

called Methodist to discover its heart and mind about the issues of war and peace. If we do that, we just might recover a sense of being a people of the new age who believe that even in the face of the threat of nuclear destruction God has given us the time to be a people of peace.³⁶

Further Reading

"Should War Be Eliminated? A Thought Experiment" (1984), essay 20 in this volume

"A Pacifist Response to *In Defense of Creation*," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 41, no. 2 (fall 1986): 5-14.

"Pacifism: A Form of Politics," in *Peace Betrayed? Essays on Pacifism and Politics*, ed. by Michael Cromartie (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1990), 133-41.

"The Gospel's Radical Alternative: A Peace the World Cannot Give," with Michael G. Cartwright, *The Other Side* (July/August 1987): 22-26, 45-46 [This article was one part of "A Dialogue on Christian Peacemaking in the Nuclear Age"; the contribution by Hauerwas and Cartwright was paired with an article by Jim and Shelly Douglass.]

"On Surviving Justly: Ethics and Nuclear Disarmament" (1983), in *AN*

36. I am indebted to Michael Cartwright and L. Gregory Jones for criticism of this and earlier drafts of the epilogue. Of course, my greatest debt is to Paul Ramsey, who not only read and energetically criticized my earlier draft, but who graciously suggested I should write this epilogue. His sense of fairness and collegiality in this and throughout his life will, I hope, continue to serve as an example for all of us who attempt to be theologians.

[In addition to cuts noted earlier (see n. 26), the editors also deleted two extended notes in which Hauerwas addresses criticisms put forward by John Milbank in his review of Hauerwas's *AN*, and one extended note in which Hauerwas discusses Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Women and War* and Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*.]

22. A Christian Critique of Christian America (1986)

Hauerwas has never shied away from taking public stands (e.g., on abortion, capital punishment, American participation in war, prayer in public schools, gays in the military). Because many theologians (and American Christians in general) have difficulty understanding Hauerwas's "theological politics," Hauerwas constantly finds himself being "lumped with" (depending on the issue) either political conservatives or liberals. The assumption that being a "good Christian" on social issues involves being either a "liberal" or a "conservative" dates back to the turn of the century, when the dominant understanding of Christian social ethics came to be that Christians must take responsibility through the political process for the direction of American democracy. Hauerwas critiques this nineteenth-century assumption of a "spiritual oneness" between Christianity and democracy, arguing that this "Constantinian" approach confuses the "progress" of nation-states with the providence of God, confuses "effectiveness" with "faithfulness." A faithful Christian response to any of a variety of important moral issues may lead to conclusions similar to those of liberals or conservatives, but will not be based on the same reasoning.

1. Setting the Agenda: A Report on a Conversation

At a conference on narrative and virtue I had an encounter with a philosopher that raises the problem with which I wish to deal. My philosophical counterpart has been strongly influenced by C. S. Peirce and is also a committed Jew. In his paper he had argued that most of the rational paradigms accepted by contemporary philosophy cannot make sense of Judaism. We began by exchanging views about why current ethical theory seems so committed to foundationalist epistemological assumptions. We shared in general a sympathy with antifoundationalist arguments, though neither of us wanted to give

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up any possibility of some more modest realist epistemology. We also found we were equally critical of liberal political theory and in particular the ahistorical character of its methodology. Then our conversation suddenly took a turn for which I was completely unprepared. It went something like this:

Philosopher: Do you support prayer in the public schools?

Theologian: No, I do not, because I do not want the state sponsoring my faith.

Philosopher: That is not the real reason. You are just afraid to be for anything that Jerry Falwell is for. You really are a liberal in spite of your doubts about liberalism's philosophical adequacy.

Theologian: That is not fair. I did not say I was against school prayer because I think such prayer is coercive, though I think such considerations are not unimportant, but because state-sponsored prayer cannot help but give the impression that the state is friendly toward religion. Moreover, school prayers, insofar as they can pass muster in a religiously pluralistic context, are so anemic that they cannot help but give a distorted view of God. So I am against school prayer not because it is against the tenets of liberalism but because it is theologically a scandal.

Philosopher: That is not good enough. As a Christian you typically do not give a damn about the Jews. You want to create a civilization and society and then walk away from it when the going gets a little tough. Of course the prayers sponsored by public authorities are degraded but they still remind people that they are creatures. A vague god prayed to vaguely is better than no god or prayer at all. Otherwise we face the possibility of a neopagan culture for which liberal procedural rules of fair play will be no match.

Theologian: I am a bit surprised to hear you argue this way. After all, Christians have persecuted and killed Jews with as much enthusiasm as anyone. I would think you would feel safer in a secular culture than one that is quasi-Christian. Indeed, has that not been the dominant social strategy of Jews since the Enlightenment? The way to secure protection from the Christians is to create and support liberal societies where religion is relegated to the private sphere and thus becomes unavailable for public policy directed against the Jews or those of any other religious faith.

Philosopher: I do not deny that is the strategy of many Jews, but I think this century has shown it to be a decisive failure. Pagan societies kill us with an abandon that Christians can never muster. Christianity even in a degraded form at least has material convictions that can make the persecution and killing of Jews problematic. Paganism has no such convictions, so I will

take my chances with the Christians and their societies. After all, we Jews do not ask for much. We just do not want you to kill our children. Living in quasi-Christian societies means we have to put up with a lot of inconvenience and prejudice—for example, Christmas as a school holiday—but we Jews have long known how to handle that. We flourish under a little prejudice. What we cannot stand is the false tolerance of liberalism which relegates us to the arena of being just one religion among others.

Theologian: So, if I understand you rightly, you are suggesting that you want me as a Christian to support school prayer, even if such prayers are but forms of degraded Christian religiosity, because at least that continues to underwrite the assumption that we are a "religious" society. Such an assumption allows an appeal to a higher standard of justice, which makes the survival of the Jewish people more likely.

Philosopher: That is about right. You Christians have to take responsibility for what you have done. You created a civilization based on belief in God and it is your responsibility to continue to support that civilization.

Theologian: But you know yourself that such a social strategy cannot help but lead to the continued degradation of Christianity. The more Christians try to make Christianity a philosophy sufficient to sustain a society, especially a liberal society, the more we must distort or explain away our fundamental beliefs. Therefore, in the name of sustaining a civilization Christians increasingly undercut the ability of the church to take a critical stance toward this society. Even when the church acts as a critic in such a context, it cannot be more than a friendly critic, since it has a stake in maintaining the basic structure of society.

Philosopher: Why should that bother me? Christians have always been willing in the past to degrade their convictions to attain social and political power (of course, always in order that they might "do good"). Why should they start worrying about being degraded now? On that score it seems a little late. For the church to start to worry about being pure is about as realistic as for the pop star Madonna to worry about being a virgin. It is just too late. So if you care anything about the Jews you ought to support school prayer.

Our conversation did not end at this point, but what I have portrayed is enough for my purposes. Even though I think most of what my philosopher friend has to say is right, for theological reasons I still cannot support school prayer. That I cannot puts me at odds with the social strategy of most Christians, both liberal and conservative, in America. In the next section I will try to

explain why this is the case. Then the ground will be prepared for me to suggest what a more radical Christian critique of America entails, both in terms of its logic as well as political strategy.

2. *Liberal Christianity and American Democracy, or Why Jerry Falwell Is Such a Pain*

Since the turn of the century, one of the dominant themes in Christian social ethics has been the Christian's responsibility for societal affairs. Time and time again it is argued that faith and action cannot be separated. Our religious convictions cannot be relegated to one sphere of our lives and our social and political activities to another. Since the faith of Christians is a faith that does justice, there is no way we can avoid political activity. Whether the political realm is viewed in Lutheran terms as a realm of lesser evil, or more Calvinistically as the arena of the mediocre good, Christians cannot avoid involvement in the political process. That is especially the case in a democratic society in which the actions of individual citizens can make a difference.

Armed with this set of presuppositions, Christians in the "mainstream" denominations attacked those Christians who maintained no particular social or political responsibilities. This position, they argued, pietistically relegates salvation to the individual's relation to God and thus betrays the essential Christian claim that God is Lord of all creation. What must be remembered is that Jesus came preaching a Kingdom that makes it impossible for his followers to be indifferent to the injustices in their surrounding social orders. On these grounds mainstream churches, such as those that constitute the National Council of Churches, urged Baptist and other pietistic Christians to join them in the political struggle to make this a more just society. As is often pointed out, not to take a political stand in the name of being Christian is in fact to be taking a political stand.

Pietists, in defense of their position, sometimes responded by appealing not to their theological convictions but instead to what they considered the normative commitments of the American society—namely, that our constitution has erected a "wall of separation between church and state." In the name of maintaining the freedom of religion the church claims no competency in matters political. The difficulty with this position, however, is that it attributes a perspective to the Constitution that simply is not there. Neither the free exercise clause nor the nonestablishment clause prohibits Christians, either as organized in churches or as individuals, from seeking to influence their so-

ciety or government. Just to the extent the free church tradition allows itself to be so excluded from the public arena, moreover, it underwrites an individualistic account of Christianity that is antithetical to its very nature.

Such was the state of the debate among Christians until recently. But now suddenly everything has changed, because the message finally got across to the pietistic Baptists. They have become politically active, seeking to influence our society and government to support causes in the name of making this a better society. Jerry Falwell represents the triumph of mainstream Christianity in America, as he is convinced, just like Martin Luther King Jr., that Christians cannot abandon the political realm in their desire for justice. They must seek through the constitutionally guaranteed means to influence our political representatives to prevent abortion, to support democratic regimes around the world, to support Israel, to provide support for the family, and so on.

Therefore, the mainstream won, but it is not a victory they are celebrating. For it turns out that once politically inactive Christians became active, the causes they supported were not those the mainstream wanted supported. The temptation is to try to defeat this new political activism by using the slogans of the past, that "religion and politics do not mix," or, that "one should not try to force one's religious views on anyone through public policy"—but to do so is to go against the position the mainstream has been arguing for years.

In order to understand how we have reached this point in American Protestantism I need to call your attention to some aspects of the history of Christianity in America. I do not mean I am going to give you a rendition of Puritan America or engage in the debate about how "Christian" America has been.¹ While such studies and questions are interesting and may still have some normative importance, they are not crucial for helping us understand why Falwell presents such a challenge to mainstream Christianity. To understand that we need to appreciate why Christian theologians and ethicists in

1. For an extremely interesting approach to this latter question, see Mark Noll, Nathan Hatch, and George Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1983). In summary, their position is that "a careful study of the facts of history shows that early America does not deserve to be considered uniquely, distinctively or even predominantly Christian, if we mean by the word 'Christian' a state of society reflecting the ideals presented in Scripture. There is no lost golden age to which American Christians may return. In addition, a careful study of history will also show that evangelicals themselves were often partly to blame for the spread of secularism in contemporary American life. We feel also that careful examination of Christian teaching on government, the state, and the nature of culture shows that the idea of a 'Christian nation' is a very ambiguous concept which is usually harmful to effective Christian action in society" (17).

America, especially since the nineteenth century, have assumed that Christianity and democracy are integrally related.

That they have done so is because America stands as the great experiment in what Max Stackhouse has identified as "constructive Protestantism." Stackhouse notes that in *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* Ernst Troeltsch argues that only two major Christian social philosophies have ever been developed: the Catholic and the Calvinist. Yet each of these as social philosophies no longer seems viable. "The vision of an organic, hierarchical order sanctified by objectified means of grace, and that of an established theocracy of elect saints who are justified by grace through faith, must both be judged as no longer live options for social reconstruction. This is not to suggest that these visions do not still hold power . . . But this is to suggest that these two forms of 'Christendom' have ended—or rather, have played their part and now must yield the stage after their immeasurable contribution to the drama of Christianity in modern culture."²

According to Stackhouse, the crucial question is whether Christianity can develop another "social philosophy." If it cannot, it would then seem that the social ethical power of Christianity is at an end. Stackhouse argues that American Christianity has, in fact, developed a third option, which he calls "conciliar denominationalism."³ The character of this new form of social philosophy Stackhouse sees prefigured in Walter Rauschenbusch, who held together two conflicting motifs, sectarianism and Christendom, that constitute the unique blend of "conciliar denominationalism." "On the one hand, Rauschenbusch comes from an evangelical background from which he gained a sense of intense and explicit faith that could only be held by fully committed members. On the other hand, Rauschenbusch lived in the age of lingering hope for a catholic 'Christian culture' and in an age that, especially through the developing social sciences, saw the legitimacy of secular realms. He, like the developing 'conciliar denominations,' saw the necessity of the select body of believers anticipating the Kingdom in word and deed in good sectarian fashion, and of taking the world seriously on its own terms, as did all visions of Christendom. These motifs conspire in his thought to produce a vision of a revolutionized responsible society for which a socially understood gospel is the catalyst."⁴

Rauschenbusch, as the champion of liberal Christianity, could speak

2. Max Stackhouse, introduction to *The Righteousness of the Kingdom*, by Walter Rauschenbusch (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 21.

3. *Ibid.*, 22.

4. *Ibid.*, 22–23.

straightforwardly of the need to "Christianize" social orders. "It is not enough to christianize individuals; we must christianize societies, organizations, nations, for they too have a life of their own which may be made better or worse."⁵ On that basis he thought it quite possible to speak of saved and unsaved organizations: "The one is under the law of Christ, the other under the law of mammon. The one is democratic and the other autocratic. Whenever capitalism has invaded a new country or industry, there has been a speeding up in labor and in the production of wealth, but always with a trail of human misery, discontent, bitterness, and demoralization. When cooperation has invaded a country there has been increased thrift, education, and neighborly feeling, and there has been no trail of concomitant evil and no cries of protest."⁶

The difference between saved and unsaved social orders, from Rauschenbusch's perspective, is quite simple: saved social orders and institutions are democratic. As he says, "Social sciences confirm the correctness of Christ's protest against the stratification of society in ranks and classes. What is the general tendency toward democracy and the gradual abolition of hereditary privileges but history's assent to the revolutionary dogmas of Christ?"⁷ The Kingdom of God is not a concept or ideal for Rauschenbusch; it is a historical force at work in humanity. The way it ultimately works its way out, moreover, is in the form of democracy. As he puts it, "Where religion and intellect combine, the foundation is laid for political democracy."⁸

If, as Stackhouse suggests, America is the great experiment in "constructive Protestantism," it seems what is Christian about that construction is democracy.⁹ For in claiming a close interrelation between Christianity and democ-

5. Rauschenbusch, *The Righteousness of the Kingdom*, 102.

6. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Theology for the Social Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1917), 112–13.

7. Rauschenbusch, *The Righteousness of the Kingdom*, 199.

8. Rauschenbusch, *Theology for the Social Gospel*, 165.

9. For Stackhouse's own constructive efforts to extend Rauschenbusch's program, only now in terms of human rights, see his *Creeds, Society, and Human Rights* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984). In defense of his position, Stackhouse provides a history of the joining of Puritanism and liberalism to create the universalistic creed of rights that culminated in the United Declaration on Human Rights. He notes that these "principles could not be articulated in the particular language of Christian piety which had shaped both the Christian and secular liberal philosophers who had first developed them. Representatives from many cultures and religions would have resisted overt theological formulations in christological or deist terms. The principles had to be stated in 'confessionally neutral' terms. But even at this point we see the triumph of the basic assumptions of the Liberal-Puritan synthesis. The state

racy, Rauschenbusch's work is hardly an isolated example. As Jan Dawson has recently argued, at the turn of this century there developed a "faith in the spiritual oneness of Christianity and democracy, based on the democratic theology of Christianity and concerned primarily with the survival of Christianity in troubled modern democracies."¹⁰ To support democracy became a means of supporting Christianity and vice versa.

Dawson quotes Lyman Abbott, successor to Henry Ward Beecher, in the liberal Christian paper *Outlook* to the effect that "Democracy is not merely a political theory, it is not merely a social opinion; it is a profound religious faith. . . . To him who holds it, this one fundamental faith in the Fatherhood of God and in the universal brotherhood of man is the essence of democracy."¹¹ If democracy was seen as the institutionalized form of Christianity, it was no less true that democracy was dependent on religion to survive. Thus in 1907, the year following the publication of the article by Abbott, Robert Ashworth wrote in the *Chicago Divinity School Journal* that "the fate of the democratic movement rests ultimately upon religion. Religion is essential to democracy, and is, indeed, its foundation. It is based upon the New Testament principle of the equal value of every soul in the sight of the Divine Father."¹²

This kind of direct theological appeal in support of democracy becomes more muted as Christian thinkers become increasingly aware of the religious and social pluralism of America, but that does not lessen their enthusiasm for democracy as that form of society and government that best institutionalizes Christian social philosophy. Reinhold Niebuhr is certainly a case in point. Vicious in his critique of the theological and social optimism of Rauschenbusch and the other "social gospellers" defense of democracy, he never questioned the assumption that democracy was the most appropriate form of society and government for Christians. What was needed, according to Niebuhr, was to provide a more adequate basis for democracy in a realistic

itself should not be 'religious'! In this view the theologically and morally valid state is one limited by righteous principles and one that allows other organizations to define what is religiously valid. In brief, the 'godly state' is a secular state" (103). Stackhouse's account seems far too sanguine about how the obvious tensions between the Puritan sense of community can be reconciled with the individualism of liberalism. But even if that were not a problem, one cannot help but wonder what has happened that a "secular state" by definition can be called "godly."

10. Jan Dawson, "The Religion of Democracy in Early Twentieth-Century America," *Journal of Church and State* 27, no. 1 (winter 1985): 47.

11. Quoted in *ibid.*, 48.

12. *Ibid.*

account of human nature. Such an account, he thought, was to be found primarily in the "Christian view of human nature [that] is more adequate for the development of a democratic society than either the optimism with which democracy has become historically associated or the moral cynicism which inclines human communities to tyrannical political strategies."¹³

In effect, from Rauschenbusch to the present Christian social ethics has had one agenda: to show why American democracy possesses distinctive religious status. The primary subject of Christian ethics in America has been America.¹⁴ This has now even become the project for Roman Catholic social ethics, as exemplified in the work of John Courtney Murray. It was Murray's task to make America amenable to Catholic social theory by interpreting the separation of church and state as a confession by the state of its incompetence in matters of religion¹⁵ and, at the same time, to make Catholics amenable to America by showing that Catholics can enthusiastically support democracy as an imaginative solution to the problem of religious pluralism.¹⁶ Murray argued an even stronger case by suggesting that American democracy, whose political substance consists in an order of antecedent rights to the state,¹⁷ can be sustained only by the Catholic theory of natural law as the only alternative to the destructive individualism of Locke and Hobbes.¹⁸

13. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), xiii. In fairness to Niebuhr, it should be pointed out that he wrote *The Children of Light* at the end of World War II in the interest of trying to deflate some of the more enthusiastic celebrations of democracy the war had occasioned. Yet Niebuhr remained throughout his life a firm supporter of democracy as that social system that best embodies the Christian understanding of man. Richard Fox observes, "What is still surprising about *The Children of Light* is that the author of *Moral Man*, even if older and wiser, could have become so complacent about democratic processes in advanced industrial society. The book elevated gradualist experimentation and piecemeal reform to the level of a basic axiom" (*Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1985], 220).

14. For a more complete development of this claim, see "On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological" (1983), essay 2 in this volume.

15. This part of Murray's work is often, unfortunately, ignored. One of the reasons for this may be that these were articles published in *Theological Studies* 13 and 14 (1953) called "The Church and Totalitarian Democracy" and "Leo XIII: Separation of Church and State." They are still worth reading.

16. This is the main argument of Murray's *We Hold These Truths* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1964).

17. *Ibid.*, 308.

18. In *An American Strategic Theology* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), John Coleman provides the best Roman Catholic attempt to continue Murray's project. Coleman, however, is much more interested in how Catholicism can act to renew the ethos or civil religion of America than the more strictly constitutional issues with which Murray was concerned.

It is only against this background that one can understand and/or appreciate the work of Richard Neuhaus. In his much publicized book, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, Neuhaus argues that we are facing a crisis in our society. Because religious discourse has increasingly been excluded from our public life, he fears that a moral vacuum has been created. This vacuum threatens constantly to be filled by totalitarianism, as the isolation of the individual from mediating structures gives us little power to stand against the omnivorous appetite of the bureaucratic state.¹⁹ The only way out of this predicament is to mend the "rupture between public policy and moral sentiment. But the only moral sentiment of public effect is the sentiment that

19. Richard Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 83-86. Charles Taylor rightly argues that no one saw this problem more clearly than did Hegel—namely, that

absolute freedom requires homogeneity. It cannot brook differences which would prevent everyone participating totally in the decisions of the society. And what is even more, it requires some near unanimity of will emerge from this deliberation, for otherwise the majority would just be imposing its will on the minority and freedom would not be universal. But differentiation of some fairly essential kinds are ineradicable. Moreover they are recognized in our post-Romantic climate essential to human identity. Men cannot simply identify themselves as men, but they define themselves more immediately by their partial community, cultural, linguistic, confessional and so, on. Modern democracy is therefore in a bind. I think the dilemma of this kind can be seen in contemporary society. Modern societies have moved towards much greater homogeneity and greater interdependence, so that partial communities lost their autonomy, and to some extent, their identity. But great differences remain; only because of the ideology of homogeneity these differential characteristics no longer have meaning and value for those who have them. Thus the rural population is taught by the mass media to see itself as just lacking in some of the advantages of a more advanced life style. Homogenization thus increases minority alienation and resentment and the first response of liberal society is to try even more of the same: programs to eliminate poverty, or assimilate Indians, move populations out of declining regions, bring an urban way of life to the countryside. But the radical response is to convert this sense of alienation into a demand for "absolute freedom." The idea is to overcome alienation by creating a society in which everyone, including the present "out" groups, participate fully in the decisions. But both these solutions would simply aggravate the problem, which is that homogenization has undermined the communities or characteristics by which people formerly identified themselves, and put nothing in their place. What does step into the gap almost everywhere is ethnic or national identity. Nationalism has become the most powerful focus of identity in modern society. The demand for radical freedom can and frequently does join up with nationalism and is given a definite impetus and direction from this. (*Hegel and Modern Society* [Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 114-15).

Neuhaus's point is profound, but I do not see how he provides an adequate response since he continues to support the political and economic presumptions that are the source of the difficulty.

is embodied in and reinforced by living tradition. There are no areligious moral traditions of public, or at least of democratic, force in American life. This is not to say that morality must be embodied in religion or that the whole of religion is morality. It is to say that among the American people, religion and morality are conjoined. Religion in our popular life is the morality-bearing part of culture, and in that sense the heart of culture."²⁰

From this perspective Neuhaus is appreciative of the Moral Majority. For in spite of the crudeness with which they often put their position they have at least raised the issue of the public value of religion that at one time was the agenda of political liberals. Rather than condemning the Moral Majority, Neuhaus seeks to help them enter the public debate by basing their appeals to principles that are accessible to the public:

Publicly assertive religious forces will have to learn that the remedy for the naked public square is not naked religion in public. They will have to develop a mediating language by which ultimate truths can be related to the penultimate and prepenultimate questions of political and legal content. In our several traditions there are rich conceptual resources for the development of such mediating language—whether concepts be called natural law, common grace, general revelation, or the order of creation. Such a civil engagement of secular and religious forces could produce a new public philosophy to sustain this American experiment in liberal democracy. The result may not be that we would agree with one another. Indeed there may be more disagreement. But at least we would know what we are disagreeing about, namely, different accounts of the transcendent good by which we might order our life together. Contra Justice Blackmun and legions of others, democracy is not served by evading the question of the good. Democracy becomes a political community worthy of moral actors only when we engage the question of the good.²¹

20. Neuhaus, 154.

21. Richard Neuhaus, "Nihilism without the Abyss: Law, Rights, and Transcendent Good," paper delivered at a conference on Religion and Law at Catholic University Law School, Washington, D.C., April 1985, 14-15. For a similar claim, see *The Naked Public Square*, 36. While agreeing with Neuhaus that religion needs to help our society discover or create a moral discourse for the public sphere, John Coleman rightly raises questions about the assumed neutrality or objectivity of that discourse. Thus he criticizes Brian Hehir for requiring Christians to come to the public arena shorn of their particularistic commitments. As Coleman says, he does not think it possible to escape "the 'permanent hermeneutical predicament' of particular languages and community traditions in a conflict of interpretive schemes through the emergence of a common universal language. I fear that this proposal could court the risk of a continuation of the pernicious intertwining of an ethics of deep concern with an ethic of

Neuhaus challenges mainline Protestant liberalism to live up to its rightful commitment to sustaining democracy as the socially specific form that Christianity should take.²² As he puts it, "The main line of the mainline story was confidence and hope regarding the Americanizing of Christianity and the Christianizing of America."²³ Indeed, he argues that in spite of their fervor for disestablishing Christianity in America, most liberals remain committed to "Christianizing" the social order, only the synonyms for "Christianize" today "include terms such as justice, equality, and sustainability."²⁴

That such is the case helps explain the enthusiasm for the work of John Rawls among those working in Christian ethics. Harlan Beckley puts the matter well as he notes that the emergence of a politically powerful Christian right has made vivid a dilemma that Christian ethics has still to resolve. "The

looking out for number one. But finally, and most persuasive for me, I simply do not know anywhere else to look in American culture besides to our religious ethical resources to find the social wisdom and ethical orientation we would seem to need if we are to face as Americans our new context of increasing interdependence at the national and international level" (*An American Strategic Theology*, 197–98). Thus Coleman, like many Protestant thinkers, calls us to renew the biblical and republican-virtue tradition against contemporary liberalism. (This is the main theme of William Sullivan's *Reconstructing Public Philosophy* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982].) It is a strange social order indeed that makes Catholics so committed to making America work that they accept the project of constructive Protestantism. For a provocative article of the destructive results this process has had on orthodoxy, see Vigen Guroian, "The Americanization of Orthodoxy: Crisis and Challenge," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29, no. 3 (1984): 255–67.

22. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, 121.

23. *Ibid.*, 220. In an unpublished paper, "Democratic Morality: A Possibility," Neuhaus responds to this essay and qualifies the starkness of this claim. As he says, "I count myself among the many Christians, perhaps the majority of Christians in America, who have the gravest reservations about the idea of 'Christian America.' It makes sense to speak, always cautiously, of America as a Christian society in terms of historical forces, ideas, and demography. But no society is worthy of the name of Christ, except the society that is the church, and then it is worthy only by virtue of being made worthy through the grace of God in Christ" (6).

24. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, 230. For one of the ablest critiques of Neuhaus, see George Marsden, "Secularism and the Public Square," *This World* 11 (spring–summer 1985): 48–62. Marsden challenges Neuhaus's contention that religion is the morality-bearing part of our culture, thus denying Neuhaus's statement of the problem. As Marsden says, "Non-theistic secularism also promotes a morality. The problem regarding public philosophy is not simply that of whether or not we have morality in public life. More basically, it is a problem of having competing moral systems and hence less of a consensus in public philosophy than we might like. Putting more religion into public life would not resolve this problem unless we decide first whose religion it would be. In fact, there is even less consensus regarding religion than there is on public philosophy; it is difficult to see how adding more religion would increase the needed consensus" (59).

dilemma is: How can an evaluation of the distribution of rights, duties, benefits, and burdens which society necessarily imposes upon all of its citizens be faithful to Christian beliefs without forcing others to accept the distinctive moral implications of beliefs they do not and should not be required to share?"²⁵ According to Beckley, "This dilemma can only be resolved if the justification for principles of justice is founded upon general beliefs and values that others hold, or can be reasonably expected to hold, and which Christians can affirm on the basis of their distinctive beliefs."²⁶ Beckley argues that to accomplish this resolution "the distinctively Christian moral ideal of love obligates those who adhere to it to embrace the beliefs which undergird John Rawls's idea of justice as fairness."²⁷ Rawls thus becomes the language of common grace that continues the project of Christianizing America.

Of course, there are disagreements among Christian ethicists on this score. Neuhaus, for example, thinks Rawls's theory threatens to destroy the individual "by depriving him of all those personal particularities that are the essence of being an individual."²⁸ As a result, Rawls's account is ahistorical, in contradistinction to the "Judeo-Christian tradition," which is "premised upon the concept of real history, real change, happening in an incomplete universe that is still awaiting its promised fulfillment."²⁹ What is needed, according to Neu-

25. Harlan Beckley, "A Christian Affirmation of Rawls' Idea of Justice as Fairness: Part 1," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 13, no. 2 (fall 1985): 210–11.

26. *Ibid.*, 212.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, 257.

29. *Ibid.*, 258. Neuhaus's criticisms are broad strokes of the much more detailed and refined criticism of Rawls offered by Michael Sandel in *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Yet Neuhaus does not explain how he can at once criticize Rawls on such grounds and yet continue to underwrite America as the exemplification of what a Christian social order should look like. For whether Neuhaus likes it or not, the public philosophy of America is liberal and Rawls in many ways is its most eloquent spokesman. In recent essays Rawls has begun to reinterpret *A Theory of Justice* more in terms of political strategy for pluralist democracies that may at once make it less philosophically compelling for philosophers but more socially significant. See, for example, his "Justice or Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (summer 1985): 223–51. In spite of his qualifications, the question still remains whether any account of justice can be intelligibly abstracted from a conception of the virtues integral to the pursuit of goods in common. The very fact that many Christian theologians such as Beckley feel the need to adopt Rawls in order to have a comprehensive theory of justice may mean that something has already gone wrong in Christians' understanding of the social and political role of the church. Put overly simply, one needs a theory of justice when one no longer assumes that the very existence of the church is a social stance. Christian thinkers obviously must test various accounts of justice offered by different societies in order to find areas of common cause. But it

haus, is a recovery of some substantive account of the goods that make a good society possible through attending to the concrete desires of real people who are not required to leave their religious convictions behind when they participate in the public arena. This same set of issues is at the center of Robert Bellah et al.'s much discussed and praised book *Habits of the Heart*. The critique of "individualism" that is the hallmark of that book is part of a larger agenda that is in essential continuity with the hope of Christianizing America. As the authors suggest, in spite of our individualism,

we have never been, and still are not, a collection of private individuals who, except for a conscious contract to create a minimal government, have nothing in common. Our lives make sense in a thousand ways, most of which we are unaware of, because of traditions that are centuries, if not millennia, old. It is these traditions that help us to know that it does make a difference who we are and how we treat one another. But if we owe the meaning of our lives to biblical and republican traditions of which we seldom consciously think, is there not the danger that the erosion of these traditions may eventually deprive us of that meaning altogether? We would argue that if we are ever to enter that new world that so far has been powerless to be born, it will be through reversing modernity's tendency to obliterate all previous culture. We need to learn again from the cultural riches of the human species and to reappropriate and revitalize those riches so that they can speak to our condition today.³⁰

is quite another matter to assume that in order for Christians to act politically they need a theory of justice such as Rawls's that claims to order the basic structure of society. In that respect Beckley's contention that Rawls's theory does not pretend to comprehend all of morality fails to denote adequately the tendency of Rawls's account to render some goods, such as the family, problematic. See, for example, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 511–12. I am indebted to L. Gregory Jones for helping me see this.

30. Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 282–83. For Bellah's more explicit views, see "The Revolution and the Civil Religion," in *Religion and the American Revolution*, ed. Jerald Brauer (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 55–73. There Bellah observes that when his original article on civil religion was published (1967), it came just as the existence of civil religion was becoming questionable. He observes, "Only the biblical religions can provide the energy and vision for a new turn in American history, perhaps a new understanding of covenant, which may be necessary not only to save ourselves but to keep us from destroying the rest of the world" (73). For a thorough discussion that raises doubts about the extent of the influence of civic republicanism in America, see John Patrick Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). Equally

This sounds very much like a call for reconstituting Christian America.

I have no interest in trying to resolve the many disagreements among Neuhaus, Beckley, Bellah, and Falwell. Rather, what I have attempted to do is to show that the reason Falwell is such a challenge to the Christian mainstream in America is not because he is so different from them, but because he has basically accepted their agenda.³¹ The Christian right and the Christian left do not disagree about the religious status of the American experiment. They just disagree about what language and/or political theory will allow them to accomplish their common goal of making American democracy as close as possible to a manifestation of God's Kingdom.

3. *What a Christian Critique of Christian America Should Look Like*

For most Christians in America, from the nominal Christian to the committed social activist to the theologian, it is unthinkable to theorize outside the tradition I have just tried to sketch. Yet I refuse to support prayer in the

interesting is Arthur Vidich and Stanford Lyman, *American Sociology: Worldly Rejections of Religion and Their Directions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). They document that the birth of sociology in America has been, even in its most secularized and scientific form, a continuation of the project to form civil society on the basis of religious values:

The problems of American sociology emanate from the dilemma and contradictions in the relationship between God, the state, and civil society. In America's Puritan heritage there is envisioned a society composed of a voluntaristic covenant of believers, exercising mutual watchfulness over one another, acceding to legitimate civil authority but recognizing the ultimate sovereignty of God over all affairs. The nation would take form as a democratic commonwealth. However, in America the promise of this democratic commonwealth was threatened by new forms of worldly success and failure and new modes of social differentiation. American sociological thinkers were the moral successors to the earlier Puritan theologians. Convinced that America was destined to be the redeemer nation for the world, these sociologists took as their project the inner-worldly perfection of American social, economic, and political institutions. Implicit in this project was the belief that a covenanted national community could be established within the boundaries of the United States. Virtually all the American sociologists converted issues of theodicy into problems for sociology. Instead of vindicating the ways of God to man, they sought to justify the ways of society to its members. (281)

They point out also that as sociologists noted the inability of Protestant churches to provide a moral framework for civil society, sociologists tended to center on the state itself as the only institution with the moral authority to guide society. Sociology as a "policy science" thus becomes the new priestly craft necessary to help the modern bureaucratic state "manage" society.

31. Falwell is particularly interesting when he wanders into questions of international relations. Suddenly he no longer makes direct biblical appeals but, rather, sounds like any good American realist accepting consequential calculations for determining the right moral policy.

public schools because I *do* find myself outside that tradition. That I do so is because I do not believe that the universalism that is intrinsic to the Christian faith is carried by the culture of the West, but instead is to be found first and foremost in the church.³² From this perspective something has already gone wrong when Christians think they can ask, "What is the best form of society or government?"³³ This question assumes that Christians should or do have social and political power so they can determine the ethos of society. That this assumption has long been with us does nothing to confirm its truth.

That assumption, in short, is the heritage of what John Howard Yoder has called "the Constantinian sources of Western social ethics." It is an assumption shared by Christians and non-Christians alike, for the very logic of most contemporary philosophical accounts of ethics and social theory accepts its essential rightness only in secular terms. By calling our attention to Constantine, Yoder has no stake in determining the sincerity of Constantine's conversion or whether it was exactly at that time that a decisive shift in Christian assumptions took place. Rather, Constantine is the symbol of the decisive shift in the logic of moral argument when Christians ceased being a minority and accepted Caesar as a member of the church. It is that logic we must understand if a genuine Christian critique of Christian America is to be made.

The most obvious consequence of the change occasioned by Constantine, according to Yoder, was the change in the composition of the church. Prior to that time Christians had been a minority who at least required some degree of loyalty. After that time everyone was a member. It now takes conviction to be a pagan. As a result, Christians are now forced to develop a doctrine of the "true church" that remains invisible (136).³⁴

32. For an attempt to develop this position, see my *CC* and *PK*.

33. John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984), 154. Subsequent references are in the text. When Christians ask such a question they assume a majority status. In contrast, Yoder's view, as well as my own, is that Christians cannot help but be a minority if they are being faithful to their basic convictions.

34. It should not be thought that Yoder is committing the genetic fallacy by his appeal to the early Christian community. He is not saying that because the early church was a minority it should always be a minority; rather, in this context he is working descriptively to show the change in the logic of moral argument when this occurred. Of course, he will argue that the form of the early church is normative for Christians, not because it was the early church but because what the early Christians believed is true and results in Christians taking a critical stance toward governmental authorities. I share that view but I cannot here adequately defend it.

This shift is of crucial importance for how ethics is now understood. Prior to the time of Constantine, Christian belief in God's rule of the world was a matter of faith. However, with Constantine the idea that providence is no longer an object of faith for God's governance of the world was now thought to be empirically evident in the person of the Christian ruler. With this changed eschatology, ethics had to change "because one must aim one's behavior at strengthening the regime, and because the ruler himself must have very soon some approbation and perhaps some guidance as he does things the earlier church would have perhaps disapproved" (137). As a result, the distinctive character of Christian life is now primarily identified with inwardness since everyone by definition is already Christian.

Once Christianity became dominant, moreover, it was now thought that moral discourse must be that which can direct the behavior of anyone. Servanthood and love of enemy, contentment and monogamy, cannot be expected of everyone. So a duality develops in ethics between "evangelical counsels" for the motivated and "precepts" for everyone else. Perhaps an even more significant change is the assumption that the decisive ethical questions become, to quote Yoder, "What would happen if everyone did it? If everyone gave their wealth away what would we do for capital? If everyone loved their enemies who would ward off the communists? This argument could be met on other levels, but here the only point is to observe that such reasoning would have been preposterous in the early church and remains ludicrous wherever committed Christians accept realistically their minority status. Far more fitting than 'What if everybody did it' would be its inverse, 'What if nobody else acted like a Christian and we did?' " (139).³⁵

35. Connected with this reversal is what happens once the ruler is let into the church, for then the ruler, not the average or weak person, is the model for ethical reason. Thus, the rightness of truth telling or the wrongness of killing is tested first by whether a ruler can meet such standards. Yoder, however, does not mean to exclude rulers from the church, but rather he expects them to act like Christians. Thus,

Caesar would be perfectly free (for a while) to bring to bear upon the exercise of his office the ordinary meaning of the Christian faith. It might happen that the result would be that his enemies triumph over him, but that often happens to rulers anyway. It might happen that he would have to suffer, or not stay in office all his life, but that too often happens to rulers anyway, and it is something that Christians are supposed to be ready for. It might happen that he would be killed; but most Caesars are killed anyway. It might happen that some of his followers would have to suffer. But emperors and kings are accustomed to asking people to suffer for them. Especially if the view were still authentically alive, which the earlier Christians undeniably had held to and which the theologians in the age of Constantine were still repeating, that God blesses those who serve him, it might also have

With this new universalism comes an increasing need to test moral discourse by its effectiveness. Once the course of history is thought to be empirically discernible and the prosperity of our regime the measure of the good, efficacy becomes a decisive test for the moral rightness of our action. Self-sacrifice that is not tied to some long-term account of result becomes irrational. This is particularly important in assessing the validity of violence and the Christian's participation in war.

What is important about Yoder's depiction of the change in moral logic occasioned by the Constantinian turn is that the effects he describes are still with us. With the Renaissance and Reformation "Christendom" was replaced by the nation-state. Christians, however, did not respond to this change by maintaining the cosmopolitanism of the Holy Roman Empire, but rather now maintained that Christian societies could wage war on one another in the name of preserving their Christian culture. With the Enlightenment, the link between church and state was broken, but the moral identification of Christians with the state remained strong. This has been especially the case in America where "once the separation of church and state is seen as theologically desirable, a society where this separation is achieved is not a pagan society but a nation structured according to the will of God. For nearly two centuries, in fact, the language of American public discourse was not only religious, not only Christian, but specifically Protestant. Moral identification of church with nation remains despite institutional separation. In fact, forms of institutional interlocking develop which partly deny the story of separation (chaplains, tax exemptions)" (142).

If there is to be a genuine Christian critique of Christian America, I am convinced that this habit of thought, which Yoder calls Constantinianism, must be given up. Otherwise, we Christians remain caught in the same habits of thought and behavior that implicitly or explicitly assume that insofar as America is a democracy she is Christian. As a result Christians lose exactly the skills necessary to see how deeply they have been compromised by the assumption that their task is to rule, if not the government, at least the ethos of America. That is why Christian social strategy in America continues to be caught in a fateful ambiguity—namely, Christians claim that Christianity, or at least religion, should be more present in public life yet they want to make

been possible that, together with all of the risks just described, most of which a ruler accepts anyway, there could have been in some times and some places the possibility that good could be done, that creative social alternatives could be discovered, that problems could be solved, enemies loved and justice fostered. (146)

government itself religiously neutral. The history of the Supreme Court decisions on church/state issues should be enough to convince anyone that there is no easy way to resolve this tension in the American legal system, much less the social and political systems.³⁶

Am I therefore suggesting that Christians must "withdraw" from the social, political, and legal life of America? I am certainly not arguing that; rather, I am trying to suggest that in order to answer questions of "why" or "how" Christians participate in the life of this country we do not need a theory about the Christian character of democracy. Rather, I am suggesting, with Yoder, that as Christians we would "be more relaxed and less compulsive about running the world if we made our peace with our minority situation, seeing this neither as a dirty trick of destiny nor as some great new progress but simply as the unmasking of the myth of Christendom, which wasn't true even when it was believed" (158).

As Yoder argues, since almost all rulers claim to be our benefactors in order to justify their rule, there is no reason that Christians cannot use that very language to call their rulers to be more humane in their ways of governing. Moreover, if we are lucky enough to be in a situation where the ruler's language of justification claims to have the consent of the governed, we can use the machinery of democracy for our own and our neighbor's advantage. But we should not, thereby, be lulled into believing that "we the people" are thereby governing ourselves. Democracy is still government by the elite, though it may be less oppressive since it uses language in its justification that provides ways to mitigate oppressiveness. But that does not make democracy, from a Christian point of view, different in kind from states of another form (158–59).

Perhaps the hardest habit to break deriving from our Constantinianism is the assumption that if we do not govern then surely society and/or government will fall into anarchy or totalitarianism. But I notice no shortage of people willing to rule nor any absence of ideologies for rule. The problem is not Christians disavowing ruling, but rather that when Christians rule they tend to create international and national disorder because they have such a calling to make things right. If Christians "claim for democracy the status of a social institution *sui generis*, we shall inflate ourselves and destroy our neighbors through the demonic demands of the claims we make for our system and

36. For a romp through church/state issues, see George Goldberg, *Reconsecrating America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984).

we shall pollute our Christian faith by making of it a civil religion. If, on the other hand, we protect ourselves from the Constantinianism of that view of democracy, we may find the realistic liberty to foster and celebrate relative democratization as one of the prophetic ministries of a servant people in a world we do not control" (165-66).

I am aware that the position I have taken will be a surprise to most Christians schooled on the assumption that there is an intrinsic relation between Christianity and America. Yet I suspect the position will be equally unwelcomed by many who dislike calls like that of Neuhaus for a recovery of the role of religion in American life. They want people who still use their private time to entertain religious convictions to be willing to work to create a social order and corresponding government that relegates those convictions to the private sphere. That is done, of course, in the name of creating a democratic society that is based on universal claims justified by reason qua reason.³⁷ Constantinianism is a hard habit to break even for those who no longer understand themselves to be religious.

From this perspective the problem with Yoder (and Falwell) is their refusal to find a neutral or at least nonconfrontational way to state the social implications of their religious convictions.³⁸ That is not playing the game fairly, as it makes religion more public than is healthy for an allegedly pluralistic society. After all, there have to be some limits to our pluralism.

Of course, Yoder might well respond that he is willing on a case-by-case basis pragmatically to use the allegedly more universal language of our society. But for many, I suspect, such a pragmatic approach would be insufficient. It is not enough to be willing to play the game of the putative neutral or objective language and procedures of pluralist democracy: one must be willing to believe that such language and procedures are truly the form of the society any people anywhere would choose if they had the material means, institutional creativity, and philosophical acumen. To challenge that presumption, as Yoder

37. It is interesting to observe that most Americans, whether religious or secular, continue to take a missionary stance for democracy. Americans criticize our government's support for nondemocratic regimes around the world to the point of sometimes advocating intervention against nondemocratic regimes. As Yoder observes, "After the 'Christian west' has lost the naive righteousness with which it thought it should export its religion around the world, we still seem to have a good conscience about exporting our politics" (151).

38. By associating Yoder and Falwell at this point, I do not mean to deny their obvious differences. Yet they both use language about Jesus in the public arena without apology. The problem with Falwell is not that he uses Christian appeals but that his understanding of the Christian tradition is so attenuated.

has, is I think the necessary starting point for any genuine Christian critique of Christian America.

4. *On Being Christian in America*

But where does this leave us? If America is not the "new Jerusalem," does that mean Christians must seek to make America live consistent with secular presuppositions? In order to make the line between being Christian and being American clear, must we side with those who wish to force any religious phenomenon out of the public arena? Should we rejoice in the destructive kind of individualism that is so graphically displayed in *Habits of the Heart*? Do we not have a stake in sustaining a public ethos that might make the rise of paganism, which might well use the language of Christianity, less likely?

I see no reason that the position I have taken would make me give an affirmative answer to these questions. I believe that Christians should not will that secular society be more unjust than it already has a tendency to be. Therefore, we have a stake in fostering those forms of human association that ensure that the virtues can be sustained. Virtues make it possible to sustain a society committed to working out differences short of violence.³⁹ What I fear, however, is that in the absence of those associations we will seek to solve the moral anomie of the American people through state action or by a coercive reclaiming of Christian America.⁴⁰

Therefore, if I refuse to support prayer in the public school it becomes all the more important that I urge Christians to learn to pray authentically as Christians. For if Christians reclaim prayer as an end in itself rather than a way to confirm the "Christian nature" of our society, we will perform our most important civic responsibility. As Origen argued, what more important public

39. Of course, some accounts of what it means to be virtuous require violence as a necessary correlative: the just person must envisage the possibility of using coercion if he or she is to be just and to do justice. To be persuasive, therefore, my claim requires a substantial account of the content of the virtues, for example, why the virtues of patience and forgiveness are central to the moral life. [Hauerwas would seek to provide such an account in, e.g., "Reconciling the Practice of Reason: Casuistry in a Christian Context" (1986) in *CET*; "Peacemaking: The Virtue of the Church" (1985), essay 16 in this volume; as well as *PK* in general.]

40. George Hunsinger, for example, has argued that we live in a time not unlike the situation that confronted those who produced the Barmen declaration. See his "Barth, Barmen, and the Confessing Church Today," *Katallagete* 9, no. 2 (summer 1985): 14-27. See also my response, "On Learning Simplicity in an Ambiguous Age," *Katallagete* 10, nos. 1-3 (fall 1987): 43-46.

service can we render than to pray that the emperor recognize his or her status as a creature of God? Such a prayer is no less significant in a society that believes "the people" have in fact become the emperor.

Further Reading

- "The Democratic Policing of Christianity" (1993), in *DF*
- "The Importance of Being Catholic: Unsolicited Advice from a Protestant Bystander" (1989), in *IGC*
- "On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological" (1983), essay 2 in this volume
- "Walter Rauschenbusch and the Saving of America" (2000), in *BH*.
- "Remaining in Babylon: Oliver O'Donovan's Defence of Christendom" (1997), in *WW*
- "The Politics of Witness: How We Educate Christians in Liberal Societies" (1991), in *AC*
- "The Politics of Justice: Why Justice Is a Bad Idea for Christians" (1991), in *AC*
- "The Kingship of Christ: Why Freedom of Belief Is Not Enough" (1992), in *IGC*
- "Flight from Foundationalism, or, Things Aren't as Bad as They Seem" (1989), in *WW*
- "Theology and the New American Culture" (1972), in *VV*
- "The Reality of the Church: Even a Democratic State Is Not the Kingdom" (1985), in *AN*
- "Virtue in Public" (1986), in *CET*

23. Sex in Public: How Adventurous Christians Are Doing It (1978)

After examining a number of typical responses by both Catholic and Protestant theological ethicists to the sexual revolution of the 1960s, Hauerwas offers a genuine alternative to the naïveté of the romanticists and the cynicism of the realists. Hauerwas shows that viewpoints claiming that a sexual ethic should be based on criteria that "foster creative growth toward integration" turn out to be vacuous, serving conclusions arrived at on other grounds. More important, such viewpoints are destructive because they tacitly reject the inherently political nature of sexuality in the Christian tradition. In other words, Christian sexual ethics of the 1970s uncritically accepted the individualism of American culture and thus was unable to offer a compelling account of why sexual desire and activity should be ordered to the mission of the Christian church.

1. On Speaking Candidly and as a Christian about Sex

Candor is always to be striven for, but it is especially important for any discussion about sex; in particular, the morality of sex. And candor compels me to say that I cannot provide anything like an adequate ethic to deal with sex. This is, no doubt, partly because of my own moral and intellectual limitations. But it also reflects that generally Christians, and in particular Christian ethicists, are unsure what to say or how to respond to our culture's changing sexual mores (if in fact they are changing).¹

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1. Indeed, I suspect that the "crisis" concerning sexual behavior in our society is not what people are actually doing or not doing, but that we have no way to explain to ourselves or to others why it is that we are doing one thing rather than another. Thus, people simply do not know why they do or do not have sexual intercourse before marriage, or even more disturbing, why they should or should not get married at all, or why they should or should not have