.e., the use of the sword, are not called in to question in regards to their authorized task. So if not all the powers are demonic/Fallen after the exaltation, yet God authorizes them to a particular task as they are (without calling them to the fullness of discipleship in the church), then it must be the case that not all the authorities/powers were Fallen in the first place. It will be useful to look at the Scriptural basis for O'Donovan's account of the relationship between the reign of the exalted Christ and the secular authorities in order to better understand any inconsistencies in O'Donovan's position.

In his first letter to Timothy, St. Paul writes:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. (1 Timothy 2:1, 2).

O'Donovan argues that these prayers and intercessions occur on behalf of all humanity, by that portion of humanity which represents mankind under the rule of God's authority: the church.<sup>192</sup> While ultimately the church prays for the Master's return, it more immediately prays for kings and all in authority.<sup>193</sup> Here O'Donovan raises the question: How is it that the immediate prayer for kings is subsumed under "the ultimate horizon" of God's saving purposes? The answer: by providing their subjects with "a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity" (presumably through the extermination of the noisy barbarians) through which the church can accomplish its mission.<sup>194</sup> He closes with Paul's affirmation that this "is right and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3, 4). Although he does point out that

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<sup>192</sup> There are definitely parallels here with Cullman's notion of election as found in *Christ and Time* (Cullman, O. 1949. *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. Trans. F.V. Filson. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.). It would be interesting to look beyond Cullman's soteriological uses of the term by looking at the political significance of the concept, particularly as used by O'Donovan.

<sup>193</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 146

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

it is not clear whether it is the work of kings, or the church's prayers for them, which are approved of, O'Donovan claims that the principle is the same either way.

Yet O'Donovan's argument is not entirely convincing on two fronts. Firstly, it seems most likely that St. Paul is referring to the church's prayers as "right" and "acceptable," rather than the kings themselves, for directly following verse 4, Paul reaffirms the sole authority of Christ: "For there is one God; there is also *one mediator between God and humankind*, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). While naming Jesus as the sole mediator between God and humankind does not necessarily refute the possibility of secular government having a place (or at least a function to fill) in the reign of God, chapter 2, verses 5 and 6, make it quite clear that it is for the function of the church, and salvation of mankind, that these prayers are offered, not for the wellbeing of kings. Indeed, there does not seem to be enough evidence to support the claim that 1 Timothy 2:1-4 proclaims the reauthorization of secular governments, especially in light of the sole authority of Christ affirmed in verse 5 and 6. The second difficulty with O'Donovan's reading is his assumption that a prayer for peace is, in reality, a utilitarian call by the early church for violence (albeit violence that ensures peace). There is no sense in the passage that blessing the nations will convince them to provide the church with peace, rather the passage seems to reflect Paul's confession to Timothy in chapter 2, verses 12-15, that Paul, a "man of violence," received overabundant mercy and grace, making him a disciple of the "King of the ages" (2:17). As such, everyone, including the kings, and all who are in high positions, should be prayed for in the hope that in them will be fostered a "knowledge of the truth" and a "desire...to be saved" by the "one mediator...Christ Jesus...who gave himself a ransom for all" (2:3-6). The mark of their salvation will be repentance and a turning away from their sins, including heresy, persecution and violence (2:13).

It is in the hope of justifying his account of the reauthorization of secular governance that O'Donovan turns to his second proof-text, which he labels as the "most disputed discussion of political authority in the New Testament": Romans 13:1-7. In Romans 13, versus 1 through 7, St Paul writes:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:1-7).

According to O'Donovan, Romans 13 has as its aim "the definition of the ruler's right," that is to say, it provides a description of "the authority which remains to secular government in the aftermath of Christ's triumph."<sup>195</sup>

The key to understanding Romans 13, according to O'Donovan, is reading this passage in the same context in which Paul originally set it, i.e., "his claim for the continued significance of Israel as a social entity in God's plans for final redemption."<sup>196</sup> Thus for O'Donovan, Paul's response to the "authorities" arises naturally from his commitment to Israel. The victory promised to Israel over the nations is that victory which is fulfilled in Christ: "the victory of a God-filled and humanized social order over bestial and God-denying empires."<sup>197</sup> The role assigned to the "chastened and reduced" authorities, which have been brought to the obedience of Israel and her God, is the same, says O'Donovan, as the functions once assigned to Israel's judges. Following Paul, O'Donovan observes government to be "an avenger" whose purpose is "visiting wrath on the wrong doer."<sup>198</sup> It adjudicates disputes between two parties, not by encouraging reconciliation, but through "praise" on the one hand and "discipline" on the other.

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid. p. 152

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. p. 147

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

O'Donovan continues, "No respect can be paid to the role of government, then, as a focus of collective identity" for it is Christ who is "the true Israelite and the true representative of the human race."<sup>199</sup> Rather, the sole role of government identified by St Paul is judgment. It is the judgment of the governing authorities that must be respected, for it is their judgment, the wrath of God, which allows a space to be created and preserved in which the Gospel can be spread. O'Donovan notes that while Christians are subject to the wrath "ministered" by secular government, they should have no fear as long as the works they do are good. Thus, the subjection expected of the church "is not the subjection of fear (*dia tēn orgēn*) but the cordial recognition of the judicial function based on respect for its place in God's purposes, a respect born of 'conviction' (*dia tēn suneidēsin*)."<sup>200</sup> O'Donovan notes that the respect for the judgment of secular governance explains in part St Paul's dismay at litigation between Christians (1 Corinthians 6:1ff). If the church is to be governed by Christ alone, then allowing secular governance into the brotherhood, in order to receive their judgment, belies a diminishment of Christ's authority.<sup>201</sup>

There are several unasked and unanswered questions in O'Donovan's account: On what ground is the judgment of government based? How does the government come to know that ground, i.e., where does the knowledge of will and wrath of God come

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid. p. 148

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> If O'Donovan is right there seems to be an excessive amount of judgment going on for Christians. If he is correct, then it is the government's role to judge all wrongdoers, including Christians. If one Christian wrongs another, O'Donovan suggests (along with St Paul) that the assembly should handle the matter. But what if the government hears of this? Is the church to speak up and demand, citing the primacy of Christ's authority, their right (and obligation) to handle the matter within the church? Perhaps Paul's dismay is that the two Christians brought the case before a governing authority rather than to a bishop, yet I find it hard to believe that Paul would suggest that the church hide their wrongdoers from the world. There seems to be a bit of a dilemma when it comes to who has authority over Christians. Surely it is Christ, but to whom has Christ given authority to judge Christians on earth? Is it to the governing authorities or to the bishops? And if, as O'Donovan argues, the church court is merely for the discerning of God's "right" rather than to separate the guilty from the innocent, is Paul wrong to be dismayed if two Christians go before the authorities over a "criminal" dispute? While it is clear that this was one of the big questions addressed for the whole of Christendom, the answers seems less clear where we are now, in a post-Christendom era. And while this is definitely a digression, I think that it must be dealt with (if not here) precisely because of the implications an answer would have for the current scandal in the church of pedophilia among priests, ministers, and other clergy. See: McFayden, A. 2000. *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

from? And is the epistemic source for Christian knowledge about God's wrath located in the government? Judgment requires reason, and reason requires knowledge. If the government makes *just* judgments consistently, it is unlikely that this is accidental. If this knowledge is revealed by God then the government *must* acknowledge Christ precisely because, for O'Donovan, Christ is the progenitor of all revelation. On the other hand, if consistent just judgment on the part of government is not accidental, and is not based upon knowledge of Christ, then it must be the case that God directly intercedes. If this is the case, then God's will in the world can be known by closely monitoring international affairs. While this is a tried and true practice among some forms of American evangelicalism, God's will has a tendency to suddenly become murky when governments disagree. Finally, it cannot be the case that the church's knowledge about justice is located in the activity of the government. If this was the case then Hitler's Germany, and Pinochet's Chile, could never be condemned by the church. The only option left on the table is, as we will see in later chapters, that offered by Yoder: a vision of secular authorities whom are no longer mediators of God's rule, but merely his judgment.<sup>202</sup> It is this judgment that, as Yoder would put it, polices<sup>203</sup> society and opens up a space for the church to be the church. As O'Donovan notes, "The power that they exercise in defeating their enemies, the national possessions they safeguard, these are now rendered irrelevant by Christ's triumph...[n]o government has a right to exist, no nation has a right to defend itself;" these claims are overwhelmed by the immediacy of Christ's Kingdom.<sup>204</sup> There is one kingdom and one ruler, but the political authority of the

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<sup>202</sup> It is unclear if the authorities *were* mediators of God's rule after the Fall.

<sup>203</sup> Strangely, O'Donovan criticizes Yoder at this point for seeing Romans 13 not as referring to war and the death penalty, but to the "police function" of the State. It seems to me that there is not at all much difference between O'Donovan's notion of judgment and Yoder's description of policing (explicated in chapter 4). Moreover, both seek to bring about the same result, a space in which the church can be the church. When Yoder is talking about the police function of the state, there doesn't seem to be a way that he can avoid talking about war and the death penalty, precisely because these, among others, are the tools used by the state when policing. Of course Yoder would like to see less violent means employed in worldly policing and judgment and indeed he suggests several possible alternatives in *Body Politics*.

<sup>204</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 151. If one were to carry O'Donovan's views to their conclusion, States would not be allowed to defend themselves, rather a third party would always be forced to intervene in the hopes of adjudicating any dispute. In this way the totality of secular authorities would always be forced to position themselves in an international community of care. In

ruler has been given partially into the hands of men—in part to the governing authorities, but only so that they might make space for the church and her mission.

O'Donovan begins his discussion of the church, and the authority that has been given it, with a definition of the political society called church:

Describing the church as a political society means to say that it is brought into being and held in being, not by a special function it has to fulfill, but by a government that it obeys in everything. It is ruled and authorised by the ascended Christ alone and supremely; it therefore has its own authority; and is not answerable to any other authority that may attempt to subsume it.<sup>205</sup>

In O'Donovan's analysis therefore, the church is like a "household staff who cannot be held answerable to one domestic regime because they...belong to another."<sup>206</sup> Indeed, the nature of the dual authority under which the church finds itself has two forms, according to O'Donovan: exilic and post-exilic.<sup>207</sup> The exilic form articulates two peoples living side by side until the *parousia*.<sup>208</sup> The post-exilic form is that which identifies one's rulers as alien (and usually illegitimate).<sup>209</sup> Indeed, the only real difference between the exilic and post-exilic forms of dual authority is that the exilic form is more accommodationist and complicit with authorities who are shown to be false in the post-exilic world view. For now we will look in more detail at the church side of the church-world divide as found in O'Donovan.

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this way, war would be a swift punishment for those authorities that reject the judgment of the international community.

<sup>205</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 159

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* p. 158

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Chapter 4. This is akin to Oscar Cullman's description of the Jewish eschatological worldview in which the midpoint of redemptive history is coterminous with the advent of the Kingdom of God.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Chapter 4. This is where Cullman believes the Christian account of redemptive history differs from the Jewish, insofar as for Christians, the midpoint of redemptive history is Christ, yet the *parousia* still lies in the future. One must, in light of Cullman's analysis, question whether O'Donovan is right to identify one of the eschatological analogies of the church-world relation as exile.

To speak of the independent political authority of the church is to speak of its authorization at Pentecost.<sup>210</sup> Yet according to O'Donovan, it is important that Pentecost not be seen as a late addition to the Christ-event, the fifth in the series of Advent, Passion, Restoration and Exaltation. The authorization of the church at Pentecost occurs by the uniting of the church with the authorization of Christ. It is through the descending of the Spirit at Pentecost that the apostles are opened up to, and allowed to participate in, the Exaltation. "But," notes O'Donovan, "since that moment is not isolated, but sums up the whole of the Christ event, so Pentecost unites the church not only with the works of power and public display that attest his triumph but with the service, sacrifice, and suffering of Christ, too."<sup>211</sup> Thus it is through the Pentecost that the church is able to participate in the fullness of the Christ-event. It is through Jesus that the church is represented in the Exaltation, and through the Spirit that the church can participate in it. In short, it is via this two-fold conference of representation and participation to the church, by Christ and the Holy Spirit respectively, that the church both represents and participates in the authority of Christ. In the words of O'Donovan: "Represented, it is authorised to represent Israel, the people of the Kingdom, possessed of the identity promised to the patriarchs. Participating, it is authorised to be the gathering nations, finding the new world order in the rule of Israel's God."<sup>212</sup>

Perhaps O'Donovan's best insight concerning ecclesiology is his identification of four characteristics of the church that mirror the four moments of the Christ event: in response to the advent, the church is a *gathering* community; in response to the passion, the church is a suffering community; in response to the resurrection, the church is glad, celebrating the vindicated creation order; in response to the exaltation, the church speaks prophecy, the words of God.<sup>213</sup> Thus the hidden authority of the church becomes tangible by its speech; in the same manner as Christ,

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<sup>210</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 161

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Bartholomew, "Introduction," p. 33

the church establishes God's kingdom through God's word. Particularly, O'Donovan states, the tangibility of God's church arises from its sacraments, the manifestation of its speech in praise of God. As the church recapitulates the saving acts of Christ through the performance of a series of "formed acts and observances," the church is granted order and becomes visible. Thus it is through the sacraments that the world can know where the church is, and be gathered to it.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, it is through the authorized church that the gathered are bound to the community; a church which then calls upon those bound to defy all other communities who make rival claims on their allegiance, ruling out all who do not make the apostolic confession.<sup>215</sup> In chapters 5 and 6, these images, and particularly the notion of the church as a gathering community, will be central to repairing the work of Yoder, Hauerwas, and by default, O'Donovan.

William Cavanaugh has rightly observed that, "If the history of salvation did not simply begin a long detour in the fourth century, we must be able to account for the continuity of the church before and after Constantine."<sup>216</sup> This is, arguably, the task to which *Desire* is aimed, for surely if a political theology cannot adequately explain the Christendom era then it is useless to those living post-Christendom. "Fourth-century Christians did not", says Cavanaugh, "simply become drunk with power and move the church off its foundations."<sup>217</sup> Rather, according to Cavanaugh, a shift in Christian thinking and practice occurred as to the way in which the Kingdom of God ought to be made manifest in the world.

O'Donovan identifies Christendom as the idea of a "professedly Christian secular political order" and "the history of that idea in practice."<sup>218</sup> Stating that *we* are post-Christendom, inhabiting the era named modernity, O'Donovan argues that the only

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<sup>214</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 175

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* p. 176

<sup>216</sup> Cavanaugh, W. T. 2003. "Church" in Cavanaugh, W. T. and P. Scott (eds.). 2003. *Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. pp. 393-406. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 400.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 195

way to understand the current modern separation of politics and theology is to first understand the Christendom background upon which it is set.

O'Donovan begins Chapter 6 of *Desire* by identifying two “frontiers” of the Gentile mission: society, and the rulers of society – pointing out, that it was the grand success of the mission toward society that gave the church its triumphal confidence in confronting its rulers. The distinction between the two is based upon their differing destinies. Whereas society is destined for transformation, rulers are designed to wither away, renouncing their own authority. Thus the church’s mission was originally concerned with gathering the masses and only later worrying about government, but the Edict of Milan in 313 caused a contextual volte-face. The church was instantly transformed from minority cult to Imperial religion. Yet as O'Donovan continues, this was the logical conclusion of their confidence in mission.<sup>219</sup> “The kings of the earth,” they proclaimed, “had come to bow before the throne of Christ, and the empire they had served had lost its most powerful agents.”<sup>220</sup> Thus, claims O'Donovan, the description of Christendom is a story of witness in response to the church’s mission, and a sign that God has blessed it.<sup>221</sup> Yet the government is not the church; the church rather, is a distinctive witness holding the government to account and standing as a constant reminder of its temporary nature. “As ruler, the ruler is meant to judge,” says Cavanaugh, “as member of the church, the ruler is meant to judge with clemency; and the church is there to signal the inherent tension between the two obligations.”<sup>222</sup>

It is upon this notion of Christendom that the modern separation of politics and theology is perpetuated—which is in part why O'Donovan considers Christendom to be the “most significant practical instance of the conviction that theology is

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p. 194

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. p. 195

<sup>222</sup> Cavanaugh, “Church,” p. 401

politics.”<sup>223</sup> By turning to the theological politics of Stanley Hauerwas in the following section, the triumphant assurance of Christendom as Christian victory will be called into question. While Christendom is seen as the *magnum opus* of Christian missions in the work of O’Donovan, it is for Hauerwas, a mark that the church has forgotten its peculiarity. The next section will describe this peculiar church, called for by Hauerwas.

### **Hauerwas: Temperance, a Contrary Cross, and Church as the *Polis* of Resident Aliens**

To say that the eschatology of Stanley Hauerwas is reticent is to say that it is reticent in relation to something else. Namely, it is reticent when compared to the dominating eschatological enterprise—the story of God’s triumphant reign—undertaken by O’Donovan. Yet in their joint article “Remaining in Babylon: Oliver O’Donovan’s Defense of Christendom,” Stanley Hauerwas and James Fodor begin their critique of O’Donovan with the disclaimer: “there are more things on which we agree with O’Donovan than on which we disagree.”<sup>224</sup> In the first section of their essay, Fodor and Hauerwas limn the way in which O’Donovan should be read (an attempt to prevent “politically conservative readers” from misconstruing O’Donovan’s program as an endorsement of “conventional political agenda[s]”<sup>225</sup>). According to Fodor and Hauerwas, *Desire* should be understood as a “bold, courageous, and compelling account of the challenges facing Christianity in a time when the church is on the brink of extinction in modern Western cultures.”<sup>226</sup> Indeed, O’Donovan’s “plumbing” of “the depths and richness of the biblical texts” is to be commended.<sup>227</sup> While taking Scripture seriously is itself a rare quality among theologians, it is even more surprising, to Fodor and Hauerwas, that O’Donovan’s use of Scripture avoids

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<sup>223</sup> Cavanaugh, “Church,” p. 405

<sup>224</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 200

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* 203

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* p. 199

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.* p. 209

“the sequestering of the theological into the transcendental” which is the offer of “modern political arrangements.”<sup>228</sup> According to Fodor and Hauerwas, their departure from O’Donovan’s enterprise (this is where the reticence begins) is to “the extent that... [O’Donovan] thinks resurrection and ascension make it possible for Christians to be more than God’s wandering people.”<sup>229</sup> For Hauerwas and Fodor, the Scripturally unapologetic nature of O’Donovan’s hermeneutic is refreshing, yet in its attempt to create an architectonic, or master-narrative (upon which “the unifying hermeneutic principle,”<sup>230</sup> unmasks “the authority structure”<sup>231</sup> of God’s reign), it insinuates that *more can be known* “about how the story comes out”<sup>232</sup> than either believe is justified. The difficulty with O’Donovan’s architectonic is that it is conceived of in primarily theoretical terms; that is, it only articulates the “*structure*” and “*design*” of political theology.<sup>233</sup> O’Donovan’s method for the construction of this complex “exegetical framework” is thus summarized by Fodor and Hauerwas:

Borrowing three common Hebrew words, salvation, judgment, and possession, O’Donovan constructs an interpretative matrix, which he will later develop and extend through a rather elaborate declension, qualifying and relating these terms to various (six) “theorems” and (four) “moments”.<sup>234</sup>

The difficulty for Fodor and Hauerwas is delineating where exactly O’Donovan separates theory from the exegetical framework (or even whether a distinction between the two concepts is appropriate). Despite O’Donovan’s repeated claim that his exegetical framework merely has heuristic value, he nonetheless wishes “to ‘stretch’ beyond the insights thereby gained and use them to make strong theoretical claims.”<sup>235</sup> While O’Donovan occasionally contends that his interpretive framework

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid. p. 200

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 22

<sup>231</sup> Ibid. p. 93

<sup>232</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 208

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. p. 204

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

is a “purely exegetical schema” having “no theoretical function,”<sup>236</sup> at other times he conflates the two, speaking of an “exegetical and theoretical outline.”<sup>237</sup> “It is not clear,” say Fodor and Hauerwas, “in what way(s) his hermeneutical theory actually guides his reading of and commentary on biblical texts. Nor is it readily apparent how his exegesis informs his theoretical claims...his hermeneutical architectonic.”<sup>238</sup> It is O’Donovan’s Milbankian<sup>239</sup> attempt to create an architectonic in the first place, which belies a desire to “rule morally.” For Fodor and Hauerwas, the systematic ambition of such a venture leaves the door wide open to temptation. They describe such temptation as “the sinful proclivities of the human imagination and of the seeming ineradicable human pride that reserves for political life its most virulent manifestations.”<sup>240</sup> Accordingly the goal must be temperance, moderating theological ambition by an ecclesiology focused more on “the eschatological ‘not yet’ than...the eschatological ‘already’.”<sup>241</sup>

Yet the difficulties with O’Donovan’s construction of an architectonic are not merely formal, but material as well; along with the structural infelicities and contradictions, Hauerwas and Fodor maintain some material concerns. It is important, however, to see that O’Donovan’s hermeneutic method shapes the possibilities of his material narration. His tendency to see Scripture as a “unifying conceptual structure,” when contrasted with Fodor’s and Hauerwas’ belief that “Scripture is best read as an aid for the church to ‘muddle through,’”<sup>242</sup> helps clarify why the eschatological metaphors used by O’Donovan and Hauerwas are so disparate. “Whereas

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid. p. 205

<sup>236</sup> O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 133

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. p. 46, See: Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 205

<sup>238</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 206

<sup>239</sup> This is not a reference to Milbank’s pseudo-liberal embrace of violence and secular political mechanisms, rather it references the tendency in Milbank’s own work, and in the overall project of *Radical Orthodoxy* to attempt the creation of an unassailable Christendom theology.

<sup>240</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 206

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid. p. 208

O'Donovan seeks correlation with Israel," say Fodor and Hauerwas, "we look for analogies."<sup>243</sup> The *material* image of God's rule rises directly from O'Donovan's *formal* monolithic method. It is because O'Donovan's architectonic assumes that "an analysis and development of an account of the reign of God is the appropriate point of departure [from Scripture],"<sup>244</sup> that God's kingship is the *only* analogy used to "push back the horizon of commonplace politics and open it up to the activity of God."<sup>245</sup> Interestingly, if it wasn't for the conflation of "theory" and "exegetical framework" in his formal structure, there might indeed have been a greater hesitation in O'Donovan's material narration when it came to marking out the Scriptural hermeneutic (rather than solely focusing on recovering an account of the reign of God). While O'Donovan recognizes theology's manifold witness, he deems that political theology needs a full political conceptuality rather than scattered political images, requiring theology to have "a unified object on which it concentrates its witness,"<sup>246</sup> namely, the reign of God.<sup>247</sup> According to Fodor and Hauerwas, however, they prefer to

[r]emain open to the possibility that there may be other images of God's care of and love for creation that might also be just as crucial as "kingship" and "rule"—such horticultural images and descriptions as gardening and vine dressing, not to mention the profoundly central pastoral image of shepherding (or that of householder or the servants who tend the estate of the absentee landlord).<sup>248</sup>

While both Fodor and Hauerwas recognize that the rule of God is a fundamental category in any political theology, they argue that this should not dominate and exclude all other Scriptural metaphors that describe the relationship between God and the world. There are other ways of knowing; as noted by Fodor and Hauerwas, "the anointed one (Jesus) is, after all, both servant and messiah, victim and priest,

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p. 212

<sup>245</sup> O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 2

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p. 21

<sup>247</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, p. 213

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. p. 212

sufferer and liberator, afflicted and physician.”<sup>249</sup> When the metaphor of God’s kingship *is* addressed, it is not just “the *manner* or *mode* of that rule” but also the “peculiarity and uniqueness” of its “*subject* and *relations*” that must be attended to.<sup>250</sup> In short, according to Fodor and Hauerwas, O’Donovan either offers the church “more than we should want,”<sup>251</sup> or not quite enough. In fact, it is his exclusive use of the “rule of God” metaphor that removes O’Donovan’s ability to temper the “already” with the “not yet.”

For Hauerwas, like Yoder, Jesus is the norm for Christian ethics; that is to say, if the character of God is revealed in Jesus, and the ethics of the church arise from an imitation of the character of God, then the church must imitate Jesus if it is to behave faithfully. Interestingly, however, being formed as a disciple of Christ, according to Hauerwas, occurs prior to knowing the truth; that is to say, in order to become truthful people, we must first submit to discipleship. Hauerwas notes,

Jesus told those who believed in him: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). He also said to them, “I am the way the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)...Note... [t]ruth is not a set of propositions about the world; rather, truth is Jesus Christ. We know truth by coming to know this person and we know this person by learning to pray as he taught us.<sup>252</sup>

For Hauerwas, therefore, the habit of praying the “Our Father,” will, over time, provide the church with the necessary skills for performing the story of Christ, i.e., for being the church. Moreover, it is only in the embodiment of *His* story – through loving as he loved – that the church recognizes the truthfulness of his story. Indeed, it is when the church faithfully follows the revealed character of God, in Jesus, that it proclaims Jesus as the sovereign *kyrios* of all things. This is the reader’s first hint that the notion of *kyrios* itself must be based upon something other than kingship as

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. p. 217

<sup>252</sup> Hauerwas, S. 1996. *Lord Teach Us: The Lord’s Prayer and the Christian Life*, with Scott C. Saye and William Willimon. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. p. 16

found amidst the nations. Thus, Hauerwas recognizes the absolute subjugation of all the rulers of the world, resulting from the establishment of God's new kingdom in Christ. (Despite the similarities to Yoder here, it is important to note that in Hauerwas' early work he almost never uses the language of principalities and powers central to Yoder's ontology). Yet rather than announcing (as does O'Donovan) God's reauthorization of the "governing authorities," with the conferred vocation that they open up spaces for the church's mission, Hauerwas announces their deauthorization.

For Hauerwas, the church is God's politics in the world. The politics of the God-who-is-love cannot but be peaceable. Indeed, peace rather than violence is the defining characteristic of the new Kingdom. Any politics not constituted by and with the love of God is a poor imitation, and should be judged as both Fallen and sinful:

Christians believe that the world is deeply bent by sin, most poignantly manifest in the distrust that characterizes all relations between people. Violence and coercion are not accidental to such a world but are integral to its nature. For example,...people are not racist because they are ignorant, but racism is a manifestation of fear, fuelled by the corrupt and prideful assumption that the only way to get out of this life alive is by taking control of our existence....The Christian and the Jew believe that they have been given a special mission in such a world. Namely, they have been called to form communities that manifest the trust and love possible between people when they recognize the sovereignty of God over all life. To be sure, they are often unfaithful to the task, but even their unfaithfulness points to the kind of life that should be possible between people.<sup>253</sup>

Thus, one of Hauerwas' central convictions is that the imitation of Christ begins and ends with love – with peace – with the refusal to violently separate from, or coercively incorporate, the friend, stranger or enemy. The Christ-event does not signify a *transfer* of authority from the secular authority to Jesus. Rather, the Christ-event is a *transformation* of sovereignty itself. For Hauerwas this transformation is a radical shift in the way that sovereign power is conceived and experienced—a shift rooted in the cross and resurrection. Here Hauerwas is following the lead of a different Anglican, Bishop N.T. Wright. According to Wright:

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<sup>253</sup> Hauerwas, S. 1986. *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark. p. 147

As everyone in the Roman world knew well, the cross already had a clear symbolic meaning; it meant that Caesar ruled the world, with cruel death as his ultimate, and regular, weapon. For Paul... [i]t is the means whereby the powers are defeated and overthrown (1 Cor. 2:6-8; Col. 2:13-15). The resurrection demonstrates that the true God has a power utterly superior to that of Caesar. The cross is thus to be seen, with deep and rich paradox, as the secret power of this true God, the power of self-giving love which (as Jesus said it would) subverts the power of the tyrant (Mk. 10:35-45).<sup>254</sup>

Because Christ is the sole authority, that is, because no power has been given back to the governing authorities, those authorities do not have the power they once had. Christ has turned the world and its power structures upside-down. Thus following Yoder, Hauerwas believes that “when the Christian whom God has disarmed lays aside carnal weapons, it is not in the last analysis, because they are too dangerous, but because they are too weak.”<sup>255</sup> The imitation of Christ requires, therefore, that the church live into the new order established by the Christ-event, an order in which politics is a way of *being* together, not because the dissidents have been walled-away or exterminated, but because the God-who-is-love gives himself to the world. Redeemed by Christ, the world is God’s good creation, even when it refuses to acknowledge the fact. As such, it is the purpose of the church, “the people capable of remembering and telling the story of God we find in Jesus,” to “show the world what it is meant to be.”<sup>256</sup> Hauerwas’ claim is two-fold: (1) soteriological, proclaiming God’s salvation and victory over evil as the result of non-resistant love; and (2) eschatological, proclaiming that the slain lamb will sit glorious upon the throne.<sup>257</sup>

In *After Christendom*, Hauerwas employs Michel de Certeau’s distinction between strategies and tactics in order to describe the distance between the ecclesiological

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<sup>254</sup> Wright, N.T. “Paul and Caesar: A New Reading of Romans” in Bartholomew, C. Chaplin, J., Song, R. and A. Wolters (eds.) 2002. *A Royal Priesthood? The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically. A Dialogue with Oliver O’Donovan*. pp. 173-99. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. p. 182-83

<sup>255</sup> Yoder, J.H. 1985. *He Came Preaching Peace*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishing. p. 29

<sup>256</sup> Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, p. 103

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.* p. 92

program found in Christendom and that found post-Christendom. According to Certeau, a strategy is:

[any] calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject that will empower (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serves as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research etc.) can be managed. As in management, every 'strategic rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its 'own place', that is, the place of its own power and will, from an 'environment'. A Cartesian attitude, if you wish: it is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other. It is also the typical attitude of modern science, politics, and military strategy.<sup>258</sup>

For Hauerwas, these type of strategies provide "a triumph of place over time insofar as" they allow one to "acquire advantages, to prepare for future expansions, and in general to create an independence against contingency."<sup>259</sup> The strategic method is characteristic of the church post-313, which adopted the self-image of an imperial stronghold from which any number of missional forays into the world could be led. Yet if Hauerwas is to be believed, the church is simply not the church if it is constituted by violent power, and strategic location always presumes violent power, because it is (to borrow from Weber) a power over those *inside* that location. Even at the height of Christendom the church was never complete, never homogenous and totalizing. It was always incomplete and heterogeneous, a fact knowable precisely because there were still those requiring evangelization (time had not yet run out). Accordingly, church ecclesiology must distinguish between strategic-space and tactical-time. In Certeau's analysis, a tactic is:

[a] calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delineation of exteriority, then, provides it with the conditions necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other, thus it must play on

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<sup>258</sup> de Certeau, M. 1988. *The Practice of the Everyday Life*. Trans. by Stephen Rendall. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. p. 35-6. See: Hauerwas, S. 1991. *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation are Bad Ideas*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. p. 16-17

<sup>259</sup> Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, p. 17

and with the terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power.<sup>260</sup>

Tactics require no general strategies, but afford only *ad hoc* engagements. While a tactical politics has *spatial* mobility, this is only true because that politics takes advantage of opportunities in its surroundings at appropriate *moments*.<sup>261</sup> As noted by Wells, such a church is “always on the hoof—at best a resident alien.”<sup>262</sup> If the transformation of power in the Christ-event is, as Hauerwas claims, an authorization of weakness, service, poverty, and peace, and if Certeau is right in that tactics *are* the art of the weak, then the church *must* adopt a tactical ecclesiology. For Hauerwas there can be no faithful pursuit of Scriptural metaphors that teach the church to see itself as a bounded country, with borders, armies, and territories; it is rather the imagination of a tactical church in, and with, the God-of-love, that provides the *moments* needed in order to birth a transformed politic-of-weakness.

Yet there are two possibilities of meaning when describing the nature of strategies and tactics, and that distinction can be made clear by questioning whether or not they are different ways of playing the same game. It is not necessary to discover whether Certeau identifies tactics with weakness in the sense that weak is *other* to power, or if on the contrary, he is merely acknowledging weakness as a *mode* (or species) of power. The real question is whether or not Hauerwas is making an ontological difference between the two. If for Hauerwas tactical weakness is not merely a low-status species of power (while high-status modes involve strategic coercion and violence), but is itself something else entirely, then Hauerwas is making an ontological move more akin to that of Milbank than either Yoder, O’Donovan, or Wells.<sup>263</sup> Such a move would be in good company amidst his call for the re-

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<sup>260</sup> de Certeau, *The Practice of the Everyday Life*, p. 36-7

<sup>261</sup> Hauerwas, 1991, *After Christendom*, p. 18

<sup>262</sup> Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, p. 115

<sup>263</sup> Indeed, following Sam Wells and J. Denny Weaver, practices of the kingdom like making friends or turning the other cheek belie a kind of weakness that is resistance and revolution—a subversion of Imperial order. An alternative description of the politics and practices of weakness, as the ontological alternative to the politics of violence, could claim no efficacy for ensuring peace among the nations, nor in undermining their structures of coercion, nor in replacing those structures with new and better

contextualization of political language in terms of a church who is constituted by and in the God-who-is-love. Indeed, a similar *ontological* distinction needs to be made between the politics of love – tactics, weakness, and practices of peaceableness – and the anti-politics of violence – strategies of force, power, strength, coercion, and status games. Weakness is not a means to an end. The existence of martyrs and the victims are not tactical attempts to wrest coercive power from the world; rather weakness becomes a way of being possible only through the God whose own being is weakness.<sup>264</sup> As noted by Romand Coles:

Witness to Jesus as Lord must *not* be read as a solicitation to strive for a singular and direct knockout victory over outsiders. Instead it calls for multiple particular vulnerable encounters in which the strengths of the church body are little by little brought to light and perhaps themselves radically reformed and renewed.<sup>265</sup>

This notion of the weakness of the church as vulnerability will be looked at closely in chapters 3 and 4. For now it is enough to begin asking the question in light of the flavor of Hauerwas' postliberal political eschatology: What is it exactly that Hauerwas means by his use of words like “tactic” and “weakness?” This is perhaps made clearer in the “Introduction” to the First Edition of *Against the Nations*, when, directly following his reading of Certeau, he offers the following lengthy vision from Milbank:

Instead of Jove, the stayer of proceeding battle, Christians worship the one true God who originates all finite reality in the act of peaceful donation, willing a new fellowship with himself and amongst the beings he has created.

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structures. Rather, a politics of weakness in this sense must be, first and foremost, nothing other than the result of answering the call of Jesus. To participate in the politics of weakness involves being disciplined within the community of disciples, to the person of Christ. The reason for going the extra mile is not to embarrass the Empire through the overacceptance of suffering, but rather to serve all, even those who would crucify the Servant. Finally, the reason for service can be nothing else except the imitation of Christ, and the embrace of the politics of the new *polis* which is Christ's body.

<sup>264</sup> The Christological root of this description of weakness must be distinguished from sociological accounts of weakness as resistance. This is true for sociologists (see Scott, J. C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.) as well as theologians (see Weaver, D. J. 2001. *The Nonviolent Atonement*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.). There is a difference between practices of resistance and the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Chapters 5 and 6).

<sup>265</sup> Coles, R. 2005. *Beyond Gated Politics: Reflections for the Possibility of Democracy*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 127

In the “Heavenly City,” beyond the possibility of alteration, the angels and saints abide in such fellowship; *their virtue is not the virtue of resistance and domination*, but simply of remaining in a state of self-forgetting conviviality. Here there is nothing but “provision of peace,” a condition that originally pertained also to the temporal creation, before the sinful assertion of pride and domination introduced a pervasive presence of conflict leading to death in both society and nature. But God and the heavenly Jerusalem—our “true Mother”—reached down in compassion for the salvation of the world. *Salvation from sin must mean “liberation” from political, economic, and psychic dominium, and therefore from all structures belonging to the saeculum, that temporal interval between the fall and final return of Christ.* This salvation takes the form of a different inauguration of a different kind of community. Whereas the *civitas terrena* inherits its power from the conqueror of a fraternal rival, the City of God on pilgrimage through this world *finds itself not in succession of power*, but on the memory of the murdered brother, Abel slayed by Cain. The City of God is in fact a paradox, “a nomad city” for it does not have a site, or walls, or gates. It is not like Rome, an asylum constituted by the protection offered by the dominating class over a dominated, in the face of an external enemy. This former refuge is, in fact, but a dim archetype of the real refuge provide by the church, which is the forgiveness of sins. *Instead of a peace “achieved through the abandonment of the losers, a subordination of potential rivals and resistance to enemies, the church provides a genuine peace* by its memory of all the victims, its equal concern for all of its citizens and its self-exposed offering of reconciliation to enemies.<sup>266</sup>

In many ways, the above passage shows an inherent contradiction of vision within Milbank’s own project (between *theoria* and *praxis*), yet for Hauerwas, this vision of a peace which is no longer resistance, domination, or plays for power, is instead the self-forgetting made possible by the refuge of the church—which is the site and moment in which the God-who-is-love *becomes* material and temporal—a description of the church’s weakness that cannot help but turn victims into martyrs. In the words of Hauerwas:

There is no more powerful witness to...understanding...salvation as enacted narrative that martyrdom. For it was through martyrdom that the church triumphed over Rome. Rome could kill Christians but they could not victimize them. The martyrs could go to their death confident that the story to which their killers were trying to subject them—that is the story of victimization—was not the true story of their death...For the martyrs their

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<sup>266</sup> from Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 391-392, quoted in Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, p. 22. Italics mine for emphasis.

dying was part of a story that Rome could not acknowledge and remain in power as Rome.<sup>267</sup>

In Hauerwas' early work, the alternative story told by the church (as politics) is the story of a rule that is not based on violence and power, but upon the love of God, which is constituted in submission to crosses.<sup>268</sup> Moreover, when the nations acknowledge the alternative re-storying of the universe in Christ, they can no longer help but cease to be the nations and begin to be the church.

For Hauerwas the most critical ecclesiological metaphor to the church's understanding of itself as God's politics is the description of love as *paoikoi* (resident alien). To be Christ-like in the world is to be *other* than world. The strangeness of the God-who-is-love, and His relationships (to Himself and His Creation), is a strangeness embodied in the church and her relationships. Thus the God whose own being is relationship (Trinity) is the ground that makes intelligible the relationships that constitute the politics-called-church. Politics is the name for the church's day-to-day existence; it is the name for loving relationships within local parishes and the wider catholic church, and for the charity of the church toward the withering authorities of the world. The church is politics, and so her relationships, according to Hauerwas, must always be founded on a commitment to the embodiment of God's peaceable kingdom. Hauerwas' difficulties with American holidays such as Mother's Day, reflect an unease with relationships founded on anything other than the kingdom of God—a dis-ease that Hauerwas sees himself sharing with Jesus (Mt. 12:36-50, Mt. 19:29-30). Thus all relationships, including familial relationships, must be re-imagined by the love of God or else they will become a danger to the community (by encouraging the church to forget her identity and so cease being church). According to Hauerwas

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<sup>267</sup> Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, p. 39

<sup>268</sup> The implication of Hauerwas' (and Yoder's) departure from MacIntyre's understanding of virtuous communities has been demonstrated in Sam Wells's dichotomy between heroes and martyrs. Wells rightly argues that a hero, on Hauerwas' analysis, is a social role in heroic societies which is completely unintelligible to Christians (see Wells, S. "The Disarming Virtue of Stanley Hauerwas." *Scottish Journal of Theology*. 52/1 [1999] pp. 82-8).

[w]hat it means to be Christian, therefore, is that we are a people who affirm that we have come to find our true destiny only by locating our lives within the story of God. The church is the lively argument, extended over centuries and occasioned by the stories of God's calling of Israel and of the life and death of Jesus Christ, to which we are invited to contribute by learning to live faithful to those stories. It is the astounding claim of Christians that through this particular man's story, we discover our true selves and *thus are made part of God's very life*. We become part of God's story by finding our lives within that story.<sup>269</sup>

Indeed, the eschatological memory of that community provides the assurance of the church's continuous existence in several ways – what Hauerwas names “the marks of the church.”<sup>270</sup> These marks, according to Rasmusson, are a description of the “means that God has given the messianic pilgrim people for sustaining its life as ‘resident aliens.’”<sup>271</sup> There are four marks mentioned by Hauerwas: (1) baptism, (2) eucharist, (3) preaching, and (4) the holy life. Whereas baptism is the initiation of members into the body of Christ (a transfer of citizenship from one dominion to another), the eucharist is “the eschatological meal of God's continuing presence that makes possible a peaceable people.”<sup>272</sup> As Rasmusson notes, it is in baptism and eucharist that the Christian story is enacted; they stand as political rituals, forming the identity of the church and witnessing to the in-breaking of the kingdom in the world.<sup>273</sup> Preaching forms the church and challenges it to be faithful to the story—admonishing outsiders to participate in God's good work. Finally, the holy life calls the church to be “a people who are capable of maintaining the life of charity, hospitality, and justice,” so that the church is ultimately known “by the character of the people who constitute it” – the people who are God's love in and for the world.

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<sup>269</sup> Hauerwas, S. (1988). *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between*. Detroit, MI: Labyrinth Press. p. 102. Emphasis mine.

<sup>270</sup> Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 106-11

<sup>271</sup> Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis*, p. 191

<sup>272</sup> Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 108

<sup>273</sup> Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis*, p. 191

Yet Hauerwas notes that “if we lack that character, the world rightly draws the conclusion that the God we worship is in fact a false God.”<sup>274</sup>

For Hauerwas these marks reconstitute, in the midst of the church, the presence of the God-who-is-love. In the Preface to *Resident Aliens*, Hauerwas seeks to remind us of Paul’s words to the Philippians: “God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (2:13), for “[o]ur commonwealth is in heaven” (3:20). As noted by Hauerwas, “in the space of a few lines, Paul has called the Philippians to be part of a quite spectacular journey—namely, to live and to die like Christ, to model their lives so closely upon Christ that they bear within themselves the very mind of Christ.”<sup>275</sup>

In short, the eschatological analogy of the church given by Hauerwas is one of aliens living in a strange land, scraping out a living on someone else’s turf. For Hauerwas, the witness of the church to God’s peaceable kingdom requires tactics rather than strategies, and colonies rather than castles. The eschatological hope of the church is the patient anticipation of the *Eschaton*; faithful witness requires both memory and foresight, that is, the skill to wait with humility. We should not get ahead of ourselves, says Hauerwas, for it is only through humiliation that the church can receive humility. For Hauerwas it is because the kingdom of God *has* already come in Christ that the church can hopefully constitute the love of God in and for the world, between the times.

### **Conclusion: A Peculiarly Postliberal Politics**

*After Christendom* is possibly Stanley Hauerwas’ least popular, and yet most important, book. I say it is least popular because in the preface to the Second Edition Hauerwas describes the book as having fallen “stillborn’ from the press.”<sup>276</sup> *After*

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<sup>274</sup> Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 108

<sup>275</sup> Hauerwas, S. and W. Willimon. 1989. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. p. 11

<sup>276</sup> Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, p. 4

*Christendom* is arguably his most important book for a number of reasons, not least of which is that it provides the theological framework, foundation, and starting point, albeit tentatively, for almost every essay Hauerwas has ever written. That is to say, it provides the *modus operandi* for Hauerwas' entire theological project, first by claiming, with Yoder, that the confession, "Jesus is Lord" is primary to every theological task; second it forces those who would make that claim to acknowledge their liberal, cultural, ethnic, national, modern economic context; third it requires those who recognize their context to examine the language of everyday life in an attempt to disentangle the conflicting allegiances within the most basic words used: such as "we," "city," "politics," "good," etc; finally, it encourages those outside the messianic community to learn, with those already gathered, a new way of speaking. As Hauerwas puts it:

The book requires the reader to submit to a discipline...not unlike the discipline required to learn to lay bricks or to worship God. Just as learning to speak a new language is necessary to learn to lay brick so we must learn again how to speak as Christians. One of the great problems, of course, is that many of the words used in Christian speech have become common. As a result, too often we have lost the oddness of Christian speech because we assume we are adequate speakers because such language is so familiar. The challenge is to rediscover how what we say as Christians forces a reconfiguration of our lives in order that we might see the world as God's good creation.<sup>277</sup>

Of the words that Hauerwas encourages the reader to reclaim, particular attention is given to "politics," "justice," and "sex," all of which are set within the broader attempt to recover the oddness of what Christ has begun in the church. Rather than politics being "the means necessary to secure cooperation between people who share nothing in common other than their desire to survive," politics becomes "the ongoing conversation necessary for the discovery of goods in common,"<sup>278</sup> a definition applauded by both Yoder and MacIntyre. Differences between Hauerwas and O'Donovan arise most clearly when each begins to clarify what is meant by "conversation," "goods," and exactly who is being referred to as being "in common."

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid. p. 6

<sup>278</sup> Ibid. p. 29

This is due in part to Hauerwas' larger claim that politics is always already the church.

The title of the first chapter in *After Christendom* is "The Politics of Salvation: Why There Is No Salvation Outside the Church," the general thrust of which carries through the rest of the book, namely that politics, justice, and sex are activities which only become intelligible inside the church. According to Hauerwas, the church is God's salvation, such that there is no soteriological political conceptuality not informed by the Lordship of Christ. For Hauerwas, politics outside the church can never be anything but the search for lesser goods, which stands as a clear point of departure with both Yoder and O'Donovan. While liberalism can be rejected by all of them because of its impoverished definition of what politics actually is, i.e., a means of contractual survival, O'Donovan, and to a certain extent Yoder (as we will see in Chapter 4), are able to identify in secular political structures (at minimum) a certain usefulness. Yet to embrace the usefulness of secular politics (politics not constituted by the God-who-is-love), while at the same time rejecting the definition of politics given by liberalism, is still liberalism. O'Donovan and Yoder both identify a better vision of politics, which is that embodied in the church; yet their identification of the usefulness of political systems (liberal or not), as violent mechanisms that ensure a survival space for the church, is in fact the precise definition of politics offered by liberalism in the first place. This is exactly the concession that Milbank is making to liberalism when he identifies the need for a temporary and contractual peace.<sup>279</sup> Hauerwas at least realizes that a rejection of political liberalism must include not only the rejection of liberal theory but liberal practice. Thus even non-liberal and pre-liberal political visions must be rejected because they are forced to found the basis for "goods" and "in common" either arbitrarily, or upon foundations other than the God who gives Himself. In the words of Hauerwas:

It was the presumption of those [pre-Constantinian] Christians that they were participants in a grand drama of God's salvation of all creation. Salvation was cosmic, as in Christ's resurrection the very universe was storied by God's

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<sup>279</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. xv (the preface to the second edition). This happens under the guise of Christian socialism.

purposes. The church did not have an incidental part in God's story but was necessary for the salvation wrought in Christ. The church was not and is not a people gathered together in order to remember an impressive but dead founder. Rather the church is those gathered from the nations to testify to the resurrected Lord. Without the church the world literally has no hope of salvation since the church is necessary for the world to know it is part of a story that it cannot know without the church.<sup>280</sup>

For Hauerwas, the testimony of the church to the nations cannot help but be the activity of a politics that is the continuing work of God in the world. Moreover, the church cannot disperse itself among the nations, precisely because it is already gathered in their midst; and for the gathered, the peculiarity of the church cannot help but be a peculiarity of knowledge as well as action.

In the next chapter, I will look at Jeffrey Stout's criticisms of the philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre, which deconstructs half of the Hauerwasian synthesis. I note that Stout's critique leads Hauerwas to make several partial concessions to Stout, and more robust concessions to the radical democrats because of their philosophical appropriation of the other half of the synthesis: Yoder. The result, I argue, is the deconstruction of the Christology at the heart of Hauerwas' description of politics.

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<sup>280</sup> Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, p. 29

## Chapter 3

### **From Postliberal Politics to Radical Democracy? Hauerwas in Dialogue with Stout, Wolin and Coles**

This purpose of this chapter is to look at the recent dialogue between Stanley Hauerwas, Jeffrey Stout, and the radical democrat Romand Coles in order to try and make sense of several inconsistencies in Hauerwas' writings. There is indeed a peculiar discontinuity between Hauerwas' brand of nearly sectarian postliberal theological politics (as described in the last chapter), and his recent sympathy for language of radical democracy—the adoption of which allows him to develop an account of non-confessionally predicated engagements between church and world. This chapter begins by looking at Stout's critique of MacIntyre and the new traditionalists. It goes on to address Hauerwas' response to Stout in terms of suggestions made by Coles and Wolin regarding the possibilities of democracy post-liberalism. This chapter ends by looking at Mark Noll's account of the American Civil War as a theological crisis in which democratic/republican values, when combined with the reading of Scripture, made dialogical conversation between opposing views of Scripture impossible—leading to an explosive and violent adjudication in which the victors claim *right* thanks to God's providential protection.

#### **Stout's Critique**

In his book *Democracy and Tradition*, Jeffrey Stout's principal tasks are to critique the “new traditionalist” (he includes in this list: MacIntyre, Hauerwas, and Milbank) dichotomy between liberal democracy and sectarian moral communities, and to encourage political philosophers to begin thinking about democracy as a tradition, with a rich account of virtues and practices socially embodied, rather than in terms of abstract liberal philosophy, *a la* Rawls. The key to Stout's position involves distancing the practical characteristics of modern democracy from the assertions of liberal philosophers (Locke and Rawls) who are committed to certain intellectual ideals of liberalism not present among, on Stout's analysis, the actual constituents (citizens) of modern democracy—particularly as it is manifested in America. These

assertions include: (1) “a theory of the modern nation-state as ideally neutral with respect to comprehensive conceptions of the good;” and (2) the attempt to “establish political deliberation on a common basis of free public reason, independent of reliance on tradition.”<sup>281</sup> Rawlsian liberalism conceives of a society in which individual liberty is properly basic, and whose *telos* is the preservation of shared rights and duties. As Wolterstorff puts it:

individuals offer each other general rules of engagement and agree to follow these rules, provided others do so as well. Then, as good liberal democrats we debate and decide matters of common concern by appealing to those general rules. Nothing here about tradition.<sup>282</sup>

The absence of tradition is not accidental; for Rawls, tradition represents historical prejudice and as such is antithetical to a universal account of social justice – it is precisely tradition which individuals have been liberated from. Thus Stout’s project is the attempt to repair, or at the very least make secondary, these kinds of intellectualized philosophies of liberalism, while positing democracy as something other than (or perhaps more than) the embodiment of that philosophy. While Stout is critical of liberal philosophy, he does not believe that critiques of liberal philosophy as such can necessarily be extended to the practical embodiment of democracy. Furthermore, Stout not only rejects the primacy of Rawlsian social contract liberalism, he also affirms the importance of tradition; in fact, Stout’s analysis of democracy as tradition is founded on the traditionalists’ description of political activity. According to Stout: “ethical and political reasoning are creatures of tradition and crucially depend on the acquisition of such virtues as practical wisdom and justice.”<sup>283</sup> For Stout, this is precisely the political activity manifested (locally) in modern democracy:

Democracy...*is* a tradition. It inculcates certain habits of reasoning, certain attitudes toward deference and authority in political discussion, and love for certain goods and virtues, as well as a disposition to respond to certain types

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<sup>281</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 2

<sup>282</sup> Wolterstorff, N. “Jeffrey Stout on Democracy and its Contemporary Christian Critics.” *Journal of Religious Ethics*. (November 2005). pp. 633-47. p. 634

<sup>283</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 11

of actions, events or persons with admiration, pity, or horror. This tradition is anything but empty. Its ethical substance, however, is more a matter of enduring attitudes, concerns, dispositions, and patterns of conduct than it is a matter of agreement on a conception of justice in Rawls's sense. The notion of state neutrality and the reason-tradition dichotomy should not be seen as its defining marks. Rawlsian liberalism should not be seen as its official mouthpiece.<sup>284</sup>

On the other hand, says Stout, the new traditionalists, in their reaction to Rawlsian modes of liberal philosophy, have become excessive in their calls for sectarian withdrawal from the democratic project—thanks in large part to the conflation of secularism (as the chief characteristic of liberalism) and democracy. That is to say, they refuse to see democracy as a virtue creating/sustaining political activity. According to Stout,

Traditionalists claim that democracy undermines itself by destroying the traditional vehicles needed for transmitting the virtues from one generation to another. Because traditionalists see democracy as an essentially negative, leveling force—as the opposite of culture—they tend to underestimate the democratic practices to sustain themselves over time...

...They declare the civic nation or modernity itself innately vicious, and then, having no place else to go, identify strictly with communities distinct from democratic society as a whole.<sup>285</sup>

For Stout, there is a third way between Rawls' over-zealous liberal philosophy, and MacIntyre, Hauerwas, and Milbank's call to Christian sectarianism, both of which are "strategies of rhetorical [or conceptual] excess... [that] have outlived their usefulness."<sup>286</sup> This third way involves the identification of democracy as a tradition socially embodied in America, complete with a shared account of the good life and of the virtues and practices not only worth pursuing, but which make life intelligible. Thus Stout's brand of liberalism ought not be identified as liberalism at all, but as a narrative; a narrative that, according to Stout, provides support for the tradition of American democracy and is embodied in the writings of Dewey, Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau.

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid. p.3

<sup>285</sup> Ibid. p. 12

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. p. xi

Stout does not believe that what is required is a re-conceiving of liberalism therefore, but a refusal to use the language of *liberalism*. This is the point at which Hauerwas begins moving away from the use of the term postliberal, agreeing with Stout that “[w]e should do so because, like the description ‘modernity,’ liberalism turns out to be too various to be given any singular identity.”<sup>287</sup> This shift away from the designation postliberal signifies the loss of “MacIntyre” in the MacIntyre/Yoder synthesis that was Hauerwas’ theological politics.

In what follows it will be useful to look at critiques of Stout’s position that one would expect to arise from Hauerwas’ account of postliberalism, before turning to look at the surprising, and seemingly contradictory, response *actually* offered by Hauerwas. It will be shown that perhaps the most important insight made by Hauerwas in his various responses to Stout is that “Stout’s argumentative strategy against Milbank and MacIntyre is to change the subject. Stout simply denies that the kind of democracy he is willing to defend reflects Milbank’s or MacIntyre’s understanding or criticisms of modernity and secularism.”<sup>288</sup> It is the viability of the kind of democracy that Stout is willing to defend, when read against Hauerwas’ postliberalism, that will be the focus of the next section.

### **A Few Hauerwasian Questions**

If Stout is correct in his assertion that democracy *is* in fact a tradition, separate from *ad hoc* liberal philosophical axioms, then there are serious problems with at least *MacIntyre’s* account of the moral fragmentation resulting from the *apotheosis* of Enlightenment, i.e., liberalism. Whether or not these issues ought to affect Hauerwas’ description of the church as politics, and the pseudo-sectarianism such a description implies, will be the focus of the rest of this chapter. Before looking at Hauerwas’ responses to Stout’s position, I will pose a few questions to Stout’s

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<sup>287</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 222

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.* p. 223

project arising from a juxtaposition of *Democracy and Tradition* with Iris Murdoch's *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*.<sup>289</sup>

The similarity between Murdoch and Stout's descriptions of the relationship between morality and politics is most visible in their shared distaste for attempts to found the practical manifestations of liberally-shaped political communities on liberal philosophical axioms. Murdoch notes, "it is difficult for a moral philosopher to say anything of the slightest interest and be 'neutral'."<sup>290</sup> Murdoch talks about the rhetorical and conceptual excesses of liberal philosophy in terms of axioms:

Axioms...are *sui generis*, unsystematic, may involve acknowledged 'fictions', as when it is argued that in liberal politics the most important picture of man is that offered by Hobbes, the self contained private being who, within external limitations, does what he pleases, and, because he is fundamental, is valuable.<sup>291</sup>

Thus for Murdoch, over-zealous axioms of liberal philosophy, like "[r]eferences to 'reason' as...a single and unified authority... [are] usually rhetorical and otiose and should be victims of Occam's razor."<sup>292</sup> What deserves analysis for Murdoch (like Stout), is the viability of modern political arrangements in terms of their ability to sustain shared social descriptions of the moral, despite increased plurality among the populace, particularly regarding the way in which individually intuitive moral judgments can inform and contribute to the moral dialogue of political communities as a whole. For Murdoch, democracy in particular operates via "a general consensus about what things are right and proper, [in such a way that] different views can contend in a reasonable manner."<sup>293</sup> Thus for Murdoch, "a good (decent) state" is

full of active citizens with a vast variety of views and interests, [this state] must preserve a central arena of discussion and reflection wherein differences

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<sup>289</sup> Murdoch, I. 2003. *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. Vintage Classics. New York, NY: Random House.

<sup>290</sup> Murdoch, *Metaphysics*, p. 351

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.* p. 366

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.* p. 367

and individuality are taken for granted. (For instance, religious differences.) Here there are no authoritarian final arbiters, certainly not God, Reason or History. Here general good will, *consent*, maintains a kind of justice which is 'intuitively' understood.<sup>294</sup>

The most important thing to note in all of this is that for Murdoch, there persists a "distinction between morals and politics" that is ultimately an axiomatic dichotomy between the moral duty of the individual and a shared account of moral rights in society as a whole. For Murdoch, "Rights are simpler, and cruder, than duties." Expanding on this description Murdoch notes that "moral rules are tasks set to individuals, whereas axiomatic statements about rights (etc.) are public banners flown for complex reasons which may be partly, even grossly, pragmatic."<sup>295</sup> The only difference between Stout and Murdoch on this point would be that for Stout, moral intuition is not limited to the individual, but to embedded communities within the larger narrative embodiment of the democratic tradition. Christians (thanks to the theology of the Barth, Frei, Lindbeck, Yoder, and Hauerwas) may no longer be interested in the individual choices of Christians alienated from the moral community, but for Stout the activity of individual communities (sub-cultures or sub-traditions) is always already under the purview of democracy, and their operation is reflected (on a larger scale and with more consensus and argument involved) in the same way as the intuitive moral individual in Murdoch's account. That is to say the *virtues* of these communities are transmitted as *values* capable of informing the shared *virtues* of plural democracy.<sup>296</sup> In the words of Murdoch:

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid. p. 366

<sup>295</sup> Ibid. p. 386

<sup>296</sup> On a side note, another characteristic of Murdoch's analysis that might prove useful to Stout lies in her characterization of the demonic individual—particular as a manifestation of liberal philosophy. On MacIntyre's ruling "barbarians" are not peculiarly tyrannical, but are the byproduct of the fragmented culture of liberalism. Indeed, the very essence of modern man is barbarous—uncivilized, because civilization is not possible for the self fragmented from communities of civil virtue. Murdoch identifies the modern man of this view as the "demonic individual." About this demonic individual, Murdoch states:

Perhaps the individual liberated or created by capitalism had a golden age of integral being and virtuous idealism, reflected in the great art forms of the nineteenth century, but now, it is said, has disintegrated and become unconfident and even corrupt. We see...his demonic descendants in ruthless tyrannical regimes and persons, and in western democracies, in egoistic materialistic 'go getters', in pursuit of money, fame, prestige and sex, who are now our most conspicuous citizens (Murdoch, *Metaphysics*, p. 352-3).

Political liberalism is pluralism, the cost must always be counted and there are different ways of counting. Thinking about politics is in certain special respects different from thinking about private morals. One may be ruthless with oneself but not with others.<sup>297</sup>

For Murdoch, even ruthlessness within sub-cultural communities must remain internal to those communities. But what if ruthlessness is a virtue mandated by the self-identify of that sub-culture—that is, what if the “cost...to be counted” makes unintelligible, as it does for Hauerwas, “the cost of discipleship?” For Murdoch, like Stout, “the difference between political morality and private morals” is the “rough-and-ready unavoidably clumsy and pragmatic nature of the former.”<sup>298</sup> While this, for Stout, is the case in modern democracy, thanks exclusively to plurality of moral insight amongst the masses, such a distinction axiomatically assumes a dichotomy between private and public drawn from Rawls, Hobbes, and Locke. It will be useful to look at Stout’s description of the rise of secularism as the historical attempt to negotiate a life in common against the backdrop of American pluralism. Of particular interest will be whether or not moral historical pluralism by definition presupposes the axiomatic public/private moral distinction—what William Connolly has dubbed “the bias of pluralism.”<sup>299</sup>

Stout’s distinction between historically contingent liberalism and philosophical liberalism is demonstrated throughout *Democracy and Tradition*, but I will limit the scope of my analysis to the shape it takes in his critique of *Radical Orthodoxy*. According to Stout, Milbank et al. are guilty of conflating modernity and secularization. According to Stout,

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Yet if the demonic man is a failed caricature of the citizen, as Stout would have us believe, and if the tradition of liberal democracy in practices sustains civil virtue and intelligibility, then it would be worth pursuing elsewhere what particular vision of human nature Stout’s account is founded—and where such a position fits in with a Christian account of man, the fall, and the exaltation.

<sup>297</sup> Murdoch, *Metaphysics*, p. 369

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.* p. 381

<sup>299</sup> Connolly, W. 1969. *The Bias of Pluralism*. New York: Atherton.

One reason for doubting that the mythos or ideology of secularism is what caused the secularization of public discourse is that its proponents have never had the numbers or the clout to change the world...According to this theory, modernity is a progressively secularizing force in the sense that it tends to produce increasing levels of disbelief and disenchantment. The trouble is that this theory now lies in shambles, having had nearly all of its predictions falsified over the last four decades...

What drove the secularization of political discourse forward was the increasing need to cope with religious plurality discursively on a daily basis under circumstances where improved transportation and communication were changing the political and economic landscape. Secularization of the kind I have described did, however, give rise to desacralization of the political sphere and to secularist ideology as an attempt to explain and justify it.<sup>300</sup>

For Stout, secularization ought not be referred to as an intellectual enterprise, but as the historical byproduct of living together in pluralistic democracies. Yet even if pluralism is a historical creator of practical secularism, the necessary distinction between public and private exists precisely because independent moral communities are embedded within the larger social embodiments of democratic tradition. What Stout fails to understand is that for *Radical Orthodoxy*, secularization (in its practical manifestation) is not the attempt to privatize or remove religion from the public sphere in a pluralistic society, but is in fact the public-ation of it. In America, the sacred became translatable without reference to mystery or revelation thanks in large part to the construction of a higher-order common language, manifested in liberal axioms, which denote an end to any notion of the incommensurability of the Christian tradition. Whether or not the formulation of such axioms came before or after the practical embodiment of them is beside the point. This is the case precisely because secularization (both practical and axiomatic) was never the replacement of sacred ontology or traditions with secular ones, but the embedding of the sacred into a public non-sacred tradition. While pluralism was most likely the driving force behind the well-intentioned translation of particular sacred traditions into the shared common vernacular, it is wishful thinking to believe such a project to have failed. Indeed, such a project *is* precisely that which MacIntyre, Hauerwas, Yoder, and *Radical Orthodoxy* describe when talking about Enlightenment liberalism. Stout then, denies the incommensurability of traditions, whereas MacIntyre, Hauerwas, and

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<sup>300</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 102

Milbank affirm it, albeit to different degrees. Just because democracy is a tradition does not mean that it is not a tradition which refrains from dissolving, absorbing, or fragmenting other traditions, and in doing so expunging the particularity of them.<sup>301</sup>

Hauerwas' description of postliberalism, as described up to this point, seems to require a questioning of how to lovingly yet faithfully navigate the distance between these two traditions—Christianity and American democracy; whereas for Stout, as demonstrated above, they are not rival, rather one tradition is embedded in another (Christianity is just another voice in the great conversation)—and this is precisely why secularization, practical or not, requires a common language. While the tradition of virtues in American democracy cannot help but be affected due to local proximity with Christian neighbors, and vice versa, and while this itself may be a central virtue of dialogue within the democratic tradition, that does not necessarily make it a virtue for the church. For Hauerwas the vice versa part represents a serious problem, that is, how to keep the church the church in the midst of the world. The impact of Christian virtue on American democracy might be seen as the necessary result of the practice of Christian charity (and evangelism) toward neighbors in the world.<sup>302</sup> As such, the replication of Christian virtues in American democracy may even be lauded by the church as a good first step towards ceasing to be the world; yet for Hauerwas' project, such a step ought never allow the church to forget that the world is the world, or to legitimate American political arrangements as such. Under no circumstances can the church, for evangelical purposes, give in to the temptation, under the guise of "practical necessity," of translating Christian particularity into a common language. Hauerwas' postliberalism, asks the question, of both Murdoch

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<sup>301</sup> Badiou's description of this attitude is extraordinarily helpful for understanding what exactly is the problem within Stout's claim: "It will be claimed, for example, that a cultural or religious particularity is bad if it does not include within itself respect for other particularities. But this is obviously to stipulate that the formal universal already be included in the particularity. Ultimately, the universality of respect for particularities is only the universality of universality. This definition is fatally tautological. It is the necessary counterpart of a protocol – usually a violent one – that wants to eradicate genuinely particular particularities (i.e., immanent particularities) because it freezes the predicates of the latter into self-sufficient identitarian combinations." Badiou, A. and S. Žizek. 2009. *Philosophy in the Present*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 30.

<sup>302</sup> There is something of this in Hunsinger's description of the confessing church in America. (See Hunsinger, G. 2000. *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. p. 89-113).

and Stout: how can the particularity of Christian communal culture be sustained when it is always already embedded within an overarching narrative of American culture? Or conversely: how does one sustain a politics-of-love without the God-who-is-love? The answer: only by removing Godself, the source of love (of being-in-common) itself. This process is the justification of liberal philosophy in practice, if not in name. Whether the generative cause of American democracy-as-incorporation is liberal philosophy or cultural pluralism, the result is a politics constituted by a love that is simultaneously God-less and polytheistic. The fictions of liberal philosophical axioms, *ad hoc* or not, are necessary to make intelligible the operation of American democracy. And as Murdoch says, “If a fiction is necessary enough, it is not a lie.”<sup>303</sup>

While MacIntyre may be wrong in his assessment of democracy *qua* liberalism as something other than a narrative tradition, he still has the ability to critique it, on his own terms, in light of liberal democracy’s fictional character. In his discussion of the narratives necessary for storying traditions, and the communities which embody them, MacIntyre says:

It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told—except in the case of fiction.<sup>304</sup>

Even if Stout is right in assuming that secularism, as embodied in liberal democracy, is historically prior to the philosophical axioms that later attempted to explain it, those axioms are, regardless, necessary fictions if citizens are to make intelligible their lives. For a tradition to be a tradition the story is lived, and then told, but the narrative of previous generations locates, and to a certain extent limits and qualifies, the possibility of the stories being lived. Furthermore, Louis Mink has described the inability of liberalism to provide an account for its own past, noting that:

The great controversies of rationalism and empiricism now appear to have been complementary phases of the enterprise, extending over three centuries,

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<sup>303</sup> Murdoch, *Metaphysics*, p. 1

<sup>304</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 212

to construct a comprehensive account of the relation between our direct perception of the world and our inferential knowledge of that world through the discoveries of natural science. In this epistemological enterprise there was no room for either imaginative worlds or the inaccessible world of the past. The latter, in particular, appeared significant only as something not perceptible, not as something past. In the riot of epistemological theories...in which the modern epoch of philosophy came to an end within recent memory, not one took seriously the problem of how it is possible that the past should be knowable, although each constructed a more or less embarrassed appendix which restored some sort of cognitive status to history, some possibility of meaning to "statements about the past."<sup>305</sup>

Thus the genealogy of democracy extends backward to the Enlightenment wherein, for MacIntyre, a fictional story was created, embodied in philosophical liberal axioms. These axioms represent the tradition's fictional starting point. Even if the axioms were created in order to make sense of what was being lived "on the ground," they are, nevertheless, fictions.

Stout attempts his own description of necessary fictions, noting that in one sense, they are *really* (metaphysically) true, and in one sense they are not. His reference in this regard is not to liberal axioms *qua* universalism, but to the pragmatic (democratic) *making* of a linguistic reality in which moral claims can be uttered true (truth-talk) without worrying about the metaphysical complexities of representation and correspondence (realism), or without reducing moral claims to descriptive appearance, verificationism / justificationism, and ultimately relativism (classical pragmatism). Stout identifies his position as "modest pragmatism,"<sup>306</sup> what Mark Johnston has described as "minimalism." According to Johnston, minimalism is the view on which

ordinary practitioners may naturally be led to adopt metaphysical pictures as a result of their practices and perhaps a little philosophical prompting, the practices [however] are typically not dependent on the truth of the pictures.

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<sup>305</sup> Mink, L. O. "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension." *New Literary History*. 1:3. (Spring 1970). pp. 541-58. p. 542

<sup>306</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 251

Practices that endure and spread are typically justifiable in nonmetaphysical terms.<sup>307</sup>

Thus for Johnston, the correct understanding of communal practice is an understanding which has “given no *crucial* hostages to metaphysical fortune.”<sup>308</sup> Of course this position already assumes Foucault’s objective Gaze. In other words, Johnston’s notion of justification assumes that one can observe a practice from the outside (as other: without relation to the practice) and judge its utility, that is to say, its “worthiness to survive on the testing ground of everyday life.”<sup>309</sup> The point, according to Stout, is “that recent developments in the philosophy of language have vindicated the plausibility of pursuing a nonmetaphysical approach to truth, an approach that makes the notion of truth seem like an inappropriate focal point for large-scale cultural angst.”<sup>310</sup> Moreover, Stout writes:

You can have the concept of moral truth and an ethos of fallibility and self-criticism, it seems to me, without adopting a theory that makes moral facts or “the moral law” capable of explaining what it is for true moral propositions to be true...Citizens are better advised to keep their commitment to democracy free from the unresolved disputes of the metaphysicians.<sup>311</sup>

For Stout then, necessary moral axioms (or moral claims) are neither fictional nor true, rather, they are simply justified, the basis of which is utility. Yet for those who hold metaphysical vision as more than just accidental to practices, and who find the justification of moral belief to involve comparing “ought” with “is,” Stout’s position cannot help but seem dangerous. The universal claims which arise from democratic conversation (on the practices inherent to democracy) then are indisputably justified as they are grounded on public utility—the metaphysical truth-fiction of majority will. For Stout, the moral claims of the democratic polity seek to justify not the moral

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<sup>307</sup> Johnston, M. “Objectivity Refigured: Pragmatism without Verificationism” in Haldane, J. and C. Wright (eds.). 1993. *Reality, Representation, and Projection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 85

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 252

<sup>311</sup> Ibid. p. 253-4

claims themselves, but the social polity which makes the claims. Revision of moral claims is required, and indeed this is the process of democratic conversation, when practice (among the majority) changes. When such change occurs, new moral justifications (and a new metaphysics) are required in order to make sense of changing practices of the polity. Such a position relegates moral language to rhetoric and propaganda, and the moral majority within the polity to tyranny.

### **Hauerwas' Actual Response**

Hauerwas' *Performing the Faith* is a strange and contrary book. In it Hauerwas provides an interpretation of Bonhoeffer's description of the distinctive performance of the church in the midst of the world, and in so doing buttresses much of what he has argued about the practice of postliberal politics in his earlier writings. Yet the book also contains a contradiction of his postliberalism as previously articulated, by making concessions to the democratic pragmatism as envisioned partly in Stout, and more fully in the radical democracy of Wolin and Coles. The reason for the contrariety of *Performing* cannot help but be due in part to the publication of *Democracy and Tradition* prior to its release, in which, as we have seen, much of what Hauerwas had taken for granted in the critique of liberalism as provided in MacIntyre was called into question. Thus, *Performing* works as a response to Stout in the midst of his reading of Bonhoeffer. Indeed, the concluding postscript is explicitly a response to Stout, and works to frame, and in some places contradict, much of what comes before.

There are three areas in which Hauerwas makes concessions to Stout's project, the first hints of which are present in *Performing the Faith*, but which are more fully articulated in a follow up article entitled "Democratic Time."<sup>312</sup> These include: language and definitions, truth-telling, and Christological memory. In what follows I will address the nature of each concession and the ways in which they contradict Hauerwas' own best insights regarding the distinctively Christian character of postliberal politics.

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<sup>312</sup> Hauerwas, S. "Democratic Time." *Cross Currents*. (Winter 2006) pp. 534-53.

In *Resident Aliens*, Hauerwas and Willimon assert that the political terms of postliberal Christians can only be made intelligible if such terms are properly Christological, noting that:

The church really does not know what these words mean apart from the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth...It is Jesus' story that gives content to our faith, and teaches us to be suspicious of any political slogan that does not need God to make itself intelligible.<sup>313</sup>

For Hauerwas and Willimon, there is a significant danger involved in failing to discern the content (and context) which informs every political utterance. The influence of liberalism (and the desire to be efficiently evangelical) has given rise to a tendency in the church to, as previously discussed, translate distinctly Christian terms into a common worldly vernacular. As Hauerwas and Willimon say, "Big words like 'peace' and 'justice,' slogans the church adopts under the presumption that even if people do not know what 'Jesus Christ is Lord' means, they will know what peace and justice mean, are words awaiting content."<sup>314</sup> The problem with liberal political definitions, for Hauerwas and Willimon, is that such an attempt on the part of the church assumes the possibility of having an intelligible context/content independent of the love of God.

Yet in *Performing the Faith*, Hauerwas limits his critique of competing contexts that posit *achristological* imaginings of justice and truth, focusing particularly on the case of democratic liberalism. Hauerwas' critique of liberalism's redefinition of political terms reflects primarily the external/structural critique of liberalism in MacIntyre (as opposed to the Christological critique from Yoder). Hauerwas states, "liberal accounts of justice have tried to make justice an end in itself abstracted from the constitutive goods named through the practices necessary for the achievement of those goods,"<sup>315</sup> moreover, "liberal social orders do not have the means to

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<sup>313</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, p. 38

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 231

acknowledge goods in common. Such goods in liberal theory are at best confused with common interest.”<sup>316</sup> Hauerwas’ description here of the liberal project’s failure, in both theory and practice, fails to take into account Stout’s response, namely that democracy can and does in practice provide a common account of the good and the virtuous. For Stout, the common good will often reflect common interest, but a specific descriptive content *is* provided in democracy. Instead of falling back on MacIntyre in order to provide an external critique of liberalism at this point, Hauerwas would have more luck returning to his argument in *Resident Aliens*, that *any* content for political terms not Christologically founded on the love of God makes the use of such terms unintelligible to Christians—conversely, any Christological basis for these terms will be necessarily unintelligible to the world. It is not so much that Hauerwas ought to “resist those who... [think] that justice qua justice...[is] more important than the justice God has shown us in the cross and resurrection of Jesus,”<sup>317</sup> rather he should be about the task of affirming that justice is only justice because the God-who-is-love *is* justice. As Hauerwas notes elsewhere, Bonhoeffer claims that “neither a static concept of peace...nor even a static concept of truth...comprehends the Gospel concept of peace in its troubled relationship to the concepts of truth and righteousness.”<sup>318</sup> Which is to say that: “No peace is peace but that which comes through the forgiveness of sins. Only the peace of God preserves truth and justice.”<sup>319</sup> The problem for Hauerwas is that he fails to respond to Stout in such uncompromised terms, perhaps partly out of worry that he will once again be called sectarian for what ought to be his necessary *inability* to compromise. This is true in part due to what he says he learned from Yoder, namely that: “If you cannot kill those with whom you may disagree, it becomes all the more important to learn to listen to what they have to say. At times the commitment to nonviolence may mean you can only listen from a distance, but you still have to listen.”<sup>320</sup> The trick for

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid. p. 228-9

<sup>317</sup> Ibid. p. 230

<sup>318</sup> Bonhoeffer, D. 1965. *No Rusty Swords: letters, lectures and notes 1928-1936*. E. H. Robertson (ed.). London: Collins. p. 169

<sup>319</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 60

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. p. 229

Hauerwas comes in finding an appropriate description of what such distance entails. Geographical or local closeness to the democratic conversation in practice is a given; the danger lies in the attempt to talk from within that tradition as opposed to that of the church, or in assuming that the Christian tradition is, thanks to geography, already embedded within the democratic one. If Hauerwas wishes to offer an external critique it should be in terms of the incommensurability of rival traditions.

### **Truth-Telling**

The problem becomes more explicit in Hauerwas' admission that he is "largely sympathetic with Stout's account of 'common morality'."<sup>321</sup> In Stout's account, the construction, evolution, and maintenance of common morality in democracy arises from pluralism in conversation. The danger of Hauerwas' sympathy stems from a premise implicit in the notion of democratic common morality that Christians might have something to say in such a conversation that does not appeal to Christ, or to the political community inaugurated by him. For the Hauerwas of *Resident Aliens*, it is simply the case that when the church uses the word "love," or "justice," or "peace" its referent is the God-who-is-love, and so already a word that the world refuses to hear. Stout's position on the other hand recapitulates the Murdochian dichotomy between public and private defining "inspired speech"<sup>322</sup> as the contribution of individual intuitions (of moral duty) to the common discourse on universal rights and responsibilities in the social polity. This is a position that the Hauerwas of *Performing* inexplicably furthers when he concedes that his own description of "witness" in *With the Grain of the Universe* is "not dissimilar" to the "inspired speech" in Stout's account of "democratic pragmatism."<sup>323</sup>

The contrariety within Hauerwas' descriptive account of the task of Christian truth-telling is perhaps best illustrated by his qualification of Rawls, whilst discussing

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid. p. 226n21

<sup>322</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 167

<sup>323</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 226n21

Christian particularity in Barth and Bonhoeffer. In commenting on Rawls' claim that, "The zeal to embody the whole truth in politics is incompatible with an idea of public reason that belongs with democratic citizenship,"<sup>324</sup> Hauerwas says that "one should at least ask Rawls whether, if politics cannot deal with the 'whole truth,' is it not the case that 'smaller truths' might be important for any politics that would be an alternative to naked power."<sup>325</sup> Yet the *attempt* (to be distinguished from the *accident*) to inspire democratic discussion via the incorporation of "smaller truths" is antithetical to what Hauerwas claims<sup>326</sup> to have learned from Barth and Bonhoeffer: in the first case, "that it is the preaching of justification of the Kingdom of God, which founds, here and now, the true system of law, the true State,"<sup>327</sup> i.e., the church; and in the second, that it is

[p]recisely because of our attitude to the state, the conversation here must be completely honest for the sake of Jesus Christ...We must make it clear—fearful as it is—that the time is very near when we shall have to decide between National Socialism and Christianity. It may be fearfully hard and difficult for us all, but we must get right to the root of things, with open Christian speaking and no diplomacy.<sup>328</sup>

For Bonhoeffer, the prioritization of truthful speaking cannot be diluted or broken down into "smaller truths," even in the best interests of diplomacy and discussion. And for Bonhoeffer this "means protest against any form of the church which does not honour the question of truth above all things."<sup>329</sup>

Once again the failure of Hauerwas is two-fold, both internal and external. Internally, he sells the church short by implying the possibility of politics informed by the transmission of "smaller" truths (God-less loves) that ultimately do not make claims

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<sup>324</sup> Rawls, J. "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" in Rawls, J. 2001. *The Law of Peoples: with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"*. pp. 129-80. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 133

<sup>325</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 56n1

<sup>326</sup> In *Ibid.* p. 55-67

<sup>327</sup> Barth, K. 1960. *Community, State, and Church*. New York: Anchor Books. p. 126

<sup>328</sup> Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, p. 286-7

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* 159

of discipleship (calls to love) on the hearer. And externally, Hauerwas fails to assert a doctrine of complete incommensurability between traditions, a point conceded by his recognition of “common morality” as morality at all.

In his article, *Democratic Time*, Hauerwas finally challenges Stout’s definition of democracy, but for all the wrong reasons, arguing that Stout’s distinction between democracy and liberalism is problematic primarily due to his conflation of American political life and democracy. According to Hauerwas, Stout would have better luck if he ceased providing an apologetic for the American political tradition in particular, and paid more attention to the local modes of democratic practice in the communities of which he is a part. Hauerwas admits his perplexity saying, “What is not clear to me is how Stout understands the democracy fostered in his neighborhood is connected with, depends on, or is a manifestation of, what he takes to be the ‘civic nations.’”<sup>330</sup> A better project, in Hauerwas’ estimation, is that conceived in the work of radical democrat Romand Coles, who draws on the work of Wolin and Yoder in order to establish a working account of democracy as, in the words of Wolin, “inherently unstable, inclined toward anarchy, and identified with revolution... This democracy might be summed up as the idea and practice of rational disorganization.”<sup>331</sup> Democracy thus envisioned “cannot be a complete political system, but rather democracy can only succeed temporarily as a witness to a political mode of existence that exists through memory.”<sup>332</sup> Indeed, for Coles, this is precisely what Yoder offers us through his ecclesiology, namely, “the local piecemeal approach of reciprocal translation”<sup>333</sup> that makes Christian virtuous practices, like patience, intelligible to the world; this is demonstrated via the vision in Yoder’s writings

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<sup>330</sup> Hauerwas, *Democratic Time*, p. 537

<sup>331</sup> Wolin, S. “Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy,” in Euben, J. P. Wallach, J. R. and J. Ober (eds.). 1994. *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*. pp. 29-58. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. p. 47

<sup>332</sup> Hauerwas, *Democratic Time*, p. 546

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.* 542

of dialogical communities that that bring...forth very particular and powerful practices of generous solidarity precisely *through* creative uses of conflict and a vulnerable receptivity to the “least of these” within the church and to those without it.<sup>334</sup>

Even this brief description of Coles’ interpretation of Yoder as a radical democrat should raise red flags, as such a position seems to contradict Hauerwas’ insistence on Christological unintelligibility (incommensurability) outside the community of believers; a position which, as we have seen, Hauerwas’ previous arguments have attributed principally to Yoder. The next chapter will go on to address the *aporias* in Yoder’s writing, and the reasons for them, in an attempt to challenge, or at least partly call into question, Coles’ reading of Yoder. For now it will be useful to look at the relationship forged between Wolin and Coles, and the dangerous way in which Hauerwas responds to it.

The danger for Coles is that those of “us” within teleological traditions “will be deaf and violent in our relations with others who resist the teleologies we embrace”<sup>335</sup>; which explains to some extent, his preoccupation with a thinker like John Howard Yoder—a member of a sect which has historically been killed by everyone, including other Christians, and who is yet committed to the notion of the “church as a community that engages otherness within and beyond its walls in a radically dialogical fashion.”<sup>336</sup> Coles’ description of Yoder’s ecclesiology in these terms filters Christian practice through the lens of radical democracy, which Coles argues is the “constitutive *tension* between teleological and ateleological responsibilities.”<sup>337</sup>

Coles describes how the constitutive tension of democracy ought to be navigated, writing:

We have teleological responsibilities to dialectically listen to and cultivate the knowledge and practices we inherit in order to help orient further efforts to

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<sup>334</sup> Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*, p. 110

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.* p. 111

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.* p. xv. Italics mine.

deepen democracy, for these contain—among other things—potent sedimentations of other such judgments and struggles. We must search our inheritance for the wisdom that might be found there and work it immanently in an effort to discern as well the damages and dangers that also reside within it—and within us. Such dialectical responsibilities are integral to the ethical and political efforts of the finite historical beings we are. At the same time, beyond the limits of our teleological efforts to critically extend the traditions we inherit, the indeterminacies and finitude of our condition call us to recognize how crucial are our ateleological receptive responsibilities to be radically open to and opened by others and new events beyond “our traditions.”<sup>338</sup>

The “double responsibility” of democracy, therefore, is to: (1) encourage citizens to “cultivate dialectically” inherited teleological traditions, while at the same time interrogating what is received from those traditions, a process of *traditioning*; and also (2) “cultivate radically ateleological receptivity.”<sup>339</sup> To put it another way, those with inherited teleological commitments must listen to and dialogue with others, from external, rival, or fragmented traditions—the outcasts, the marginalized, and the prisoners. The importance of Yoder’s ecclesiology for Coles’ project is that Yoder’s understanding of radical reformation Christian practices reflects both of these responsibilities: in the first case by proposing peaceable methods of discernment and reconciliation when faced with conflict, and in the second case by offering hospitality to strangers. I will address Coles’ interpretation of each of these characteristics as found in Yoder, as well as possible problems with his interpretation, before moving on to look briefly at Coles’ use of Wolin and Hauerwas’ response to the radical democratic project.

According to Coles, Yoder describes the Christian tradition in terms of *traditioning*. Traditioning, for Yoder, requires more than a blind acceptance of inherited wisdom, but a critical engagement with the tradition of which one is a part; a dialogical activity that leads each generation to cultivate the “expectation of newness.”<sup>340</sup> Yoder writes: “Far from being an ongoing growth like a tree (or a family tree) the

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid. p. xv

<sup>339</sup> Ibid. p. xvi

<sup>340</sup> Yoder, *Priestly Kingdom*, p. 38

wholesome growth of a tradition is like a vine: a story of constant interruption of organic growth in favor of a pruning and a new chance for roots.”<sup>341</sup> Interruption requires receptivity to “the need to be corrected,”<sup>342</sup> and the willingness to engage in a “midcourse correction.”<sup>343</sup> The recognition that such reform is needed requires a “reaching back” to the canon (as discussed in terms of the *didaskalos* in Chapter 1). Thus traditioning is the “perennially unfinished process of critiquing the developed tradition from the perspective of its own roots”<sup>344</sup> in such a way that the church’s movement through history is as “a continuing series of new beginnings.”<sup>345</sup> As Coles puts it:

Thus truth is always a finite historical incarnation. For Yoder what might endure is a community of vulnerable dialogical practices responsive to Jesus in their reaching back to Scripture for illumination; one that might allow truth to manifest itself ever anew in the specificities of historical encounter and discernment.<sup>346</sup>

In terms of radical democracy, the teleological responsibility of Yoder’s ecclesiology lies in a critical excavation of the roots, along with receptivity to the possibilities of (re)newness.

Yet dialogical interruptions and opportunities for critical examination are not limited to insiders. Indeed, when the church is incapable of seeing internal flaws in its own makeup, it will often be the marginalized outsiders who are responsible for challenging the insiders to reconceive their collective logic and activity. These challenging engagements cannot help but require a looping back to the canon, thus

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid. p. 69

<sup>342</sup> Ibid. p. 70

<sup>343</sup> Ibid. p. 87

<sup>344</sup> Ibid. p. 17

<sup>345</sup> Ibid. p. 133. Bernd Wannewetsch takes this a step further noting the relationship between critical dispute and receptivity in terms of the possibility of consensus: “Because it [worship] envisages consensus as a genuine option it makes dispute really possible for the first time—possible and also real.” Wannewetsch, B. 2004. *Political Worship: Ethics for Christian Citizens*. Trans. M. Kohl. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 304

<sup>346</sup> Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*, p. 116

the result of dialogical interaction can never be predicted, rather it opens the church up to the possibility of newness. However, every dialogue has two speakers, and just as the teleological community must be vulnerably receptive to ateleological interruption from outside, so must the ateleological be open to challenge from the teleological. According to Coles, Yoder's call for the church to be vulnerable (open) to strangers (ateleological surprises), and engaged "for the nations," is manifested

in multiple ways, ranging from critical resistance, to community practices embodying and proclaiming an alternative Gospel ethics, to the flexible experimentation of a minority community in ways that often have broader implications and uses, to selective tactical alliances and forms of cooperation with other groups.<sup>347</sup>

Many of these engagements will be the chief focus of the following chapter; for now it is enough to note that engagements between the teleological community called church and ateleological outsiders are in a dialogical tension by which each continuously calls the other to radically examine the practices, and accepted wisdom, that inhabits the present instance of traditioning newness that each manifests—a process Coles calls radical democracy.

Yet it is important to note that Coles' account is explicitly "not confessional."<sup>348</sup> As Coles puts it, "I imagine that my own project is inflected less by Christianity and more by a struggling faith in a *traditio* of discontinuous and discrepant insurgent struggles of radical democracy."<sup>349</sup> Yet as we have seen, in the attempt to uncover the kind of practices necessary for sustaining the struggles of radical democracy, Coles uses Yoder as an example of radical democracy in action. That Coles' interest is solely on the sociological-pragmatic *modes* of radical democracy derivable from Yoder's ecclesiology (and separable from his Christology) begins to become apparent when Coles writes:

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid. p. 111

<sup>348</sup> Ibid. p. xxxii

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

There is no Christian ecclesiology that could forego the evangelical proclamation to others that Jesus is Lord—that he calls us to peace, to voluntarily radically dialogical communities, to a witnessing of the wild heterogeneity of giftedness, to the cessation of coercive hierarchies, to generous sharing of wealth in both production and consumption, and to attention in every sense to the “least of these.”<sup>350</sup>

Indeed, at the beginning of the chapter “The Wild Patience of John Howard Yoder,” Coles warns the reader that he is about the task of “translation,” i.e., making Yoder’s project intelligible to radical democrats and vice versa. Rather than the herald being a call to gather around Christ, it is a call to enter into “radically dialogical communities” whose practices sound vaguely Christian in shape, but which could be Buddhist, anarchist, Communist, etc.; a fact due entirely to the total removal of the offensiveness of confessional language from the description of those practices. Without such a removal Coles’ translation (and the creation of a higher-level language) would be impossible, and Yoder’s Christologically-informed practices would be of interest to radical democrats at best as unintelligible behavior and at worst, sectarian.<sup>351</sup> The practices themselves are intelligible to the church only by virtue of remembering (looping-back) the source from which they come, and by the way such activities have trained them to be people capable of remembering. Because no Christian ecclesiology can forego that evangelical proclamation, “Jesus is Lord,” Coles is forced to do it for them. It is worth quoting Coles at length in order to observe his deft use of Yoder’s own words in order to justify this move on Yoder’s own terms:

Crucial to this project is translating “our Word into their words,” “one particular community at a time” (“Meaning after Babble,” 132). This is not a call to trim the Gospel to whatever “public discourse” claims to be sovereign in the surrounding world. Rather, faithful to their scriptural roots, Christians should contest the discourses and powers that govern the world when those powers contradict the politics of Jesus. But this means that, far from simply bearing witness in their “own” idioms, they must also communicate in “terms familiar to particular outsiders,” as the messianic Jews did when they openly “seized [the world’s] categories, hammered them into other shapes” that often

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid. p. 124

<sup>351</sup> Mark Thiessen Nason provides an apologetic for Yoder’s translation of Christian practice into the world non-confessionally via the practice of conflict resolution in Nason, M. T. 2005. *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

radically reformed or reversed their meaning (*Priestly Kingdom*, 54). In so doing they bore witness in such a way that the others who were invited to respond could truly hear it. “Interworldly grammars” are often generated in these encounters (56), but none should “renew the vain effort to find assurance beyond the flux of unendingly meeting new worlds, or to create a metalanguage above the clash” (60). The church’s assurance and the other’s acceptance are the stuff of ever renewed challenges.<sup>352</sup>

The question as to whether Yoder is actually guilty of conceding Christological particularity by discarding confessional language as offensive will be addressed at length in the next chapter. What is important to take as a given for now is that at the least, evangelism (mission) and dialogue are, for Yoder, codependent activities. Indeed an underlying question which this thesis attempts to provide an answer to is whether the church has the capability of “enter[ing] concretely into the other community...long enough, deeply enough, vulnerably enough” or even at all, while still maintaining its identity as “church.” Hauerwas’ description of the postliberal politics called “church” by definition, refused even the possibility of that engagement as one of “entering.” Indeed, the church, for Hauerwas, was always already both scattered and gathered within the midst of nations. The emphasis was on staying faithfully the church, vulnerable and “the weakest of these,” without taking up the violent and greedy habits of liberalism and Constantinianism. For Hauerwas, honest dialogue with the world almost always took the form of polemical argument—vulnerable in the sense that, “you can kill us but at least we’ll tell you the truth first.” But on Coles’ reading of Yoder, even the church’s ability to confess “Jesus is Lord,” is called into question, or at least tempered by something prior, namely the virtue of patience *qua* patience, rather than patience *qua* Jesus.

Christologically timeful patience must be a virtue of people awaiting *parousia*. But as Coles notes—the way that such patience applies to the powers, a list of idolatries, according to Coles, which includes self-aggrandizing “power, mammon, fame and efficacy”—is never to the powers as such, but to the “other subject peoples” enslaved by them.<sup>353</sup> Yet how can eschatological patience ever be more than simply: waiting

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<sup>352</sup> Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*, pp. 124-5

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.* p. 132

in hope, evangelical dialogue which names the enslaving powers, and the invitation for outsiders to enter into a commonwealth of freemen? Moreover, eschatological patience is a virtue, the memory of which is sustained by a “looping back” to the canon within the canon, the practices of which manifest *caritas* (the love of God) via witness, a “receiving of others with radical vulnerability,”<sup>354</sup> not merely in terms of openness to the surprises (ateleological directions) they might wish to give, but a willingness to see and share the suffering of those whose vulnerability has been radically exploited by the powers—the weakest of these. Patience, no matter how wild or radical, cannot be patience if it eschews the God-who-is-love and who makes all love possible, nor if it rejects the judgment required to disciple the church to that confession. Certain judgments—such as those which hold that Christ has triumphed over powers that are still in rebellion—are necessary if Christians are to train themselves, reflexively to be sure, to be people capable of understanding and remembering what patience is. Judgments about truth do not preclude vulnerability for the church; indeed they make it not only possible but necessary.

Yet in Coles’ reading of Yoder, patience is nothing more than “radical indeterminacy.”<sup>355</sup> Coles writes:

the meaning and relevance of “His [Christ’s] victory” breaks off into indeterminacy when faced with other subject peoples “for themselves.” Those within the church simply cannot know if their good news is the best news for other subject peoples.<sup>356</sup>

To put it another way, the church’s confession that “Jesus is Lord” is good for those within the church, but the church cannot make truth-claims that result in judgments about what is good for anyone else. What the church can offer to do is surprise the world, by introducing new teleological or ateleological directions to those who find themselves subjugated. The danger in making judgments then, involves falling into

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid. p. 111

<sup>355</sup> Ibid. p. 132

<sup>356</sup> Ibid. p. 133

the trap of assuming that “exemplary relations are to be *within* the church.”<sup>357</sup> Coles continues,

does “Jesus as head” structure relations with people outside it around a rigid hierarchical privileging of Christian vision... In other words, might not “Jesus as Lord” constitute a radical deafness to nonbelievers and a confinement of prophesy to those within the church, so that the dialogic conditions of *agape* within give way to monological practices toward others outside in a manner likely to proliferate blindness and violence—certainly not the careful discernment that might make vital giving and receiving possible?<sup>358</sup>

For Coles, confessional judgments only avoid the tendency toward deafness, blindness, invulnerability and violence if such judgments are deemed truthful *only* within the confines of a particular dialogical community, in this case the church. Even then they will be open to revision, reform, or rejection, as each current social embodiment of the *traditio* continually “loops back” in order to determine if such judgments are worthwhile in light of internal dialogue with “members” and external dialogue with “others.” Coles’ reading of Yoder in this regard makes clear his Derridian commitments to postmodern notions of inter-subjectivity and alterity, ultimately representing a response to the Enlightenment failure dubbed “relativism,” as defined by MacIntyre.

Coles’ excavation of radical democratic modes of practice from their Christological roots in the writings of Yoder stands in a strange relationship to his simultaneous privileging of the political vision of Sheldon Wolin.<sup>359</sup> The contribution of Wolin to critiques of liberalism in both theory (Rawls) and practice (radically exploitative capitalism), arises from his telling of the history of political thought; a reading that affirms the timeful (Christianity) and ridicules those who would deny contingency (liberalism). Wolin names the politics of liberalism, the politics of speed. What must be recovered at all costs, according to Wolin, is an honest politics of memory. The strangeness in Coles’ appreciation of Wolin should be readily apparent. What Coles

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid. p. 119

<sup>358</sup> Ibid. p 119

<sup>359</sup> Wolin, S. 2004. *Politics and Vision*. Expanded Edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

receives from Yoder is a specific memory, which he then reconstitutes into a memory available for everyone. In short, what is required in radical democracy is not so much a memory, but a *way* of remembering and dialoguing with those who would challenge that memory, that is not context specific; rather it is available to all democrats *qua* the democracies they inhabit. It will be useful to look at the politics of speed versus the politics of memory in Wolin, in an effort to come to grips with this tension in Coles between particular memory and general modes of vulnerable remembering.

Wolin argues that attempts to navigate the tension between the *political* and *politics* was a dismal failure until the Christians interjected time into the equation. The “political” in classical thought identified the form of government required in order to rule, while “politics” was the “art” of dealing with “conflict and antagonism:” to “offset them when necessary, to ease them where possible, and creatively, to redirect and transmute them when the opportunity allows.”<sup>360</sup> Yet, according to Wolin, Plato attempted to defeat the need for artful politics by defeating contingency, i.e., “the contraries of disorder” that “the political realm was inherently prone” to.<sup>361</sup> Plato attempted to solve this disorder by inaugurating a better form of the political; one founded on “knowledge of the eternal pattern.”<sup>362</sup> The danger of his project, for Wolin, is its tendency to remove the contingent and replace it with unassailability. Removing the contingent removes time. As Wolin puts it, “the concluding note of Plato’s political science is not of an unlimited arrogance that man can fashion a polity untouched by time, but of a heroism chastened by the foreknowledge of eventual defeat. It is, in Shelley’s words, ‘Eternity warning Time’<sup>363</sup>—or perhaps more appropriately, eternity *warring* time. The salvation of politics came from a most unlikely source, says Wolin, in a time when the *polis* was being subsumed into

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid. pp. 40-1

<sup>361</sup> Ibid. p. 41

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid. p. 62

Empire; a time when bureaucracy and self interest replaced “a sense of common involvement” with “a common reverence for power personified.”<sup>364</sup> Wolin writes:

Christianity succeeded where the Hellenistic and late classical philosophies had failed, because it put forward a new and powerful ideal of community which recalled men to a life of meaningful participation. Although the nature of this community contrasted sharply with classical ideals, although its ultimate purpose lay beyond historical time and space, it contained, nevertheless, ideals of solidarity and membership that were to leave a lasting imprint, and not always for the good, on the Western tradition of political thought.<sup>365</sup>

Christians were able in Wolin’s analysis, to doubt existing *political* arrangements because, as Hauerwas puts it, “they were members of an alternative politics.”<sup>366</sup> Often times the church “mistakenly equated politics with power” in the attempt to attribute “a more positive form” of political life based upon that politics, as was the case in Christendom. Where Christianity falls back into the classical trap of conflating power and politics, or politics and the political, the church should be rightly chastened, yet “Christianity,” thanks in large part to Augustine, saw that any politics “which began in hope and ended in despair, seemed a mockery of both God and man.”<sup>367</sup> Augustine’s contribution then was to insert the notion of time into history: “It was a unity pointing towards consummation at the end of time.”<sup>368</sup> Wolin writes:

Christianity broke the closed circle, substituting a conception of time as a series of irreversible movements extending along a line of progressive development. History was thus transformed into a drama of deliverance, enacted under the shadow of an apocalypse that would end historical time, and for the elect, bring a halt to suffering.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid. p. 69

<sup>365</sup> Ibid. p. 87

<sup>366</sup> Hauerwas, “Democratic Time,” p. 545

<sup>367</sup> Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 112

<sup>368</sup> Ibid. p. 112

<sup>369</sup> Ibid. p. 112

It is against this background that Hauerwas, via Coles, comes to see liberalism in Wolin's terms as a return to Plato. Indeed, the attempt to establish an ahistorical perfect form of rule in terms of a contractual veil of ignorance is no different from the benevolent philosopher-king's Republic. Both remove conflict and contingency by attempting to create an unassailable position from which one can say "the way things are seem to be the only way things can be."<sup>370</sup> For Wolin, Plato, Rawls and Empire all threaten to end the art of politics by removing time from the context of the political life, replacing it with invulnerable, static, eternal truth.

Politics without memory cannot help but be a politics of exploitative excess, for there is no "birthright"<sup>371</sup> (teleological tradition) with which to temper (by looping back) conflicts (ateleological surprises) which inevitably arise. Conflicts arise because the political arrangements in which such politics operate can never be free of ateleological surprises; no matter how violent the political systems' attempts to repress the other may be, there will always be barbarians who want Rome to burn. Indeed, the attempt to suppress otherness inside the empire by creating a poverty of language and category (what some might call orthodoxy) seeks to abolish difference, but in fact encourages it. The historical proof of this is that movements like postmodernism and postliberalism actually exist (as those "irrational" elements once repressed but which have come bursting through the surface of the encyclopedic and organizing logic of the "rationality" imposed on them). What is necessary, for Wolin, is the critical rejection of liberalism's induced Alzheimer's, and a return to a politics of memory. As Hauerwas puts it, in Wolin's analysis, "Birthright politics, historical politics is composed of ambiguous historical moments, deep ambiguities, that require interpretative modes of understanding that make us able to reconnect past and present experience and in the process reconstitute our politics."<sup>372</sup> Furthermore, "birthright politics" should be cultivated in local communities rather than states, for "state-centeredness" results in "a politics in which at one extreme are the experts

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<sup>370</sup> Hauerwas, "Democratic Time," p. 544

<sup>371</sup> Wolin, S. 1990. *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State and the Constitution*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. pp. 137-50

<sup>372</sup> Hauerwas, "Democratic Time," p. 556

struggling to be scientific and rational while at the other is a politics of mass irrationality, of manipulated images, controlled information, single-issue fanaticism and pervasive fear.”<sup>373</sup>

A politics of memory is ultimately, for Wolin, the politics of democracy, which “is inherently unstable, inclined toward anarchy, and identified with revolution...the idea and practice of rational disorganization.” In this sense, *democracy is not a political system, but a politics of time*, the chief attributes of which, are contingency, interruption, and conflict resolution. This point is crucial for understanding the seeming contradiction between Wolin’s affirmation of memory, on the one hand, and Coles’ translation of Yoder’s Christological particularity into general democratic terms on the other. Namely, Yoder’s church is the religiously informed *political* system, while the *politics* operating within that system is radically democratic. It should be noted however that Coles’ analysis in these terms forces a separation between agent and agency, actor, and act, that neither Coles nor Wolin should be comfortable with. What Coles ought to learn from Wolin is the opposite; indeed the politics of the church can in no way be identifiable as radical democracy because the politics (act) is inseparable from the political system (actor) which birthed it. In the case of the church the political system is constituted by a continuous re-membering of the birthright—the inexplicable recapitulation of the God-who-is-love in the midst of time. The politics of the church is, because of that birthright, radical discipleship as radical love – not radical democracy. Indeed, Hauerwas notes that in Wolin’s account the church represents the kind of radical democratic interruption that Rome needed in order to preserve and reacquaint itself with the notion of politics, yet he fails to point out that once accommodated to the power of Empire the church was guilty, not of ceasing to be radically democratic (in favor of imperial efficacy) but of ceasing to radically disciple itself (to the God-who-is-love).

That Hauerwas is sympathetic to the account of democratic politics offered by Coles and Wolin cannot be denied. Hauerwas notes that

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<sup>373</sup> cf. n371

Wolin does not believe our situation is at all hopeless. Indeed he thinks we have time to draw on our ability to tend to one another when we are sick or when the garden needs weeding. To so tend requires the development of skills through which our tending is tempered by “a concern for objects whose nature requires that they be treated as historical and biographical beings. The beings are such as to need regular attention from someone who is concerned about their well-being and sensitive to their needs.” [Wolin, *Presence of the Past*, p. 89] Such tending politically should direct our attention to practices constituted by habits of competence and skill that are routinely required if things that matter to us are to be taken care of.<sup>374</sup>

Yet Hauerwas here is not merely approving of pagans, who, not knowing quite what they are about, do what is just or good by accident, or circumstance. Rather Hauerwas asserts, “If that is “radical democracy,” then I think I can claim to be a radical democrat.”<sup>375</sup> For Hauerwas there is something positive at work in radical democracy. In reflecting on the mentally handicapped, Hauerwas notes, “A community that has the time and can take the time, the patience, to be constituted by practices represented by those “slower” than most of us, is a community that may provide an alternative to the politics of speed that currently shape our lives.”<sup>376</sup> The question is whether what “we” need is an alternative, or more to the point, *any* alternative, to liberalism. If anything will do, then surely Jesus dying for the sins of the world seems a bit excessive. The problem here is that Hauerwas never calls into question how “we” *know* that the politics of speed is bad, while the politics of memory is good. “We” know because “we” refers to the people of God, not to those enslaved by liberal forgetfulness. The people of God know because “we” are gathered around the person of Christ, the Light of the World, who makes visible, if “we” will only look, “our” own vulnerability, weakness, and contingency. To be gathered into the body of Christ requires habits and practices that “we” call discipleship. When the world names such practices radical democracy, “we” can only reply that “our” stories and practices, when told and performed rightly, bear witness to the way the cosmos is *really* ordered, i.e., the grain of the universe; moreover, “our” confession that “Jesus is Lord,” offensive as it may be, is necessary for remembering how to engage in those practices—a proclamation heralded to the

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<sup>374</sup> Hauerwas, “Democratic Time,” p. 547

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

world in the hopes that “they” will remember to help “us” remember how to be a people of weakness and vulnerability (for this reminder we should indeed thank Rom Coles). What Hauerwas must not do when faced with an ateleological surprise like Romand Coles, is forget to loop back to the canon, tempering Coles’ interruptions with the (offensive) memory of the cross. Anything less continues the mistake of O’Donovan, giving primacy to politics *sui generis*, rather than to the politics of the peculiar God-who-is-love.

### **Civil War as Democratic Theological Crisis**

In keeping with Hauerwas’ desire to ground the church’s self understanding in lives practically lived, through examples like that provided by the Dunkards in chapter 1, I will close by looking at the particular examples of the theological crises surrounding the American Civil War, the relationship those crises bore to democracy, and what the church *ought* to have learned from them. This critical looping back is entirely necessary if the church is to embrace its vulnerability, in Christological terms, as the necessary cost of discipleship. The following argument is meant to directly challenge, explicitly in Coles, and latently in Stout, the notion that the church has a stake in identifying its ecclesiological practices as fundamentally democratic. For Coles:

Democracy is *democratization*. And when it has been brought to life historically (by abolitionists, feminists, antiwar activists, Native American rights activists, grassroots community activists, and so on), it has always hinged upon those who sensed, in their myriad insurgent, inventive, and receptive capacities, that democracy was, is, and will be significantly beyond democracy as “we” “know” it in its dominant forms: beyond the arbitrary exclusions, subjugations, and dangers that accompany every democratic “we” and their “knowing” and disclose complacency toward present practices as a sham. Democratization has always depended upon those who embark beyond democracy’s dominant forms to invent greater equality, freedom and receptive generosity toward others.<sup>377</sup>

Democratization as described by Coles ought to be rightly attractive to Christian sensibilities, particularly in terms of its continuous self-critical reflexivity, but it is

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<sup>377</sup> Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*, p. xi

not at all clear how democracy so envisioned, nor the practices it entails, are different in any way from the necessary ecclesiological practices of weakness, generosity, *caritas*, and self-critical reflexivity, which are inseparable and unintelligible (for Christians) from the confession that “Christ is Lord.” In his book, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, Mark Noll analyzes the historically deaf, blind, and violent internal debate on the legitimacy of the American practice of slavery on both sides of the theological crisis that founded the American Civil War. Indeed, it will be shown that in Noll’s account it was the very democratic virtues of “equality” and “freedom,” as non-Christologically founded, that, when introduced to everyday readings of Scripture, could not help but result in the liberal, “invulnerable privileging of one’s own church and community...[a church, which] finally and in spite of themselves, slid...toward postures at war.”<sup>378</sup> While the churches could not see their apostasy because they had exiled the necessity of confessional language from descriptions of discipleship in practices, that is to say, they had removed the content (the person of Christ) that made such language intelligible, they were unable to temper their democratic, independent notions of justice, equality, and freedom with the (at one moment critical, at one moment receptive) generosity (*caritas*) toward others that is required by those who have had their sins forgiven.

According to Noll, “The most important first step toward understanding the Civil War as a theological event is to recognize how reasoning about the war reflected long-standing habits of mind.”<sup>379</sup> Noll writes:

For more than a century before 1860, American theologians had been uniting historical Christian perspectives with specific aspects of American intellectual experience. The ubiquitous Christian reflection on the war followed trails blazed in the late eighteenth century and then set firmly in place by a confluence of intellectual forces during the early years of the Republic. A culturally powerful combination of intellectual ingredients gave American theologians their categories for apprehending sectional controversy and the war itself. For the most numerous and most public American religious groups, biblical Protestantism of a primarily evangelical cast provided the

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid. p. 112

<sup>379</sup> Noll, M. 2006. *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. p. 17

religious content of the synthesis. Despite tumultuous conflicts with each other, these Protestants shared a number of fundamental convictions that grew directly out of their American experience.<sup>380</sup>

The “time-tested ideology” of these Protestants<sup>381</sup> included: an exaltation of the Bible as the sole authority, instead of tradition or clerical hierarchy; a skepticism toward received religious authority; an emphasis on grace in their lives and lives graciously lived; pietism; a worldview in which Catholicism was not a branch of the church (denomination) but a “perverse” heresy, not solely in terms of “true Christianity” but also “treasured political values”; and finally, the utilization of American cultural institutions and ideas to effectively further the cause of the Gospel.<sup>382</sup> Indeed, it is due to the adaptability of the brand of American Protestantism “that dominated public life at mid-century” that it was able to “gain its place” by “successfully” clothing “the Christian faith in the preeminent ideological dress of the new Republic.”<sup>383</sup> Yet not only did the relationship between American Protestantism and the Republic’s democratic values lead to an increase in the credibility of the church, but the church “vivified, ennobled, and lent transcendent value to republican political assumptions, democratic convictions about social organization, scientific reasoning pitched to common sense, and belief in the unique, providential destiny of the United States.”<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Noll, *Civil War*, p. 17

<sup>381</sup> Protestants were not the only one to be enamored with the idea of democracy. de Tocqueville in particular expressed surprising admiration for the values of democracy and saw in it an ally for Catholicism: “[America] is the most democratic country in the world, and at the same time, according to reliable reports, it is the country in which the Roman Catholic religion is making the most progress...If Catholicism could ultimately escape from the political animosities to which it has given rise, I am almost certain that that same spirit of the age which now seems so contrary to it would turn into a powerful ally, and that it would suddenly make great conquests.” (de Tocqueville, A. 1969. *Democracy in America*. Lawrence and Mayer [eds.]. New York: Anchor Books. p. 450).

<sup>382</sup> Noll, *Civil War*, pp. 17-8

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.* For an account of the historical link between American religion and American empire see: Northcott, M. 2003. *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire*. London: I. B. Tauris.

According to Noll, nowhere was this “marriage” between American Protestantism, republican values, democratic practices, and Enlightenment reason “more clearly illustrated than in the pervasive belief that understanding things was *simple*.”<sup>385</sup> This reason by common-sense approach bestowed not only great “self-confidence” to those employing it, but also the ability to vilify intellectual opponents as willful perverters of “sacred truth and natural reason.”<sup>386</sup> Furthermore, American Protestants saw the Enlightenment as directly responsible for liberating “liberty,” and other republican values, from the stifling traditions of their European forbearers. Once “distracting traditions had been set aside,” “perceiving the causes and effects of political developments was a simple matter” because “human beings of the right sort possessed a nearly infallible ability to perceive clear-cut connections between moral causes and public effects.”<sup>387</sup> The intellectual synthesis between biblical faith and Enlightenment certainty birthed, therefore, a set of republican and democratic values that were at the same time both reasonable and authorized by God. In the words of Noll:

By 1860 a substantial majority of articulate Americans had come to hold a number of corollary beliefs about the Bible—specifically, that besides its religious uses, it also promoted republican political theory, that it was accessible to every sentient person, that it define the glories of liberty, that it opposed the tyranny of inherited religious authority, that it forecast the providential destiny of the United States, and that it was best interpreted by the common sense of ordinary people.<sup>388</sup>

The Protestant churches that prospered during this time were the churches that gloried in the disestablishment of complex forms of reasoning and Scriptural exegesis. Yet even the more traditionally minded Protestants, like the Episcopalians and Lutherans, were pulled along in the wake of Christian democratic republicanism. Thus in 1860, when disagreements over “what the Bible had to say about slavery”

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<sup>385</sup> Noll, *Civil War*, p. 20

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

occurred, there was no way to adjudicate between individual interpretations without impeding upon personal liberty or referring (looping back) to tradition.

Both sides in the debate retained unassailable intellectual positions, and as a result the only possible response to the escalating conflict was violence. By eschewing the possibility of dialogical conversation, the only way to prove who was right was by seeing who won the military conflict—a demonstration of God’s providence. Yet does Noll’s account of American republican/democratic values in the 1860’s really have anything to say about radical democracy? For Coles, radical democracy requires a generous receptivity in order to avoid the kind of monologically violent posturing exhibited on both sides of the slavery debate. Indeed, Coles rejects the invulnerability of Enlightenment modes of thinking which repress ateleological, or competing teleological, traditions. Yet the democratic values of liberty, justice, and equality *qua* democracy occur in only two contexts: liberalism and the church. In the church such practices are the activities of discipleship and are indistinguishable from the exclusive Christian commitment to the God-who-is-love—“the god who is above all gods;” yet as I have argued, claiming to know the truth does not endanger the vulnerability of the church, because the truth was incarnated in the One who would rather die than claim power. In liberalism, prior categories exist—an activity can be just or good, liberty and equality can be human rights, generosity and vulnerability can be exemplary skills—that is, as long as they are founded upon liberal Averroism. In short, there is no way to judge the practices of radical democracy as good without replacing the goodness of Christ with a position – a moral standard that is ontologically prior to the God-who-is-good. Indeed, in the debate over slavery there was a third way, which incurred the wrath on both sides, those pro-slavery as well as abolitionists. Henry Van Dyke, a pulpit minister in Brooklyn, responded to those who would *replace* Scripture, due to its indeterminacies, with abolitionism. Van Dyke argues that

Abolitionism leads, in multitudes of cases, and by a logical process to utter infidelity...One of its avowed principles is, that it does not try slavery by the Bible; but...it tries the Bible by the principles of freedom...This assumption, that men are capable of judging beforehand what is to be expected in a Divine

revelation, is the cockatrice's egg, from which, in all ages, heresies have been hatched.<sup>389</sup>

Dyke is right insofar as abolitionism is not in any way more primal than the authority of Christ. A more interesting question to ask of Coles, is whether or not “abolitionist” is a good term for describing a Christian who is anti-slavery. If abolition implies a *position* rather than an activity of Christ (freeing us from the powers), which must also be embodied by His body in the midst of the world, then Dyke would probably want his readers to indict Coles on similar grounds. Abolition, like pacifism, is only virtuous if it proceeds from a commitment to Jesus—abolition *qua* the abolition of the messianic community. In that sense “abolitionist” is only intelligible to Christians as a description of one facet of faithful discipleship. What the account provided by Noll serves to show is that (1) republican/democratic values/practices are always already committed to the ontological axioms of liberalism, and (2) it is extremely dangerous for the church to clothe itself in the independent, i.e., non-Christological, democratic language in the hopes of transmitting goodness to the world. Even when such transmission is well intentioned (as opposed to the American Protestant grabs for secular power), the results can be disastrous.

### **Conclusion: Acts by Different Agents**

In the final analysis, while the practices espoused by radical democracy may be good ones, it is not at all clear how radical democrats judge them to be so. That is to say, how can anything other than the forgiveness of sins by the God-who-is-love make possible generous receptivity—hospitality, the hope of new friendship, and love of the enemy—or make such practices in any way intelligible? What is more likely is that American democracy is in practice a tradition, and the memory of that tradition (common sense) articulates, through constant dialogue, shared common interest (non-Christologically founded goods in common); this is possible insofar as just enough of the church's best insights have rubbed off to make it seem so. That is not to say that the church is incapable of learning how to be the church from the world.

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid. p. 32

Indeed, nothing could be further from the truth, as such learning forces the proper reevaluation and reconception of what constitutes right Christian practices. Hauerwas notes that for Yoder, even “agents of the Enlightenment have taught and continue to teach the church crucial lessons about religious liberty.”<sup>390</sup> These crucial lessons are of course things that should have been learned from Jesus and Paul, particularly in terms of “radical subordination,” yet the church should be thankful for the reminder. As Yoder puts it, the

Hermeneutical role of the community is...primordial; i.e., we have to talk about it first. It is however by no means an exclusive possession...When the empirical community becomes disobedient, other people can hear the Bible’s witness too. It is after all a public document. Loners and outsiders can hear it speaking especially if the insiders have ceased to listen. It was thanks to the loner Tolstoy and the outsider Gandhi that the churchman Martin Luther King, Jr.,...was able to bring Jesus’ word on violence back into the churches. It was partly the outsider Marx who enabled liberation theologians to restate what the Law and the Prophets had been saying for centuries, largely unheard, about God’s partisanship for the poor.<sup>391</sup>

That such has happened historically there is no doubt, but what must really be called into question is whether same acts (by different agents) constitute same practices?

In *Performing the Faith*, Hauerwas extends this line of enquiry a step further, nothing that he is “not sure”<sup>392</sup> he agrees with Stout that “all moralities” are “about roughly the same topics.”<sup>393</sup> Hauerwas writes:

If description is everything, and if act and agency are constitutive of one another, then it is not at all clear to me that we can be confident about “same topics.” I am not denying some commonalities may be found, but you have to look. I would press this same set of issues in relation to Stout’s thought experiment concerning the atheist who does the same act in two possible worlds with the only difference being that in one of the worlds God exists. I

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<sup>390</sup> Hauerwas, “Democratic Time,” p. 541

<sup>391</sup> Yoder, *Priestly Kingdom*, p. 23

<sup>392</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 226n21

<sup>393</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 228

am not at all convinced that in such worlds we can be confident it would be the *same* act.<sup>394</sup>

Practices, as we have learned from MacIntyre, are more than the sum of their parts. If the difference between acts and practices is that practices have goods internal to their activity and standards of excellence attached to that activity, then it makes sense to judge practices as unique to the socially embodied contexts in which they are pleonastically performed (and which via the process of looping back, non-identically perform those social contexts). The move that Hauerwas rightly makes here is from the pragmatic to the ontological. No longer is “a difference between agents” merely descriptive, rather it names ontologically separate moral entities (this position coupled with Yoder’s ontology of the powers, may give Hauerwas the ability to resist, as I will argue in the next chapter, the accommodations he is inclined to make to Coles and Stout). To put it another way, Hauerwas moves from a psychological/anthropological description of the relationship between agency and act, to a tacit ontological account of the church, which by *doing* right acts (loving) participates in the continuing work of Christ (God’s love)—that is, His agency.

The next chapter, through a close reading of Yoder, argues that there exists an innate schizophrenia in his writings. Because of its occasional quality, and Yoder’s eschewal of attempts to systematize his writings, the ontological implications of Yoder’s account of the powers—as *precisely the ontological difference between moral agents*—is ignored when he articulates the proper Christian response to democracy and civic nations. Moreover, in his debates with Stout and the radical democrats Hauerwas lost, in different ways, the firm footing upon which he had been standing in the form of MacIntyre and Yoder. The task of the next chapter then is to identify the problem and possibilities in Yoder, in the hopes of finding the grounds upon which Hauerwas might tactically reestablish the kind of postliberal theological politics he espoused for most of his writing career.

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<sup>394</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 226n21

## Chapter 4

### Two Yoders

#### Powers Ontology versus a Christian Witness to the State

The purpose of this chapter is to address inconsistencies in Yoder's own account, and in so doing begin to understand the possibilities of repair that might be open to Hauerwas if he were to read Yoder differently. In this chapter I argue that the major failure of Yoder's account can be attributed to the occasional nature of his work, and his refusal to systematize his thought. This has led him to speak ontologically about the Fallenness of the powers in some places, while in others he speaks of the church/world distinction as a difference between agents. The refusal to remember, particularly in his writings on democracy, that the church/world distinction is ontological has led him to affirm the translation of Christian peculiarity into worldly terms, giving a liberal tint to those writings.

I begin by outlining Yoder's cosmology of the powers, as found in *The Politics of Jesus* and *The Christian Witness to the State*. As we will see, for Yoder the powers are those physical and spiritual entities that since the Fall have stolen authority from Christ and have gathered/enslaved His creation to their own benefit. These powers are disarmed in the resurrection and ascension such that the eschatological promise of the Kingdom of God is the subordination of those powers (once again) to the Lordship of Christ.

One of the powers that Yoder's cosmology identifies is the state, which, according to Yoder, has also been disarmed in the resurrection and ascension. Yet as I illustrate in the second part of this chapter, the state in almost every way attempts to deny the Lordship of Christ, claiming for itself authority over all those it has gathered—who live within a particular set of imagined geographical boundaries. Drawing on the work of Oscar Cullman, Yoder argues that all such attempts are futile however, as Jesus Christ has mastered history—this occurs in such a way that even the defeated powers work toward the good of the church despite their continued attempts at rebellion. As we will see in the final part of this chapter, for Yoder, the church must

be a witness *for* the nations in such a way that the nations become better, less violent servants of God's will.

The difficulty that I will address in this chapter is Yoder's inconsistency in maintaining an account of the peaceful politics of the Kingdom of God (arguably the whole point of *The Politics of Jesus*), while at the same time generally affirming the politics of the world and of democracy in particular. Drawing on the work of Oscar Cullman, Yoder describes the role of the state as that of a police force. For Yoder, throughout history states have maintained a certain order (albeit Fallen), which is required in order for the church to be the church. According to Yoder, this describes the way in which Jesus can be Lord of all while some powers still resist his Lordship; namely that Jesus uses the violence-on-violence mechanism of the Fallen powers to make the continuation of the church's mission in the world possible. It will be the point of this chapter to begin raising suspicions about Yoder's account of God's utilitarianism—God's use of violence to maintain a community of peace. This position is one that I believe contradicts all of Yoder's (and Hauerwas') own best insights.

### **Yoder's Ontology of the Powers**

Yoder's work on the powers is most thoroughly discussed in the eighth chapter of (1972) *The Politics of Jesus* entitled, "Christ and Power." The second chapter of (1964) *The Christian Witness to the State* further analyzes Christ's Lordship over the powers as a foundation for talking about "The Ground for the Witness to the State." What follows is an account of Yoder on the powers taken primarily from these two sources. It is important to say at this point, that in the Second Edition of *The Politics of Jesus* (1994), Yoder's purpose is not to "spell out at length samples of the relevance of this kind of approach for concrete social and ethical thought."<sup>395</sup> Rather he points to Jacques Ellul, who through his plethora of writings "probably...thinks the most consistently within the framework for this approach, though often without

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<sup>395</sup> Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, p. 157.

direct allusion to the Pauline vocabulary.”<sup>396</sup> Indeed, Yoder allows for Ellul’s systematization of thought on the powers precisely because, for the most part, Ellul’s work on the powers is inseparable from an account of Jesus’ victory over them, and it is precisely that victory which allows for a critique of mechanisms which govern the secular world. Those who would attempt to derive *a priori* or natural principles of economy, manipulation, force, technological progress, etc., from Ellul’s writings would therefore be doing the unintelligible, as the powers of enslavement are only nameable thanks to the alternative freedom provided by Christ. Thus the lens through which Ellul views the world must always be identified as both Pauline and Christological if it is to be useful.

Yoder begins his account of the powers in the *The Politics of Jesus*, by stating that the powers originate in Creation; that is to say, the powers are a creature of God, made with a specific purpose and function.<sup>397</sup> The purpose of the powers is to establish “the reign of order among creatures, order which in its original invention is a divine gift.”<sup>398</sup> Yoder continues, “[t]he universe is not sustained arbitrarily, immediately, and erratically by an unbroken succession of new divine interventions. It was made in an ordered form and it was good.”<sup>399</sup>

Yoder finds it helpful to make an analogy between the New Testament concept of the “principalities and Powers”<sup>400</sup> and the contemporary use of the word “structure.” For Yoder, the regularity, systemization, and ordering of the universe, provided by God at the Creation in the form of the powers, is responsible for the possibility of society, history, and nature. The powers are mediators; God’s means of regulating Creation.

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid. For a thorough description of the Powers in the work of Ellul see Dawn, M. J. 1992. *The Concept of ‘The Principalities and Powers’ in the Works of Jacques Ellul*. Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Notre Dame. Unpublished. Available, Ann Arbor : University Microfilms #9220014

<sup>397</sup> Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, p. 141

<sup>398</sup> Ibid

<sup>399</sup> Ibid

<sup>400</sup> It is interesting that Yoder almost always capitalizes the word powers, which serves to give them proper names, making them ontological entities in their own right.

Yoder argues that there could be no humanity without the existence of “religious, intellectual, moral and social structures;”<sup>401</sup> there could be no nature without the laws of science; there could be no history without the passage of time.<sup>402</sup> Noting the wide variety of ambiguous language surrounding the powers in Scripture, and particularly considering the complex uses of the term “power” in modernity, Yoder argues that it is helpful to see the dilemma, as to right use of language involving the powers and the word “power,” as analogous to modern and ambiguous uses of the word “structure.”<sup>403</sup> For Yoder, the modern hierarchical power structures that surround us on a day-to-day basis are “structurally analogous to the Powers.”<sup>404</sup> Indeed it is upon making the analogy between powers and “structures” that Yoder avoids discussion about the ontological make-up of the powers, as guardians of the natural order of Creation and towards political/historical accounts of the powers structuring humanity.

Yoder’s focus on the political/historical aspects of the powers is evidenced when in *Politics* he provides a list of some of the structural powers that govern Creation, including: (1) primitive sociological religious foundations; (2) intellectual “ologies and ‘isms””; (3) moral “codes and customs”; and (4) political structures like “the tyrant, the market, the school, the courts, race, and nation.”<sup>405</sup> Yet there does exist an explicitly ontological account of the powers as more than “ideas” in Yoder’s work, which can be found in the first footnote of *The Christian Witness to the State*; there Yoder provides an extended list that importantly includes powers at work in the natural order. Yoder says:

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<sup>401</sup> Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, p. 143

<sup>402</sup> The powers that regulate history and time are a function of both humanity and nature brought together. In terms of nature we have the possibility of space-time and with humanity we have the possibility of history *within* that space-time.

<sup>403</sup> Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, pp. 136-38

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 142-43

we could add ‘doms and ‘hoods. Such words as causality, fatality, necessity, humanism, respectability, Christendom, nationhood do not point to specific people, things or events but neither are they mere ideas.<sup>406</sup>

Yet Yoder’s account of the powers is not limited only to the material, physical, and structural. Marva J. Dawn, a student of both Yoder and Ellul, argues in her book *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God*, that over the last fifty years scholars have broadly fell into two categories whilst describing the powers.<sup>407</sup> Dawn dubs the first category the Demythologizers and includes Rudolf Bultmann, Amos Wilder, G.H.C. MacGregor, and Ernst Käsemann.<sup>408</sup> (Dawn tentatively includes Walter Wink in this list). According to Dawn, the Demythologizers argue that the powers are identifiable only with human structures; the powers are visible and physical structures that exert authority over humanity and do not exist as spirits or angelic/demonic beings. Yoder makes a reference to demythologizing scholars, saying that like the Protestant fathers of the Reformation, the Demythologizers found themselves living in an

age which no longer believed in spooks or in Santa Claus, there was something embarrassing about the way in which the Bible—and especially the Apostle Paul—spoke of the “Powers,” that is, of some sort of undefinable superterrestrial beings, not only as if they existed but in fact as if they mattered and were somehow involved in the work of Christ.<sup>409</sup>

While Yoder clearly does not place himself within the Demythologizer camp, neither does he fit with the alternative. According to Dawn, the scholars which fell into the second category can be called Personalizers. The Personalizers, the most notable of which was John Stott, argued that the Scriptural powers referred *only* to angelic and spiritual creatures. Dawn describes their interpretation as an almost fundamentalist reaction to that account of the powers provided by the Demythologizers. For Stott,

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<sup>406</sup> Yoder, J. H. 1964. *The Christian Witness to the State*. Eugene: Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. 8

<sup>407</sup> Dawn, “The Concept,” cf. n396

<sup>408</sup> While Wilder and MacGregor both reject Bultmann’s specific position (For Bultmann’s position see Bultmann, R. 1951. *Theology of the New Testament*. Vol. 1. Trans. Kendrick Grobel. New York : Charles Scribner’s Sons.), they still fall into the Demythologizer camp.

<sup>409</sup> Yoder, J. H. “Translator’s Preface” in Berkhof, H. 1977. *Christ and the powers*. 5th Edition. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press. p. 5

the description of the powers provided by Bultmann and the others was both reductionist and inadequate.<sup>410</sup> Robert Webber, also a Personalizer, later modified Stott's position to say that the spiritual powers employed human structures.<sup>411</sup> Dawn argues that the median between these two categorical extremes is walked, albeit in vastly different ways, by the likes of Hendrik Berkhof, John H. Yoder, William Stringfellow, Oscar Cullman, and Karl Barth. If Dawn is right in arguing that Yoder takes the middle path between the Demythologizers and the Personalizers, his account requires a description of the powers which is both material/historical/physical and also spiritual and invisible.

I have already addressed Yoder's description of the creaturely origination of the powers, their governance of both humanity and the natural order, as well as their physical and structural characteristics, yet it is also important to mention that Yoder's analysis of the powers includes a spiritual side (which necessarily gives them ontological status). While the spiritual dimension of the powers in the thought of Yoder is not often discussed, it is perhaps best described when Yoder argues that the powers are "not and never have been a mere sum total of the individuals composing them... [t]he whole is more than the sum of its parts. And this 'more' is an invisible Power, even though we may not be used to speaking of it in personal or angelic terms."<sup>412</sup> That is to say, the structures of humanity give us a background on which to paint our existence and ought not be reduced to the material or psychological. Indeed, there is a spiritual reality above them, which in some cases is entirely separate from the physical. That to which the powers point are "not mere ideas" but:

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<sup>410</sup> See Stott, J. 1979. *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>411</sup> See Webber, R. E. 1986. *The Church in the World: Opposition, Tension, or Transformation*. Grand Rapids : Zondervan Academic Books. Today many Pentecostal, charismatic, and even evangelical churches offer classes and seminars on "Spiritual Warfare," which almost always refers to the individual Christian's battle with specific demonic entities. These accounts, while spurred on by authors of Christian fiction like Frank E. Peretti, are historically based in the "Personalizer" traditions of scholars like Heinrich Schlier, F. F. Bruce, and D. E. H. Whiteley.

<sup>412</sup> Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, p. 141. Italics mine. This is probably a reflection of Cullman's description of the Jewish notion of angelic beings which lead each nation. See Cullman, *Christ and Time*.

*realities*, of a suprapersonal kind, which lend coherence to life, exercising a *real* power over human decision. Their impingement upon concrete events may be quite crudely visible (Fascism, sorcery) or quite imprecise and indirect (humanism, moral law).<sup>413</sup>

Indeed, “these powers are seen as invisibly determining human events.”<sup>414</sup>

Unfortunately, continues Yoder, we no longer have access to the good Creation of God. As alluded to above, the human creature, the world, and the powers, are all Fallen. Following St. Paul (Romans 8: 18-22), Yoder notes that humanity, creation, and the powers (as mediators of God’s creation) are subjected to futility and death after the Fall. Moreover, in the words of Yoder, the powers

...are no longer active only as mediators of the saving creative purpose of God; now we find them seeking to separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38); we find them ruling over the lives of those who live far from the love of God (Eph. 2:2); we find them holding us in servitude to their rules (Col. 2:20); we find them holding us under their tutelage (Gal. 4:3).<sup>415</sup>

In the Fall, the powers become the systems and structures of sin, i.e., those orderings of reality that are lesser goods than the Good that God established for his creation. In the Fall, the powers, rejecting their creaturehood and the modesty and service required of them, glorified themselves, seeking to replace Very God with themselves, a multitude (legion) of authorities.<sup>416</sup> Indeed the hopelessness of the situation is most clearly revealed, according to Yoder, in that while humanity cannot live under the authority of the powers, neither can humanity exist without those structures that order its existence.

According to Yoder, despite this seemingly hopeless situation God has preserved his creation. The powers, while immersing humanity in the slavery of sin, at the very least order its existence as a protection from chaos—all of creation, including

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<sup>413</sup> Yoder, *Christian Witness*, p. 8. Italics mine.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, p. 141

<sup>416</sup> Ibid. p. 142-43

humanity is preserved to await the redeeming work of God.<sup>417</sup> Yoder continues, pointing out that, “If...God is going to save his creatures *in their humanity*, the Powers cannot simply be destroyed or set aside or ignored.”<sup>418</sup> Rather, their authority and “sovereignty” as lesser gods/goods “must be broken.”<sup>419</sup>

For Yoder, this is exactly what Christ does in the cross and resurrection. As Yoder notes in *The Christian Witness to the State*: “The triumphant affirmation of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ by His cross, resurrection, ascension, and the pouring out of His Spirit, has triumphed over the powers.”<sup>420</sup> Indeed Jesus submitted himself to the powers but refused “to support them in their self glorification” for which the powers killed him.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid. p. 143

<sup>418</sup> Ibid. p. 144

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Yoder, *Christian Witness*, p. 9

<sup>421</sup> It is important to point out that Jesus no longer had a choice but to submit. The only other option was to wield the same violence used by the powers, and this was unacceptable to him. It is not that Jesus was trying to undermine the powers ontology of self-glorification, but that he chose to die instead of fight his way free. His submission, suffering, death, and resurrection *do* undermine powers ontology. Indeed, many readers of Yoder are predisposed to view any mention of ontology as transcendental and metaphysical, and as such exerts some kind of top-down, systematic, violent control over theology proper. This is due in large part to the bad reputation ontology has gained from those involved in Radical Orthodoxy, particularly the writings of John Milbank. For Milbank et al. Christian ontology is a better, stronger, more persuasive vision of the cosmos than that provided by the nihilism of modernity (and postmodernity). It is no wonder that Milbank’s project has thrown up red flags to readers of Yoder. Indeed, any attempt to present an ontology of strength from the Christian tradition seems very reminiscent of the Christendom *hubris* which bathed the Anabaptist Fathers in their own blood.

The question that must be asked by the reader of Yoder (and at which Hauerwas more than hints in his exchange with Milbank in *Must Christianity be Violent?* (Chase, K. and Jacobs, A. [eds.]. 2003. *Must Christianity be Violent? Reflections on History, Practice and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI. Brazos Press.) is: in what way must an ontology of peace be primarily an ontology of weakness as opposed to an ontological of strength? Any attempt to recover and extend an ontology of peace that is rooted in strength will inevitably lead to *Pax Romana*, while the *Pax Christi* by its very nature denies the self-glorification of its ideology. The peace of Christ is not better than the peace of empire; rather it is the only peace that is actually peace by virtue of the Christ-Act. Christ did not attempt to establish a better ontology; he redeemed God’s creation from the violently self-absolutizing powers by re-ordering the cosmos in the church. It is the job of the church therefore to witness to the vision of Creation (which is also eschatology) in Jesus, not by fighting our way free of the privative ontology (nihilism) of the world but by pointing out that God’s ordering of the world is the only ontology possible. We are not competing with the world; the world’s ontology is a self-positing, self-absolutizing, and ultimately the self-glorification of the powers, the mediators of the world, who are fallen. In the same way that

Preaching and incorporating a greater righteousness than that of the Pharisees, and a vision of an order of social human relations more universal than the Pax Romana, he permitted the Jews to profane a holy day (refuting thereby their own moral pretensions) and permitted the Romans to deny their vaunted respect for law as they proceeded illegally against him. This they did in order to avoid the threat to their dominion represented by the very fact that he existed in their midst so morally independent of their pretensions. He did not fear even death. Therefore his cross is a victory, the confirmation that he was free from the rebellious pretensions of the creaturely condition. Differing from Adam, Lucifer, and all the Powers, Jesus did “not consider equal with God as a thing to be seized” (Phil 2:6). His very obedience unto death is in itself not only the sign but also the firstfruits of an authentic restored humanity.<sup>422</sup>

For Yoder, the powers were an attempt by God’s creatures to become gods themselves, a temptation which Jesus denied even unto death on a cross. Through death on the cross and resurrection to new life, Jesus “disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them.” (Col. 2:13-15). In short, Jesus broke the sovereignty of the powers concretely and historically.<sup>423</sup> It is upon this cosmological foundation that Yoder develops an account of the church as “revolutionary subordination,” that is to say, the church is the body of God’s people who serve (love) the world (rather than dominate it) by their visible re-ordering in Christ.<sup>424</sup> The church’s discipleship in Christ therefore, is a rejection of any attempt to grasp equality with God by embracing the powers as ends in and of themselves; rather, the church acknowledges that Christ has given us a new way of *being* humanity (gathering), and a new way of living in the natural order (environmental

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Milbank rejects the positive substance of evil in favor of privation he should similarly reject the ontological positive substance of nihilism and violence as merely privative. Moreover, any attempt to compete or fight with privative ontology is to submit to that lesser ontology by situating our own vision within the same violent struggle for dominance i.e., Christianity is just another version or possibility, but better because it is more beautiful. The point for Yoder, and Hauerwas, is: Christ has died, risen, and will come again; the world has been re-ordered in the Church; the grain of the universe has been revealed; and it is not our job to fight the powers. Christ through his embrace of weakness, suffering and death has disarmed them and reigns as the Prince of Peace. It is our job to embrace the reign of the King of Peace rather than engage in battles with the death throes of the Imperial powers. When we attempt to engage the powers we enslave ourselves to them.

<sup>422</sup> Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, p. 145

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.* p. 169-92

care and sustainability), and this way is not a way of violent domination but an acceptance of creaturely weakness (contingency).

In the next few sections I provide a close reading of the way in which Yoder, in other writings (but also including *Witness*) and particular in those toward the end of his career, separates himself from this ontology, positing the church/world distinction not as one between ontological antitheses but as a difference of response between moral agents. It will become clear as this chapter progresses that Yoder's position is extremely sympathetic not only with the radical democracy of Coles and Wolin, but also the liberal democratic pragmatism (even in its civic national form) of Stout. These sympathies are unfortunate and illuminate serious contradictions in Yoder's overall body of work, occasionalist as it is. It is difficult to believe that the Yoder of *The Politics of Jesus* is the same as the Yoder of *For the Nations*.

There are serious inconsistencies between Yoder's ontology of the powers in terms of the legitimacy of those powers under the Lordship of Christ, and Yoder's optimism toward the work of the state. Throughout his writings, and particularly in *The Politics of Jesus*, Yoder exhorts the church to reject the violence and force employed by the powers in favor of submission and weakness, which is ultimately discipleship to the Prince of Peace. In this age, according to Yoder, all of humanity is obsessed with progress and the direction of history, such that "part if not all of social concern has to do with looking for the right 'handle' by which one can 'get a hold on' the course of history and move it in the right direction."<sup>425</sup> Forcing history in a certain direction not only rejects the notion that history has already come out right in Christ, but identifies a new *telos*, which humanity must fight for and for which everything ought to be sacrificed. Unfortunately as we will see, in some of Yoder's other writings, particularly in the *The Christian Witness to the State*, *The Priestly Kingdom*, and *For the Nations*, it seems to be the case that post-ascension, the Lamb of God is master of history and as such has become a utilitarian—using the violence of the nations to constrain the violence of the world, giving the church room to be the church.

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid. p. 228

Yoder's reliance on Cullman in his description of the Lordship of Christ and the two ages (two perfections, two responses), his Augustinian description of the Christian witness to the state, his development of a Christian case for democracy and its basis as a low status power play, as well as his reliance on the survival of the church via the violent hand of either God or the just warriors, will all be analyzed in what follows.

### **Yoder and Cullman**

The importance of Cullman to Yoder's enterprise cannot be overstated. Cullman, a protestant theologian and pioneer of the ecumenical movement, was Yoder's professor of New Testament at the University of Basil. Unfortunately, in most Yoder scholarship the importance of Cullman to Yoder's enterprise has been given but passing mention, while much more time and energy has been put into illuminating the connections between Yoder and Barth, or Yoder and the Yale School. An example of this would be Craig Carter's previously mentioned book, *The Politics of the Cross*. Against Carter, I argue below that it is Cullman's account of time and history, rather than Barth's, which Yoder adopts wholeheartedly as his "ground for the witness to the state".<sup>426</sup>

Cullman points out that questions as to the nature of the relationship between the church and the state are not "contemporary problems," rather such questions "are actually posed and solved by the New Testament."<sup>427</sup> It is because the Gospel identifies the church as the *politeuma*, "the community of the coming age, [that] it must accordingly see as its most intrinsic concern its disposition toward the present 'polis,' the secular State."<sup>428</sup> The difficulty then, according to Cullman, is finding a middle ground between "denial" and "affirmation" of the world, whilst reflecting the

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<sup>426</sup> Yoder, *Christian Witness*, p. 8. The quotation is from the title of the section.

<sup>427</sup> Cullman, O. 1956. *The State in the New Testament*. Charles Scribner's Sons. p. 3

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4

primitive Christian conviction that, “on the one hand, in Christ the end is already fulfilled; and that nonetheless the consummation is still in the future, since the framework of the present world still endures.”<sup>429</sup> While Cullman is right in that the New Testament poses the question of church and state, there is still a decided lack of clarity as to the answer, evidenced by the very fact that Cullman wrote a book titled, *The State in the New Testament*. While the New Testament provides a variety of clues for how the church should name, serve, and witness to the world, conclusions are missing because, as Stanley Hauerwas puts it, “the Gospel is only the Gospel when it is received.”<sup>430</sup> That is to say, the Gospel cannot be *good news* if it is not embodied and performed within a community that is always already rooted in Christ.<sup>431</sup> Indeed Cullman admits that the question of church and state “is so closely bound up with the Gospel itself that they emerge together.”<sup>432</sup> In the same way that the Gospel is the Gospel when it is received, Hauerwas argues that the church/state relationship cannot be discussed separately from a community of Christ. It is the church which makes the world the world; that is to say, it is only in the midst of the church, the Kingdom of God, that the state can be named world. This is something that Hauerwas credits learning directly from Yoder.<sup>433</sup> Yet as we will see below, while Cullman’s task begins by interpreting the world through the church, by providing a primitive Christians lens by which history can initially be viewed, Cullman’s eschatology finds at its end the justification of the church via the world; which is to say that the church is just a stepping stone on the way to the universal

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid. For Cullman’s work on primitive Christian eschatology see: Cullman, *Christ and Time*.

<sup>430</sup> Hauerwas, S. 2006. “Sermon Seminar” at Rochester College. Rochester Hills, MI. Despite arguments which identify the advent of the state with the late medieval period (making questions about first century accounts of the state unintelligible),<sup>430</sup> I will at present assume that the New Testament (including the Gospels) has something to say about the state, on the grounds that it is: (1) the dominant manifestation of the powers in the contemporary world, and (2) as such is the contemporary form of the fallen *polis*, the *civitas terrena*.

<sup>431</sup> This is why, for nonfoundationalist theologians, the church does not have or require an epistemology. It does not need a theory of legitimacy for the truth of the Gospel; rather the church has an ecclesiology, it exists as a community of witness to the truthfulness of the Gospel, not vice versa.

<sup>432</sup> Cullman, *State in the New Testament*, p. 3

<sup>433</sup> Hauerwas, “Sermon Seminar.”

redemption of humanity, and if one is not careful it is *that universalism* which then constitutes the church, not the God-who-is-love.

In his book, *Christ and Time*, Cullman rightly argues that the Christ-event is at the center of all history. According to Cullman, the primitive Christian conception of *redemptive* time can be visibly represented in that “[i]t takes its start from the broadest conceivable basis and narrows steadily until it reaches that center from which it again broadens out: Creation – mankind – Israel – the remnant – the One – the apostles – the Church – mankind – the new creation.”<sup>434</sup> While Cullman’s account of time is correctly centered on the redeeming work of Christ, the description of the redemption *process* involves a universal and progressive expansion of the community of Christ to the nations (and all of creation)—a primitive Christian universalism—which we will see is a major point of contention in this thesis.<sup>435</sup> For Cullman, this universalism is not an extension of the church per se, but a dissemination of the recognition of the *Lordship* of Christ to the ends of the earth. Thus, according to Cullman, not only does time center upon the redemptive work of Christ, but Christ’s place at the center of history is an unmistakable sign of his immutable Lordship. While the knowledge of the Lordship of Christ over all creation is present at both ends of the historical timeline, it is the story of salvation which spans the historical distance between the two.

Rejecting the “de-mythologizing” efforts of Bultmann,<sup>436</sup> Cullman dedicates a hefty chapter of *Christ and Time* to developing an account of *exousia* as entities both material/structural as well as spiritual/angelic.<sup>437</sup> Summarizing his overall cosmology at the beginning of *Christ and Time*, Cullman notes:

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<sup>434</sup> Cullman, *Christ and Time*, p. 178

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.* p. 184

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 191-210. Cullman is one of the first to connect late Jewish teachings about the place of angels at the head of nations (such as in Daniel, Wisdom, Sirach, Enoch and also in the Talmud and Midrash.), with New Testament descriptions of *exousia*.

There is in the New Testament an invisible heaven and a visible earth; invisible powers and authorities are at work, while man observes only the visible deeds executed by the earthly agents of those powers. But this invisible course of events is itself completely subjected to the progress of time. The essential thing is not the spatial contrast, but the distinction which faith makes between the times.<sup>438</sup>

Thus it is in following the paradoxical character of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, that Cullman is able to announce the Lordship and reign of Christ over *all* things, whilst acknowledging that many of the powers of the world still refuse to subordinate themselves to Christ's reign. The way that Cullman navigates the contrary descriptions of the lordship of Christ in the New Testament is two fold: (1) an eschatological account of two ages, and (2) a soteriological account of the relationship between those two ages which includes the universal redemption of both.

### **Cullman's Eschatology**

The central thrust of Cullman's argument involves the illumination of a Biblical conception of time divided into three distinct units: the time before Creation, the time between Creation and *parousia*, and the time after *parousia*.<sup>439</sup> Subsumed within the "Biblical conception of the time" however, there are two vastly different perspectives: that of Judaism and that of Christianity. The vastness of the difference between the two is noted by Cullman as occurring thanks to a second two-fold division present in each timeline between "this [age] and the coming age."<sup>440</sup> This two-fold division designates a midpoint in the overall timelines of Judaism and Christianity, the difference between the two being the location of the midpoint on the timeline. For Christianity the midpoint of the timeline is the Christ-event, while for Judaism the midpoint is coterminous with the already existing separation twixt the age that is "between Creation and Parousia" and the age "after Parousia."<sup>441</sup> What

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<sup>438</sup> Cullman, *Christ and Time*, p. 37

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.* p. 82

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*

this means is that for Judaism the midpoint on the timeline is in the future, whereas for Christians it is in the past. The difficulty for Christianity therefore, lies in coming to grips with the notion that while the initial timeline remains, i.e., that the *parousia* is in the future, the church finds itself already belonging to the new age.<sup>442</sup> Cullman puts it such that

Expectation continues to exist just as in Judaism. What the Jews expected for the future is still expected of the future; but the future event is no longer the center of the redemptive history; rather, the center lies now in a historical event. The center has been reached but the end is still to come.<sup>443</sup>

For Cullman this is analogous to the deciding battle happening during the early stages of a war, yet the war continues on till “Victory Day.” Cullman rightly describes the powers as defeated by the Christ-event, and yet they still rule over the world, in the present, awaiting the fullness of the *parousia*.

It is precisely this method of navigation of the “already” but “not yet” character of the Lordship of Christ which Yoder adopts throughout his writings. Following his description of the creation, fall, and dominion of the powers in *The Christian Witness to the State*, Yoder acknowledges the “triumphant affirmation of the New Testament...that Jesus Christ by His cross, resurrection, ascension, and the pouring out of His Spirit, has triumphed over the powers.”<sup>444</sup> Following Augustine and Cullman, Yoder identifies the present historical period (after Pentecost and prior to *parousia*) as being marked by the coexistence of two overlapping ages, one old and one new. The old age is passing away and is centered upon the sin of man, the rejection of God, and the dominion of the powers. The new age, which is already beginning to supersede the old, is the “redemptive reality” characterized by the Lordship of Christ and “God’s will being done.”<sup>445</sup> For Yoder, “the present

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<sup>441</sup> For a helpful line graph of the differences between the timeline midpoints in Christianity and Judaism see Cullman, *Christ and Time*, p. 82.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid. p. 83

<sup>443</sup> Ibid. p. 84

<sup>444</sup> Yoder, *Christian Witness*, p. 9

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

paradoxical state of the world is well expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. Christ is now reigning, He is now Lord, yet not all His enemies have subjected to Him.”<sup>446</sup> This is the point at which Yoder adopts Cullman. Yoder uses the example provided by Cullman (as described above) of the time between the end of a war and the final surrender of the defeated enemy. Citing the “merit” of Cullman’s work as having “most clearly” worked out the “double character of Christ’s reign,” Yoder identifies two separate anticipations of the kingdom, “both of them valid foretastes of the final triumph but in different ways.”<sup>447</sup> Yoder describes these two anticipations as follows:

The church points forward as the social manifestation of the ultimately triumphant redemptive work of God; the world, however, even though still rebellious, is brought into subjection to the kingship of Christ or the kingdom of the Son. The kingdom of the Son is thus to be distinguished, insofar as we may be permitted to speak systematically, from the kingdom of God.<sup>448</sup>

It is upon this foundation that Yoder builds his argument for the “scaffolding” service that violence provides to the redemptive process. For Yoder the purpose of the “vengeance-upon-vengeance mechanism...is to maintain peace so that all men can come to the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>449</sup> Thus it is Cullman’s work that makes this seeming inconsistency (a kingdom of peace maintained by violence) in Yoder’s work possible. If I am to argue that Yoder is wrong regarding God’s utilization of violence to master history however, I must first make my case against Cullman.

### **Cullman’s Soteriology**

According to Cullman, the soteriological process that primitive Christian eschatology identifies as occurring in history can be dubbed a “double movement of the redemptive line,” which is “the principle of *representation*,” i.e., “the *election of a*

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid. p. 9-10

<sup>448</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>449</sup> Ibid. p. 11

*minority for the redemption of the whole.*”<sup>450</sup> In the first case, man is representative for the fall and redemption of the whole creation; the curse of man in the fall is the curse of all Creation. Moreover in the midst of the sinfulness of all humanity God chose one community of people, Israel, to be the agents of salvation for the whole creation.<sup>451</sup> As the process of redemption continues, it follows a path described by Cullman as a “*progressive reduction.*” In the prophets, when Israel does not fulfill her role in God’s plan of salvation, the whole of Israel is replaced by a faithful remnant. Finally the remnant is further reduced to one man “who alone can assume Israel’s role,” Jesus Christ, the “Suffering Servant of God” and “Danielic Son of Man.”<sup>452</sup> As Christ is the midpoint on the line, the overall movement of redemptive history changes. No longer does redemption move from the many to the One, but “*from the One, in progressive advance, to the many.*”<sup>453</sup> For Cullman this is the separation between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant; in the first the many are represented *by one* and in the New Covenant the many will ultimately represent *the one.*<sup>454</sup> Thus the New Covenant/Old Covenant divide signals a double movement on the redemptive timeline with the Christ-event at the center. The second movement on the redemptive line, from the One to the many, begins with the apostles (the remnant), leads to the church (Israel), advances to the *universal* redemption of all humanity, and finally of the whole creation—a new heaven and a new earth.

Cullman’s soteriological universalism is equally problematic for Yoder’s enterprise. According to Cullman,

[s]ince the time of Abraham there has been occurring a course of events which, to be sure, develops outside of the real redemptive history, but which

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<sup>450</sup> Cullman, *Christ and Time*, p. 115

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.* p. 116

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.* p. 117

<sup>454</sup> What Cullman refers to here is the unity of the people of God in Jesus. The question is whether or not that unity is available outside the church, or perhaps in a time that is post-church.

nevertheless has proceeded from it and will again enter into it; indeed since Christ's death and resurrection it already has begun to enter into it again.<sup>455</sup>

The gentiles, and all the nations of the world, have been continuing to exist (subjugated to the powers) outside the redemptive timeline since the inauguration of Israel as representative of all humanity. Yet post-Christ, redemption is once again spreading universally to the whole world. Perhaps Cullman's best (and saving) insight in his description of "Christian universalism," which he acknowledges as paradoxical, is that the general history must *enter* into the redemptive history, not vice versa. The danger comes from describing the eschatological relationship between the timelines as a merging. In the case of a merging, the general timeline is not subordinated to the redemptive timeline; that is to say, the world need not necessarily pass through the church in order for it to participate in the redemptive history.

There is a reflection of this kind of soteriological thinking in the work of A. James Reimer, particularly when he encourages theologians like Yoder to temper their "ought" with a contextual "is." According to Reimer, a more proper relationship between the two, rather than an over-focus on "ought," as is found in Yoder, or an over-focus on "is," as found in the Niebuhrs, is required. For example, Reimer believes it would be prudent to temper the "Anabaptist ideal" against the "Mennonite reality."<sup>456</sup> Should this tempering fail to happen, a scenario is created in which a theological discussion of

how God governs the world "outside the perfection" of Christ remains largely unaddressed, the focus being primarily, if not exclusively, on what it means to be faithful "inside the perfection" of Christ, with little analysis on what positive role human institutions of family, tribe, ethnicity, nationality, law and government play in the divine economy of the world at large and the cosmos as a whole.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Cullman, *Christ and Time*, p. 181

<sup>456</sup> Reimer, J. A. "I came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it': A Positive Theology of Law and Civil Institutions" in Ollenberger, B. C. and G. G. Koontz (eds.). 2004. *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*. pp. 245-73. Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House. p. 249

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.* p. 248

As will become obvious in what follows, the conclusion of this chapter does not find Yoder guilty of overemphasizing theology “inside the perfection” at the expense of theology “outside the perfection,” although it would probably be better for Yoder if he were. Reimer’s main concern is that the “true theological significance of ‘God ordained’ institutions through human history, which God preserves the world from total chaos and disintegration, is not adequately understood or acknowledged.”<sup>458</sup> Yet it is precisely a theology of “God ordained” powers (most of which, according to Yoder, *are* systems and institutions) that Yoder is developing when he draws on Cullman’s eschatological account of the two ages and his soteriological description of the Lordship of Christ.

Reimer’s soteriology, insofar as it reflects that of Cullman, is summarized in the following three part movement: “God *has* created the world good, God *has* redeemed the world in Christ, and God is reconciling the world to himself through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>459</sup> The statement as such seems rightly orthodox. Until, that is, Reimer clarifies the third movement of his summa, noting that:

If, for example, Christians believe that God *is* doing something reconciliatory in the world through the Holy Spirit both inside and outside the church, then there is insight to be gained from looking empirically at what *is* happening in cosmic and human history—past, present, future.”<sup>460</sup>

Nowhere in Reimer’s three part summa does he mention that the reconciliatory and redemptive work of Christ occurs *within* the church. Indeed, it seems for Reimer that the work of the Spirit replaces the work of the church as opposed to grounding it. To put it another way, for Reimer it is the Spirit which works both inside and outside the church, because, on Reimer’s analysis, rather than Yoder’s, the church is designated “inside.” For Reimer, the job of the church seems to be *being* the church, whose evangelical witness to the world is showing what the perfection of Christ looks like. This sounds similar to Hauerwas’ claim that the first task of the church is to be the

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid. p. 248

<sup>459</sup> Ibid. p. 249

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

church, except for one *caveat*. It is not necessarily the church who serves the world, or even attempts to perfect the world by evangelizing it—rather, that is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is unclear how Reimer then avoids the charge of deriving an “ought” from an “is.” On his analysis, human institutions are the way they are, the Holy Spirit perfects institutions outside of Christ, therefore, current institutions are as perfect as they can be (or are getting there through the grace of the Holy Spirit) outside of Christ.<sup>461</sup> (Here he leaves himself open to critique from both Yoder and Ellul by assuming the possibility of Hegelian progress); even if this is but a parody of where Reimer wishes his position to take him, it remains unclear how anything can be perfect, or perfected, “outside the perfection of Christ,” which Reimer takes to be present only in the church, that is, unless Reimer were to make an ontological distinction between the perfection of Christ and the perfection of the Holy Spirit.<sup>462</sup> Reimer’s position is similar to Cullman’s insofar as Cullman says that the general time line is forced to enter into the redemptive time line, and the way this occurs can be articulated as the world entering into redemptive history at a time perhaps best described as post-church. In short, God’s salvation of the nations occurs separately from the gathering of the nations into the church. The alternative then would involve seeing the *crossover* between the general time and redemptive time as always taking place in the church. Unfortunately the error made by Reimer, Cullman, and Yoder is that too often a dichotomy is presumed between perfection “inside” and “outside” as if there really were two perfections, one for each age. Redemption of the old age is marked by making it as good as possible, but ultimately assuming that the gathering of the nations will occur in the *parousia*. For now a few citizens here and there may

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<sup>461</sup> It also stands to reason that an account of the perfecting of the world outside of Christ through the Holy Spirit would make the notion of perfection synonymous with progress. Either, history has already come out right in Christ, and therefore the nations are as perfect as they can be outside of Christ, or, the Holy Spirit is progressing history in the right direction, toward the perfection of the nations outside of Christ.

<sup>462</sup> A second criticism could be made of Reimer regarding his reading at this point of the church as collection of individuals rather than as a community unified by the Holy Spirit. Reimer notes: “The Church is of course, for Christians, the primary community of allegiance—the community within which our ultimate values and commitments are shaped. However, the church is not the only venue of our faithful activity. Good and godly things happen outside the church and church-related ministries. In fact, there are occasions when individuals are called on in concrete times and concrete places to give provisional priority to working outside the standard institutions of the church as a form of Christian faithfulness”. (Ibid. p. 248). Reimer is making a distinction here between the individual Christian and the context in which their faithful activity occurs.

decide to switch their allegiance, but the church must be satisfied with the perfection of the nations to only a certain extent, because, of course, the violence of the nations is required.

The compartmentalization of the “perfection of Christ” within the church is made particularly evident in Cullman’s description of the crossover between the two time lines, which is based upon his account of the New Testament concepts “the sovereign Lordship of Christ” and the “Church.”<sup>463</sup> Citing a number of passages in the New Testament (Matt. 28:18, Phil. 2:9-10, Col. 1:18-20, Col. 2:10, Eph. 1:10) that proclaim Christ as head of both the church and head over all things, Cullman argues that while Christ is head over all things, including the church, the body of Christ is represented by the church alone, because “[t]he Church as Christ’s body continues his work on earth.”<sup>464</sup> The church, for Cullman, is the heart and center of the Lordship of Christ. According to Cullman it is not the case that the church and the world are

two circular surfaces that lie beside one another...or perhaps only touch or intersect...[or are] identical. We must rather conceive two concentric circles whose common center is Christ. The entire circular surface is the reign of Christ, the inner circle is the Church, the...[outer] is the world.<sup>465</sup>

Indeed, while both circles are full of sinners the inner circle knows it has been redeemed while the outer circle stands “unconsciously under the Lordship of Christ.”<sup>466</sup> It is the work of the church then to make the world aware that it stands already under the Lordship of Christ. It should be said here that I find this analogy useful as long as the world is called to recognize the Lordship of Christ not where they are, or as what they are, namely “world,” but are called to come enter in to the community of Christ, the “church.”

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<sup>463</sup> Cullman, *Christ and Time*, p. 185

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.* p. 187

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.* p. 187-188

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.* 188

It is at this point in *Christ and Time* that Cullman begins to develop his own particular account of the powers as those entities that have been placed under the Lordship of Christ yet do not quite realize it, including the way in which Christ's mastery of the powers is the ability to use the powers, despite their rejection of his Lordship, in order to benefit the process of redemption. Cullman explains this benefit such that the powers work on behalf of Christ "not, to be sure, as mediators, but rather as executive instruments of the reign of Christ."<sup>467</sup> (The worrisome connection between Yoder and Cullman at this point becomes readily apparent). Establishing the "late Jewish belief that all peoples are ruled through angels" based upon Daniel, Wisdom, Sirach, Enoch, the Talmud, and Midrash, Cullman identifies Christ's mastery of the powers as the subjection of Fallen angels. Cullman then leaves room for the violence and sinfulness of the state, by observing the presence of a "certain freedom...left to the angelic powers within their subjective position;" this explains why, "in the present stage of redemptive history, it still is not possible for the Church to take without qualification or criticism the view that the State is divine."<sup>468</sup> Looking specifically at Rom. 13:1, Cullman argues that the state can never be viewed as an end in and of itself, rather it merely serves a purpose within the divine order, a purpose that is to be both respected and questioned (as the state is prone to demonic flare-ups).<sup>469</sup>

Cullman's overall emphasis on the respectability of the state in the divine order, as based on Rom. 13:1 must be addressed. According to Cullman, the New Testament "simply confirms the fact that the State (the Roman State), in its judgment concerning good and evil, agrees with the Christian judgment."<sup>470</sup> Yet this is clearly not the case for either Yoder or Hauerwas. Everything in the Gospel rejects the Roman Imperial order, particularly their view of good and evil, and replaces it with something completely different: no longer are the rich blessed, rather it is the poor.

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid. p. 192

<sup>468</sup> Ibid. p. 198

<sup>469</sup> Ibid. p. 202

<sup>470</sup> Ibid. p. 204

Indeed, Cullman himself sounds slightly confused when he notes that the nature of the agreement between the church and state, as to what is good, cannot be explained.<sup>471</sup> The question is: why does Cullman even think that a theory of state legitimacy is necessary in order to describe the intersection of the redemptive time line and the general time line? Why is it necessary to see the state as having a place within the divine order that does not require transformation and incorporation within the redeemed community, the church? It is not as if, upon Christ's ascension into heaven, the Roman Empire, or the angelic powers which led it, immediately altered their conceptions of goodness and justice. Yet Christ was still Lord, regardless. The point is that if general history is to be incorporated into redemptive history, then the general history must acknowledge the Lordship of Christ by gathering to Him, into the community called church—a position explicated in detail in the next chapter.

Upon Cullman's eschatology and ecclesiology, as described thus far, Yoder extrapolates a vision of the mastery of God over history that identifies the Lordship of Christ as *using* the mechanism of violence-on-violence to police the unruly nations, thereby making it possible for the church to be the church in relative peace. But surely, as I have noted above, it cannot be the case that the maintenance of the church is made possible by a utilitarian Prince of Peace who uses violence to establish the peaceful Kingdom of God. Such a vision enslaves the peace of Christ (the love of God) to the *Pax Romana*, a peace (love) on the other side of violence. This Deific utilitarianism stands in stark contrast to his account of the powers as metaphysical entities that stand in rebellion against God. As I will argue in the next chapter, what Yoder and Hauerwas require is a theology of gathering that proclaims the Lordship of Christ, yet requires those who would answer the call, including the powers, to *disciple* themselves within the community of love. Negatively, to identify the redemptive process as a gathering into the body of Christ, rather than a *diaspora* of salvation to the world, a merging of redemptive history into the world history, Yoder will be able to avoid falling into the trap of universalism, and founding the Lordship of Christ on an ontological violence. Positively, Yoder, and through him Hauerwas, have the intellectual tools to discern the powers as ontological realities, as

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<sup>471</sup> Ibid. p. 203

opposed to merely moral agents (who make bad choices), if they would only use them.

### **Bettering the State**

Besides the Lordship of Christ, Yoder identified a second foundation for the Christian witness to the state, namely, the translatability of Christianity into the language of the World. This translatability is manifested by J. H. Oldham's notion of "middle axioms," which acknowledges the ability of the church to speak to the world in a neutral language. The use of middle axioms in Yoder's work, to attend the interrelationship between secular peace and justice groups, the state, and the church, begins in *The Christian Witness to the State* (1964), but as I argue below, continues, though often not so named, throughout his career finding its *apotheosis* in his (1992) *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*. Through the use of middle axioms, Yoder encouraged the church to engage with, and witness to, the nations. This involved replacing the language of the church with the language of the state, in the hopes of calling the state to live up to the state's own best moral insights. Such methods of public engagement might for example involve the translation of *agape* into "pagan terms" such as "liberty, equality, fraternity, education, democracy, human rights."<sup>472</sup> Yet it is important to remember that for Yoder, middle axioms are only tools whose utility is the illumination of Christ to those unable to hear and comprehend the Christian language. As Alain Epp Weaver puts it, "[n]o metaphysical value is ascribed to the middle axioms outside of Christ."<sup>473</sup> Still the question as to whether or not Yoder embraced the translation possibilities provided by "middle axioms" for the duration of his career has been at least briefly contested. Michael Cartwright observes that Yoder drops the middle axiom terminology later in his career, though never repudiates the notion *per se*.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Yoder, *Christian Witness*, p. 73

<sup>473</sup> Weaver, A. E. "After Politics: John Howard Yoder, Body Politics, and the Witnessing Church." in *The Review of Politics*. 16:4. (1999). pp. 637-73. p. 663. Weaver is the Mennonite Central Committee's representative for Jordan, Palestine, and Iraq, and is directly responsible for offering alternatives to the conflicts in these regions. Indeed, his job is that of using middle axioms to establish and maintain peace.

Craig Hovey disagrees, acknowledging that while Yoder drops the language of middle axioms, the notion itself is retained, and most likely transformed.<sup>475</sup> It will be my purpose in this final section to identify the continuity, as implied by Hovey, between Yoder's vision of the interrelationship between the church and world in his early writings, and that found in his later works in order to make clear any inconsistencies between Yoder's description of the church within the context of the Kingdom, and the church within the context of the world.

### **The Christian Witness to the State**

In his essay, "The Christian Witness in the Earthly City," Gerald Schlabach draws remarkable comparisons between the form and function of Yoder's *The Christian Witness to the State* and St. Augustine's *The City of God*.<sup>476</sup> It will be useful to look closely at Schlabach's reading of Yoder through the Augustinian lens precisely because it is a reading which avoids the particulars of middle axiom language whilst illuminating the eschatology of translation that underpins each. Schlabach argues for six ways in which Yoder's Christian witness to the state "corresponds with Augustine's attitudes toward the earthly city:"<sup>477</sup> (1) eschatological context; (2) the co-mixture/coexistence of two societies; (3) the obscurity of purpose and meaning within history or society alone; (4) critiques of imperial self-glorification; (5) an exhortation of the earthly *polis* to its own betterment; and (6) the making of effort to establish and maintain the peace of the earthly city. It will be useful to look briefly at each of these below.

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<sup>474</sup> Cartwright, M. "Radical Reform, Radical Catholicity: John Howard Yoder's Vision of the Faithful Church." in Yoder, J. H. 1994. *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*. Cartwright, M. (ed.). Grand rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing. p. 17

<sup>475</sup> Hovey, C. R. 2004. "The Public Ethics of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas: Difference or Disagreement." in Ollenburger, B. C. and G. G. Koontz (eds.). 2004. *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*. pp. 205-220. Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House. p. 213

<sup>476</sup> Schlabach, G. W. 2004. "The Christian Witness in the Earthly City: John H. Yoder as Augustinian Interlocutor." in Ollenburger, B. C. and G. G. Koontz (eds.). 2004. *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*. pp. 221-44. Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House. p. 233

<sup>477</sup> Ibid. p. 231

Schlabach's analysis begins by noting the eschatological context in both Augustine and Yoder is that of God's people struggling to come to terms with the "already" but "not yet" character of the kingdom. Augustine's contrast between the earthly city and the heavenly city is an analogy reflected in the "two ages or aeons"<sup>478</sup> of Yoder, both of which identify a

pilgrim people [who] live in tension, as resident aliens, not only because they are away from home but because the current world is a contested zone, in which the angelic citizenry of each city (the faithful and rebellious angels) vie to direct our loves and loyalties to opposing ends.<sup>479</sup>

Schlabach goes on to note that the opposition between the two cities is not merely a question of time, but of space as well. While both cities represent opposing ages, it is also the case that the *citizens* of both cities are intermixed within the same space. It is the practices of citizenship, therefore, that distinguish the members of one city from the other. As such the solution to the conflict between the two cities can never be a question of time alone or space alone. It stands to reason therefore, that the church cannot simply trust that given enough time the chaff will separate itself from the mystically unified wheat. Neither can the church begin the task of separation by walling itself inside suitably Christian ghettos. Rather, citizens of the heavenly city must locally embody the full catholicity of the *parousia* in the midst of the earthly cities. Moreover, it is the evangelical nature of the church (witness and conversion), which allows the heavenly city to avoid charges of sectarianism. Thus the timeful and eschatological response of the church to the earthly city must always be witness and an invitation to conversion, whereas the space into which earthly citizens are invited is the local embodiment of the universal city of heaven—for it is the very practices of the local community which make both responses possible.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Yoder, *Christian Witness*, p. 9

<sup>479</sup> Ibid. It should be that this imagery of opposing angels is identical to that found in Cullman's account in *Christ and Time*.

<sup>480</sup> If not for the unity of the Holy Spirit, and the sacramental practice of baptism and table fellowship, such a position would ensure the creation of but smaller and smaller sectarian ghettos.

The danger for both Yoder and Augustine occurs when the nature of witness becomes the effort to effect change in the practice of the earthly city by *bettering* its practices. The reason to better the practices of the earthly city involves an over-preoccupation with the notion of shared space. Both Augustine and Yoder acknowledge the Fallen character of the earthly city and the practices of its citizenry. For Augustine, it was not the might of Rome or her gods but the “one God who was ruling for purposes that were ultimately inscrutable but surely included such ends as establishing that partial earthly peace of which believers were to make use but not trust.”<sup>481</sup> For Yoder the state is always only the “scaffolding” service by which the church can more effectively evangelize the world. In both cases, the effectiveness of the mechanisms of the earthly city is too good a medium for the church to pass up. As just one example, when it came to sending out missionaries, the roads of Rome, and the peace from banditry, were to be lauded. Similarly for Yoder the Anabaptist, a state free of religious persecution is preferable to one that is not. Of course, the earthly city and the practices of her citizens must never be seen as ends in and of themselves, but in some cases such activities might just be the means by which the will of God could most effectively be done. At this point a brief aside will help make clear the nature of what Yoder and Augustine are doing when they make this kind of move.

In his book, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*, Sam Wells advocates the appropriation of categories found amidst the activities of improvisational theater in the hopes that such categories will help Christian re-imagine their moral contexts. Among the categories listed in *Improvisation* is a description of the different roles playable by actors, particularly in regards to those who are high status as opposed to those that are low status. According to Wells, high status roles command attention, demand space, and refuse to yield, while low status roles work in the margins, getting things done with subtlety rather than force.<sup>482</sup> According to Wells, the variation in status relationships is similar to the variation found in Michel de

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<sup>481</sup> Schlabach, “Christian Witness,” p. 232

<sup>482</sup> Wells, S. 2004. *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos. p. 321

Certeau's distinction between a "strategy" and a "tactic."<sup>483</sup> For Certeau, as described in Chapter 2, a tactic is an act of resistance (what Wells would call blocking) which occurs when those who would resist are homeless, whilst a strategy begins as an excursion from citadel to countryside—after either victory or defeat the army can retreat back to the citadel. Yet there is a striking difference between Wells and Certeau involving the place of the "other." For Certeau, a tactic is the resistance of the other to the domination of hegemony, whilst for Wells both high and low status describe the interrelationship of power within that hegemony. To put it another way, those who are low status are not weak, nor are they victims, rather, adopting the means of the low status player is but a strategy for the manipulation of power. At a recent conference Wells told the slightly humorous story of a friend who catches a young boy breaking into the ground floor of his flat. Rushing outside, his friend (high status) catches the boy and holds him. Yet as the friend prepares to call the police, the boy (of low status, and seemingly powerless) shouts out to those at a nearby bus stop: "This man is trying to touch my willy!" This, according to Wells, is a form of role reversal in which the low status thief uses his lower status to make a high status player vulnerable. This occurs because the low status player, the high status player, and those at the bus stop, are all set within a deeper context involving pedophilia and abuse that saturates society as a whole. Thus both low and high status players are playing the same power games, only in different ways. There is no "other" involved in Wells' analysis at this point, which could quite possibly be a criticism of Well's categories, or at least the ambiguity in his employment of them. At times Wells wishes to encourage the Christian to creative and shrewd acts of resistance, and in his another book describes Jesus washing the feet of the disciples as an status reversal (high to low).<sup>484</sup> It would be extremely helpful then if Wells were to spend some time making distinctions between non-exploitive acts of weakness, vulnerability, service, and victimization which do not attempt to manipulate power in the manner of the low status player. Whether or not de

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<sup>483</sup> Wells cited the similarities between his own work and that of Certeau at The Ekklesia Project Conference in 2006.

<sup>484</sup> Wells, S. 2006. *God's Companions: Reimagining Christian Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. p. 218

Certeau's tacticians are as *other* to the strategist as he claims is a discussion for another place.

What is important for this chapter is coming to see the moves toward efficacy made by Augustine and Yoder, particularly regarding their affirmation of the usefulness of the practices of the earthly city, as attempts to play the low status game. The attempt to better the practices of the earthly city in the hopes of maintaining a longer lasting *Pax Romana* (or *Pax Americana*), is a low status manipulation of power. Yoder and Augustine attempt to increase the efficacy of the church by establishing a peace and a justice rooted in violence rather than the God-who-is-love. Schlabach notes that for both Augustine and Yoder, the call is for the statesmen to at least give their "second best," that is, to adopt as policy the lesser of two evils—all the while the shared motivation for their actions, is a Christ-founded concern for the welfare of one's neighbors and friends. Overall, Schlabach argues, this is the eschatological worldview on which Yoder founds his account of the translatability of Gospel principles and ultimately his description of the usefulness of middle axioms. Schlabach goes farther and notes that an account of middle axioms might have saved Augustine from accommodation to the Constantinian enterprise, by rejecting his need to ascribe metaphysical ground to lesser truths.<sup>485</sup> While Schlabach acknowledges serious differences in Augustine and Yoder, particularly in Augustine's willingness for Christians to engage in just war, the differences as presented in *The City of God* and *The Christian Witness to the State* are ultimately differences in what concessions are made in the name of effective utility. To put it more clearly, the differences amount to different strategies by which the church ought to use its low status to maintain a Kingdom which does not even have a stake in the game.

### **The Christian Case for Democracy**

Yoder's article "The Christian Case for Democracy," was given to the Ethics Section of the American Academy of Religion conference on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1976. The article

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<sup>485</sup> Schlabach, "Christian Witness," p. 234

was republished with minor changes in 1984, in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel*, twenty years after the publication of *The Christian Witness to the State*. In addition to the task presented in this section, of finding continuity in Yoder's writing with regards to the nature of the church/state relationship, it will also be useful to look at the ways in which this article affirms one form of secular government in particular, namely, democracy, and does so precisely because democracy is the form of government which is most useful to Christians who are attempting to better the practices of the state.

Yoder begins by noting that there is no simple way to engage Scripture so that a biblical vision of how the world political order ought to look like is swiftly illuminated. Rather, “[w]e need to correct for our built-in habits of thought, to recognize that prescriptive visions for how things ought to be, in the world beyond the community of faith, did not come naturally to early Christians, or to early Israelites.”<sup>486</sup> The Maccabees and Zealots adopted a theocratic model based upon their Messianic expectations, which “included an affirmative design for government according to the will of God, but projected that hope only for the people of God, not a better empire.”<sup>487</sup> While the apocalypics and Zealots were frustrated with earthly Empire, and their preoccupation with it revolved around its annihilation, or at least it's fading away, the question was never asked, “What would be the best form of government?” Alternatively, Yoder notes, the early Christians never asked whether empire was the best form of government. Rather, this question could only be asked by the church after Constantine, when those who asked had the power and leisure to contemplate possible alternative worlds.<sup>488</sup> In an attempt to explain the complexity of Yoder's position, Hauerwas observes:

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<sup>486</sup> Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, p. 153

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> This Rawlsian mode of enquiry seems dangerous for a number of reasons, not least of which is that at no point is Christ presumed as the foundation for the act of imagination. To put it another way, an alternative has already been offered in Christ, what need of more? The only possible reason for more would be the construction of less offensive alternatives – a world of lesser evil, yet one in which the offensiveness of Christ is not on display.

Yoder's disavowal of the question of what form of government is best does not mean that he thinks we live politically in a world in which all cats are gray. Christians can and should distinguish between different societal and governmental alternatives, but they must do so without assuming they need a theory of legitimacy to discern the difference between political societies. That Christians refuse to speculate about what form of government may be best does not mean they must abandon all attempts to discern between better and worse forms of societies.<sup>489</sup>

Yet whether or not Yoder actually disavows the question, is far from clear. Following his recitation of the difficulties involved with the question, including the Constantinian context from which the question is asked, Yoder develops two accounts of translation: one negative and one positive. The negative case for democracy is interested in a kind of translation which navigates between the facticity of secular authority and the moral claims of secular authority, yet whose starting point is the way of Christ. The positive case for democracy is the more familiar notion of the Christian cultic commonwealth which trains, most likely through the use of middle axioms (although this terminology is not used), the civil commonwealth. Yoder begins with his discussion of the negative case for democracy because it is, in practical terms, more basic and possibly more useful, though also more accommodated.

Yoder begins his discussion of the negative case for democracy by talking about the "facticity" of secular dominion as opposed to the "language of legitimation" (which is the *ad hoc* justification of that facticity), referring to his claim in *The Christian Witness to the State*, that "[t]he State does not need to be theoretically justified in order to exist; it does exist."<sup>490</sup> Indeed, according to Yoder, Jesus did not, and the church should not, baptize the authority of the secular state as the divine right of rulers. Despite the *already* character of state dominion, the state legitimizes itself by identifying itself as a moral good. Yoder observes, "that even the pettiest Caribbean dictator, like the most powerful in Peking or Moscow, makes claims to be benefactor."<sup>491</sup> In practical terms, the church need not criticize the ontological

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<sup>489</sup> Hauerwas, "Democratic Time," p. 538

<sup>490</sup> Yoder, *Christian Witness*, p. 78

ground for the legitimacy of a government; rather the church need only call a government to live up to its own moral claim of legitimacy—to be a benefactor to those over whom they claim dominion. (The problem with this is that it already begins to ignore Yoder’s account of the ontological facticity of the powers). Following Yoder, Hauerwas argues that Christians need not “ask governments to be nonresistant, but they can ask those in power to be just, care for the orphans and widows, and use the least violent means possible to secure order.”<sup>492</sup> Thus middle axioms have been rejected in that no longer are such axioms taught to the nations as principles derived from the Gospel; rather, the church is responsible for calling the state to its own best insights. Moreover, none of this lies in contrast to the “differentness of the disciples,” who live in obedience to the Lordship of Christ in the midst of the nations. It is when a ruler claims to be a benefactor “and he always does...that [his] claim provides me as his subject with the language I can use to call him to be more humane in his ways of governing me and my neighbors.”<sup>493</sup>

Therefore, the negative case for democracy states that in democracies in particular, it is not the case that the government is more *humane*<sup>494</sup> or *legitimate* because it is a government “by the people,” rather it is merely the case that democracies are more useful to Christians (who desire to call on the state to improve its care for the governed), because in democracies representatives of the people have to take seriously the wishes of the people if they wish to continue to legitimate themselves as democratic *qua* democracy. Thus, Yoder can be opposed to Niebuhr’s liberalism whilst still being optimistic about the possibilities of democracy for the church. Indeed, because the government attends to many services other than protection and the acquisition of resources, it is possible for Yoder to claim that the government is “by no means only the sword.”<sup>495</sup> This allows Christians to not only exhort the state

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<sup>491</sup> Yoder, *Priestly Kingdom*, p. 156

<sup>492</sup> Hauerwas, “Democratic Time,” p. 540

<sup>493</sup> Yoder, *Priestly Kingdom*, p. 158

<sup>494</sup> Once again the question must be asked: how one can have a notion of what is “humane” without allowing for the possibility of ontological status independent from Christ?

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.* p. 165

to better practices, which is the Christian witness to the state, but also to participate in government.<sup>496</sup>

Alternatively, Yoder's description of the positive case for democracy once again encourages the church to think in terms of middle axioms, although Yoder never actually uses the term, as such. In what Yoder calls the more hopeful case for democracy, the Christian commonwealth is called to act as a model for the civil commonwealth. The particulars of this relationship are never really expanded upon except to note that two failed versions of such a program are reflected in the age of Milton and Cromwell. The gist of Yoder's argument however, seems to be to train the world so that honest dissent is possible on a range of issues, including those that deal with human justice and nonviolent conflict resolution, all of which must be founded on "the logic of servanthood rather than...coercive beneficence."<sup>497</sup> The oddity in Yoder's argument however, is that there does not appear to be a clear line of separation between the civil commonwealth and the Christian commonwealth. If the civil commonwealth is founded in Christ, why is this positive case for democracy not called effective evangelism? At what point does the civil commonwealth cease to become civil and become a part of the Christian commonwealth? At what point does this new arrangement become Christendom all over again? The answer to these questions has to be that Yoder is actually referring to a kind of education whereby the church teaches the state a set of cruciform principles through the use of middle axioms—the very activity of liberalism. Whether or not the principles of democracy have a cruciform shape has already been called into question by Noll's reading of the theological crises of the Civil War, but Noll's arguments aside, as readers of Yoder, our suspicions are raised by the seeming inconsistencies between Yoder as radical democrat and Yoder as the opponent of Niebuhr. At the very least it seems that Yoder is providing an answer to the question: what is the best form of government? He does this not only by acknowledging the efficacy of democracy for calling rulers to account, but by implying, with Romand Coles, that the republicanism of the "town

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<sup>496</sup> Ibid.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid. p. 167

hall” is akin, on some level, to the diversity of the “congregation,” by comparing “free speech” and “parliament” to the “Christian hermeneutic of dialogue in the Holy Spirit”.<sup>498</sup>

### **Body Politics**

In his book *Body Politics*, published in 1992, Yoder analyzes five practices of the church, which “prefigure” God’s will “for human socialness as a whole.”<sup>499</sup> Yoder notes that these five practices are called sacraments by some, yet in them grace is conferred not only to the church but to the world as well. This conference of grace is not, according to Yoder, a metaphysical reality, but is rather, training in the ways of discipleship for the church and a mediation of better alternative practices for those living in secular communities. Thus Yoder describes the church/world distinction not as “two compartments under separate legislation or two institutions with contradictory assignments, but two levels of the pertinence of the same Lordship.”<sup>500</sup> *Body Politics* as a whole, therefore, further develops Yoder’s *positive* account of the church/state relationship as found in the above section. While the primary goal is to discover the formative political character of the sacraments for the church, Yoder’s discussion of each practice ends with a description of the ways in which that particular practice is capable of transforming political habits in the secular community as well. Before moving on to look at Yoder’s magnum opus on church/state issues, it will be useful to look briefly at one of the sacraments, and the way in which Yoder makes it viable to the secular community.

The first practice of early Christians, as described by Yoder, is Jesus’ admonition of binding and loosing. In the words of Jesus:

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<sup>498</sup> Ibid. p. 166

<sup>499</sup> Yoder, J. H. 1992. *Body Politics*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press. p. ix

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one (Matt. 18: 15).

The process of binding and loosing is a doctrine of confession, discipline, and reconciliation called by Paul<sup>501</sup> “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1), and affirmed also by the Epistle of James (5:19-20). In both Matthew and John 20:23—“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”—Jesus outlines, according to Yoder, a specific human activity (sacrament) in which “God would at the same time be acting ‘in, with and under’” the activity of the disciples.<sup>502</sup> (Yoder uses this definition of sacrament to apply to all five practices). According to Yoder, the goal of “binding and loosing” is to name sin in the midst of the community and then to seek both peaceable reconciliation and forgiveness, i.e., the remission of the offense. Yoder observes four central aspects of this activity, which he points out are “significantly different” than historical understandings of this practice:

- a. The initiative is personal, not a clergy function. The one who is to address the offender is the person who knows about the offense, not a clergy person.
- b. The intention is restorative, not punitive.
- c. There is no distinction between major offenses and minor ones: Any offense is forgivable, but none is trivial.
- d. The intention is not to protect the church’s reputation or to teach onlookers the seriousness of sin, but only to serve the offender’s own well-being by restoring her or him to the community.<sup>503</sup>

Thus the church must first discern (confess) sin, and place upon the offending party the obligation to confess its offense. Thus confession is, in both cases, a description of sin and a call to (or affirmation of) a different way of living. Forgiveness and absolution of the offender are not solely activities of the clergy, nor are they wiped clean by an inward (mental) assertion of guilt and remorse within the sinner. Rather, the offender can only be reconciled to the body through a person-to person process of

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<sup>501</sup> For a discussion of Yoder’s contribution to Pauline studies see Harink, D. 2004. *Paul Among the Postliberals*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

<sup>502</sup> Yoder, *Body Politics*, p. 1

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3

confession and forgiveness between offender and offended. Furthermore, the pastoral nature of the call to peaceable reconciliation is only possible for Yoder because membership in the community is voluntary. Yoder sums up his argument about the practice of binding and loosing in the early church in the following way:

1. Believing men and women are empowered to act in God's name.
2. What the believers do, God is doing, in and through human action.
3. God will not normally do this without human action.
4. If we receive forgiveness, we must give it.
5. This dialogical reconciling process must come first. Only then must we turn to talk of the set of standards that this process enforces. Much Christian debate about moral issues makes the mistake of concentrating on what the standards ought to be rather than on how they are to be discerned and implemented.<sup>504</sup>

It is at this point that, despite Yoder's oft-repeated rejections of the liberal attempt to derive theological insights from Christian practices,<sup>505</sup> he does exactly this by using middle axiom terminology to make reconciliation viable to the secular community as a whole.<sup>506</sup> Here Yoder creates an eight-point model of peaceable and effective reconciliation for any human community, based upon the principles of the practice of binding and loosing.

- a. The process begins at the point of concrete offense, with a real problem.
- b. The intention is not punishment but resolution.
- c. The frame of reference is a value communally posited as binding the parties.
- d. We should assume that the process is not a zero-sum game. The mediator trusts that a solution is available whereby both parties will win; each party affirms the other's rights.
- e. The first efforts are made in ways that minimize publicity and threat, and maximize flexibility without risk of shame.
- f. The process makes use of a variety of roles and perspectives carried out by competent, caring, yet objective interveners.
- g. The skills and the credibility of interveners can be validated by experience and accredited by colleagues and clients.

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid. p. 7

<sup>505</sup> Ibid. p. vii

<sup>506</sup> Ibid. p. 11-12

- h. The ultimate sanction if negotiations fail is public disavowal of the party refusing reconciliation; what is left is either to let the injustice stand or to see the civil powers intervene in their ordinary way.

Yet a number of questions arise from Yoder's claim that such secular reconciliatory activity is possible, such as how can peculiarly Christian concepts like confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation be intelligible in communities not founded upon the acclamation that Christ is Lord? What is the method for determining offenses from correct behavior in secular communities? Would not these be framed in terms of reason, nature, and law<sup>507</sup> for which the claim "Christ is Lord" has no meaning? What are the limits of secular discipline for the unrepentant? What are the terms of the membership for those within the community? Is the community voluntary? What if it is not? And in what way is reconciliation intelligible as a good, or even a "lesser good," within communities not disciplined by the Lordship of Christ?

Beyond these most basic questions, concerns arise as to whether Yoder's description of liberalism in the "Introduction" is any different from his own attempts to translate sacramental practice into secular terms. According to Yoder:

There are ways to bridge the chasm between "church" and "politics" or between "worship" and ordinary life, many people will say, but all agree that a bridge is needed. Then they differ about what the right bridge is. From the perspective called "liberal," the bridge between the two is thought to be a set of *insights* concerning human nature and the world, such ideas as justice and freedom and understandings of why and how we should behave. Worship is then thought of as inculcating such insights and reinforcing devotion to them. Worship helps you understand things in a particular way; then, in the light of those understandings, you will be usefully active in public affairs. It will for instance, help you think of the global ecology as something God created for a purpose or of your neighbor's hunger as your responsibility. Those understandings will guide you to act.<sup>508</sup>

The main difference between the liberal response to the chasm between church and state, and Yoder's own, lies in the distinction between individual and community.

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<sup>507</sup> These are terms which are disavowed by Yoder (Ibid. p. vii) as attempts at "autonomy," i.e., autonomy from Christ. These terms claim to be known "otherwise than through revelation or worship." (Ibid).

<sup>508</sup> Yoder, *Body Politics*, p.12

Liberalism identifies Christians as those secular citizens with special insights, whereas Yoder identifies the church, as does Stout, as a separate community whose insights are available to world. The important thing to recognize is that this availability of insight (into Christ) is not evangelism, nor does it require the world to disciple itself to the Lordship of Christ, nor enter into the community of faith as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. Rather, a version of these insights is available to the world as middle axioms—whether or not this is merely Christianity without Christ remains to be seen. At the very least it is clear that Yoder is once again relying on middle axioms to bridge the church/state divide, ultimately in the hopes of bettering the state, ensuring a temporary peace, and relying on God to use the violence of one nation to check the violence of another. But is this entirely fair to Yoder? It seems that the whole point of *Body Politics* is to expand on the notion that the state is not, or need not be, entirely the Sword. By drawing on a variety of services which might be provided by the state, and which offer an alternative to the violent maintenance of peace, Yoder it seems may be hoping to avoid the dangers of describing God as using the violence of the state to ensure the work of the peaceable Kingdom. Whether or not Yoder can extricate God's *use* of the nations from the violence of the nations remains to be seen as I end this chapter by looking briefly at Yoder's most extensive study of the church-state relationship in *For the Nations*.

### **For the Nations**

As Yoder notes in the "Introduction" to *For the Nations*, published in 1997, each of the essays in the volume "argues, though each in a somewhat different key, that the very shape of the people of God in the world is a public witness, or is "good news," for the world, rather than first of all rejection or withdrawal."<sup>509</sup> In *For the Nations*, therefore, Yoder's chief enterprise is to shuck the label "sectarian" and to provide an alternative through the analogical "development of Yiddish."<sup>510</sup> Yoder refers to the development of Yiddish as the Jewish attempt to find a middle ground between, on the one hand, the adoption of German language and custom in the interest of

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<sup>509</sup> Yoder, *For the Nations*, p. 6

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4

becoming “effective participants in the...culture,”<sup>511</sup> and on the other hand, the Jewish need to maintain their Hebrew identity by hanging onto the language of “‘back home’.”<sup>512</sup> Thus Yoder’s goal is to encourage *diaspora* Christians to find a median between engaging “fully... [with] the host culture” and maintaining the peculiarity of habits cultivated by citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Indeed, it is safe to say that there is no place among Yoder’s later writings in which a call to middle axioms is more fully realized. Yoder is not calling the church to merely find single concepts or terms which can be translated from Christian commonwealth to civil commonwealth, rather, he is encouraging the church to develop a pidgin, creole, or contact language, by which both *poleis* might begin to understand one another.<sup>513</sup>

According to Yoder, there is much at stake in the way we discern what he calls the two most basic turnings in history, Jerimian and Constantinian, each of which required a review and transformation of the relationship between God, power, and the nations, in the theology of the people of God. Yoder’s wish, in the light of the still felt reverberations from the Constantinian turn, is to reconcile Christ and the nations through a middle language which allows for participation in the world, while allowing the church to maintain its identity and discipleship. Yoder is thus advocating a similar low status strategy for the development of peace within the nation, such that, through the new language of witness the church need not rely on

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<sup>511</sup> Ibid. p. 1

<sup>512</sup> Ibid.

<sup>513</sup> According to noted linguist Steven Pinker, “[w]hen speakers of different languages have to communicate to carry out practical tasks but do not have the opportunity to learn one another’s language they develop a makeshift jargon called a pidgin.” (Pinker, S. 1994. *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*. New York: Harper Perennial. p. 21.). A fruitful discussion could be had setting Pinker and Chomsky against Wittgenstein at this point in order to establish a more complex account of language creation, but this is not the place in which to do so.

However, as an aside it is interesting to note that on Pinker’s analysis a pidgin can be transformed into “a full complex language in one fell swoop: all it takes is for a group of children to be exposed to the pidgin at the age when they acquire their mother’s tongue.” When this happens, the children, “[n]ot content to reproduce the fragmentary word strings...inject...grammatical complexity where none existed before, resulting in a brand new, richly expressive language,” this is what is known as a creole (p. 21). While there are certainly differences between Yiddish and creoles, it seems that describing Yoder’s task as the development of a pidgin, with the hope that it may someday become a creole, is more clearly what Yoder has in mind.

the nations to maintain peace through the use of violence, but through a variety of services that have less to do with the Sword.

The stated aim at the beginning of the last section was to discover any inconsistencies between Yoder's description of the church within the context of the Kingdom, and Yoder's description of the church within the context of the world. The above reading of Yoder's work recounts the evolution of Yoder's thought, with its genesis in Cullman, regarding the positive possibilities of temporary peace provided by the nations, and more specifically, the use of that peace as a police action, restraining the violence of the world, giving the church the space to do the work that God has called it to. In light of his arguments, one is forced to wonder if the realist's criticism of the pacifist has been right all along: "The only reason you can argue about pacifism is because we (the soldiers and just warriors) fight for your right to live in peace." In response to the realist's claim that Christian pacifism is not an effective means to ensure peace and order in the world, Yoder responds by saying:

That Christian pacifism which has a theological basis in the character of God and the work of Jesus Christ is one in which the calculating link between our obedience and ultimate efficacy has been broken, since the triumph of God comes through resurrection and not through effective sovereignty or assured survival.<sup>514</sup>

When Yoder's account of Christian pacifism from *The Politics of Jesus* is coupled with his vision of the policing possibilities of the nations, it stands to reason that Yoder's account of Christian pacifism need not be effective (in ensuring the survival of the church) precisely because the survival of the church is ensured by the violence of the nations. As Yoder puts it, "[v]engeance itself, the most characteristic manifestation of evil, instead of creating chaos as is its nature, is harnessed through the state in such a way as to preserve order and give room for the growth of the church."<sup>515</sup> Yet when the survival of the faithful church is ensured by the violence of the nations, a two-tiered ethic falls into place by which the church is called to true discipleship under the Lordship of Christ (the perfection of Christ), while under that

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<sup>514</sup> Yoder, J. H. 1998. *The Original Revolution*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. 62

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

same Lordship the nations protect the true disciples, who in turn make the salvation of the nations possible (those who are, as of yet, unready to respond appropriately). It is unclear how this vision of Yoderian *just policing* is any different from Augustinian *just war*, except in that Christendom is no longer confined to one nation but to all the nations of the world. Moreover, if it is not the violent hand of the just warrior who ensures the survival of the peaceable community of disciples it must be the violent hand of God, who, because of the war-mongering of the nations, rather than despite it, ensures the survival of His people.

While Yoder hopes for the church to draw on the Jerimian tradition of encouraging the nations to better and more peaceful habits, it is still the case that the nations are the nations. Their use of the Sword, no matter how restrained, can never be a function of the God-who-is-love – of the Lordship of the Prince of Peace – precisely because the community he has created stands not as a vindication of that order, but as a transformation of it. If a language is developed in order to translate the Gospel to the world then what is said in that language must always be a call to confession, repentance, and discipleship. As I will argue in the next chapter, Christ ensures the survival of the *diaspora* church, not through the violence of the nations that surround them, but by gathering the scattered into the body of Christ, unified in Baptism, at the Eucharistic common table, and through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

### **Conclusion: The Implications for Hauerwas**

Throughout the course of this chapter it should have become clear that Hauerwas' appropriation of Yoder's thought, as previously explicated, neglects to name many of the contradictions in Yoder's writings, and it should not be a shock, therefore, when conflicts arise in Hauerwas' own work. Without the rabid anti-liberalism of MacIntyre's account in which democracy both creates and is sustained by moral disarray, it is not surprising that Hauerwas should spend more time looking at Yoder's own political commitments. Hauerwas' defense, when questioned as to why he does not use powers terminology, or provide an account of the powers, is that

Yoder already said it.<sup>516</sup> Yet if Hauerwas spent more time looking at the ontological commitments involved in Yoder's description of the powers, before and after the Christ-act, he could not help but be more critical of Yoder's later political writings, particularly in regards to Yoder's affirmation of democracy (both radical and otherwise). An account of the powers would supplement his early and middle critiques of liberalism that, up until Stout, were founded primarily on MacIntyre's dismissal of the Enlightenment project and democracy. Moreover, a full account of the powers would force Hauerwas to recognize that radical democratic imaginings of political activity are nothing more than practices central to the church which have been co-opted by the world. As such they are simulacra of the good practices to which the church is called, which the church has historically had enough difficulty embodying on its own—despite having access to the perfecting/correcting influence of the Holy Spirit, Scripture, tradition, and the sacraments. On such an account, when transmission occurs it ought always be *accidental*, the result of charity and evangelism, to be lauded, but never seen as an end in its own right. In light of Yoder's implicit ontology of the powers, radical democratic practices can only finally be seen as the attempt to have Christians without Christianity, or Christianity without Christ. Indeed, radical democratic practices cannot be intelligible as good ideas without an account of the character of the God-who-is-love which they attempt to imitate.

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<sup>516</sup> Hauerwas, S. 2003. Telephone Conversation, 9:00 AM EST. July 2003.

## Chapter 5

### Gathering and Gathered Between Already and Not Yet

In the first two chapters of this thesis I mapped the geography of something new in Christian political theology: an attempt to get beyond the organizing logics of modernity as found in the unsystematic postliberal writings of Stanley Hauerwas. As noted, the tentative nature of Hauerwas' writing can and should be seen as a continued critique of the modern/liberal encyclopedic description of what can be known. Yet, as I argue in chapter 3, the absence of a strong methodological framework makes inconsistency between Hauerwas' scattered writings a reality. Much of what Hauerwas hopes to gain by writing against and without an organizing method is sabotaged by his turn toward radical democracy. Radical democracy posits a secular politics that is neither informed by God's grace nor disciplined by God's wisdom. Radical democracy posits a knowledge, wisdom, and grace separate from God; it posits a new organizing logic, based on care and sharing which is not founded in the relationship between God and Godself (Trinity), or God and God's creation, but rather a description of abundance (Deleuze) and lack (Lacan)<sup>517</sup> that is grounded in Cartesian (liberal/modern) descriptions of the *ego* and the (o/O)ther. Hauerwas' postliberal hope, to reject the limitation of God and his activity by human reason, is subverted and appropriated to work against that very hope. In chapter 4, I worked to deconstruct and repair problems in Hauerwas' relationship to his source material, particularly the writings of John Howard Yoder, which have left him open to such a disastrous theological about-face.

While the first four chapters worked toward the critical and deconstructive portion of this title, the final two chapters do the work of the second half: the proposing of an ecclesial politics of gathering. Yet the description of *ecclesia-as-gathering-of-love* toward which this thesis is working cannot be separated from what the gathered are gathered from: the multitude. And so the final chapter will take up the constructive

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<sup>517</sup> See: Tonder, L. and L. Thomassen (eds.). 2006. *Radical Democracy: Politics between Abundance and Lack*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

and creative task of describing the phenomenality of the church's love for the world as a thing-in-itself. While this chapter works to answer questions about the knowledge, means, and shape of the gathering, the last chapter will attempt to sustain the concept of gathering while exceeding it. The central question that both chapters seek to answer, albeit in different ways, is that posed by Robert Jenson in his article titled "Christian Civilization": "When the barbarians say, 'Teach us to sing,' can the church say 'No'?"<sup>518</sup> In many ways, Jenson's question frames the tension in Hauerwas' writings between public postliberal sectarianism and the desire to evangelize, witness, serve, and care for a suffering world. Ought not the church help if and where it can? Jenson (reflecting Coles' tension between faithful remembering and radical, generous receptivity to the stranger) writes:

If the church shares her cultural treasures with a civilization, she shares them with an entity that does not control her own use of them. The church takes the risk that instead of despoiling the Egyptians, she is inviting Egyptian chaos to despoil her: to make of her freedom, libertinism; of her art, blasphemy; of her debunking of myth, nihilism.<sup>519</sup>

Indeed, as Foucault said, "everything is dangerous."<sup>520</sup> But does sparing the church's purity outweigh the cost of denying the world practical practices that could make the lives of those enslaved peoples easier? Putting the question in these terms, even the Hauerwas of *Resident Aliens* would say, emphatically: "No." The church cannot help but teach the world about Jesus; evangelism is as Yoder describes it, a dialogue with the other. Yet when teaching the world the ways of Jesus, the church must continually remind the world that "generous receptivity" is not a transcendental, but the very name of God. Indeed, the church is "a segment for this age of the single and unitary city of God,"<sup>521</sup> the mission of which is to minister and care for prisoners (peoples enslaved to the powers); yet service and ministry are more than the attempt

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<sup>518</sup> Jenson, R. W. "Christian Civilization." in Jones, L. G., Hütter, R., and C. R. V. Ewell (eds.). 2005. *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*. pp. 153-66. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. p. 163

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.* p. 162

<sup>520</sup> Foucault, M. 1984. *Foucault Reader*. P. Rabinow (ed.). New York, NY: Random House. p. 343

<sup>521</sup> Jenson, "Christian Civilization," p. 162

to “make things better,” they are the call to be free—an invitation to take the King’s amnesty, to gather around His table.

In this chapter, I begin by developing a correct location for Christian epistemic access (the church) and question whether and how such knowledge can be shared with the world. It becomes clear quite early on that it is impossible to begin to *know* in the right kinds of ways without being part of that gathered assembly called church. Indeed, in this chapter, I explore the question of what it means to be gathered at all and how such gatherings are made possible by certain practices called sacraments. Toward the end of the chapter, I explore several challenges to gathering, both practical and epistemological, that sacraments work tentatively to overcome. I finish this chapter by inserting an ecclesial identity of gathering into the work of Hauerwas, and recounting the challenges that he will face if he is allow such an identification to shape his theological politics. In short, my work in this chapter is to describe Christian eschatologically-informed practices of gathering and the way in which the church and her theologians (particularly Hauerwas and Yoder) ought rightly respond—simultaneously, generously, and confessionally—to a world enslaved by the false gods. My task will be achieved by opening up new sources to Hauerwas, beginning with the negative political theology of Bernd Wannewetsch.

### **A Tale of Two Cities**

Wannewetsch begins his version of theological politics by drawing on the eschatological vision of Richard Bauckham, who states that

In the beginning God had planted a garden for humanity to live in (Gen 2:8). In the end he will give them a city. In the New Jerusalem the blessings of paradise will be restored, but the New Jerusalem is more than paradise regained. As a city it fulfills humanity’s desire to build out of nature a human place of human culture and community.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Bauckham, R. 1993. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 135

Moreover, the old city is always and everywhere under the judgment of the new by virtues of God's new city presently present. Wannewetsch here is echoing Ellul's sentiment that it is by virtue of "the fact that God chose the city to show forth there the presence of final truths [that the New Jerusalem] removes man's sovereignty over his work."<sup>523</sup> In order to understand the new city set over, against, and amidst the old, Wannewetsch extends Ellul's observation making a distinction between the eschatological practices of "de-citifying" and "de-civilizing." The latter represents wrongful ungenerosity, a lack of receptivity to other. For Wannewetsch, the civilization of the world by the church is a positive response to the Jerimian exhortation to the exilic community in Babylon, "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you" (Jer. 29:7). That the church does not "leave the earthly city unaffected" is to say that it offers "judgment and hope—not as a model, blueprint, or actual 'betterment,' but neither as blunt annihilation nor disdain."<sup>524</sup> Thus, the Christian engagement with the world must be tempered by a commitment to remain "genuinely Christian;" Wannewetsch dubs this process, "de-citifying the city."<sup>525</sup> De-citifying is, says Wannewetsch, "short-hand for the threefold need to defortify, demythologize, and desacralize the earthly city by stripping it of exactly those traits that represent its most profound self-understanding: its *civic pride*."<sup>526</sup> Each of these de-citifying practices will be discussed in what follows. First, it will be useful to look at Wannewetsch's description of the relationship between the two cities.

What Wannewetsch means by 'the city' is not merely the structured governing bodies that rule the world but the "ultimate expression of civilization and the icon of human sociality."<sup>527</sup> Rome was not merely the capital of an empire, but an "infinite

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<sup>523</sup> Ellul, J. 1970. *The Meaning of the City*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing. p. 108

<sup>524</sup> Wannewetsch, B. "Representing the Absent in the City: Prolegomena to a Negative Political Theology According to Revelation 21" in Jones, L. G., Hütter, R., and C. R. V. Ewell (eds.). 2005. *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*. pp. 167-92. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. p. 170

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*

stretching of the city walls that offered *Pax Romana* to those forced inside.”<sup>528</sup> This is reflected in Scripture in the apocalyptic vision of John of Patmos, in which the city, Rome/Babel, represents demonic imperial power while the “city that comes down from heaven” (Rev. 21:2), the New Jerusalem, stands in direct opposition to it. Wannewetsch identifies three antitypes that illuminate the relationship between the two cities:

The New City comes dressed as a “bride” (21:2), as opposed to the great whore Babel, who is dressed in purple and scarlet and drunk with the blood of the saints (17:4-6). Whereas Babel/Rome’s empire was based on violence and death—bringing death to others as well as bearing death for itself—the New City will be marked by the absence of death and crying and pain (21:4). While Rome’s habit of “giving” was actually a means of sustained oppression, in the New City the water of life will be given to the thirsty “without cost” (v. 6).<sup>529</sup>

Moreover, the *civitas caelestis*, living between the times, is, in the words of Augustine, “like a captive and stranger in the earthly city...though it makes no scruple to obey the laws of the earthly city.”<sup>530</sup> Thus the heavenly city “‘touches down’ rather than ‘settles down’;” “[i]t intersects rather than occupies;” “it can have no *stabilitas loci*.”<sup>531</sup> Moreover, the touching down of the *civitas dei* in the midst of the *civitas terrena* engenders opportunities for engagement *qua* change and transformation among the nations—engagement *qua* de-citification. It is telling, says Wannewetsch, that the Hebrews writer (13:12-14) believes

that the one crucial event in the history of mankind, its actual turning point, was meant to happen *outside* the city. And when it was accomplished the concomitant signs of Jesus’s death were the extinguishing of the lights that illuminate the city’s grandeur, the tearing of the temple curtain, and the shaking of the city walls (Matt. 27:45-51 ff).<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid. p. 169

<sup>529</sup> Ibid. p. 169

<sup>530</sup> in Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid. p. 170

<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

Yet the Christ-event does not only darken (deconstruct) the earthly city, but illuminates the “future promise” of the one that is coming, and, at the same time, is already here in part. The eschatological vision of the *civitas caelestis* intersecting the earthly city is not just spatial but temporal as well.

Arising from his reading of Revelation 21, Wannewetsch describes three “moments of political rule that are portrayed as being absent in the new City”<sup>533</sup>:

1. shut gates in the city *wall* (v. 25);
2. a need for lighting (*sun and moon*) to reflect the grandeur of the city (v. 23);
3. a *temple* at/as the center of the city (v. 22).<sup>534</sup>

According to Wannewetsch, each of these symbolizes the organization of “social identity by virtue of the security that it bestows on its inhabitants.”<sup>535</sup> Protection is offered the inhabitants: by their location behind a *wall with closed gates*, by their temporal storying via a cosmological (*sun and moon*) myth of eternity, and by their spatial anchoring via a *temple* in the middle of the city. The “presence” that fills the new city is the Lord, and that presence illuminates the idolatrous security of the old city as maintaining modes of protection which are at once aberrational simulacrum, and unnecessary. The peace of the city of heaven is constituted by the “absence of threat and fear and not from the employment of protective measures that operate on the basis of separating an inside from an outside.”<sup>536</sup> Thus the heavenly city does not operate on the basis of exclusion, but rather for those not inside, the “unclean” and those who practice “abomination and falsehood” (v. 27), “it is simply...that they will not enter.”<sup>537</sup> Secondly, the eternity of the new city does not struggle to create for

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<sup>533</sup> Ibid. p. 172

<sup>534</sup> Ibid. p. 173

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid. p. 174

<sup>537</sup> Ibid. p. 176

itself permanence, but arrives from heaven, illuminated by the light of the presence of God.<sup>538</sup> Thirdly:

In the New City there will be veneration of divine majesty, but not as religion or *civil religion*. The eschatological singing of God's praise will no longer be intelligible in terms of...the binding of one's own fate and the fate of the city to a deity whose presence must be visualized and localized, fixed in space and domesticated for continuous service for the city. Rather than being a god in a temple at the center of the city, God will be its temple. God's presence will fill the whole of the city. Rather than himself being localized *within* the city, God's presence will actually *make* the city a *locus*, a true place.<sup>539</sup>

For Wannewetsch, the "presence of the absence" in the new city represents more than just opportunities for judgment on the idolatrous ideologies of the old. Rather, true peace and security makes it possible for the church to welcome strangers into its midst.

Wannewetsch illuminates three practices of vulnerable invitation to citizens of the old city, though he does not explore them fully: asylum, mediation, and pilgrimage. The offering of asylum to the weak and disposed is an invitation to the exiles and marginalized of the old city to become citizens—to be baptized into the "celestial *politeuma*."<sup>540</sup> The second invitation takes the form of providing the old city with an outsider's perspective, that is, the church as the adjudicator of political disputes which always speaks from "outside the city gate" (Hebrews 13:12). Finally, the church invites those within the city to follow the liturgical procession. Nevertheless, even if they do not join in, the church still moves toward the new city, in the midst of the old, in the hopes that such movement will disrupt, and illuminate, the false security and staticity of the old city.

If we learn anything from Wannewetsch's account it is that "a genuine theological engagement of politics should be *precisely negative*, representing what is absent

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid. p. 177

<sup>539</sup> Ibid. p. 174

<sup>540</sup> Ibid. p. 189

rather than what is present.”<sup>541</sup> His call to judge the *civitas terrena* and de-citify it whilst simultaneously inviting it to gather in the midst of a new city, the *civitas dei*, provides an account of appropriate Christological engagement with the world. The old city is not bettered, legitimated, or controlled by the church, but neither is it left to its own devices. Indeed, judging “the presence” of characteristics in the earthly city that are “absent” in the heavenly one, makes it possible for the church to offer the world hope despite itself. As Ellul puts it, it is not what the New Jerusalem

says or does that expresses her true mission, but her simple presence in the world of men, confronting the cities of men. She is like a catalyst: because she is there, things change. She is like a road sign, changing the route of those who observe her. But the most basic meaning of this mission is that by her very presence she shows the world that there is a final judgement—and that its presence may already be seen in her...She is subject to all the twists of history and to the reverberations of what is happening in Chaldea and Egypt. But throughout this history her only and never-ceasing purpose is to hold up before men not the end of time, but the present reality of what constitutes the end...witnessing to divine grace *and* condemnation is an integral part of her eschatological function.<sup>542</sup>

The presence of the new city, presently awaiting *Eschaton*, by embodying judgment, makes invitation possible. Thus Wannewetsch not only navigates the tension in Jenson’s question, as to whether the church ought to teach barbarians to sing, but in doing so provides an explicitly Christological description of generous receptivity to other that is so central to Coles’ account of radical democracy. The church need not choose between withdrawal and accommodation (forming contracts for survival) to the idolatrous powers (and their false gatherings), rather it embodies the hope of the “already” in the midst of the “not yet,” and invites those enslaved by the powers to flee their enslavement and re-gather into the citizenship of the city which will not fade away. As Bonhoeffer puts it, “God is one, and the whole world should be in God’s Realm.”<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid. p. 168n5

<sup>542</sup> Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, pp. 107-8. Emphasis mine.

<sup>543</sup> Bonhoeffer, D. 1998. *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*. Green, C. J. (ed.). Krauss, R. and N. Lukens (trans.). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress. p. 266

It is precisely this notion of “gathering in the midst” that I will discuss in what follows. This eschatological “already but not yet” gathering in the midst of the world is not just a call to catholicity for the church, but an invitation to those who, as of yet, are still straggling amidst the wolves. The call to “seek the welfare” of the city is tempered by a call to exodus—an exodus which, as we will see in Lohfink, is always a call *to gather* somewhere else: “Flee from the midst of Babylon and go out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as he-goats before the flock” (Jer. 50:8). In the words of Ellul, this is not

the departure of individuals fleeing before a catastrophe, but the departure of God’s people [to be] gathered into a flock. What is astonishing is that in this prophecy those who understand God’s will are likened to he-goats, the leaders of a flock. And so in this departure it seems not only that faithful Christians separate themselves from the city, but that they are guides for still others—men whom God has chosen in secret and who perhaps have never confessed Jesus Christ or belonged to any confession, but who nevertheless belong to God’s people and prove it at the decisive moment by hearing the word of judgement and salvation that the church is announcing to the world.<sup>544</sup>

While those in the old city may reject the prophetic call to exodus—as it was with Noah, Abraham and Lot—the church lives in hope, precisely because it has the ability to remember Jonah’s Nineveh. What Gerhard Lohfink teaches, through his careful exposition of Scripture, is that the civilizationing of the world is not a scattering or *diaspora*, but a gathering together, which by its very activity constitutes judgment and the invitation to true catholicity.

### **The Exodus and the Gathering around Sinai**

Lohfink begins his description of exodus and gathering as practices that constitute the creation of a new eschatological community. Following the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, Lohfink notes that “Jesus’ disciples left the capital city and were in the process of being scattered to the four winds. But suddenly the movement turned back on itself: they regathered, and not just anywhere, but in the very place that was most

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<sup>544</sup> Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, p. 82

dangerous for them, the city of Jerusalem.”<sup>545</sup> Indeed, following the encounter with the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus, the two disciples, at “[t]hat same hour...got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together” (Luke 24:33).<sup>546</sup> The reassembling of the friends of Jesus in the midst of the capital city and their subsequent preaching of the resurrection with “great grace” (Acts 4:32-4), constitutes a witness to the Easter event. Yet, in Acts 4, the emphasis is not on the grace with which the disciples spoke, but on the witness born by the *gathered*, i.e., the life held in common:

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them...

Indeed, notes Lohfink, the disciples “needed no special eloquence, for they knew whereof they spoke and their hearers could see it.”<sup>547</sup> The *basileia* had come fully in Christ, and was still in the midst of the world, though not perfectly, as embodied in the community He gather(s/ed), and which awaits its consummation in the fullness of time. In what follows, I will first address Lohfink’s description of baptism as an invitation to exodus, and then the gathering to which those called out are invited.

For Lohfink the act of baptism is simultaneously an act of exodus. This is true in the sense that people are called out of their previous communities, contexts and stories, and invited to be part of something new—it is baptism that “creates the eschatological people of God and continually adds members to it.”<sup>548</sup> Moreover, the making of the people of God, in Lohfink’s account, is not a mystical (or internal) union but a concrete community embodied within real history.<sup>549</sup> This community is

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<sup>545</sup> Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church*, p. 204

<sup>546</sup> Scriptural quotations in this section are drawn from an original translation provided by Lohfink.

<sup>547</sup> Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church*, p. 207

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.* p. 208

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.* p. 211

visible and bodily, made up of distinctive ways of living together that demonstrates the profundity of Christ's love, *caritas*. As Paul says to the communities in Galatia:

in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:26-9).

The "novelty and revolutionary" character of this body is constituted, Lohfink notes, by "the deep gulf between nations, classes, and genders."<sup>550</sup> The offer of baptism is manifested then in the invitation of all to walk away from the idols and practices of idol worship that constitute the Fallenness of the world. This occurs through the incorporation of those on exodus into the "very real history of Jesus and thus into the Church, his equally real body" in such a way that those belonging to the new community "are placed on a new footing that makes it possible for them no longer to live according to the models of pagan society."<sup>551</sup> This is precisely where an account of the ontological reality of the principalities and powers arises in Lohfink.

The powers, by Lohfink's account, are ultimately the power of sin that "has spread through the world, that rules people like slaves and allows them no freedom at all."<sup>552</sup> In the same way that the newly inaugurated community constitutes a gathered body, namely the body of Christ, so too must the powers of sin, and the communities which they sustain, be accounted in bodily terms, i.e., "the body of sin."<sup>553</sup> Baptism is a rescue from the power of sin that is enslavement to a false gathering. This language of slavery is extremely important to Lohfink precisely because of the crucial way in which the early church discussed Easter, as a remembrance of Exodus. Lohfink writes,

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<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid. p. 209

<sup>552</sup> Ibid. p. 209

<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

As Israel went out of Egypt, the land of slavery and unfreedom, and received at Sinai, in the Torah, a new social order that made possible freedom and equality, so the Church celebrated in the Easter night its exodus from the rulership of sin and death, and its rescue and translation into the new life of Christ.<sup>554</sup>

The use of passages from Exodus in the liturgical mass on Easter night along with the baptism of catechumens provided the church with a constant re-storying that ended in re-remembering. This remembering does not end in eschatological triumphalism but proceeds “cautiously and without false enthusiasm” in order to preserve the tension between “already” and “not yet.”<sup>555</sup> Moreover, the act of remembering is central to the constitution of the body of Christ precisely because through memory the church continually is trained. The learned practices of idol worship are rejected, along with the communities that made such activities intelligible (and ends in and of themselves), in favor of new ways of living together at worship before God. As Rudolf Pesch puts it, when the rural (Galilean) disciples followed the call to exodus out of their homes and to the capital they could not help but

live and work *together* out of necessity, especially in the hostile atmosphere surrounding them, manage their affairs and finance their daily life and mission from the sale of landed property (such as Barnabas’s field)—in order to be able to fulfill their eschatological task of building in Jerusalem the messianic community in which there could be “not a needy person among them” because otherwise “their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” would have been diminished.<sup>556</sup>

On Lohfink’s account, exodus was not a withdrawal, despising, or renunciation of the world *qua* world, it was the call to build something new that God desired for all mankind.

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<sup>554</sup> Ibid, p. 213

<sup>555</sup> Ibid. p. 210

<sup>556</sup> Pesch, R. 1986. *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Apg 1-12). EKK V/1. Zurich: Benzinger/Neukirchener. p. 187. in Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church*, p. 214

Moreover, there is particular significance in the name that the community, gathered together by God in the midst of the nations, took for itself, that is, *ekklesia*. Lohfink traces the genealogical import of this term within both Torah and Rome. In Greek, *ekklesia* refers to the “assembly of the people,” “the coming together of all those with citizen rights in a given city.”<sup>557</sup> The adoption of this term from the civil life of the *polis* made the “extraordinary claim” that the church was not “a group of like-minded friends...joined together because of particular interests.”<sup>558</sup> Rather, they were a public gathering, interested in all things, and instituted by God. Indeed, throughout the history of the church, Lohfink notes

The Church deliberately avoided applying the manifold terminology of ancient guilds and societies to itself. The Christian community was not a *thiasos* or an *eranos* or a *koinon* or a *collegium*. It was not a segment or part of a larger whole. Concretely it was not a group, or a faction or a club, nor was it a sect. It was rather a “public assembly of the whole.”<sup>559</sup>

The whole people of God participated in more than the Greek and Roman understandings of *polis*; they also identified themselves as the “eschatological fulfillment of the gathering at Sinai.”<sup>560</sup> Lohfink follows the account, in Deuteronomy, of Israel’s gathering around Mount Horeb, which was a gathering “out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness” (Deut 5:22)—a day that was ever referred to by Israel as “the day of the assembly.” The gathering at Sinai was the consummation of the Hebrew exodus from Egyptian captivity, the moment wherein God acted to unify the exiles, slaves, outcasts, wanderers and oppressed into one people, one body, Israel. Moreover, “the Church did not regard itself as a *new* people appearing in the stead of the old people of God, having dissolved and replaced it, but as *Israel*, or more precisely as the beginning and center of growth for the eschatological Israel.”<sup>561</sup> The church’s appropriation of the term *ekklesia* therefore

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<sup>557</sup> Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church*, p. 218

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.* p. 219

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.* p. 220

denotes a description not only as a *polis*, but also as the consummation of the promise to Israel.

Finally, it should be noted that for Lohfink, the *ekklesia*, gathered in the midst of the nations, offers a very particular kind of salvation for those enslaved to the powers of the world. Lohfink points out that the salvation offered by God to the gathered “means not only eternal life but also primarily the rescue, the salvation, the peace they already receive. They live, indeed in a new bond of togetherness in which each has everything he or she needs because all give everything they have.”<sup>562</sup> Lohfink points our attention to the “the already” character of salvation embodied in the life of the *ekklesia* as described in Luke:

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:43-47).

The awe of “everyone” was not the awe of miraculous “wonders and signs,” rather it was, in Coles’ terms, an ateleological surprise—the possibility that a community could exist in which wealth was shared, all were fed, and perhaps most importantly, unity was not due to coercion or necessity, but joy. Joy, generosity and care for the “least” were possible because the *basileia* was *becoming*; indeed, the God-who-is-love was gathering to Himself a people capable of living in freedom from the powers. These people were saved not in some distant mystical sense, but in their life together—within a concrete people and a concrete history.

The description of exodus and gathering as found in Lohfink extends the description of the *caelestis civitas* begun in Wannewetsch. Wannewetsch emphasized (negatively) the double eschatological character of the church’s invitation as judgment (de-citifying) and the promise of hope, while Lohfink exhorts (positively)

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid. p. 223

the church to begin thinking of itself and its invitation: the call to exodus, and the subsequent gathering of exiles into a community of people capable of living between the “already” and the “not yet.”

### **In the Meantime**

Despite the polarized descriptions of ecclesiology offered by Hauerwas and O’Donovan in chapter 2, there is much to be said for avoiding the implicit exclusivity in the dichotomy between all “already” or all “not yet” theologies; for if anything betrays the “already” character of the church it is that the gathered body is fractured, and if anything subverts the “not yet” it is that the fractured body (or at least its parts) still performs the eucharist. Thus in order to better understand the church’s embodiment of the double designation, both “already” and “not yet,” in the next section I will look at the way in which the church performs the eucharist whilst divided in the midst of the powers. In short, if the church were fully “already” then there would be no division in the body of Christ, and if the church were completely “not yet” then the gift of the eucharist would be premature.

In the next section I will address Cavanaugh’s description of globalization as a violent organizing logic, a power. The powers discussed up until now have been: secularization (as the de-Christologizing of discipleship and the translation of its language into that of radical democracy), and the liberal nation-state. The danger of globalization however, is that rather than gather people into a false community (the state), or translate Christian practices into non-confessional language, it scatters all people, calling them out of their communities and gathering them nowhere—all the while calling it’s activity unification. The simulacrum of catholicity engendered by globalization is the promise that if everyone is exiled everywhere then there is no need to gather anywhere, rather, the whole world is home. In the following section I will provide an account of eucharistic performance as the sacrament by which God continually gathers his people, in direct opposition to the power of globalization, by making present the “already” in the midst of the “not yet”—that is to say, as, ontologically, both local and catholic. Next, I will look at a concrete example of

church division where it seems the most irreconcilable, in the eucharistic theology of Mennonites and Catholics. The church cannot but help be deemed fragmented (as opposed to gathered), a broken body, when practices central to the life of that community, i.e., table fellowship, become impossible due to internal divisions. Yet that dialogue exists (relationship and love persist), painful though it may be, bearing a promise that reconciliation is possible through the grace of the God-whose-being-is-communion. The Bridgefolk then, bear witness to the generous receptivity that is a necessary characteristic of dialogical engagement, even for those within the same teleological tradition. To put it another way, because the conversation has started, no longer can Bridgefolk Mennonites look at Catholics as if they were ateleological aliens and vice versa. This will all prove helpful in my attempt to suggest to Hauerwas a means of repairing inconsistencies in his theological politics, primarily through an account of gathering as ontological activity, not just in terms of what one gathers against, i.e., the powers, but also the eucharistic grace that God bestows on His church so that the church might live beyond the purview of the powers.

### **Globalization as the Power that Scatters**

According to Cavanaugh (one of Hauerwas' most prominent students), the ability of the church to see itself as a people on pilgrimage is failing. He gives three reasons as to why this is the case: (1) the modern state's program of subsuming the universal into the local has been extended by globalization; (2) globalization disallows the possibility of pilgrimage and flight through the rationalization of space; and (3) the false catholicity celebrated by globalization distracts the church from the reorganization of space and time, both local and catholic, occurring in the eucharist. For Cavanaugh, truthful catholicism is not equivalent to universalism, but requires, as we will see, the universal redemption of local places in which the eucharist celebration concentrates full catholicity in each local gathering.

The church's inability to understand its call to be gathered is due in part to the demonization of "locality." Cavanaugh notes:

Just as the nation-state freed the market from the ‘interventions’ of local custom, and freed the individual to relate to other individuals on the basis of standardized legal and monetary systems, so globalization frees commerce from the nation state, which, as it turns out, is now seen as more localization impeding the universal flow of capital.<sup>563</sup>

Thus, Robert Nisbet is correct in his identification of the rise of the modern state with the triumph of universality over locality.<sup>564</sup> This, as Cavanaugh notes, is synonymous with the “sovereign state’s usurpation of power from the Church, the nobility, guilds, clans, and towns” during the middle ages.<sup>565</sup> As a result, a direct relationship was established between the sovereign and the individual, which John Milbank dubs “simple space;” this is to be contrasted with “complex space,” the intermingling and overlapping of loyalty, responsibility, and authority in medieval society.<sup>566</sup> According to Cavanaugh, globalization is the hyperextension of the nation state’s program of the subsumption of the universal into the local. That is to say, globalization is not merely the fragmentation of complex space, as is the modern state, but is also an enactment, “a universal mapping of space typified” by an extended “detachment...from particular localities.”<sup>567</sup>

Cavanaugh explains this new configuration of space arising within modernity by looking at Michel de Certeau’s distinction between “itineraries” and “maps.” According to Certeau, itineraries did not survey “spatial stories” as a whole, but traced narrative movement through space and time by giving a log of the most important events that happened on a journey. He contrasts this to the mapping of space on a grid, the “formal ensemble of abstract places.” For Certeau, maps are the “totalizing stage on which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a ‘state’ of geographical knowledge.”<sup>568</sup> Cavanaugh notes that

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<sup>563</sup> Cavanaugh, W. T. 2002. *Theopolitical Imagination*. New York, NY: Continuum. p. 105

<sup>564</sup> Nisbet, R. 1953. *The Quest for Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 75-125

<sup>565</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, p. 99

<sup>566</sup> Milbank, J. 1997. *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 268

<sup>567</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, p. 98

<sup>568</sup> de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 12

Space itself is rationalized as homogenous and divided into identical units. Each item on the map occupies its proper place, such that things are set beside one another, and no two things occupy the same space. The point of view of the map user is detached and universal allowing the entire space to be seen simultaneously. The type of mapping that Certeau describes is a corollary of the rise of the modern state, which depends on the ability to survey a bounded territory from a sovereign centre and make uniform the relations of each particular unit of space to every other.<sup>569</sup>

This modern panopticonic mapping, in which space is rationally homogenized so that it relates directly to the centre, requires the state and state institutions to ensure that the coercive power relations such mapping requires are diffused throughout society as a whole. Foucault's prisoners need to *feel* the all-penetrating Gaze, the threat of coercion. (Interestingly enough, "insiders" must fear not only external threats but that of their own state as well). Yet, globalization undermines even the locality of the state.

The new order eschews loyalty to workers, products, corporate structures, businesses, factories, communities, even the nation," the New York Times announces. Martin S. Davis, chair of Gulf and Western, declares, "All such allegiances are viewed as expendable under the new rules. You cannot be emotionally bound to any particular asset."<sup>570</sup>

By breaking down the barriers between nation states, the disciplining of space into rational units is preserved through dispersion. Rather than having many geographies, states, or prisons that the centre must watch over, globalization ensures that discipline is "ever more tightly organized through dispersal"<sup>571</sup> turning multiple subjects into one unified object for observation.

The demonization of locality and the rationalization of all space via the Gaze of globalization, leads Cavanaugh to describe common metaphors, such as pilgrimage and flight, as unable to resist globally segmented space. He cites Gilles Deleuze's

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<sup>569</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, p. 101

<sup>570</sup> Morris, D. "Free Trade: The Great Destroyer" in Mander, J. and E. Goldsmith (eds.). 1996. *The Case Against the Global Economy*. pp. 218-28. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books. p. 221

<sup>571</sup> Harvey, D. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 159

concept of the “line of flight” as an oft-invoked postmodern solution to a modern dilemma.<sup>572</sup> For Deleuze, one can create “nomad spaces” of flight from the totalizing surveillance and territorialization of controlled space.<sup>573</sup> While “flight” (or exodus) is a perfectly good form of resistance if one is seeking escape from the segmentation of space created by a state or state institution, it becomes less so when there is no space in which to escape—when the whole world has Fallen under the all-encompassing Gaze. As Cavanaugh notes, “The irony here is that in the globalized economy direct discipline over a particular locality has given way to the discipline of sheer mobility, the ability to flee.”<sup>574</sup> Indeed, it is the “sheer mobility” of globalization that continually oppresses workers. The flight of corporations from one location to another removes all protections offered by locality.<sup>575</sup> Thus, flight continually reproduces the segmentation of space, “complicating” all forms of nomadic resistance. Cavanaugh continues,

Far from yielding peaceful flight, the compression of space in the “global village” has not only exacerbated but produced insecurity and conflict in the late twentieth century, since global mapping brings diverse localities into competition with one another...Through transcending spatial barriers, capital is able to map and exploit even minute spatial differentiations, unleashing an economic war of all against all.<sup>576</sup>

Rather than simply subsuming the local into the universal, globalization puts the local at odds with itself. While global competition forces each locality to sell its unique advantages in order to “lure capital,” at the same time it paradoxically forces each locality to tailor itself, to be “modeled on those localities that have been previously successful.”<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>572</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, p. 107

<sup>573</sup> Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 13

<sup>574</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, p. 107

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.* p. 108

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*

The result of local competition is the construction of a “global village,” which is both maintained and constituted by a false sense of catholicity. As noted by Cavanaugh, New Yorkers and Africans commune on the internet and Mexican food is popularized in Minnesota; of course the use of the internet in both New York and Africa is reserved for the rich (or at least those able to pay), and the dominant form of Mexican in Minnesota is the fast-food chain Taco Bell (“which serves up a hot sauce that a native Minnesotan could mistake for ketchup”<sup>578</sup>). If the proponents of globalization are to be believed, peace and equality are almost within our grasp. All one must do is submit, or enslave, oneself to the metropolitan free-market which promises to shrink the globe. Cavanaugh quotes the president of the Nabisco Corporation who describes this utopia as:

One world of homogenous consumption...[I am] looking forward to the day when Arabs and Americans, Latins and Scandinavians will be munching Ritz crackers as enthusiastically as they already drink Coke or brush their teeth with Colgate.<sup>579</sup>

Thus, the catholicity of globalization makes it possible for those with money to see all the peoples of the world as sharing one space-time.<sup>580</sup> As Ken Surin says, while it is important for the other to be “different” it is just as important that it remain “merely different.”<sup>581</sup> The commodification of the other produces a simulacrum; i.e., a copy in which difference exists on the surface only precluding any “engagement with the genuinely other.”<sup>582</sup> This consumption of particularity both exacerbates and produces false catholicity. Moreover, without real other, there is no conflict and no teleological surprise. While the world waits for the full consummation of globalization, conflict is likely to arise, but when it does one need only to pack one’s bags and go somewhere else.

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid. p. 106

<sup>580</sup> Ibid. p. 109

<sup>581</sup> Surin, K. “A Certain ‘Politics of Speech’: ‘Religious Pluralism’ in the Age of the McDonald’s Hamburger.” *Modern Theology* 7/1. (October 1990) pp. 67-100. p. 74

<sup>582</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*. p. 110

## Eucharistic Performance and Vulnerable Catholicity

For Cavanaugh, the only hope that the church has is in retaining (or perhaps reestablishing) its pilgrim status; such a move requires firstly the recognition and rejection of the simulacrum of catholicity offered by globalism, and secondly the acceptance of the eucharist as a “counter-narrative of global proportions.”<sup>583</sup> Cavanaugh describes the gift of the eucharist as that of true catholicity, precisely because the eucharist

does not depend on the mapping of global space. The Church gathered in the catacombs, after all, was as catholic as the Church that would ride Constantine’s chariots to the ends of the known world...The action of the Eucharist collapses spatial divisions not by sheer mobility but by the gathering of the local assembly. The *Catholica* is not a place, however, but a “spatial story” about the origin and destiny of the whole world, a story enacted by the Eucharist.<sup>584</sup>

Tracing the etymology of the word “catholic” from the Greek adjective *katholikos* to its modern usage, Cavanaugh cites the distinction, made by Henri de Lubac, between “universal” and “catholic” in the English language: while “universal” suggests spreading out, “catholic” suggest gathering together; while “universal” indicates a “reality prevalent everywhere,”<sup>585</sup> “catholic,” according to de Lubac,

says something more and different: it suggests the idea of an organic whole, of a cohesion, of a firm synthesis, of a reality which is not scattered but, on the contrary, turned toward a center which assumes its unity, whatever the expanse in area or the internal differentiation might be.<sup>586</sup>

According to Cavanaugh, it is important to note, however, that the catholicity of the church made present through the eucharist is a “decentred centre.” The eucharist rite is celebrated in local churches around the world, and as such, its middle-point is everywhere. It is for this reason that Hans Urs von Balthasar suggests that

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<sup>583</sup> Ibid. p. 112

<sup>584</sup> Ibid. p. 113

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

<sup>586</sup> de Lubac, H. 1985. *The Motherhood of the Church*. Trans. S. England. Ignatius Press. p. 174

Christendom is not the normal state of the church (because the church's catholicity is not dependent upon extension through space).

While for Cavanaugh the celebration of the eucharist occurs in a *diaspora* of local communities, these are all ultimately gathered into one. He notes that it is not *part*, but the *whole* of the body of Christ which is present, *gathered* together at each Mass, for the *whole* body is accounted for *in each fraction* of the elements. Similarly, it is not *part*, but the *whole* body of Christ present in each eucharistic community. Cavanaugh cites this as the reason Paul refers to the local community in Romans 16:23 as *hole he ekklesia*. If each local community is as Paul says, “the whole church,” then it must be the case, argues Cavanaugh, that “Each particular church is not an administrative division of a larger whole, but is in itself a ‘concentration’ of the whole.”<sup>587</sup> Wherever the whole body of Christ is present, there also is the whole catholic church. Unlike the modern state or globalization, the church is not catholic in the sense that all the parts relate to a center, but that all the parts relate to centers present locally—in which each locality is a manifestation of the whole catholic body. As stated by Cavanaugh, the eucharist

Refracts space in such a way that one becomes more united to the whole the more tied one becomes to the local. The true global village is not simply a village writ large, but rather “where two or three are gathered in my name” (Matt. 18:20).<sup>588</sup>

In short, catholicity does not depend upon global mapping, but on the collapse of the entire world into each local assembly gathered around the eucharist—what Cavanaugh so eloquently describes as “the world in a wafer.”

While the eucharistic dismantling of the dichotomy between the universal and the local might be seen by some as a fascist sectarianism, which, by allotting *any* privilege to local gatherings attempts to exclude others, this ignores the fact that the catholicity given by the eucharist results from a story not a place. Drawing on

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<sup>587</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, p. 115

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.* p. 115

Certeau's earlier mentioned distinction between maps and itineraries Cavanaugh points out that

Stories organize and link spaces in a narrative sequence. They not only move from one space to another, but more accurately construct spaces through the practice of characters who trace an itinerary through the story...The itinerary implies not seeing but going; the subject does not survey the space detached as from above but is immersed in the movements indicated by the story.<sup>589</sup>

For Cavanaugh, the story of the eucharist is not told, but performed. It is an itinerary describing the practices and gestures of the body on its way, making the pilgrim's path as or before the "feet perform it."<sup>590</sup> Thus, the itinerary of the eucharist is a spatial story that deconstructs the "overcoding of the map," and the church performs the eucharist as a way of going forward, transforming local places into storied spaces.<sup>591</sup> Yet, the journey of the eucharist, when performed in an economy of "sheer mobility," means that resistance occurs "not by fleeing, but by abiding."<sup>592</sup> Therefore, the pilgrimage of the local church does not necessarily occur as mobility, for the "entire world and more comes to it in the Eucharist."<sup>593</sup> Rather, the eucharist *is* the ultimate cure to loneliness. As noted by the Hebrews writer, we have company when we approach the altar:

You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Thus, it is because the eucharist concentrates the entire catholic church in each local gathering, in such a way that localities are not forced to compete with one another,

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid. p. 116

<sup>590</sup> de Certeau, *The Practice of the Everyday Life*, p. 116

<sup>591</sup> Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, p. 117

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid. p. 118

for localities “are not juxtaposed but identified.”<sup>594</sup> Moreover, when a locality does not have to compete it can take the time to be truly vulnerable. According to Paul, in the catholic body of Christ, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). This honor and care, Cavanaugh continues, ensure the care of the weakest members of the body because that member is identified with oneself. Yet, “At the same time the other is not merely different but wholly other, for the suffering are identified with Christ himself (Col. 1:24), who nevertheless remains other to the Church.”<sup>595</sup>

If Cavanaugh is right, globalization tells both the world and the church a story of false unity (God-less love). In the world, the powers, and particularly globalization, force localities into competition with one another in the name of universal prosperity; in the church, globalization encourages blindness to the divisions that really exist in her midst. Cavanaugh therefore admonishes the church to be mindful that the eucharist should not be falsely told as that which unites the church while “some live off the hunger of others.” The divisions that Paul saw within the eucharistic assembly of the Corinthians are still with us today. It is Cavanaugh’s encouragement therefore, to remember that although the “already” is fully manifested in the *Catholica* of each local church around her altar, the church still lives “between the times” for surely the “not yet” is still fully evident in the divisions among us. If the church is to be paradoxically a people on pilgrimage and a people who abide, it must come to terms not only with its own failures to love, but also with the false-love of globalization that attempts to obscure those divisions both locally and catholically.

To summarize, the church needs to see itself as simultaneously “already” *and* “not yet.” There is no meeting in the middle between triumph and reticence, but only patience between the ascension and the *Eschaton*. While it is dangerous for the church to see itself as a castle in a warring world, it is equally dangerous for the church to see itself as merely a colony trying to make its way in a world of war. The church has received a gift in Christ, and continues to receive that gift in the

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<sup>594</sup> Ibid. p. 120

<sup>595</sup> Ibid. p. 121

performance of the Mass at every gathering of the community. It is the eucharist which makes the church triumphantly “already,” while at the same time giving it the skills to recognize, and remain vulnerable in its “not yet-ness.” This received gift of the “already” in the midst of the “not yet,” constitutes both the hope of the church and its fulfillment. As such, unity is not something that the church works for, but something that is given to it—it is not a product of her agency, but a glimpse of God’s creativity. This is not to say that the church can sit back and be content with its divisions, but that it must discern those divisions as flaws on the canvas that God has provided—not the Master’s flaws, but those which have been inflicted by human agency (our refusal to love). It is the human brush that mars the work of the Master, a result of failed attempts to accept what has already been given and which will be given again.

### **When The Gathered Scatter: The Bridgefolk**

In March and April of 2001, a mixed group of Catholics and Mennonites met with Abbot John Klassen, OSB, and Kilian McDonnell, OSB, of St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, to “explore the possibility of initiating an on-going dialogue that would make the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition of discipleship, peaceableness, and lay intentionality more accessible to Roman Catholics, while sustaining those practices by reconnecting them to their spiritual, liturgical, and sacramental roots in the Catholic Tradition.”<sup>596</sup> These early meetings were very positive, and as a result, the first official Bridgefolk gathering took place in July of 2002. As noted in their mission statement, Bridgefolk

is a movement of sacramentally-minded Mennonites and peace-minded Roman Catholics who come together to celebrate each other’s traditions,

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<sup>596</sup> In the Introduction to “Creating Peacemaking Communities for the New Millennium Catholics and Mennonites Bridging the Divide” Conference at St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. July 12-14, 2002. Text retrieved from <http://www.bridgfolk.net> ; Conferences, 2002. It should be noted here that the Bridgefolk talk about themselves as being from two different traditions, when in reality they are both called to be gathered around the person of Christ. The differences between them might not seem as great if they adopted Yoder’s idea of tradition as a vine (Chapter 3), rather than a tree. On their current view, it is as if they all started off in similar places but branched off along the way. On Yoder’s view, they must continually loop back to examine their roots in light of their divergence, the possibilities for newness on his model are very real. They are not bound to continue along different paths.

explore each other's practices, and honor each other's contribution to the mission of Christ's Church.<sup>597</sup>

Together the men and women of Bridgefolk seek better ways to embody the commitments of both traditions. While the ecumenical prospects of such a conversation are exciting, the words do not come easily.

During the gathering in July of 2003, Gerald Schlabach offered a reflection paper entitled "Between the Times, Between the Communities: Eucharistic Theology for the Bridge." He begins by telling the story of a wedding between two Christians, a Mennonite and a Catholic. According to Schlabach,

Since the wedding was to be a Catholic ceremony, Mennonite family members were uncertain whether they should take communion. At the rehearsal, one of them pulled the priest aside and asked what they should do. "There are two rules I must observe as a Catholic priest," he told them. "The first is that I cannot invite non-Catholics to receive communion. And the second is that I cannot refuse communion to anyone who comes forward in the communion line." With that he gestured to indicate that the conversation was over.<sup>598</sup>

Thus, it is with the words, "Welcome to Catholic culture -- welcomed to the table? or not?" that Schlabach describes the mixed messages that such paradoxical theology sends to both Mennonites and Catholics. He begins by noting that when one of the Benedictine hosts attempted to convey a similar message at the 2002 gathering, the message was neither easy nor clear. According to Schlabach, while some of the Bridgefolk heard hard words, others saw generous pastoral gestures, and all felt the deep pain of their mutual disunity. Thus, the Bridgefolk pray for the day that they will "partake together at the table of the Lord without any reservations whatsoever,"

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<sup>597</sup> Quoted at <http://www.bridgefolk.net>; Mission Statement.

<sup>598</sup> Schlabach, G. W. 2003. "Between the Times, Between the Communities: Eucharistic Theology for the Bridge" at the *Spiritual Practices for Violent Times: Catholics and Mennonites Bridging the Divide* conference. St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. (July 17-20, 2003). Available, <http://www.bridgefolk.net/eucharist.html>. p. 1

a day when they will shall embrace the “living unity” which they see “God’s Spirit [as] already making present among” them.<sup>599</sup> Yet, Schlabach continues,

In the meantime, we gather together in Bridgefolk precisely because we have discovered a unity worth celebrating and exploring even though we still are in a “meantime,” living between the times, living between the “already” and the “not yet” of that Christian unity which is both a gift and a calling.<sup>600</sup>

It is in the hope of finding out how to embody a unity that is “on the way,” that Schlabach describes the intertwining of two of the church’s most constitutive tactics: rule and flexibility. He begins by recounting the tale told by Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues* about the last visit St. Benedict received from Sister St. Scholastica.

Having “spent the whole day [together] in the praise of God and in holy conversation” at some distance outside the gate of the monastery, Scholastica wished to continue discussing “the joys of heaven” on into the night. Faithful to the Rule for his community that St. Benedict himself had penned, Benedict was determined to return to his cell before nightfall. But while he acted strictly according to the rule, she acted on love and prayed to God with so many tears that the heavens themselves—calm until now—burst out in their own downpour of rain and thunder. Benedict could not leave.<sup>601</sup>

Gregory comments that because Scholastica’s love proved stronger than Benedict’s resolve, the lesson to be learned is that the durability of Benedictine tradition is constituted by the cohabitation of structure and flexibility (looping back amidst radical vulnerability and generous receptivity). According to Schlabach, both are needed for the fullness of Christ’s church. Without the integration of structure and flexibility, he argues, Bridgefolk would not be possible; that is, without the structured Rule, the story of Benedict and Scholastica would have been lost, and without the flexibility of the Rule, the durability of it would be severely compromised.<sup>602</sup>

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<sup>599</sup> Ibid

<sup>600</sup> Ibid. Underscore in original.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>602</sup> Ibid. p. 3

Schlabach uses the story of Benedict and Scholastica, and the virtues embodied therein, as the lens through which he reads Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Ecclesia de eucharistia*. According to Schlabach, the relationship between structure and flexibility in the Rule is reflected in the encyclical as the relationship between the objective and the subjective. However, because the objective has primacy over the subjective in the encyclical, the relationship reinforced is one between norms and exceptions; that is to say, objectivity is the norm but normativity becomes stagnant if there is no flexibility through which exceptions are made intelligible. The most obvious example of this primacy, says Schlabach, is "that the 'objective reality' of transubstantiation, by which the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ, is guaranteed 'independently of our mind' by 'the objective truth' of Christ's words in John 6"<sup>603</sup>:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life within you"... "My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."<sup>604</sup>

When the question is asked: "who may participate in communion?" the Pope makes it clear that subjective "invisible communion" is insufficient without objective "visible communion."<sup>605</sup> While "invisible communion" is integral to the unity of Christ, i.e., a necessary condition of its existence, "objective communion" must be present in the "visible framework" of the church's hierarchy, which is to say that "invisible communion" alone can never be a sufficient condition for the unity of Christ. For, according to John Paul II, "Eucharist as the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church, demands to be celebrated in *a context where the outward bonds of communion are also intact*."<sup>606</sup> While the church constitutes the eucharist and the eucharist constitutes the church, it is the case, notes Schlabach, which Catholic sacramental theology cannot turn to a pastoral and subjective account of the eucharist until the objective account has first been satisfied.

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid. p. 4

<sup>604</sup> John Paul II. 2003. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. (encyclical letter in English). p. 16

<sup>605</sup> Schlabach, "Between the Times," p. 4

<sup>606</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, p. 38

In Catholicism therefore, the sacrament of Eucharist thus requires the apostolic succession, and so on. In turn the ritual must be performed according to canonical guidelines. The personal holiness of the priest is not the criterion of eucharistic validity. The quality of music, the eloquence of the homily, the aesthetics of worship, and the intensity of experience are not the final test of sacramentality.<sup>607</sup>

For John Paul II, there are two major problems with allowing non-Catholics to receive eucharist: first, it sends the world a duplicitous message,<sup>608</sup> and second, it opens the unifying and unified gift of the eucharist up to a divided catholic church. In the first case, lifting the prohibition would be premature, communicating to the world that the divided church bodies had reconciled all their differences. As noted by John Paul II, this

might well prove instead to be an obstacle, to the attainment of full communion, by weakening the sense of how far we remain from this goal and by introducing or exacerbating ambiguities with regard to one or another truth of the faith. The path towards full unity can only be undertaken in truth.<sup>609</sup>

In the case of the latter, it is as Paul says to the Corinthians: eating and drinking eucharist in the midst of division is equivalent to eating and drinking damnation upon itself (1 Cor. 11:17-34). While the Holy Father recognizes that divided brothers hunger to share the Divine Meal together, it is the case, according to Schlabach, that we must first acutely feel the pain of our separation and learn to view it realistically before unity can go forward. With the rule in place, Schlabach moves on to attend the pastoral flexibility within the pope's encyclical.

In the face of the normative prohibition of open eucharist in the Catholic Church, John Paul II offers the exception:

While it is never legitimate to concelebrate in the absence of full communion, the same is not true with respect to the administration of the Eucharist *under special circumstances, to individual persons* belonging to Churches or

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<sup>607</sup> Schlabach, "Between the Times," p. 4

<sup>608</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, p. 38

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44

Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church. In this case, in fact, the intention is to meet a grave spiritual need for the salvation of an individual believer, not to bring about an intercommunion which remains impossible until the visible bonds of ecclesial communion are fully re-established.<sup>610</sup>

While the “special circumstances” are often deemed to be for those Christian from high-church traditions, with a substantial doctrine of the real presence, for whom it is temporarily impossible to receive in their own tradition (due to emergencies such as displacement, travel, and illness, and nearness to death), Schlabach is not convinced that this is all the Holy Father has in mind. He notes that if all “special circumstances” could be anticipated, then it would be pointless for the pope to speak of discernment as he does whilst saying that it is “possible to provide for the salvation of souls with proper discernment.” Schlabach continues,

So what of a Christian whose personal vocation is so intimately wrapped up in working for Christian unity, promoting mutual understanding, and reconciling differences in their very person that to falter or turn away from their calling would in fact pose a certain kind of risk to their salvation? What of a group of such Christians who banded together to support one another in their callings and on this journey—not claiming to constitute one more church, yet faithful to a communitarian understanding of Christianity that requires us to embody the changes God is working through us, by joining together into durable bonds of society, friendship and accountability?<sup>611</sup>

In addition, what will a community such as this need? According to Schlabach, such a community requires “sustenance” for the long and arduous pilgrimage that stretches out before them. John Paul II’s affirmation of the journey, and admonition that the church not squander or cheapen the “treasure” of the eucharist, are words of comfort to the Bridgefolk.

The path itself is long and strewn with obstacles greater than our human resources alone can overcome, yet we have the Eucharist, and in its presence we can hear in the depths of our hearts, as if they were addressed to us, the same words heard by the Prophet Elijah: “Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you.” (1 Kg 19:7).<sup>612</sup>

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<sup>610</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>611</sup> Schlabach, “Between the Times,” p. 6

<sup>612</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, p. 61

Though the “special circumstances” imagined by Schlabach are not spelled-out, they are perhaps implied, namely, that “some may find the ecumenical quest itself unsustainable without the nourishment of the sacrament.”<sup>613</sup> Citing the preacher to the papal household, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, Schlabach argues that a traveler can only move forward for so long on hunger pangs alone, and for those on pilgrimage, even when received, the eucharist increases hunger for the fullness of God’s Kingdom even as it satisfies. Indeed, hunger is proper to the pilgrimage.

Schlabach describes this hunger as the “‘eschatological’ reality of the eucharist.” According to Schlabach,

In the Eucharist, what Christ has “already” accomplished in the world through the Church brings near and makes present those realities that are “not yet” altogether tangible except by faith....In elaborating on the bedrock Catholic conviction that “The Church draws its life from the Eucharist,” the pope has underscored the “already” of “the *Eucharist* [that] makes the Church” – in other words, the norms and conditions that define an authentic Eucharist. But according to the eschatological tension that the Eucharist holds together, accent can also be placed on the “not yet” of the Eucharist in this way: “The Eucharist *makes* the Church.”<sup>614</sup>

For Schlabach the process of making is “ongoing and unfinished;” the church must always draw strength from the eucharist because the church, and in particular the unity of the church, is still being completed. Thus, “Unity is required for eucharist, but the eucharist makes unity possible.”<sup>615</sup> This is not circular theology, but rather a reflection on the way in which a fractured church can still receive eucharist. For the Bridgefolk there is no question as to whether a theology of exceptions is biblical.

But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” Jesus answered, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions.” (Luke 6:2-4).

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<sup>613</sup> Schlabach, “Between the Times,” p. 6

<sup>614</sup> Ibid.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

As noted by Schlabach, there would be no story to share if David and Jesus had not assumed the validity of the Hebrew priesthood and the Law of Moses. David and Jesus did not challenge the authority of their tradition even when they justified exceptions to it. Thus, it is with great respect that the Bridgefolk approach the structures and rules of the Christian tradition, while at the same time singing praises for the flexibility “buried deeply but integrally within the tradition itself.”<sup>616</sup>

In short, even at the bridge between Catholic and Anabaptist there is hope for unity. The eucharist is the manifestation of the “already,” making Christ really present to the church during each performance of the Mass. Presently, however, the church is divided, and the pain caused by that disunity brings the excruciating agony of the “not yet” back into focus. While, because of division, concelebration of the eucharist is impossible between un-unified communities, a unified and unifying celebration of the eucharist among starving pilgrims is not. Most importantly, it is essential to remember that “living between the times” can only be a matter of theology when it is a reflection upon the embodied discipleship of pilgrims becoming princes.

### **Conclusion: Re-gathering Hauerwas**

Finally, it should be noted that the concept of gathering has recently made a vital appearance in the work of Hauerwas. Hauerwas traditionally has made the same mistake as Yoder in that his absolute refusal to systematize his work, or to write a “big” book, leaves him with the inability to *see* much of what he has written. Thus, it is no surprise that one of the first occasions upon which we see Hauerwas say much about gathering is in *Matthew*, his commentary on the gospel of the same name.

In his chapter on Matthew 5, Hauerwas writes that, “The difference between those who admire Jesus and those who would be his disciples is indicated by His disciples’ willingness to ‘come to him’ on the mountain.”<sup>617</sup> There is a parallel, Hauerwas

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid. p. 7

<sup>617</sup> Hauerwas, S. 2006. *Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos. p. 58

notes, between the Sermon on the Mount and “the day of assembly” at Sinai—Jesus becomes “the new Moses” teaching a new Israel how “to be holy.” The teaching transmitted by Jesus, in particular the beatitudes, are not says Hauerwas, to be identified as law, a list of requirements, or a codex. Rather, they are a “description of the life of a people *gathered* around Jesus.”<sup>618</sup> To put it another way, the beatitudes are not recommendations, rather “Jesus is indicating that given the reality of the kingdom we should not be surprised to find among those who follow him those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek.”<sup>619</sup> This is what happens when you have a community that is generously receptive to the “weakest of these.” Moreover, to talk about the church as salt and light is to talk about its visibility. That visibility is its witness. The church witnesses, by the kind of members that constitute it, that something about the cosmos has changed. No longer are the rich, the fat and the strong blessed. The whole universe has been turned upside down in just such a way, that, for those with eyes to see, the poor are not a disease but a gift. The apocalyptic reordering of the universe by the Christ-act is heralded: “The kingdom has come near.” The in-breaking of that *basileia* occurred in the incarnation of Jesus. Furthermore, Hauerwas tells us, “The Sermon on the Mount cannot help but become a law, an ethic, if what is taught is abstracted from the teacher.”<sup>620</sup> That is to say, with Bonhoeffer, that “Action in accord with Christ does not originate in some ethical principle.”<sup>621</sup> The actions of the *ekklesia*—like receiving in its midst the dregs of society, or the selling of landed property in order to support unemployed pilgrims—can make no sense unless they are grounded in an understanding of reality transformed by Christ. Yet, Hauerwas’ understanding of gathering as described here is pragmatic. It is always in terms of gathering around Jesus in order to understand, i.e., make intelligible, the practices of the church. Indeed, the eschatological implications of being gathered involves, as Wannewetsch shows us, the practices

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid, p. 61

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid. p. 59

<sup>621</sup> Bonhoeffer, D. 2004. *Ethics*. Green, C. J. (ed.). Krauss, R., West, C. C., and W. D. Stott (trans.). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress. p. 231

necessary for being able to de-citify the city. Thus, Hauerwas is able to make a very good case for truth-shouting. Hauerwas writes:

Too often we want to use the gift of speech as a weapon, often a very subtle weapon, to establish our superiority. To learn to speak truthfully to one another requires that we learn to speak truthfully to God, that is, we must learn how to pray.<sup>622</sup>

Yet, his use of the concept of gathering seems to apply predominately to the “we” of the church. It would be extremely useful to Hauerwas to expand this to take into account not God’s word to “us,” but “us” as God’s word to the world. While he is interested in the shape of the gathered, or a description of what the gathering looks like, gathering as God’s activity of drawing the world to Himself is never made explicit. To put it another way, while intelligibility is certainly an aspect, or at least a benefit—explanation as to why some are poor and others are not, why some suffer and others do not—there is something missing. That is to say, what Hauerwas’ account of the gathered church needs is a description of gathering, not only as a description of formative practice but also as ontological evangelism.

If Hauerwas would explicitly adopt an ontology of both the powers and the eucharist, he would be in a much better position to resist the attractions of radical democracy, by offering not just a postliberal critique of liberal political arrangements, but also a robust postliberal alternative – a God and a politics constituted in and by peaceable gathering. For Hauerwas, God *has* acted on behalf of the world and history has come out right in Christ. The danger lies in positing the difference between the world and the church as a difference between agents. If “agent” is a value-neutral term signifying any of many possible actors, then a separation exists between act and actor. Moral goodness on this model is constituted exactly where Hauerwas has historically *not* wanted it to be, on choices made as opposed to the character of the individual or social group. What is required then is a description of agency which takes into account the ontological status of every agent in question: God, powers, church, and world. There are on the one hand, the powers of sin and death that work

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<sup>622</sup> Hauerwas, *Matthew*, p . 71

to enslave the world, while on the other is the God who is simultaneously being-in-communion and being-as-radical-freedom and those gathered to Him. This is the point made by Lohfink when he writes: “The Church could not be the space for redemption and liberation opened by Christ if it were...simply...an agency for conveying truth.”<sup>623</sup> The church *is* God’s act in and for the world. An ontological distinction between agents must be preserved. The political arrangements of the world operate on behalf (and as) the powers, the politics called church operates on behalf (and as) Christ’s continuing work in the world. If Hauerwas were to identify postliberal theological politics as an ecclesiology of gathering in opposition to the powers of sin and death, it would make visible the actions coterminous with each actor. On this model, feeding a beggar is not the same act for a Christian as it is for a radical democrat, precisely because the act is inseparable from the actor. The ontological distinction is not between powers and church, but between powers and Christ. The moral agency of the church is determined by Christ acting *in, under and with* the body that He constitutes. Those gathered around Christ must discern the powers and their agency (and agents) as sin, whilst inviting those enslaved peoples under their *dominium* to come in to the assembled. Lohfink writes:

Christ is already set above all the powers and dominions (Eph 1:20-22), but they still rule the world and society. Therefore, *through the Church* the exalted Lord draws the world under his rule. The necessary consequence is that the Church itself is worldly. It is not *above* the world or *beyond* the world. We cannot even say that it is *in* the world. No the Church itself is world and nothing else. But it is a world under the rule of Christ. It is a world in which the fullness is already present. In this sense and only in this sense can we say that through it the whole world and the whole of society are to be drawn into the space of reconciliation that the Risen One creates in the world.

...Thus the principle of “wholeness” involves...the incorporation of everything that constitutes a world: emotion, reason, education, wisdom, religion, art, play—but equally the world of science, business, the professions, word, leisure. Faith...brings home everything in the world...into the redeeming and liberating rule of God.

Obviously that cannot be done without discernment, critical testing possibly also distancing and rejection. But if the redemption of the world presupposes its transformation the thing to be transformed must first be grasped and accepted. The old principle of Christology that nothing can be redeemed unless the divine *Logos* assumed it into his human nature is

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<sup>623</sup> Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church*, p. 290

analogously true of the Church: *Quod non est assumptum, non est sanatum*. What is not assumed is not redeemed (and cannot be redeemed).<sup>624</sup>

Ultimately gathering the nations to Christ is a gathering that occurs *through* the baptism of the nations into the church, not as Constantinian syncretism but as discipleship. What Hauerwas needs to remember is that the church is not against the nations, nor for the nations, nor the desire of the nations; rather, the church invites the gathering of the nations into itself, a gathering into the real world—a gathering that is *disciplining*.

In the final portion of this thesis, I begin the task of moving the concept of ecclesial gathering from an account of the church's self-understanding, to a description of the church's activity in and with the world. What follows is not a theory about how to think the practices of the gathered, or how to begin the activity of theological discernment, but a description of the church whose love for neighbors and enemies is a love that exceeds the church's ability to reason. The last chapter of this thesis is not an attempt to explain or critique Hauerwas' love of the world as a thing-itself, but to revel in it. The problem I have explored in this thesis has not been Hauerwas' love of the world, but his attempt to explain that love reasonably through the language of radical democracy. In short, Chapter 6 attempts to provide an account of the God-who-is-love and whose love is ineffable, and who dwells (remains) in the gathering. It is a snapshot into an ecclesiology for which gathering is not *only* a way of thinking, but also a way of being that is, paradoxically, able to love the world alongside its disciplining of it.

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<sup>624</sup> Ibid. p. 288-90

## Chapter 6

### **Gathering Beyond a Concept** **The (radical) Politics of Love**

While the first four chapters worked toward the critical and deconstructive portion of this title, the final two chapters have worked, and continue to work, toward the second half: the proposing of an ecclesial politics of gathering. Central to this constructive and creative task is finding a balance – a location, a time – between church and world. So far, in this thesis I have argued alongside Hauerwas that the church does not have a politics but is politics and I have extended his position to say that the shape of that politics is gathered. In the last chapter I mapped the positive spatial and temporal geography of the gathered politics called church, exploring God's liberation of the world from the multitude of Fallen powers: legion. My account of the gathering, and those gathered, rejected fideism and withdrawal. It rejected descriptions of the church as an alternative *political* arrangement with high walls and closed gates – a ghetto or sect removed from the world. It defined the antithesis of gathering as dispersal, positing an ecclesiology of gathering that was fundamentally evangelical and singular (gathering as an inclusive and incorporating politics). As such, the charitable work of teaching the barbarians to sing was described as primarily the invitation to stop being barbarians. Yet teaching implies education, training, and the sharing of knowledge – catechism. If teaching is accounted as charity, such gifts cannot but seem imperial to those who have rejected God's emancipation from legion. In the last chapter little time was given to those who remain reticent and doubt; to those who see incorporation as colonialism; or to the development of an account of the church's relation to the world as a thing-in-itself (to avoiding the blinding of ateleological openness by eschatological hope). Is the church-world relationship doomed then to the violence of Hegelian master-slave dialectics? Can a necessarily evangelical politics love the world as the world? Is there a potential for singing with the barbarians without civilizing them? Might harmonies or rhythms be shared even if the lyrical logic is different? The question on which I focus this chapter is whether collaboration between the church and the world is possible.

The duration of this thesis will work then toward parsing the “already” but “not yet” distinction of a gathered politics that is on the one hand *actively* participating in (the tentative futurity of) the redeeming work of Christ (gathering and being gathered), and yet is simultaneously capable of *actively* loving the world as a thing-in-itself (in the present). This move is one that will be reminiscent of John Paul II’s identification of the broken and divided church as presently living in the liturgical space between eucharistic rule and exception. In that case, the church was able to navigate the tension (albeit imperfectly) due to the eschatological promise of healing. As the world does not share the apocalyptic vision, it may seem as if the eschatological patience is condescension at best and violence at worst. Yet, I reject the nihilism implicit in such a reading of the relationship between the singular and multiple. It is my contention in this chapter that the paradox of a God whose existence is both three and one sets the stage for an ontology in which difference is peaceably reconciled. Shared acts of love, i.e., charitable collaborations, between the church and the world participate in a similar paradox: on the one hand such collaborations (co-labor) require a continuous and careful process of premeditative discernment by the gathered *polis*; on the other such collaborations must acknowledge love as having ontological priority over knowledge, which is to say that the *act* of self-giving is *never* limited by the bounds of human reason. The double-nature of gathered ecclesiology identifies the former with theology (God-reasoning) and the latter with theurgy (God-bringing). In the theological aspect, the possibility of collaboration must be prefaced by critique and judgment, and will sometimes result in refusal.<sup>625</sup> In the theurgic case, the collaborative act is *ad hoc*, it is not a means of doing but a reflection on what has been done (the act that brought God to earth).<sup>626</sup> As this

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<sup>625</sup> To put this in context of preceding chapters: Hauerwas’ concession to radical democracy, can be identified as accommodation rather than collaboration because it involves the premeditated legitimating of a politics not founded on the confession of Christ; while Yoder’s move toward a Christian witness to the state, founded on middle axioms (the development of a pigeon between the language of confessional Christian morality and secular linguistic arrangements), is premeditated utilitarianism. Yoder legitimates the construction of a language for the purpose of evangelism and discussion precisely because it is *reasonable* to do so. The failure in this case then is a rejection of the second aspect of collaboration: the notion that love occurs in the face of reason and we ought not construct relationships (even linguistic ones) for reasons of utility.

<sup>626</sup> I am using “paradox” in the broadest possible sense. On the one hand, I am talking about the juxtaposition of two seemingly contradictory sets of belief, on the other I am gesturing toward the fact that the simultaneous holding of both beliefs *is* the mystery of faith: the *para doxa* – an overwhelming

chapter will argue, what makes either act possible (the doing of the theology, or the theurgic bringing-forth of God) is the sacramental promise of John 6:57: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood *remains* in me and I in him” (NIV, emphasis mine). This remainder is the excess, the saturation of God in, with, and under the sacrament. It is the eating of Jesus, and the full constituting of the body of Christ, by the Holy Spirit. And so the activity of the gathering is not simply analogous to God’s activity, i.e., Christ-like, but is in some way a co-operation with (and as the body of) Christ – a shared agency made possible by God’s remaining with us. The remainder is the promise of a transformation of ordinary time and ordinary activity in the messianic event – *parousia qua para-ousia*. It is the presence of transcendent being alongside material being. It is the ecclesial participation in God’s loving of the world, and the saturation of the gathering by the presence of God, which makes the gathering God’s sacrament to the world – that through which God works in, under and with. Therefore, in this chapter I argue that the church loving the world despite itself evidences God’s grace to the church, that is to say God’s remainder/abiding in her.

Finally, this chapter continues the task of the last, by attempting to open up new resources by which Hauerwas might begin to think about the church/world relationship. The style of what follows is very different from that employed by Hauerwas. It is systematic and concerned with ontology where he is hesitant and pragmatic. Yet, this final chapter attempts to capture and continue Hauerwas’ unconditional love of friends, strangers, and enemies, whilst doing so in a way which names the unintelligibility of that love outside the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. The goal of this chapter is not to explain the ways in which the church’s love for the world should be thought, or to name which of the practices of the gathering toward the world are acceptable and which are impermissible. Instead, this chapter works to describe the mysterious God who-*is-love*, and who remains in the gathered so that the gathered can remain in the world.

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and transcendent glory; and “a mystery,” as John McFayden and David McCarthy put it, “[is] not an unsolved puzzle, but a reality with inexhaustible depth.” (McFayden, J., and D. McCarthy. 2002. *Preparing for Christian Marriage*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock. p. 9).

## Milbank on Pleonasm and Analogy

At first glance it may seem odd to return to the writings of John Milbank here in the last chapter, particularly after his work was criticized in chapters 1 and 2 both for its triumphalism, as well as its accommodations to liberalism and modernity (in the form of his continued recommendation of state-based socialism). Just as chapter 3 asked Hauerwas why the church needed the new language of radical democracy to explain care for “the weakest of these” to the world, the same question can be posed of Milbank’s socialism. Why talk of socialism when Christ already charged his followers to care for orphans, widows, prisoners and the dispossessed (a practice that he called discipleship)? Milbank’s response is that the operation of the church is distinct from any peculiar community. Moreover, the operation of the church should not be limited to any specific group of people (because doing so would limit God). Thus, socialism belongs no more to the state than to the church.<sup>627</sup> While Milbank’s position is more nuanced than that of Hauerwas, the failure of his thought involves a refusal to reject the pragmatic imaginary. The complaint here is not that he should describe charity as an act belonging only to the church, but that he claims the possibility of charity exists as an activity of the state, making Christ-likeness the acceptable product of legal and violent coercion. This point has been made particularly in regards to Milbank’s Kantian conception of law by Leora Batnitzky,<sup>628</sup> and more generally by Slavoj Žižek<sup>629</sup> in his description of the relationship between subjective (eruptive violence) and objective (systematic, status quo) violence. Regardless, Milbank’s ontology, particularly his description of paradox and reconciliation, is able to avoid the pitfalls of the modern attempt to encyclopedically shoehorn the transcendent into the boundaries of human reason, as well as the postmodern attempt to nihilistically dissolve the transcendent in order to

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<sup>627</sup> See Milbank, J. “Enclaves, or Where Is the Church?” in Milbank, J. 2009. *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology*. pp. 131-144. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

<sup>628</sup> Batnitzky, L. “Love and law: John Milbank and Hermann Cohen on the ethical possibilities of secular society” in Clayton Crockett (ed.). 2001. *Secular Theology: American Radical Theological Thought*. pp. 73-91. London: Routledge.

<sup>629</sup> Žižek, S. 2008. *Violence*. New York: Picador.

bypass the modern dilemma. Milbank's ontology is neither violent and coercive, nor arbitrarily nihilistic; rather, it is peaceable. This is not the place to fully explore the disconnection between Milbank's ontology and ethics, yet it is the hope of this chapter that the reading of Milbank developed here, regarding the ontology of analogy and the practice of peaceable repetition (which preserve genuine difference), might provide Milbank with the tools to repair his own system. It will be useful to start with an overview of Milbank's project.

It is in the final chapter of *Theology and Social Theory*, after eleven chapters spent criticizing secular sociologies, their practices, and ontological frameworks, that Milbank begins his assertion that theology must itself be taken as a social science, and as in fact "the queen of the sciences for the inhabitants of the *altera civitas*" which is "on pilgrimage through the temporal world."<sup>630</sup> Similarities with the Yale project quickly become apparent. According to Milbank, in the recent past (since the Enlightenment) theology has suffered from a false humility, and looked elsewhere for accounts of history or society (Frei's "foundational hermeneutics") which could be made theologically relevant, *ad hoc*. Yet for Milbank, and also for Barth, Yale and MacIntyre, there is no universal, rational, or neutral account of history that can be declared already primitive to theology, rather theology must provide its own account of "the final causes at work in human history."<sup>631</sup> The nature of this Christian account, says Milbank, is most clearly an ecclesiology, and all other societies and communities can be defined by their continuity or discontinuity with Christian historical practice: "As the Church is already, necessarily, by virtue of its institution, a 'reading' of other human societies, it becomes possible to consider ecclesiology as also a 'sociology.'"<sup>632</sup> This position recapitulates Yale and the early Hauerwas' turn to sociology, but with a difference. For Milbank, Christian theology is not distinctive because it merely explicates and adopts the vantage point of the church, rather *all* theology has to re-conceive itself as "the constant re-narration of

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<sup>630</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 380

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

this practice as it has historically developed.”<sup>633</sup> For as Milbank writes, “[the] task of such a theology is...to tell again the Christian *mythos*, pronounce again the Christian *logos*, and call again the Christian *praxis* in manner that restores freshness and originality.”<sup>634</sup> The difference, as will be argued in what follows, is that Milbank avoids sociological realism by redefining (in a very Barthian way) story, politics and reason through the facticity of the Incarnation. Thus for Milbank, Christian theology must boldly assert itself as the paradigm for all social analysis, and it must do so by continually re-narrating the social-sciences through the Gospel. Rather than employing, with Lindbeck, Wittgensteinian language games, Milbank navigates internal inconsistencies by noting that the Gospel itself is pleonastically re-narrated by those who hear it.<sup>635</sup> Non-identical repetition, recapitulation, and redefinition

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<sup>633</sup> Ibid. p. 381

<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

<sup>635</sup> Milbank’s critique of Lindbeck’s sociological realism in *Theology and Social Theory*, is similar to Yoder’s (as discussed in Chapter 1), but Milbank’s solution is a turn to ontology rather than to the acting church. According to Milbank, there are two forms of “foundationalism” that must be rejected in order for postliberal theology to take place. Firstly, postliberal theology must refuse the Kantian/Cartesian affirmation of absolute (objective) truth. Faith is not grounded in a series of propositions about objects which can be known. God is not an object which is visible to our rational gaze. Secondly, Milbank argues that postliberal theology must reject the notion that Christian belief is merely an “expression” of experiences which occurs prior to the holding of belief. That is to say, Christian theology when done correctly must not recede into subjective Cartesian interiority but must be a surface expression, on display for the world to see. Indeed, postmodern theology must understand itself as being derived from a “particular cultural practice which projects objects and positions subjects in a conjoint operation.” (382) For Lindbeck, that which refers to reality is the *entire practice* “with all its signs, images and actions, and not just a set of propositions taken in isolation.” (Ibid.) While Milbank believes Lindbeck to be correct in rejecting both forms of “foundationalism,” he goes on to argue that a rigorous acceptance of Lindbeck’s thesis forces one to appreciate that a greater place must be given to “propositions” that Lindbeck allows.

Milbank begins his extension and critique of Lindbeck by following D. Z. Phillips in pointing out that Lindbeck’s post-liberal theology must be set within a mythical and historical framework in order for a performative reference to “the absolute” to make sense. According to Milbank, when Lindbeck writes the sentence – “the whole of Christian practice refers to the absolute” – it is not immediately clear what *kind* of “absolute” it is that the whole of Christian practice refers to. Moreover, Lindbeck begs the question precisely because his notion of Christian practice internally defines itself as “response to the absolute,” “and indeed only constitutes itself as a practice insofar as it imagines, in a hesitating and provisional fashion, the shape of the ‘absolute’ to which its own practice is a response.” (383). In short, Lindbeck has always already presupposed a relationship between Christian practice and “the absolute,” and this relationship is the stage upon which all Christian performativity occurs. This mythic and historical stage sustains the entire Christian performance—and is, at its very core, propositional. Indeed according to Milbank: “A ‘propositional’ level, grounded not on intellectual ‘vision’, but in creative imagination, is therefore implicit even within a religious practice confined to worship and the recitation of stories.” (Ibid). The need for a “propositional level,” or indeed a particularly Christian ontology, occurs when a difference in the interpretation or retelling of the stories occurs. Milbank describes the work of Christian ontology and Christian propositions as “taking off” from the level of narrative; in fact, doctrine is derived from the

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narrative itself, yet also provides continuity and clarity in the face of interpretive ambiguity. Yet, Milbank continues, it is precisely because doctrine itself arises from interpretive ambiguity that doctrinal issues cannot be settled simply by recourse to a more exact reading of preceding practices and narratives. Indeed, were this the case, then heresies could be put down by merely repeating the narratives in a louder tone in the hope that via such a repetition the truth would be made transparent. Rather (and this is crucial for the entirety of Milbank's project),

doctrine represents a kind of 'speculative moment' that cannot be reduced to the heuristic protection of narrative (in the sense of merely safeguarding what is properly implicit in the narrative) because it relates to the synchronic, paradigmatic instance of ultimate 'setting' which *every* syntagmatic sequence has to assume, and yet cannot adequately represent. (Ibid).

Milbank deepens his account of the "speculative moment" by appealing to the inventiveness that is central to doctrine, and particularly the doctrine of the incarnation. According to Milbank, Christians regard Christ as their standard, a judge by which to gauge every aspect of their lives. The stories that Christians tell about Christ provide an account of the will and way of the judge. These stories occur as a climax within the middle of history; all history before Christ points toward his coming and all history since is situated within the Christ-has-come narrative. Christ is seen as the "measure" of all reality in the same way as God's word, i.e., God's *logos*, is taken to do. Thus the doctrine of the incarnation follows Christian practice in identifying Jesus with the *logos*. Yet according to Milbank, there is a radically inventive moment at the center of such a doctrine:

Disconcerting as it may appear, one has to recognize in the doctrinal affirmation of the incarnation a radically inventive moment, which asserts the 'finality' of God's appearance in a life involving suffering and violent death, and claims also that in a certain sense God 'has to' be like this, and has not just 'incidentally' chosen this path (384).

The justification for this inventive moment, i.e., speculative moment, is two-fold: (1) it provides "redoubled force" to existing Christian practice that considers Christ to be the standard; and (2) it provides a picture of God which is characterized by its "inherent attractiveness." While the first justification when presented on its own terms seems to be a bit excessive, Milbank argues that the second aesthetic justification, which paints a picture "of incarnation in a joyful and suffering life," provides a vision of "divine love" and God's involvement in human destiny that is otherwise inaccessible. Indeed for Milbank, since the *idea* of a God-become-incarnate is excessive when compared to the stories about Jesus, it is inevitable that at times these concrete stories will be deferred to background. Moreover, the deferment of concrete stories about Jesus has clearly already begun in the New Testament, and even in the Gospels themselves: "In fact, one should say that it has 'always already' begun," notes Milbank, "because the dazzling effect of Jesus upon his followers caused them to use divine metaphors with regard to him, which both 'reflected' Jesus (and in a real sense *were* the presence of Jesus) and also, in a certain, not really-to-be-regretted fashion, obscured him in favour of an idea." (Ibid). The "idea" of the doctrine of the incarnation then has worked itself back into the first order level of mythical narrative and devotion. Indeed, according to Milbank, these "ideas" and "speculations" are integral and unavoidable parts of historical Christianity both of which are completely ungrounded except for the "pleasing character of the conceits to which they give rise." (Ibid). Yet there is a danger when confronted with the speculative moment that the "baroque scenery" will "totally efface the syntagmatic, narrative dimension" of the original stories. Indeed, according to Milbank:

Properly understood, the speculative idea does *not* encourage this, but rather...of its own nature demands a return to the concrete, narrative level: if Jesus really is the word of God, then it is not the mere 'extrinsic' knowledge of this which will save us, but rather a precise attention to his many words and deeds and all their historical results. The idea helps to confirm *that* God is love, the narrative alone instructs about *what* love is (385).

Thus, Lindbeck is right to argue that narrative alone can identify God for us, but the complexities of that narrative require an attendance to the never fully represented "synchronic setting." There is an implicit ontology always already "taking off" from the level of narrative which is not manifested as a

(which always involves invention and creativity), are both the products and production of faithful Christian practice. (The place where Milbank's project falls apart is in his failure to limit pleonastic creativity in order to avoid violent repetitions: he could appeal here to either Yoder's canon-within-the-canon or Coles' description of "looping back" to an original framework).

Thus Milbank's Incarnational Realism leads him to describe theology as *the* alternative to secular sociology and philosophy, requiring him to oppose the secular philosophical claim that philosophy has both autonomy and independent content – its own subject matter. Getting theology beyond philosophy for Milbank means reinterpreting theology most primarily as beyond traditional metaphysics. Thus, Milbank calls for an end to onto-theology, i.e., the attempt to understand God within

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totalizing system, but rather requires "speculation" in the face of the hesitating, uncertain and ambiguous connection between the identification of God and the ontological "idea" of God, within the narrative. In short, narrative always already anticipates the inventive and speculative moment of doctrine.

Furthermore, doctrines arise based upon "speculative interpretations of the implicit assumptions of a narrative" whose articulation "will necessarily engage with the conceptual resources available at a particular historical time, which then become an inescapable part of the Christian inheritance, not a mere husk to be easily discarded." (386). That is to say, although doctrine is a "second order" speculative moment which arises from the "first order" of narrative, such excess of the invented affirmation constitutes a very real historical moment in which the artful performance of the Christian narrative was supplemented and enriched by the doctrinal vision. Doctrine extends the aesthetic imagination of the narrative providing a thicker and more beautiful description of the "first order" of narrative stories.

According to Milbank, all of this bares crucially on Lindbeck's case for the formation of a "metanarrative realism" precisely because Lindbeck fails to acknowledge the *play* between paradigmatic and syntagmatic. For Lindbeck, correct performance of the Christian narrative is defined in advance by the stories about Jesus. The Jesus stories situate the world within the exemplary narrative of his life and so provide a "metanarrative." Yet Milbank argues that such an approach is necessarily ahistorical and foundational: "Because...[Lindbeck] fails to see the tension in any narrative between the assumption of a paradigmatic setting, and the unfolding of a syntagmatic development, he proceeds to graft the paradigmatic function inappropriately onto the narrative structures as such." (Ibid). Indeed, for Lindbeck the good (Christian) life is determined by "fixed" and "hypostatized" narratives that stand as eternal truths outside the flow of time and history. The narratives of Jesus are made foundational in such a way that the syntagmatic unfolding of history is utterly arbitrary. The problem, according to Milbank, is that when these narratives are presented as a paradigm, then they are seen as both over and done with and easy to interpret. Conversely, a truly metanarrative realism would require a tension within the narrative itself as to whether the narrative should stay in its historical place or alternatively, break out of its frame and into a new performance through the course of temporal events. For Milbank, God continues to work within history and the syntagmatic unfolding of events. As this is the case, the paradigmatic setting continues to be revealed through the syntagmatic unfolding of history by the Spirit in the church. At any one distinct historical moment the paradigmatic setting is vague and hesitating. Where Lindbeck offers a fixed and rigid paradigm that can be "clearly read" off the first order level of narrative, Milbank suggests that identifying doctrine as provider of the paradigmatic setting would offer a more mutable, cautious and honest account of the syntagmatic nature of revelation.

a framework of the philosophical notion of being.<sup>636</sup> Onto-theology, according to Milbank, is the attempt to make God comprehensible via a particular understanding of the concept of being. In the onto-theological conception, God is one being among many—a super-being. On this view, God, man, and vegetables all participate within the same type: existence. God just participates in existence (being) infinitely more than humans do. Thus, onto-theology allows humans to have epistemic access to both God and the flow of history by transforming human perception into divine vision; it allows humans to bypass knowledge of God on the way to understanding the nature of existence: being in-itself.

Following the lead of Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar,<sup>637</sup> Milbank argues that the root of the modern secular deformity (which allows a place for both onto-theology and secular sociology) lies in a fundamental theological shift during the fourteenth century. This shift was principally a shift from the ontology of St. Thomas Aquinas, and a notion of being founded in analogy, toward an ontology which claimed all being as univocal. For Milbank this modern heresy can only be cured via a non-identical (re)turn toward orthodoxy by and with theology. Thus Milbank sides with Aquinas in describing *being* not as a form or concept which God (like man and vegetables) participates in (i.e., univocity), but affirms rather being qua being *as* only being insofar as it emerges from God. Indeed, following both Augustine and Aquinas, Milbank interprets Exodus 3:14 to make Being the highest name of God: I AM (or He Who Is). According to Balthasar, in Aquinas' ontology,

being (*esse*), with which he is concerned and to which he attributes the modalities of the one, the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, is the unlimited abundance of reality which is beyond all comprehension, as it, in its emergence from God, attains subsistence and self-possession within the finite entities.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> There is an argument to be made here that Milbank is conflating onto-theology with univocity of being. While onto-theology as Heidegger conceives the term is certainly a *type* of univocity, it is not so clear that this is the case with all onto-theologians, of which Kant might be an example.

<sup>637</sup> Balthasar, H. U. V. 1991. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. Volume 5 of *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*. Trans. Oliver Davies. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12. Note: the “abundance of reality which is beyond all comprehension” is the same thing I am describing with the concept of mystery.

For Aquinas, there is no common genus or type that both God and God's creatures share. This is precisely because, for Aquinas, "God is not a measure that is proportionate to what is measured; so it does not follow that he and his creatures belong to the same order."<sup>639</sup> In short, Milbank, with Aquinas, wishes to preserve the ontological transcendence of God. In Aquinas' ontology God is not knowable (*Deus absconditus*) as such, but only by analogy; thus the language in which God is known (*Deus revelatus*) is always analogical and never definitive of God's perfect mystery. Aquinas explains analogy as the signification of different relations to one thing (*deversas proportiones ad aliquid unum*):<sup>640</sup>

When we say he [God] is good or wise we do not simply mean that he causes wisdom or goodness, but that he possesses these perfections transcendently, We conclude, therefore that from the point of view of what the world means it is used primarily of God and derivatively of creatures for what the word means – the perfection it signifies – flows from God to creature.<sup>641</sup>

According to Milbank, the move from analogy toward univocity (the signification of identical relations to one thing) begins in the theology of Duns Scotus,<sup>642</sup> paving the way for a "univocist drift" that continues through the work of Cardinal Cajetan, Francis Suárez and culminates in the Cartesian revolution. In Descartes, rationality is "not theologically assured by Christian Revelation, but metaphysically founded on the humanity of 'men strictly men'"<sup>643</sup> – the modern enclosure of the whole world within the boundaries of human reason.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> Aquinas, T. 1964. *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 3. Trans. Herbert McCabe. London: Blackfriars. 1a.13.6

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.* 1a.13.5

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.* 1a.13.7

<sup>642</sup> Here Richard Cross has vigorously critiqued Milbank's reading of Scotus. See: Cross, R. 1999. *Duns Scotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; and CROSS, R. 2002. *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>643</sup> Marion, J-L. "The Essential Incoherence of Descartes' Definition of Divinity." In Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.). 1986. *Essays on Descartes' Meditations*. Trans. Frederick Van de Pitte. pp. 297-306. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. p. 298

Milbank's enterprise does not seek a return to Aquinas' notion of creaturely participation in divine Being (a return to the pre-modern), but to re-form human personhood, creativity, community and knowledge in the *style* of Thomist analogy. Analogy, as the style of Thomism, begins with a genealogy of human participation in divine being, but continues forward toward a neo-Thomist, neo-Platonic ontology that reframes the Christian story in a peculiarly Christian way: by maintaining the ontological transcendence of God without falling prey to subversion by modern (and postmodern) methodologies, or naïve nostalgia. This move from modern Averroism to a Thomistic account of God-as-Being requires not only an ontological paradigm shift from philosophy to theology but also a redefinition of the disciplines themselves. This process has been well articulated by Wayne Hankey:

The problem, for Milbank, is not philosophy, metaphysics and ontology absolutely, if their substantiality and autonomy could be eliminated. Ancient philosophy sought objective substantiality and modern philosophy sought subjective substantiality because they remained "inside the horizons projected by the Greek *mythos*, within which the Greek *logos* had to remain confined". Milbank envisages "another ontology" which is "another philosophy" and "another metaphysics". This would be properly Christian, inscribed within the Christian rather than within the Greek *mythos*.<sup>645</sup>

Milbank's turn from modern and Greek descriptions of philosophy and theology cannot help but be a turn toward Neoplatonism, albeit a Neoplatonism filtered through the lens of Aquinas, Augustine, and Dionysius the Areopagite. Thus, Milbank's Neoplatonism is "no longer *exactly* Greek" as the notions of "presence, substance, the idea, the subject, causality, through-before expression, and realist representation" have been "radically" altered and reinterpreted by a God whose

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<sup>644</sup> A version of Cartesian univocity has been adopted as incorporative difference in Deleuze. For Deleuze: "With univocity, however, it is not the differences which are and must be: it is being which is Difference, in the sense that it is said of difference. Moreover, it is not we who are univocal in a Being which is not; it is we and our individuality which remains equivocal in and for a univocal Being." Deleuze, G.1995. *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 39

<sup>645</sup> Hankey, W. J. "Theoria versus Poesis: Neoplatonism and Trinitarian Difference in Aquinas, John Milbank, John-Luc Marion and John Zizioulas." *Modern Theology* 15:4 (October 1999). p 387-415. p. 390

highest name is Being.<sup>646</sup> The Christian repetition of Greek forms is itself a pleonasm, a creative (re)description. Similarly, the Thomistic repetition of analogy is a repetition with difference. Milbank's repetition of the Thomist analogy can and should be extended beyond a discussion of the univocalist vocabulary as commonly conceived: being, goodness, justice, beauty. The analogy is not only broadly about what creatures mean when they say that God exists, or that God is good, just, beautiful. Rather the analogy can be inverted to describe creaturely knowledge of other creatures. When asking, how ought persons relate to one another, the answer can be founded in Jesus' new (*kainos*) command: "As [*kathos*] I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34). The newness here does not speak to just the love, but to its kind, degree, and observed proportion. The command is a repetition of what has already come, albeit with newness; it is a call to a non-identical repetition of the love that has been observed. In what follows, Milbank's return to the Aquinas' doctrine of analogy will be inverted. No longer does the analogy point epistemically from human knowledge of human love toward an ineffable God-love, but from the Christian knowledge of God's love (in the ecclesial gathering) to what is unknown: the shape of the church's love for the world.

Finally it should be noted that what I am arguing here is entirely different from O'Donovan's claim in Chapter 2 that political theology requires an analogy between God's rule and human rule. With Yoder, I am arguing that there is an ontological difference between the power of the God-who-is-love and the powers of violence that enslave the world. Power, for O'Donovan, is univocal; the difference between God's power and human power is a difference of degree and right use (proper authority). Yet I am arguing, with Hauerwas, that the God-whose-being-is-love is a God who cannot help but seem weak and ineffectual to those who name exaltation as strength, coercion and control. For O'Donovan, God's sovereignty is an omnipotence deferred, for the pleonastically-minded reader of Hauerwas, God's sovereignty is the triumph of love (communion, and the desire for communion) by the God-whose-being-is-love. The discussion of the phenomenality of love that follows is the

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<sup>646</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 295-296

attempt to reorient the political analogy as the analogy between human communion and the God-who-is-communion – the God-who-is-love.

### **The Analogy of Love beyond Nihilism and Univocity**

Love as a philosophical category has enjoyed a recent resurgence in continental circles thanks in large part to the work of Jean-Luc Marion. Yet most philosophers, says Marion, “no longer have the words to speak of [love]...nor the concepts to think about it, nor the strength to celebrate it.”<sup>647</sup> Other more artistic endeavors remind humanity of what has been lost (“the repressed, the unsaid, and the unmentionable”<sup>648</sup>), yet love, without the conceptuality of the philosophers, remains un-reasonable. For Marion, poetry has the potential to liberate humanity from its “erotic aphasia” yet leaves us without a concept, while novels re-inscribe love within a “social, plural, and public narrativity” but fail to identify the personality of the phenomenon.<sup>649</sup> Psychoanalysis identifies love by its absence; it is the suffering caused by lack, the unnamable void that cannot be spoken or thought whole. Conversely, for Marion, the problem with theology is not absence but presence. Theology, fails, according to Marion, because it “knows [love]...too well.”<sup>650</sup> Theology “knows what loves is about” yet always interprets love through Passion, annulling human passion by its failure to “give meaning” to the phenomenality of *my* love.<sup>651</sup>

For Marion, theology fails for two reasons: first because it particularizes the universal, and second because the self (whether human or divine) is always a self-that-then-loves. The former concern has become the subject of the recent return to

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<sup>647</sup> Marion, J-L. 2007. *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Trans. Stephen E. Lewis. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 1

<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

Paul in continental political philosophy. For theorists like Slavoj Žižek<sup>652</sup> and Alain Badiou,<sup>653</sup> and to a lesser extent Terry Eagleton<sup>654</sup> and Jean-Luc Nancy,<sup>655</sup> the New Testament is an untapped resource for overcoming postmodern nihilism. The deconstruction of Christianity and the Christian canon ends in a non-peaceable repetition, i.e., the excavation of a multitude of libratory concepts that can be used to universally ground “life together” after the failure of modern reason. Marion grounds the transcendent, that which saturates life in its excess and which overflows the bounds of reason, in the concept of love. It is the universal, which cannot be particularized (for instance by the Passion of Christ) without obscuring its ontological priority. Marion’s latter concern is that love is secondary to being: Being, here, defined as that which is synonymous with the Cartesian *ego* – the thinking thing. Thus the second aspect of the theological failure is because love is perceived as the response of a subject that exists *a priori* – selfhood as self-knowledge precedes love (given or received), rather than being constituted by it. Thus Marion says that the Christian person is constituted by a *knowing*, and in particular a knowing of what love is, that precedes their *desire* to know. This failure is, to use Milbank’s language, a pleonasm, a new recurrence of the contemporary philosophical *aporia*: the failure of philosophy to remember its own erotic origins. The love of wisdom, what Marion describes as the desire to know, means that “in order to attain the truth, it is necessary in *every* case, first to desire it, and therefore to love it.”<sup>656</sup> For Marion, it is love that is *a priori*: *Amo ergo sum*, or conversely, I am loved therefore I am.

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<sup>652</sup> Žižek has a number of texts that deal extensively with Paul, the most developed of which is a recently published dialogue between he and Milbank: Žižek, S., and J. Milbank. 2009. *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic*. Creston Davis (ed.). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

<sup>653</sup> See Badiou, A. 2003. *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*. Trans. Ray Brassier. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. For Badiou, Paul overcomes the particularity of the Christ event, making it the ground for human liberation *qua* radical freedom.

<sup>654</sup> See Eagleton, T. 2007. *Jesus Christ: The Gospels*. New York: Verso. and also Eagleton, T. 2009. *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Eagleton, while maintaining his Marxist atheism has much sympathy for the Christian imagination and a Catholic reticence toward Paul particularly.

<sup>655</sup> See Nancy, J-L. 2008. *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*. Smith, M., Malenfant, G. and Bettina Bergo (trans.). New York: Fordham University Press. For Nancy, universalization requires a turn to James rather than Paul, with an emphasis given to the concept of hope rather than love.

<sup>656</sup> Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, p. 2

In the final paragraphs of *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Marion turns from the task of returning philosophy to the concept of love (not vice versa as love never left) by asking whether the God “who names himself with the very name of love...loves like we love, with the same love as us”?<sup>657</sup> Marion’s answer betrays everything that comes before it, re-inscribing love as a Cartesian concept, defined and limited by the boundaries of human reason and knowledge. Marion writes:

Clearly one may hesitate, but nevertheless we cannot avoid this conclusion. For, in fact, God does not only reveal himself through love and as love; he also reveals himself through the means, the figures, the moments, the acts, and the stages of love, the one and only love, that which we also practice. He plays the lover, like us...who ends up by identifying himself in the incarnated Son, up to the unilateral promulgation by him to us of our faithfulness. God practices the logic of the erotic reduction as we do, with us, according to the same rite and following the same rhythm as us, to the point where we can even ask ourselves if we do not learn it from him, and no one else. God loves in the same way we do.<sup>658</sup>

Marion is unable to escape the grasp of onto-theology, and the definition of love as a concept whose excess is always stifled by human reason precisely because of his reformation of the concept of the univocity of being as the univocity of love. In the same way that Milbank defined the God of onto-theology as a super-being, a being whose existence was of the same kind but who participated in that existence only to a higher degree than that of humanity, so Marion claims of the Lover God: “When God loves (and indeed he never ceases to love), he simply loves infinitely better than we do.”<sup>659</sup> Love is given ontological priority to not only human selfhood but to God’s as well. The God of the philosophers can no longer be determined by his omniscience and omnipotence but his desire. Marion writes: “God’s highest transcendence, the only one that does not dishonor him, belongs not to power, nor to wisdom, nor even to infinity, but to love. For love alone is enough to put all infinity, all wisdom, and all

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid. p. 221

<sup>658</sup> Ibid. p. 222

<sup>659</sup> Ibid.

power to work.”<sup>660</sup> God loves infinitely and first, yet even that love can always be spoken, thought and appreciated. Its climax is material rather than ecstatic. The love of God can never be indescribable or Marion’s task has failed, and the psychoanalysts will need to begin their task anew. The love that we are brought to is a concept. It never occurs to Marion that the inability to speak or think love might not be a function of its absence, but of its sheer *presence*.

So what does Marion’s attempt (and failure) to bring us back to love have to do with the stated goal of this chapter, i.e., the development of an account of a gathering (an enclosure) that is paradoxically able to love the world as the world? Moreover, how might Marion’s work help redefine the political analogy, whilst avoiding the univocity of love? The key is in Marion’s failure, but this will become clearer after a short aside on the nature of human making.

In the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas famously makes the argument that human making always falls short of genuine creation. Yet as Robert Miner argues, while it may seem as if this means humans are trapped within the technical conception of making (utilitarian and pragmatic), that is not exactly the case.<sup>661</sup> According to Miner, Aquinas makes true human creativity possible in his doctrine of analogy. As stated earlier, Aquinas analogy argues that while God is the source of all being, there is yet an ontological distinction to be made between Creator and created. God and the world do not share a principle of existence, yet humanity can understand its existence as analogous to God’s. Drawing on Aquinas’ metaphysical analogy and the writings of Nicholas Cusanus, Miner is able to claim with Cusanus that “all human arts are images, as it were of the infinite and divine art.”<sup>662</sup> For Miner, human making and creativity is analogous to divine making; simultaneously human making actively participates in the divine creation, while the understanding of that activity is defined

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<sup>660</sup> Ibid.

<sup>661</sup> See Miner, R. 2004. *Truth in the Making: Creative Knowledge in Theology and Philosophy*. London: Routledge

<sup>662</sup> Cusanus, N. 1975. *Idiota de Mente*, Trans. Clyde Lee Miller. New York: Abaris Books. p. 45

by its ontological separation from the divine. Indeed God's generative activity not only anticipates and makes possible human creation, but celebrates and commands it: be fruitful and multiply.

The possibilities for Marion's program should be clear. Marion's exhortation to ground being in love – desire and relationship – need only adopt the Thomist metaphysics of analogy to acknowledge love as more than a concept. On this model, the love of God for the world is not infinite yet fathomable, it is the always ineffable *a priori*; that which cannot be thought, only experienced. That is precisely the revelation of Godself that becomes apparent in the creation of the world and the subsequent Incarnation of Jesus: God's unreasonable *kenosis*, i.e., the gift of Godself to the material that could not help but overflow the material – to saturate the world. It is the knowledge about, and experience with, this love that is the basis for an account of the gathering's love for the world as the world. The project cannot be to simply reveal or recover a concept of love and gathering. With Aquinas we must acknowledge that God and his activity transcend any conceptuality. We are creatures who participate in the being of God and understand our own existence as analogous but never identical to God's existence. Political concepts such as gathering and love are crucial for self-understanding yet must always subject themselves to the analogy between the God-whose-being-is-love-and-gathering and the political gathering made possible by participation in that love. Participation in the being of God is a participation in the being of the God-whose-being-is-love-and-gathering, and so conceptualities are (rather than O'Donovan's mediators of reality) always only the temporary tactics of finite human reason and are everywhere transcended by the God-whose-being-is-love. The argument that follows is a stained proposal for a description of an ecclesiology (of love and gathering), which rejects the univocal and so is paradoxically possible precisely because its practices are both theological and theurgic. The reconciliation of this disparity of practice is only possible because of ecclesial participation in the being of God – a participation that is both constituted by the sacraments that gather the church and in the constitution of the church as sacrament, a reality made possible when the Spirit is counted as remainder.

## Between Theology and Theurgy

It is the contention of this chapter that the eschatological paradox of “already” but “not yet” presumes, for the gathering, a paradox of ecclesial action: a call to discipleship that includes both the practice of theology as well as theurgy. To exemplify the double aspect of the gathering’s relationship to the multitude we must return to Milbank’s account of the Christian difference, which rejects univocity in favor of a more peaceable ontology.

Milbank identifies the Christian theological difference as a Trinitarian difference. Thus in his own work, Milbank’s (re)turn to Thomist analogy means that *onto-théologie*, revelation imprisoned by the concept of being, must undergo a transformation into *théo-onto-logie*, revelation as that which defines the concept of being.<sup>663</sup> Incidentally, this is the same move that Hauerwas is making when he announces that he does not have a political theology, but a theological politics. As we have seen, Milbank claims that univocal departure from the Thomistic tradition centers upon counting being, and not God, the subject of theology.

The solution (and this is where Milbank theological enterprise is more robust than that of Hauerwas) is not simply a “looping back” to the person of Christ or a re-narration of the ethical imaginary through the call to discipleship, rather for Milbank the re-narration (or theologization) that occurs must be fully Trinitarian. This is the point at which Milbank’s task reflects that of St. Augustine:

According to Augustine, physics has for its object God as cause of being, logic God as norm of thought, ethics God as rule of life. This Augustinian order: physics, logic, ethics, corresponds to the order of the divine persons of the Trinity: the Father is the principle of being, the Son of intelligence, the Holy Spirit of Love. The systematic unity of the parts of philosophy reflects here the reciprocal interiority of the divine persons.<sup>664</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> See Marion, J-L. “Saint Thomas d’Aquin et l’onto-théologie.” *Le Statut Contemporain de la Philosophie première, Philosophie 17*. (1996). pp. 29-50. p. 37

<sup>664</sup> Hadot, P. “Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l’Antiquité.” *Museum Helveticum*, 36 (1979). Pp. 213-25. p. 212 quoted in HANKEY, W. J. 1987. *God in Himself: Aquinas’ Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 124

The difference between Milbank's *théo-onto-logie* and Hauerwas' conception of theological ethics however, is not just one of scale, i.e., an overemphasis in Hauerwas on the person of Christ at the neglect of the rest of Trinity. Rather, Milbank's *théo-onto-logie* identifies Christ as *logos*, the logic of reality, but also as *verbum*, the very word that God has spoken to us. What this means is that for Milbank reality is entirely linguistic. As Milbank makes clear in the "Logos" section of *The Word Made Strange*, language (and the entire range of significant human cultural productions) is not *representative* but *constitutive* (or at least analogous to the language which is constitutive) of natural reality.<sup>665</sup> Humans are able to make and create, to *do* theology precisely because we participate analogously in the creation *ex nihilo*, a creation by God's *verbum*. Frederick Bauerschmidt identifies the two most important consequences of Milbank's linguistic ontology, writing:

[f]irst, [human] creation is not a matter of the imposition of form upon a pre-existent substance but is a generation of forms that are as much material as they are intelligible. Second, if [human] language is primordial, then the distinction between nature and culture is blurred, if not obliterated... Thus the Christian metaphysics proposed by Milbank might be characterized as an idealist materialism (or a materialist idealism?) in which the generation of conceptual structures is a process that is coextensive with the generation of material cultural forms.<sup>666</sup>

Indeed, for Milbank, humans produce their world so totally that "man as original creator" participates "in some measure in creation *ex nihilo*."<sup>667</sup> For Milbank, as for Nicholas Cusanus and Robert Miner, every act of creativity, *poesis*, is an act of theology: reasoning the divine. The task of the church is to make the world aware of the fact, to help it identify creative acts as (re)narrating the word that God has already spoken to the world.

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<sup>665</sup> Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*.

<sup>666</sup> Bauerschmidt, F. C. "The Word Made Speculative: John Milbank's Christological Poetics." *Modern Theology*. 15:4 (October 1999) pp. 417-432. p. 419

<sup>667</sup> Milbank, J. "Pleonasm, Speech and Writing," in Milbank, J. 1997. *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture*. pp. 55- 83. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 79

Milbank's description of the Trinitarian theological difference has been developed for the other two persons of the Trinity as well, although for now it is enough to note that Milbank's move from *onto-théo-logie* to *théo-onto-logie* involves a restriction, or perhaps more accurately, a loosening or freeing-up (from the limits of human reason), of being-language—a transformation from transcendental categories to Trinitarian categories. Milbank argues:

*Factum...is Verbum* in God, and so the made cultural object is promoted to the status of a divine transcendental...and this is equivalent to saying that God in his creation *ad intra* in the *Logos* "incorporates" within himself the creation *ad extra*, including human history...Because *Verbum* marks a primordial difference in the Godhead, it realizes a perfect tension between Unity and Being...and allows no lapse into either a henological totality of system or structure, nor an ontological totality of the isolated subject. When *Verbum* is included as a transcendental, all the transcendentals are transformed into personal intersubjective Trinitarian categories: but this leaves us with more than a 'social God', it leaves us also with a cultural God.<sup>668</sup>

And this is a God who does not exclude the multitude, even in the "not yet," precisely because the multitude participates and continues, albeit incompletely and without understanding, in God's first generative act. Good theology, for Milbank's project, can only be orthodox when it locates within its own activity the prior activity of God (a sentiment that will be explored more fully in the next section).

The problem with Milbank's analysis is that while it is theologically more robust in its argument, it fails to embrace the Hauerwasian style: the ineffable love of friends, strangers and enemies. For Hauerwas the participation of the people of God in the love of God is embodied inexplicably in the peaceable witness of the Dunkards. The Hauerwasian style of the participation in, and continuation of, the ineffable love of God requires the people of God to claim that love (of one's life, or of one's family) is only love insofar as it non-identically repeats the weakness of the peaceable God. The Hauerwasian question is: if every human creative act participates in the divine act, how can one make a distinction between a creative/Godlike act and a destructive/violent act? What happens if the human non-identical repetition of the

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<sup>668</sup> Ibid. 80

divine act is coercive? What would help Milbank's project here is a reading of John Howard Yoder's account of the powers and the *didaskalos* and the powers. With a proper account of the powers, it would become clearer to Milbank that even creativity can participate in a Fallen sovereignty: creating for its own sake – progress. And while Milbank would most likely agree that progress as a thing-for-itself is in some sense the enemy of God (i.e., it attempts to sublimate rather than participate), his ethical system does not have a method by which to distinguish right kinds of cultural creativity. This is apparent in Milbank's often-repeated recommendation of institutional state-based socialism (an accommodation/legitimation rather than a collaboration/co-operation with the world). The second thing that Milbank could adopt from Yoder in order to solve this problem, is Yoder's account of a two-tiered theology; for the multitude generative and creative, for the teacher/theologian corrective and disciplinary.<sup>669</sup>

The contention of this thesis is that theology is the task of reasoning about, and creating with, the divine. Indeed, the entirety of this thesis (along with all Christian theology) has been about how the church should understand herself after ascension but before *parousia*. Part of that task has been correction and discipline, but in this chapter as well as in chapter 5, this thesis has attempted to create – to do something new. Chapter 5 was about the theology of the gathered, i.e., how the gathered should *know* about itself. Yet as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, touting her knowledge of the end of history is not the purpose of the gathering. With Hauerwas we must repeat that the purpose of the church is to be the church, the act of the God-who-is-love in and for the world. Just as God loves the world-as-itself, so too must the church. This task is paradoxically different from that of theology. It requires actions which make, which bring-forth, God in the world. If theology has been deemed the careful task of reasoning the divine in history, theurgy is the confession that human reason and the made products of that reason do not confine God. Theurgy is, finally, the Hauerwasian style. The practice of theurgy pleonastically recapitulates

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<sup>669</sup> The difference between correction/discipline and Milbank's notion that "true political theology" is always the "theological critique of society and politics" (*Theology and Social Theory*, p. 208) is that the latter is the product of triumphalism while the former is the task which makes the community of which we are already a part sustainable.

the God who entered history in Jesus Christ – the perpetual mystery of incarnation. As we saw in the writings of Cavanaugh, John Paul II, and Schlabach in the last chapter, the incarnation continues in every Eucharist through the work of the Holy Spirit. The church is, through the Eucharist, the living body of Christ in the world. If the church is to continue the work of Christ, it *must* teach the *ochloi* (crowd/multitude), and to authenticate that teaching it must work miracles and wonders (*semeion*) in their midst (love and care for the weakest). Yet theurgy is not a utilitarian means of conversion, but true compassion and love for the world. Jesus mysteriously healed the sick, fed the hungry, and made wine for celebrations, not merely as a means of legitimating his claim to divinity but because he loved them. Those who experienced his miracles were friends, family, neighbors, strangers, and enemies. The disciples of Jesus in the book of Acts pleonastically recapitulated the miracles of Jesus in their wondrous gifts of love to the dispossessed. What follows then is a description of theurgy as love: the act of the gathered that is not founded in a reason or critique but in the spontaneous and ineffable loving as God loved; the act that is not about God (theology) but which co-operates with God, bringing God to earth. The question of how such a love (ontologically separate yet analogous to God's love, as always already a co-operation with God's love) avoids O'Donovan and Marion's univocity will be the subject of the next section.

Just as Milbank, following Augustine, deems *théo-onto-logie* as the task of getting beyond ontologically prior (univocal conceptions) of being (via the theologization / Trinitarianization of Greek metaphysical categories), so too must an account of orthodox Christian theurgy involve a Trinitarian (re)conception of Platonism. The kind of Platonism that opposes metaphysics, as noted by Gregory Shaw, is in fact most closely related to that of “the god-inspired Syrian,”<sup>670</sup> Iamblichus. After the conversion of Constantine and the privileging of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the leaders of the pagan world turned to Iamblichus (c. 240-c. 325 C. E.) for spiritual and intellectual leadership. While much of late antiquity was concerned with the conflict between paganism and Christianity (including Iamblichus' teacher

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<sup>670</sup> Shaw, G. 1995. *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press. p. 2

Porphyrus), Iamblichus concerned himself with preserving the old order of sacred traditions rooted in the cosmic gods. The enemy was not Christianity in particular but more generally the “new ways” which threatened to subvert the status of (and eventually exile) the Hellenic gods. Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Iamblichus’ Platonism, and what we are most interested in, is his privileging of *theourgia* (god-work) above *theologia* (god-talk). According to Iamblichus, rationalism exalted the powers of the mind and diminished the cult of the gods. Theology, like philosophy, concerned itself primarily with *logos*, a “discourse about the gods,” which was always ontologically separate from the gods themselves – a human activity. Theurgy on the other hand, was for Iamblichus, a *theion ergon* (a work of the gods). Shaw explains:

In theurgy...divine principles were embodied and enacted, not merely contemplated, and in whatever context this occurred it was a “work of the gods,” a *theourgia* in which the human soul participated both as recipient and beneficiary.<sup>671</sup>

Thus the Iamblichean theurgist attained Godlikeness (*homoiosis theoi*) through the cultic ritual, which invoked the presence of God, and through which “the Gods are pleased.”<sup>672</sup> For Iamblichus, the goal of such rituals was self-perfection (as unity-with-the-divine) rather than *gnosis* (“because it is self-contradictory to *know* one has experienced an *ineffable* union”).<sup>673</sup> Similarly, for the ecclesial gathered, the ineffable act is that which cannot be reasoned or theologically justified; it is collaboration as co-operation, i.e., the joining of humanity to the God-whose-love-is-mystery (a reality with inexhaustible depth).

The theurgic rituals of the church are her sacraments. Some, like baptism continue God’s work of gathering. Others, such as eucharistic, continually renew the union between God and gathered. Indeed, as noted in chapter 5, the gathering itself is an act

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<sup>671</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>672</sup> Iamblichus. 2003. *De Mysteriis: Writings from the Greco-Roman World, Vol. 4*. Clarke. Dillon and Hershell (trans.). Bilingual Edition. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature. p. 14

<sup>673</sup> Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 156, fn. 5

of God, made possible by theurgic sacrament (that in which God works in, under and with). Yet the church not only receives the grace of unity-with-God in the sacraments but also is itself a sacrament for the world. The call for the church to be the church is the call to complete God's activity: to feed the hungry, to anoint the sick, to celebrate marriages, vocations and the rejection of violence. The act of the church as sacrament is not to demystify (share a *knowledge of*) God but to continue Christ's wonders in the midst of the multitude; to participate in the mysterious love of a God that is not a reason or a critique, but the scandalous Hauerwasian *desire* for relationship.

Nevertheless, all of this gives rise to two questions: (1) why does a separation between theurgy and theology, or an account of human love creatively analogical to divine love require an ecclesial concept of gathering? and (2) if theurgy does require an ecclesiology of gathering, how is the theurgic imaginary, as a syncretism between mystery cult and Gnosticism, radically (rooted in) orthodox? To ask the second question is not the attempt to reason the divine, but simply to question whether the acceptance of theurgic practice is compatible with ecclesial discipleship. In order to answer the first question, I will analyze a recent philosophical probe into the Pauline messianic by Giorgio Agamben, and repair it through the application of Milbank's pleonasm (as Pauline recapitulation). I will then ontologically extend the concept of remainder in the final section to explain the co-activity of the gathering with God.

### **Sovereignty, Exception and the Messianic Remainder**

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has inverted the postmodern return to Paul. As mentioned above, there has recently been a trend in contemporary continental philosophy to find, in the writings of St. Paul, leftist resources for political resistance. Such political resistance becomes possible because, in the wake of the deconstruction of Christianity and the writings of Paul, there can be excavated a universal (transcendent) ground for critique that continues the postmodern deconstruction, yet simultaneously is able to find a universal generic ground for all

the *petit récits*. For Agamben however, Paul does not identify a generic event, what Badiou calls the “production of the same,”<sup>674</sup> but its opposite: the messianic.

Agamben reads, in Paul’s account of the messianic (*Christos* as *mashiah*), not a search for the universal, i.e., a neat transcendental, but an isolation of the rest – the remainder. The question is not: what does every event/story have in common? rather, in what sense is every time located in and constituted in *this* time – the *ho nyn kairos* (the time of the now)?<sup>675</sup> Agamben identifies Christ-time, or messianic time, in Paul, as the contraction of time itself. This contraction is summed-up in 1 Corinthians 7:28-30. Paul writes:

I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed *time has grown short*: from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away (*italics mine*, NRSV).

Therefore, Agamben, against Cullman, describes Paul’s messianic time, not as the midpoint between creation and *parousia* but *as the present figure, and recapitulation, of both*. The time between “already” and “not yet,” is not “a third eon situated between two times; but rather...a caesura that divides the division between times and introduces a remnant, a zone of undecidability, in which the past is dislocated into the present and the present is extended into the past.”<sup>676</sup> For Paul, the *ho nyn kairos* is neither history (*chronos*) nor eternity, but the time (*kairos*)<sup>677</sup> that time takes to end (*il tempo che il tempo ci mette per finire*).<sup>678</sup> Agamben is arguing

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<sup>674</sup> Badiou, *Saint Paul*, p. 109

<sup>675</sup> Agamben, G. 2005. *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Trans. Patricia Dailey. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. 3

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74

<sup>677</sup> Here Agamben references Gustave Guillaume’s notion of *temps opératif* (operational time). For Guillaume, operational time is the time that it takes a person to conceive/reason/spatialize/symbolize their experience of time.

<sup>678</sup> Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, p. 67

that *parousia* is not reducible to *Escahton*. A properly messianic reading of Paul, says Agamben, does not identify (with Cullman) *parousia* as “a second messianic event that would follow and subsume the first.”<sup>679</sup> Rather, *parousia* simply refers to presence: “*par-ousia* literally signifies to be next to; in this way, being is beside itself in the present.”<sup>680</sup> On Agamben’s reading of Pauline messianic, *parousia* names the presence in ordinary time (*chronos*) of another time (*kairos*). Indeed, the *kairotic* moment occurs within the chronological but “it is that innermost disjointedness within time through which one may—by a hairsbreadth—grasp time and accomplish it.”<sup>681</sup> In short, the messianic event *has* occurred, and so time has begun to contract, to end, the final product of which is the explosion into eternity. The shared temporal location, for Paul and for us, is within that messianic contraction (*kairos*) of time (*chronos*) in which all time is re-constituted, fulfilled, and ended-as-eternity. The messianic *ho nyn kairos* as presence is a “pressing within chronological time” which works and transforms it from within.<sup>682</sup>

For Agamben, the messianic caesura (hesitation) that divides the division between times also divides the division between peoples. The “*una separazione della stessa separatezza*” (separation of separateness itself) are those who are identified by their lack of identity.<sup>683</sup> When there is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile, what is left is the messianic remainder: he or she, whose *kairotic* location in relation to the messiah is that of between weeping and not weeping, married and not married, Jew and not Jew. Paul makes, what Agamben describes as an Apelles cut, a division between Jew and not Jew, between “every people and itself, between every identity and itself.”<sup>684</sup> It is not that Jews and not-Jews are now, after the messianic event, the

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<sup>679</sup> Ibid. p. 70

<sup>680</sup> Ibid.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid. p. 72

<sup>682</sup> Ibid. p. 68

<sup>683</sup> Ibid. p. 49

<sup>684</sup> Ibid. p. 52

same, rather it is that the very identity “Jew” must be divided against itself, as must “not-Jew,” *ad infinitum*. The life (*zoe*) that is left after the infinite Apelles cut is the remainder. It is the end of being-in-common. Every life is equivocal and other. Thus messianic remainder refers not only to the time of the now but also to the people of the now. The people are not universally bound together by the phenomenality of love, politics, or some other such transcendental, but are the remains of the messianic event that constitutes time as it ends it. The problem with Agamben’s project is despite his divergence from the mode of the philosophical universalization of Paul, his reading of Paul affects a (re)turn of the universal in the claim that all messianic life is *zoe* – the remainder. This move allows Agamben to identify Israel as merely the first people to acknowledge the Apelles cut, the first to divide their division and so become in some sense the *anticipation* of messianic remainder. For Agamben, the division/evacuation of all people from their context and subsequent relocation via the messianic event is life-as-*parousia*. Agamben writes, “*At a decisive moment, the elected people, every people, will necessarily situate itself as remnant, as not all.*”<sup>685</sup> Agamben’s messianism is but a pleonastic universal, a deconstruction of persons-in-time to a deconstructed remainder – to life as *zoe*. In order to understand the parts of Agamben’s analysis of Pauline’s messianism that are worthwhile, and those which need to be discarded, it is critical that *para-ousia* be defined not simply as “[all] being beside itself” but being whose *para-doxa* of *ousia* describes an “overwhelming glory” that exists beside. In short, *para-ousia* is always the transcendent (*ousia*) beside the material (*ousia*), the relationship between which is Aquinas’ analogy of being. In order to understand the theological danger of accepting Agamben’s account of messianism and *parousia* as is, we must first understand how he accounts for the difference between *zoe* and *bios*, and also the relationship between rule and exception.

Agamben’s book *Homo Sacer* elucidates the distinction between competing notions of “life,” *zoe* (bare life) and *bios* (qualified life, or the life together) by appealing to an obscure figure in Roman law, the *homo sacer* (sacred man). Under Roman law, the *homo sacer* was the person that the law defined as beyond the law. The *homo*

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<sup>685</sup> Ibid. p. 55. Italics in original.

*sacer* could be killed by any person, yet could not be the subject of a sacrifice. The *homo sacer* was the one included in the law, insofar as the law was required to determine exclusion (the suspension of the prohibition to kill). Moreover, the *homo sacer* existed, according to Agamben, in order to make a space (a remainder/an exception) in which the law could suspend itself. Here Agamben is following Carl Schmidt's account of the sovereign, the one who is simultaneously subject to the law and the suspender of it. Schmidt explains,

The exception most clearly reveals the essence of the state's authority. The decision parts here from the legal norm, and (to formulate it paradoxically) authority proves that to produce law it need not be based on law...The exception is more interesting than the normal case. The normal proves nothing; the exception proves everything: the exception does not only confirm the rule; the rule as such lives off the exception alone.<sup>686</sup>

Two of the most recent examples of this sovereign/judicial suspension of itself, says Agamben, are the prisoners at Guantanamo and the extermination of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Both are reduced, *biopolitically*, to bare life (*zoe*). That is to say, those who live subject (qualified) to the law (which constitutes life as *bios*) are only biotic subjects of law insofar as they are exceptions to it. The law is the mechanism that makes them not subject to the law, which makes them part of the *polis* only insofar as they are removed from it, which makes them *homo sacer*. Therefore, the Holocaust is misnamed, says Agamben, because there is no burnt offering, no sacrifice:.

The Jew living under Nazism is the privileged negative referent of the new biopolitical sovereignty and is, as such, a flagrant case of *homo sacer* in the sense of a life that may be killed but not sacrificed. His killing therefore constitutes...neither capital punishment nor a sacrifice, but simply the actualization of a mere "capacity to be killed" inherent in the condition of the Jew [as exception]”<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>686</sup> Schmitt, C. 2006. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. G. Schwab (ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 13,15.

<sup>687</sup> Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. D. Heller-Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. p. 114

The horror is not confined to the *act* of genocide, but to the *capacity* (the possibility and imagination) of genocide – to the judicial announcement of a people external to the judicial. For the *homo sacer*, any account of life together (of the political) is stripped away, in the process of legitimating the political, (Apelles) cutting/dividing life down to bare existence (*zoe*). Moreover, this is the very violence that is ontologically prior, not just to the liberal state but to sovereignty *qua* power. A violence that O'Donovan's political theology recapitulates *qua* God-as-sovereign. The God-who-is-love can never be the God who delegates the suspension of love in order to ensure it. While Agamben's critique of current political arrangements is entirely correct, Agamben fails because he attempts to suspend the messianic itself.

For Agamben, the messianic hope is grounded on the legitimation of sheer existence/survival – life-as-*zoe*. The overcoming of (to borrow from Žižek) objective, subjective and symbolic violence becomes possible beyond the sovereign in the glorification of every exception as remainder. The radicality of messianism then is embodied in Jesus' rejection of the Caesar's sovereignty, in his announcement of jubilee (the fulfillment of law, reason, and time [*chronos*]), and as Agamben sees it, the whole world as remainder. Yet Agamben's position prematurely suspends the messianic activity whose end is the (re)constitution – the (re)gathering – of biotic life. The messianic does divide division against itself, but the Christ-event continues from resurrection through the promise of a renewing Spirit at Pentecost. Life *is* constituted politically (as *bios*) as a gathering, which is to say that God is doing something new in the church.

If Agamben's work is going to be helpful to this project, the determination of where and how Agamben's reading of the Pauline messianic fails and where it succeeds must be determined. To begin with, it should be noted that Agamben's account of the state of exception has direct implications for Marion's account of the phenomenality of love. When reading Marion through the lens of Agamben's messianic, it is clear that it is not the law (univocal/universal) of love that is interesting but the exception to it; the exception indicates an inclusion that is only an inclusion as exclusion. That is to say, the universality of the love phenomenon must also be conceived as

constituted by a prior included exclusion: the love of God. When humans experience love, that love is knowable as such because it is founded upon a suspension, a hesitation, which makes it impossible to claim that the speech/love/representation of love is unitary. To borrow Lacan's language, the symbolic order is also an order based on exception; the ability to love, to order, to name, to create, are all founded on the Trinitarian difference – the God who in every way is exceptional.

As mentioned above, the sense in which Agamben's fails in his exposition of Paul's Christ-time is in his reduction of messianic life to *zoe*. Agamben's account of sovereignty and exception is helpful insofar as it defines, in ways similar to Yoder, the ontologically prior violence of the powers. In a sense, for Agamben as for Yoder, the law/the powers are but a pale reflection of the messianic. The work of philosophy/theology then becomes the naming of failed demonic flare-ups – the places where time and personhood have been contracted by false messianisms (literally anti-Christ's). The danger is in the politics that justifies itself by dividing others whilst failing to acknowledge its own division, clear examples of which are Nazi Germany and Guantanamo. Where Agamben fails is in his refusal to see that the messianic contraction of kairotic time only makes sense for Paul because of the particularity of the messianic event: the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ-*mashiah*. While it may be possible, or even necessary, to think of messianic time and persons as constituted in, and by, the contraction of all time into the *ho nyn kairos*, it is essential that Agamben understands the full ontological implications of his own statement: "the *pleroma* [fullness] of *kairos* is understood as the relation of each instant to the Messiah—each *kairos* is *unmittelbar zu Gott* [immediate to God], and is not just the final result of a process"<sup>688</sup> It is the sheer fact of the *apotheosis* of history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth which makes him *mashiah*-Christ. For Agamben, the messianic claim is not "Jesus is Lord/God became man" but that "man is destructible/all life is exception." In addition, this position leaves him with an infinite prior violence and ultimately a Deleuzian univocity of difference. In order to overcome this univocity of pleonasm, Agamben's account of *para-ousia* must be

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<sup>688</sup> Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 76

joined to the *para-doxa* of analogy; an analogy twixt the gathering as messianic Christ-body and the Jesus who leaves the world whilst leaving himself with it.

While the messianic event begins with the deconstruction – the Apelles cut – of political identity, the messianic event recapitulates (non-identically) the political in the gathering around Jesus. What Agamben’s account of Pauline messianity needs then is not merely a Trinitarian account of the messianic, but also a Jewish account of the messianic. Messianity for Paul only makes sense because of the messianic community, the people of Israel gathered. It is indeed the case, as has been noted by William Placher, that

one of the remarkable features of the narratives of his [Jesus’] last days is that his increasing isolation makes it impossible to identify him with any one “side” or cause. The Roman governor sentenced him as a Jewish rebel, but the leaders of Judaism also turned against him. He attacked the powerful on behalf of the poor, but in the end the mob too called for his blood. His own disciples ran away; Peter denied him. He did not go to his death agony as a representative of Jews, or of the poor, or of Christians, but alone, and thus, according to Christian faith, as a representative of all.<sup>689</sup>

Jesus-*mashiah* did divide himself from division, and Paul’s messianic does divide, more generally, the self from the political, but this occurs only insofar as that messianic re-identifies the political, and sovereignty itself, as beyond violent exceptions. In Jesus Christ, God rejects a sovereignty of exception by subjecting even Godself to the material. In so doing, God exposes, as Hauerwas, Yoder and Milbank have all noted, the laws of the world (of Rome and the Temple) as founded on violent exception (Jesus becomes *homo sacer*). God’s sovereignty is peaceable – the messiah and the messianic kingdom are peaceable – precisely because God subjects Godself to the materiality of history. This *kenosis* is not the death of God (as in Žižek’s heterodoxy) or the death of politics, or sovereignty, but the transformation, the pleonasm, the resurrection of each. In the words of Paul, “as for the economy of the *pleroma* (fullness) of times, all things are *anakephalaioomai* (recapitulated) in

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<sup>689</sup> Placher, W. P. 1983. *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster. p. 30

him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:10).<sup>690</sup> The Christ-event makes biotic life, i.e., the political life, possible because it recapitulates the *polis* in the ecclesial gathering. Agamben rightly notes that the concept of messianic recapitulation in Ephesians is directly responsible for Origen and Leibniz's doctrine of *apocatastasis*, repetition/retrieval in Kierkegaard, eternal return in Nietzsche, and repetition in Heidegger. Yet if the incarnation and resurrection are included in the Christ-event, as they surely were for Paul, then *parousia* ceases to be material being beside material being and life as *zoe*. Rather, biotic life becomes possible because recapitulation/pleonasm involves a re-gathering and re-identification rather than the mere division of division and the death of sovereignty. On this reading of the messianic, Thomas' doctrine of analogy, Nicholas's participatory creativity, and Milbank's pleonasm become the Christological successors of Paul.

### **The Gathering as Sacrament**

In Agamben's reading of the messianic remainder, *parousia* is the presence of the material being beside itself, yet in the Gospel of John the messianic remainder is the ontological reality of *para-ousia*, God's presence dwelling beside our own. The word remainder (*meno*), occurs more than 40 times in the Gospel. The word is used analogously to describe the ontological status of the relationship between Godself in the persons of the Trinity, as well as to describe the relationship between God and those he has gathered. To begin with Jesus describes his relationship to the Father:

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who remains in me (*en moi menon*) does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:10-14 NRSV)

Note that the proof of the remainder of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father lies in works – the shared activity. It is the Father in the Son who acts, just as John 1:1 begins with an account of the Son in the Father who creates (*en arche en ho*

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<sup>690</sup> Ephesians 1:10 translated in Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, p. 75

*logos kai ho logos en pros ton theon kai theos en ho logos*). That the divine remainder is not binitarian but Trinitarian becomes clear in the testimony of John the Baptist:

And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (John 1: 32-3 NRSV).

The securing of a distinction between being (*ousia*) and person (*hypostasis*) by the Cappadocian fathers was the ontological breakthrough that made this thinking in terms of remainder not only possible but also orthodox. And so a reformed systematic theologian like Colin Gunton can find himself in full agreement with an Eastern Orthodox Metropolitan like John Zizioulas,<sup>691</sup> that God *is* being-in-communion. In the words of Gunton:

God *is* no more than what Father, Son, and Spirit give to, and receive from each other, in the inseparable communion that is the outcome of their love. Communion is the *meaning* of the word: there is no 'being' of God other than this dynamic of persons in relation."<sup>692</sup>

God is love, and love is communion. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit remain in one another because they give themselves each to the other; when one acts it is the others acting in them. This is not the place to recite the genesis and evolution of Trinitarian thought (both Zizioulas and Gunton have done exhaustive studies on the subject). What matters is that remainder, while being constitutive of God's relationship to Godself, does not exhaust the Johannine use of *meno*.

The second usage of remainder in the Gospel of John extends the ontological language about the God of love whose being-is-communion to the relationship between God and humanity. In our earlier discussion of Yoder's practice/sacraments, Yoder defined the sacrament of binding and loosing as an activity in which God worked in, with, and under the activity of the disciples. This definition of the

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<sup>691</sup> Zizioulas, J. D. 1997. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminar Press.

<sup>692</sup> Gunton, C. 2003. *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Edinburgh: T & T Clark. p. 10

sacramental shared act was continued in the last chapter, specifically in regards to the Eucharistic practice, which Cavanaugh described as a simultaneously gathering and a being gathered. Both accounts tacitly assume divine remainder, the Johannine basis of which begins in John 6:56-7, “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood remain in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.” The-God-who-remains-in-us-as-we-remain-in-him claims ontologically what Paul claims ecclesialogically in his description of gathering as the body of Christ (messianic body) in the world:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit...God has membered the body...so that there should be no division in the body. (1 Corinthians 12:12-26).

Paul’s claim that the gathering is the recapitulation of Christ’s body in the world makes clear that despite the bodily ascension, the body of Christ remains in the world. Just as the Father, Son and Spirit remained in one another, so God continues to remain among those gathered by the Spirit into the body of the Son. The complex ontology of the Pauline remainder gets repeated in the Johannine Gospel, by Jesus, not just as a comfort to the faithful, but as an exhortation to Christ-like activity:

Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can’t bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who remain in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:4 NIV).

The body of Christ can only act insofar as the divine remainder acts, just as the Son could act only insofar as the Father acted. To be separated from the divine remainder as located in the body of Christ makes participation in, under and with the divine act impossible. Furthermore, the very possibility of remainder is based on the peaceable sovereignty of Jesus. In John 15:14, Jesus notes that those who are gathered in love under his sovereignty are the divine remainder, a remainder that necessarily spreads the love (*philos*) of God as fruit (*karpos*) that then remains (*meno*), as food, for the world. Jesus finishes, announcing that “these commands [are] so that you may love one another” (17); just “as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; remain in love.” (10).

## Looping Back to Hauerwas

Having noted the plethora of Scriptural language surrounding remainder, it should be no surprise that the theme of co-operation with God is also present in the writings of Hauerwas. In an article that he wrote with Jim Fodor called “Performing the Faith,” Hauerwas describes “Christian existence...[as] an activity—a performance,” a communal drama that is possible “only because Christians worship a God who is pure act, an eternally performing God.”<sup>693</sup> Yet Hauerwas and Fodor go further, noting that the “performing God...has invited us to join in the performance that is God’s life.”<sup>694</sup> The existence of God in which Christians are invited to participate is not “some univocal Being but to Father, Son, and Spirit.”<sup>695</sup> Following Milbank, Hauerwas and Fodor describe the being of Trinity as a “differential ontology peaceably sustained” in the relationship between the divine persons.<sup>696</sup> They are able to agree with Milbank that

Christianity...recognizes no original violence. It construes the infinite not as chaos, but as harmonic peace which is yet beyond the circumscribing power of any totalizing reason. Peace no longer depends on the reduction to the self-identical, but is the sociality of harmonious difference. Violence, by contrast, is always a secondary willed intrusion upon this possible infinite order (which is actual for God).<sup>697</sup>

Thus Hauerwas and Fodor write: “Trinity and creation are the language Christians use to speak of this God.”<sup>698</sup> Human love and “openness to difference”<sup>699</sup> participate in the love of God, but are not identical to it, for “only God as Trinity can perform in

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<sup>693</sup> Hauerwas and Fodor, *Performing the Faith*, pp. 76-7

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.* p. 77

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.* p. 87

<sup>697</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, pp. 5-6

<sup>698</sup> Hauerwas and Fodor, *Performing the Faith*, p. 77

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.* p. 87

such a way as not to be alienated from who God is.”<sup>700</sup> Hauerwas and Fodor end where we have, by identifying creaturely participation in divine being as peaceable co-operation:

Christians believe that no human action (or any other action for that matter) can be described as autonomous activity, a self-generating movement. To act is to share in the divine life, for human reality exists solely within God’s reality. Because the source or ground of human activity resides not in ourselves but in God, any movement we make, any action we perform, entails an actualization of the divine act in our own temporal and finite context. Far from erasing the distinction between God’s act and our actions, this claim affirms that any human action truly and properly performed will be nothing short of, and nothing other than, “a movement into our createdness.”<sup>701</sup>

For Hauerwas and Fodor, the “best that secular peace can hope for” is just policing and contractual peace – “a ‘tolerable’ regulation or management of conflict by one coercive means or another.”<sup>702</sup> Hauerwas and Fodor also note their appreciation of Milbank’s description of the *shape* of the ecclesiology that participates in being-as-communion. For Milbank, the church is the *concentus musicus* (harmonious music), the beautiful and continuously differential process of alteration, revision, and interpretation.<sup>703</sup> This process is necessarily nonviolent and open to ateleological surprise. When violence arises in the series (in the form of jarring notes and premature endings), consonance can still be preserved, for Milbank, because (in God) nothing is excluded. Hauerwas and Fodor supplement Milbank’s description of the church as music with Wells’ account of ecclesial performance and improvisation (of which high and low status power plays are a part). Before continuing, a brief aside is needed in order to expose the problem with these two ecclesial descriptions.

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<sup>700</sup> Ibid. p. 77

<sup>701</sup> Ibid. pp. 85-6

<sup>702</sup> Ibid. p. 88

<sup>703</sup> Milbank, J. “Postmodern Critical Augustinianism: A Short *Summa* in Forty-Two Responses to Unasked Questions” in Milbank, J. 2009. *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology*. pp. 337-51. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books. pp. 227-8

The danger for both Wells and Milbank, is that their ecclesiologies end-up, despite their own best insights, (re)turning to a univocity of being. Wells' account of high and low status games is utilitarian, and recapitulates (as discussed above) the univocity of power. Milbank's ecclesiology has a similar yet unique problem. For Milbank, the God-who-is-love is constituted as the infinite reconciliation of difference, and the church, through her participation in that reconciliation, must patiently allow for jarring notes in the knowledge that God will bring the series back to harmony. Does the church's constitution as an eschatological community of difference allow for participation in (or the incorporation of) differences that are violent? An affirmative answer allows for: Milbank's "contractual peace" with liberalism; Yoder's just policing; and O'Donovan's reauthorization of the Sword. This is so because Milbank's account of the difference of God is identical to: Deleuze's univocity of difference; Agamben's Apelles cut; Hegel's dialectic; and Badiou's singular universal.<sup>704</sup> Milbank's account of difference is univocal because his rejection of Greek monistic being, in favor of Trinity, fails to sustain an ontological distinction between "difference" – between the difference of the God-who-is-difference-in-harmony and the difference of humanity. For Milbank, particular violences are allowed because they can be made (ontologically) peaceable in God; the peace of God becomes the harmony of infinite violence. The God of Milbank is identical to the *mashiah* of Agamben – the division of division itself. Agamben's account of the messianic ended prematurely (before resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost) in a univocity of difference. Milbank's account of God-as-infinite-difference ends in the same way because it forgets that God redeems and recapitulates difference, in creation, as love – and in particular as a gathering that is a politics-of-love. Difference *qua* difference is not good in the same way that peace *qua* the extermination of one's enemies is not good. What Milbank needs is an account of the powers; the powers are, to use Milbank's terminology, disordered differences. God created difference and difference was good. Difference was God's gift to his creation, the space for creation to be itself. It was the *imago dei*, which allowed God's creation to be like Godself – to be in communion with other. Yet

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<sup>704</sup> Badiou and Žižek, *Philosophy in the Present*, pp. 30-38.

difference for creatures after the Fall is like love for creatures after the Fall: solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. Without the redeeming work of Christ, the structures of difference and love only know being-in-communion in terms of self-interest. However, the God-who-is-infinite-love-and-difference makes possible our participation in His being – in His love and difference. Violence is not just another difference that will be eschatologically assumed into the divine harmony. *In the same way that love is not love unless it participates in the God-who-is-love, difference is not difference unless it participates in the God-who-is-difference.* Violent difference is the difference that eradicates and flattens the other in its search for uniformity. Violent love is the relationship sustained by coercion and the suspension of itself. Both fail to preserve the ontological distinction between Creator and creature. Both fail to describe a genuine politics-of-love/politics-of-difference as participating (albeit incompletely) in the God who, in his grace, brings relationship to the solitary. To repair Milbank, one need only adopt an account of the powers and of God's activity, which is constituted in (and as) a community that is simultaneously gathered and gathering.

Despite the fact that “Performing Faith” appears in the same collection of essays in which Hauerwas begins making concessions to Stout, Hauerwas and Fodor end this essay with a brilliant description of *ekstasis* that mirrors the account of theurgy developed above:

One of the traits of faithful performance is the way in which the performer is drawn out of him- or herself and is “possessed” or “taken over” by the work...these “ecstatic” moments are...features of self-absorbing play, where the participant becomes so wrapped up in the activity that it may be more correct to say that the game plays him than he plays the game, there is something more involved in performing the faith than a temporary suspension or loss of self-control...Self-divestment therefore invites a certain privation, a peculiar giving up that is also a giving over—which means that, with regard to Christian faith, the “loss” of self-control is not so much a forfeiture of responsible agency as it is the cultivation of...contemplative receptivity.<sup>705</sup>

For Hauerwas and Fodor, *ekstasis* is discipleship recapitulated as the Pauline *doulos Christou* (Christ-slave). While it is disappointing that the Hauerwas of “Performing

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<sup>705</sup> Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, p. 102

Faith” was not able to stand his ground against the Hauerwas of “Democratic Time,” it is impossible to deny that Hauerwas’ arguments in each, are only made possible by his love of God, and God’s creation. While Hauerwas’ struggles with univocity and accommodation are due primarily to his refusal to systematically engage with his sources (and his own body of writings), it is my hope that this thesis has begun the work necessary to make possible (through the critique and repair of Hauerwas and his sources) an account of gathering as God’s (radical) politics of love.

In this chapter I have argued that theurgy names the co-operation of God and his people – the activity of God in, under and with the gathered. It names a co-labor of God and gathered (on behalf of the world) that is called love. Theurgy is the love of the world, as the world. It rejects, with Marion, the priority of reason over relationship. Theurgy is the act of the church becoming sacrament, God’s conferral of grace to the world. Grace not merely as the invitation to be gathered, despite the fact that the church (in the *ho nyn kairos*) is an unfinished project, but the grace that pleonastically enacts God: to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and comfort the suffering. While theology names the process of attempting to discern through the Spirit, by appealing to tradition, reason, and Scripture, the correct ways of thinking about God and his activity, theurgy is the act which is God’s creative and co-operative act in us.

The paradox of the gathered’s love for the world is embodied most clearly in the cultivating of friendships that don’t make sense, whilst being tentative in the acknowledgement of “secular co-workers: socialists communists and anarchists.”<sup>706</sup> The hesitation must remain because of the “already” but “not yet” character of history. On the one hand, the gathering has the *knowledge* of love and so must share that knowledge in all its offensiveness with the world, on the other hand the church loves despite itself, precisely because God remains within her. When confronted with Stout’s question, “whether Christians, for their own *theological reasons*, may join hands with others in the struggle for justice—and do so without holding their noses

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<sup>706</sup> Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 210

in the presence of their comrades?”<sup>707</sup> the Hauerwasian answer is, “No.” Yet theology is not the sole activity of the gathering; the church, as God’s sacrament to the world, has no choice. It has been *made* to drink the Spirit and so become God’s body in the world. When the gathered think about “joining hands with others in the struggle for justice,” it will, if it is truly the body of Christ in the world, be surprised by its own smell.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I continued to outline the possibility of the concept of gathering for the work of theological politics of Stanley Hauerwas, and did so by recommending more faithful ways of thinking about how to love the world than those offered by radical democracy, which as we have seen is ultimately an accommodation to the powers. It would have been inappropriate, in this chapter, to have attempted to develop a full-blooded account of the relationship between the gathering and the multitude. It will be left for later scholarship to develop more fully, in a Hauerwasian, and postliberal mode, the sources that are only hinted at here. There is always a danger in trying to do too much, and so interesting discussions about specific theological practices, such as how the church should reason about voting and paying its taxes, have been put aside in favor of doing work which I deem to be more consistent to the grain (if not the style) of Hauerwas’ project. Hauerwas’ work has ever been about loving ones friends and enemies, and ultimately the rejection of the qualification of that love is what has led him to embrace radical democracy. The hope is that the account of the paradoxical nature of the *ecclesia*, as the doers of theology and theurgy, and as the people in whom God remains (and whom God uses to make that remainder available to the world), will provide Hauerwas, and readers of Hauerwas, with the tools to love the world co-labor-atively and co-operative-ly whilst rejecting the legitimizing of Fallen sovereignties. The hope is that this chapter has refused, with Hauerwas, coercion, violence, and the hating of one’s enemies, and rejected the notion that one can choose one’s friends and neighbors. Participating analogously in the love of God means never entertaining the possibility of

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<sup>707</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 105. Emphasis mine.

discrimination; because of the divine remainder it means embodying a love that shines down on the evil and the good and sends rain to the just and the unjust (Mathew 5:45). It means participating in a love that does not withdraw. As Costa, Keller, and Mercedes have so wonderfully put it, the love of God is an “[e]lementality, charged with the energies of nonhuman nature, [which] saves love from sentimentality... In the connections of difference, it reaches toward always-more-extensive relationship – more intensive reciprocity.”<sup>708</sup> What this requires is a description of the activity of a politically messianic love that on the one hand does not claim the univocity of love (that our love is the same as God’s love) – a difference preserved by describing God’s loving act as analogous to human act – but paradoxically claims human love as participating in, sustaining, and continuing the divine act – a sacramental grace. Thus the gathering, through the possibility of divine remainder, becomes, despite itself, a sacrament (a loving) for the world.

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<sup>708</sup> Costa, M., Keller, C. and A. Mercedes. “Love in Times of Empire: Theopolitics Today” in Benson, B. E. and P. G. Heltzel (eds.). 2008. *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo*. pp. 291-305. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. p. 296

## Conclusion

The work of this thesis has been two-fold: to critique inconsistencies in Hauerwas' postliberal theological politics, and to begin the work of repair necessary if Hauerwas is to remain faithful to his own best insights.

The first chapter provides a genealogical reading of Hauerwas' primary influences for the construction of his unique brand of postliberalism. While Frei, Lindbeck, and the Yale school set the methodological stage for Hauerwas' writings, and in essence provide him with an intellectual heritage (Barthian Christocentricity mixed with postmodern critiques of the Enlightenment project), his particular contribution to the postliberal school of thought is the result of a synthesis of MacIntyre and Yoder. From MacIntyre, Hauerwas retrieves not only a critique of modernity and liberalism, but also a partial solution—a return to a pre-modern, Aristotelian conceptuality, with its emphasis on practical reason, dialectic, virtue, narrative, community, practices and tradition. From Yoder, Hauerwas is able to clothe MacIntyre's call to story-formed (dialectically traditioned) communities, with a particular story, a specific community with peculiar practices, as well as a shared (teleological) account of the good and the virtues necessary for achieving it: the messianic community called "church." At the same time Yoder's description of Constantinianism, as the de-particularization of the church due to a syncretization between the church and state (Rome), reaffirms Hauerwas' distrust of liberalism as the neoConstantinianism—an accommodation of the church to the nations such that Christian particularity is lost.

Chapter 2 explicates Hauerwas' methodological postliberalism (theory) as theological politics (practice), arguing that the two are inseparable because of his claim that the church does not have a politics but *is* politics. Yet Hauerwas' refusal to systematize his writings, along with his preference for polemical dialectic, requires a reading of Hauerwas' response to a political theology significantly different from his own. Thus this chapter begins by examining the political theology of Oliver O'Donovan in order to provide a framework from which Hauerwas scattered insights

on postliberal Christian politics might be placed. This chapter argues that O'Donovan's political theology comes much closer to a type 2 or 3 approach, on Frei's theological typology (in *Types of Christian Theology*), because, for O'Donovan, particular concepts are not applied to the reading of Scripture *ad hoc*, but are primary, pre-existing the narrative itself. Such concepts include: politics, kingship, sovereignty, rule, obligation, justice, etc. O'Donovan seeks to re-define the possibilities of politics, rather than redefine politics itself. Alternatively, Hauerwas argues that the political cannot precede the Christological, but can only be seen as the faithful embodiment (discipleship) of the claim: Jesus is Lord. While politics is central to the reading of Scripture, this is so only because the reading of Scripture requires a response—an assembly that is not political *qua* current (worldly) political arrangements, but is a politics proceeding from the activity of Christ (inscribed in a particular historical community of care that is gathered around Him). Thus for Hauerwas, what citizens of the *civitas dei* mean when they talk about politics, justice, equality, liberty, etc., is very different than the definitions provided by citizens of the *civitas terrena*. The church gathered in the midst of the nations cannot, according to Hauerwas, see itself as anything other than a community of pilgrims and resident aliens. The church cannot set up for itself walled cities, but must constantly be on the move—celebrating its out-of-place-ness, vulnerability and weakness.

Chapter 3 examines a broad shift in Hauerwas' political thought in his most recent writings, arguing that his sympathy for the radical democratic project undermines not only his previous writings on the characteristics of postliberal theology, but his entire political ecclesiology. This chapter argues that such a shift occurs partly due to Jeffrey Stout's critique of MacIntyre (in *Democracy and Tradition*), which identifies American democracy as a tradition rather than a vehicle for the destruction (fragmentation) of tradition, and partly due to Romand Coles' appropriation of Yoder, which along with his deconstruction of Rawlsian liberalism is central to his account of practical radical democracy. In short, both the anti-liberalism (MacIntyre) and the Christian particularity (Yoder) of his synthesis are called into question. Hauerwas' sympathies to radical democracy, as presented by Coles, lead him to make theo-political concessions that include the possibility of: non-Christologically founded political language; non-Christologically founded morality *qua* the "common

morality” constructed within the tradition of American democracy; infusing lesser truths into democratic societies in order to better them (i.e., the possibility of progress); and remembering as a viable mode of politics (without reference to the confession: Jesus is Lord)—all of which are antithetical to Hauerwas’ postliberal theological politics as demonstrated in chapters one and two. This chapter argues that Hauerwas’ support for radical democracy is due to radical democracy’s ability to provide an alternative to liberal political arrangements. Yet such a position cannot but make the same mistake Hauerwas named in O’Donovan, namely the identification of politics as a category external to the community gathered around Christ. This chapter argues that there are lessons to be learned from outsiders, i.e., radical democrats like Romand Coles, but such lessons can be understood as good only because they participate in the Good of God. This chapter ends with a reading of the American civil war, as an example of the kind of problems possible when Christians begin to identify political conceptualities as prior to the church’s own narratives, via Mark Noll’s book *The Civil War as Theological Crisis*.

Chapter 4 is divided into two parts: the first of which attempts to supplement Hauerwas’ theological politics with Yoder’s ontology of the powers, while the second addresses inconsistencies in Yoder’s own use of powers ontology that led him to make concessions to liberalism; thus the task of this chapter is also to help Hauerwas critically read Yoder in order to avoid: (1) Yoder’s qualification of powers ontology via a description of two kingdoms (two perfections), (2) Yoder’s utilitarian descriptions of violence and policing, and (3) Yoder’s ecumenical (well intentioned) pro-democratic sensibilities. This critical reading of Yoder is essential predominately because an ontological account of the powers would replace Hauerwas’ need to adopt MacIntyre’s meta-theoretical critique of liberalism with a re-description of liberalism as Constantinianism (rather than vice versa), a re-description which is founded on the activity of Christ.

Chapter 5 begins to positively plot a course past the problems in both Hauerwas and Yoder by introducing the concept of gathering as central to any Christological politics that takes seriously the call to discipleship, as well as the generous

receptivity required of faithful evangelism and ecumenism. The chapter begins by outlining a description of the community gathered around Christ from the writings of Bernd Wannewetsch and Gerhard Lohfink. Gathering becomes identifiable as a metaphor that is simultaneously the call to exodus (and so openness to outsider, exile, and stranger), and a critique (de-citification) of false gatherings (enslavement to the powers). This chapter then draws on the work of William Cavanaugh to examine globalization as a power that calls the citizens of the nations to exodus without the possibility of gathering anywhere. Cavanaugh argues that the only response to the sheer mobility of *diaspora* is the reclamation of particular locality—the gathering of the church inaugurated and sustained in the gift of eucharist. This chapter then responds to the brokenness of eucharistic communities as represented by the Bridgefolk, an example that forces those gathered to remain humble. Finally, this chapter ends with a brief exhortation to Hauerwas to temper his reading of the radical democrats with insights on the importance of gathering that he makes in his commentary on *Matthew*.

Chapter 6 moves beyond the question of the gathering's own constitution and self-knowledge, by moving beyond the concept of gathering. Just as the concept of ecclesial politics is redefined to mean gathering in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 explores resources for redefining the love of the gathered as a participation in the activity of God-whose-being-is-love. This is necessary in order to describe the church's love for the world as a thing-itself, and to explain the temptation that Hauerwas' found in the radical democracy of Stout, Wolin and Coles. The hope is to move Hauerwas and his readers beyond a description of the gathered church as a politics of univocal love. In order to do this the concept of pleonasm in Milbank and the doctrine of analogy in Aquinas are applied to Marion's re-conceptualization of persons as constituted by love, in order to describe God as more than the infinite lover whom we must imitate. God is not an-infinite-self-which-loves, but is love itself. Moreover, human love is only love in its God-likeness. Chapter 6 argues, with Giorgio Agamben, that the time of the now is the time of the messianic. The *parousia* is now, but it is not, as for Agamben, a dislocation, or an infinite division of person from primordially violent politics, but a re-gathering of persons into a new politics-of-love. And that politics is

only possible because the God who is love remains in us (the ecclesial polis), allows for the loving of the world with, in and under His own activity. The Hauerwasian ecclesiology then must be conceived of as not just theological, but also theurgic. Gathering (and being gathered) is not just a way of *reasoning* about the politics of love, but the active, pleonastic, creative, constitution of God in the world through Spirit and sacrament. In short, the gathering is constituted by the sacraments, but also constitutes a sacrament, despite itself, in and for the world.

Future scholarship will be required in order to explore a number of areas to which this thesis only spoke briefly. The most necessary of which, in terms of Hauerwas' scholarship, will be the critical evaluation of a recent joint venture between Hauerwas and Coles (published after the initial submission of this thesis but the arguments of which this thesis attempted to anticipate), titled: *Christianity, Democracy and the Radical Ordinary: Conversations Between a Radical Democrat and a Christian*. Whether or not Hauerwas is able to love Coles without giving in to the temptation to reason that love, to do theology, will be essential for determining the staying power of this thesis. Of secondary importance is the repair of the projects of Milbank and O'Donovan that will involve encouraging each to secure for ecclesiology, not just a theurgic account of divine remainder, but of the God-who-is-love. If each were to adopt a definition of ecclesiology as gathering (whose existence like that of its maker is constituted by being-in-communion), their writings would be more likely to resist the temptations of efficacy embodied in the violent (God-less) political arrangements of the world. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, further time will need to be spent discussing, *ad hoc*, the practices of the church that have historically, and pleonastically continue in the present, to mysteriously manifest the *ho nyn karios* as *para-ousia*.

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