Chapter 6

VIRTUE AND THE WAY OF THE WORLD

STANLEY HAUERWAS is surely the most prolific and influential theologian now working in the United States. He has also done more than anyone else to spread the new traditionalism among Christians in the English-speaking world. But in the introduction to his recent book, *A Better Hope*, he confesses that he has "grown tired of arguments about the alleged virtues or vices of liberalism."[1] This is understandable, because he has argued against the vices of liberalism countless times, often while invoking MacIntyre's authority, in the many books he has written since the latter's *After Virtue* appeared in 1981. The index to *A Better Hope* contains more than twenty listings under the term "liberalism." The book begins by arguing against the temptations of Rawlsian political liberalism (BH, 26–27, 30), and eventually gets around to claiming, more generally, "that if the gospel is true, the politics of liberalism must be false" (BH, 124).

If *A Better Hope* offers little evidence that Hauerwas has tired of such arguments and claims, perhaps it does show signs that he is growing uneasy with the posture in which they have left him. He warns his readers—and reminds himself—that "Christians cannot afford" to let themselves be defined by what they are against. He describes the book as his "attempt to make the 'for' more determinative than the 'against' " (BH, 9). His "problem has never been with political liberals," he says, "but rather with the widespread assumption shared by many Christians that political liberalism ought to shape the agenda, if not the very life, of the church" (BH, 9). He wants to make those who read him as a sectarian "think twice" (BH, 10). It must be said, however, that he has stated the "against" in his message much more forcibly than the "for."

Over the last two decades the principal targets of his criticism have been twentieth-century theologians who have dedicated themselves to social justice and sought to make the church safe for democratic aspirations. If Hauerwas has his way, such people will no longer hold a place of honor in the memory of American Christians, for, despite their noble intentions, they were caught up in the way of the world, not the work of Christian virtue. He has other figures to propose as models of virtue. There is no doubt that the main effect of his antiliberal rhetoric, aside from significantly widening his audience, is to undercut Christian identification with democracy. No theologian has done more to inflame Christian resentment of secular political culture.

HOW HAUERWAS BECAME A TRADITIONALIST

To understand what attracted him to MacIntyre's ideas in the first place, one needs to keep in mind, first of all, that Hauerwas is a Methodist. After teaching briefly at Augustana College, he joined the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, a Catholic institution, and accepted a position in the Methodist divinity school at Duke University in 1984. But one constant in his thinking from the beginning has been his own tradition's emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the life of the believer. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, taught that once God had "justified" the believer through the gift of faith, thus setting straight his or her personal relation to God, it remained for the believer to be made holy through the achievement of Christian perfection. This process of transformation, which is called "sanctification," depends on divine grace but also requires a serious and sustained effort of self-cultivation on the part of the justified sinner.

Hauerwas's commitment to the Methodist doctrine of sanctification led him to become dissatisfied with the leading forms of Protestant ethics he studied while pursuing his doctorate at Yale. He began rethinking a teaching that had been central to the Protestant Reformation—the doctrine of *sola fides*. According to this doctrine, the sinner is justified, or set straight, solely by divine grace through the gift of faith. This means that one cannot achieve a proper relationship with God by behaving morally or by striving virtuously but can do so only by receiving the gift of faith from God. There is much truth in this doctrine, from Hauerwas's point of view, but many Protestants had gone seriously wrong by using it, in effect, to undermine the equally important doctrine of sanctification, which obliges the justified sinner to cultivate the virtues of Christian perfection. Lutheran theology, in particular, is partly responsible for dislodging the virtues from their formerly central place in Christian ethical reflection. Hauerwas set out to give virtue its due. In ethics this meant shifting the balance between the right and the good. In theology it meant playing down the image of God as one who issues commands while playing up the image of God as one who both personifies goodness in the figure of Christ and graciously reshapes the character of those called to follow him.[2]

In his doctoral dissertation, Hauerwas not only explicated the Wesleyan and Calvinist conceptions of sanctification, but also connected this doctrine with an older tradition of thinking about the virtues that goes back to Aquinas and, through him, to Aristotle.[3] One can see what led Notre Dame to hire him as a teacher of theological ethics in what Hauerwas then called "an ecumenical department of theology in a Catholic university."[4] For here was a bright, young Protestant theologian, articulating doubts about the very doctrine that inspired the Protestant Reformation and arguing for a

retrieval of themes from *the* moral theologian of Catholicism. But what interested Hauerwas about Aquinas from the start was his account of the virtues, not the natural-law account of moral principles attributed to him by scholastic Thomists. Catholics had not done much better at giving virtue its due in moral theology than had the Lutherans. For the Methodist Hauerwas, Christian ethics is perfectionist. It is mainly about what kind of people Christians are called to be, not about what one ought to do, and he has always read Aquinas mainly with this thought in mind.

Hauerwas's writings of the 1970s had an enormous impact on theology in the United States, for he was largely successful in persuading theologians representing a wide spectrum of denominations to reconsider the role of virtue in Christian ethics.[5] These writings drew upon and consolidated the work of thinkers like Elizabeth Anscombe, Iris Murdoch, Stuart Hampshire, and Edmund Pincoffs, who had already been raising doubts about similar imbalances in philosophical ethics. His most influential essay from this period is probably a piece entitled, "From System to Story: An Alternative Pattern for Rationality in Ethics" (TT, 15–39), which was coauthored by one of his Catholic colleagues at Notre Dame, David Burrell. This essay's nickname for modern ethical theory is "quandary ethics," an expression Pincoffs had introduced in a paper originally published in *Mind* in 1971. What quandary ethics tends to focus on, as Pincoffs first put it, is "a quandary which arises because I fall into a certain situation. The situation is such that it can be described in perfectly general terms, without any reference to me as an individual, including my personal conceptions of what are and are not worthy deeds and attitudes and feelings: worthy of me."[6] A quandary, then, is an example capable of causing moral perplexity, a problematical case in search of a moral principle under which to be subsumed. Quandary ethics is the variety of ethical discourse in which one performs the legalistic task of formulating moral principles and subsuming cases under them. It is a variety of discourse, according to Hauerwas, in which character is effectively eliminated from ethical consideration.

A quandary is essentially a case, and a case is essentially a narrative rendering of a situation that has been stripped of all but a few details that are necessary for displaying its potential for falling under conflicting generalities. To qualify as a case, an example must first pass through a filter, so that it becomes thinly narrated and, from the perspective of someone applying rules to it, clear. Hauerwas and Burrell argued that the resulting narratives are too thin and abstract to retain the actual moral significance of the problems we face in real life. Focusing mainly on examples of this kind tends, therefore, to distort the situations that do call for ethical reflection. It also tends, over time, to distort our understanding of the moral life as a whole. Quandary ethics gives rise to a view of the moral life as nothing more than a succession of problems calling for decisions and thus to a view of the

self as little more than a principled will. Wherever quandary ethics is the dominant variety of ethical discourse, ethical theory is bound to become preoccupied with the formulation of principles designed to systematize and rationalize our intuitions about quandaries. Modern ethical theory "represents an attempt to make the moral life take on the characteristics of a system" (TT, 23).

The alternative Hauerwas and Burrell propose is an ethics of character. In place of the quandarist's cases, ethics must attend to narratives that are rich enough to display the significance of virtuous and vicious traits of character in particular human lives. Narrative, as defined here, is "the connected description of action and of suffering which moves to a point. The point need not be detachable from the narrative itself; in fact, we think a story better that does not issue in a determinate *moral*" (TT, 28; emphasis in original). The stories that someone cares about determine the substance of his or her ethical life. Quandary ethics, with its thinned-out cases, is too abstract to have much substance. Religious faith essentially involves "accepting a certain set of stories as canonical" (TT, 38), but they tend to be stories quite unlike the cases of the modern ethical theorist. They are rather stories like the Gospels or Augustine's *Confessions*, which present "an exemplary instance" of divinity, holiness, or virtue (TT, 31).

His critique of quandary ethics was one of the most influential arguments Hauerwas put forward during the 1970s. It quickly became associated with the topic of narrative theology that was then attracting much attention in the divinity schools. Meanwhile, however, Hauerwas had been learning much from the other Protestant then teaching theological ethics at Notre Dame, John Howard Yoder. Yoder represented the Mennonites, a pacifist church that originated in the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation under the leadership of the renegade Dutch priest, Menno Simons. In a powerfully argued 1974 essay, "The Nonresistant Church" (VV, 197–221), Hauerwas offered a detailed analysis of Yoder's views. He claimed that Yoder's pacifism, conceived in vocational terms as a form of discipleship to Christ, was left essentially untouched by the standard arguments against pacifism. And he endorsed Yoder's claim that the church's task is not to transform the sociopolitical order through direct engagement with it, but rather to establish its own community of discipleship—*in* the world, but not *of* it. The essay stopped just short of committing its author to a pacifist stance. What prevented him from taking the final step appears to be his worry that "the nature of evil is broader than the questions of violence in itself. We constantly confront and perpetrate on others subtle forms of aggression and injustice that are all the more fatal for their nonviolent forms. What form would nonresistance take in the face of this kind of problem in our lives?" (VV, 221) At this point in his development, Hauerwas was worried that pacifism fails to acknowledge the difficulty of extricating

oneself from complicity in the evils of the world. Refraining from killing can, of course, have unintended but foreseeable violent consequences. And violence is not the only bad thing there is to avoid.

The final section of the essay raised several other serious questions for Yoder's position. One of these, which "concerns Yoder's interpretation of the nature of the dualism between faith and unbelief," is "whether some forms of justice based on the possibilities open to unbelief do not have a more positive relation to the life of faith" than Yoder was prepared to grant (VV, 217).[7] Hauerwas then asked whether "Yoder's theological predisposition has not prevented him from considering a more positive understanding of the nature of political community. Yoder's assertion that violence is the essence of the state fails to appreciate that the state as a form of community cannot be explained or reduced to a Hobbesian mutual protection society" (VV, 218). Hauerwas complained that "Yoder seems to assume that the language of justice is completely determined by sin and thus from the perspective of faith can only be negatively understood. . . . Thus the language of faith can have no positive relation to the language of justice." But Hauerwas wondered whether "any discriminating social judgments by the Christian can be made without buying in at some point to the language of justice" (VV, 219). The underlying difficulty is that Yoder seems to assume "an exact parallel between faith and the new aeon [of God's kingdom], unbelief and the old aeon." "There would be no difficulty in this," Hauerwas concludes, "if Yoder's understanding of the relationship between the two aeons were more dynamic" (VV, 220).

Hauerwas continued to develop his accounts of narrative and virtue while wrestling with Yoder's influence throughout the 1970s. But by the early 1980s he had taken on two important commitments that changed the tenor of his writing significantly. First, he had resolved his doubts about Yoder's position and declared himself a pacifist. Henceforth, he will argue that the church is essentially a community of *peaceable* virtue. The purpose of this community is to follow Christ's nonviolent example, thus exemplifying in its own conduct God's way of dealing with evil in the world. Second, when MacIntyre's *After Virtue* appeared in 1981, he immediately embraced him as the paradigmatic philosophical critic of our time. Henceforth, he will use MacIntyre's traditionalist framework to say much of what he wants to say about virtue and narrative. For here is a philosopher who not only agrees with him that these concepts are of central importance, but also provides an impressive historical explanation of how quandary ethics had come to dominate the scene. According to this story, much of what is wrong about modern society and modern thought can be explained by neglect of the very concepts that Hauerwas had been emphasizing. The change in Hauerwas's thinking can first be seen in his 1981 essay collection, *A Community of Character*, and emerges more fully in his 1983 book, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, which remains the most unified statement of his mature theological and ethical outlook.[8]

Both of these books describe the church as a community of virtue in a "divided" or "fragmented" world (CC, 89–110; PK, 1–16). The latter (PK, 4–5) quotes a full page from the sublime opening of *After Virtue* to set the tone for the volume as a whole, and then adds:

> If MacIntyre is correct we live in a precarious situation. Life in a world of moral fragments is always on the edge of violence, since there are no means to ensure that moral argument itself can resolve our moral conflicts. No wonder we hunger for absolutes in such a world, for we rightly desire peace in ourselves and in our relations with one another. Granted the world has always been violent, but when our own civilization seems to lack the means to secure peace within itself we seem hopelessly lost. (PK, 5–6)

Hauerwas agrees with MacIntyre that the citizens of a liberal democracy are essentially rootless individuals, not members of a community united by their commitment to the same "canonical stories" and "exemplary instances." As individuals, they have their own private conceptions of the good, and they strive to satisfy their own desires. In order to do this, they may adopt roles and enter into associations with other people as they wish. But they lack the sort of narrative framework they will need if they want to make sense of their lives, cultivate the virtues, and sustain meaningful discourse with one another on ethical and political questions. Ethical theorists, like the rest of us, start out with a collection of inherited moral rules that have been uprooted from the traditional contexts in which they originally made sense. They then try in the midst of all of the fragmentation to supply some source of stability by searching for principles that every rational person would have reason to accept. It is precisely the fragmentation caused by the disintegration of a traditional way of life that makes people want to cling to such principles. But because the theoretical project merely reflects the underlying fragmentation, it is doomed to fail.

In the modern period, according to this story, ethics ceases to be a matter of cultivating the virtues and instead becomes a quest for universally acceptable principles. Because neither ordinary people nor ethical theorists have been able to reach agreement on what the correct principles are, it is hard to see why anyone should think that there really are principles of the kind being sought. Each ethical theory offers evidence that its competitors are mistaken, yet each claims to have found *universally acceptable* principles. The Catholic natural-law theorists appear to be in the same business as the modern moral philosophers. But too many people disagree with Catholic claims about the basic principles of the natural law for it to be plausible to think that these principles are written upon our conscience by God. If such

principles are there, they generate too much controversy among apparently rational people to do us much good.

Another problem with natural-law theory, says Hauerwas, is the impression it leaves that distinctively Christian beliefs do not make much difference to ethics. The task of Christian ethics should be to say what difference Christian commitments and practices make to ethics. If Christian beliefs do make a difference to ethics, it should not be surprising that people who are brought up outside the church reach ethical conclusions that put them at odds with Christians. The primary way for a Christian to persuade such people, as Hauerwas sees it, is to preach the gospel and to conduct oneself in a way consistent with the gospel, so that people can see what the Christian way of life looks like. They may still reject it. When God ordains that they convert to Christianity, they will. The Christian task is to preach and live out the gospel, not to find the philosophical basis on which anybody, Christian or non-Christian, can stand. The project of trying to find reasons that would be compelling for any rational person, regardless of upbringing and circumstance, is not only destined to fall short of its goal, but also deflects the church's efforts from the task to which it has been called, which is simply *to be the church*. Being the church, according to the view Hauerwas now takes over completely from Yoder, is a matter of maintaining a pacifist community of virtue in the midst of a violent world, thus providing a foretaste of the peaceable kingdom in which God reigns absolutely and eternally.

Rather than striving for universally acceptable moral principles, Hauerwas is concerned to figure out to what Christians, as members of a particular community, are committed. At the center of Christian practice over the centuries are the retelling of certain stories and the cultivation of certain habits and dispositions. He begins, in other words, not with foundational principles discovered by pure reason, but simply with the liturgical and ethical practices that he and his fellow believers engage in as members of the church. Christian ethics, he concludes, is essentially in need of the qualifier, "Christian" (PK, 1–2, 17–34). For him, every form of ethics requires some kind of qualifier—an adjective that specifies connection to some particular tradition or community. Even natural lawyers, who try to do ethics from a universal standpoint, are really expressing the beliefs and commitments of a particular historical tradition of thought and practice. Like everybody else, the Christian starts somewhere. But not everybody starts in the same place, and where you start is bound to shape how and what you think and how and why you act. Future experience and dialogue with others may convince you to change your mind. Being reasonable requires openness to that possibility. There are no guarantees in this life. We can only begin where we are and do our best to deal reasonably with what we inherit from our tradition, changing our minds when we have good reason, from our own point of view, for doing so.

When he argues against the quest for universally valid principles and grants that everyone has some sort of traditional inheritance for which to take responsibility, one can see how much Hauerwas has in common with Emerson's perfectionism, Whitman's emphasis on character, and Dewey's pragmatism. He might seem, then, to be preparing the way for a pluralistic conversation among people representing varying reasonable points of view—a conversation at least partly about the demands of justice both inside of and outside of the church. For these were the demands he had charged Yoder with neglecting. Hauerwas appears to have been actively exploring this way forward in the essay collections he published in the 1970s. But in *The Peaceable Kingdom*, he implicitly forecloses this possibility by envisioning the political culture surrounding the church in terms that combine MacIntyre's antiliberalism with Yoder's "dualistic" conception of the relation between faith and unbelief. And in his subsequent books, he makes the foreclosure explicit by rejecting the surrounding political culture in increasingly strident terms. "Liberal society," "the secular," and "democracy" become his names for what the world has become in an age of fragmentation after the demise of virtue and tradition.[9] His previous doubts about Yoder's "dualism" suddenly and thoroughly recede from view.

Church and World

Hauerwas does not like being called a "sectarian." In the introduction to *Christian Existence Today*, he protests that the Mennonite conception of the church he takes over from Yoder does not entail withdrawal from the world.[10] Christians, as he rightly points out, are not faced with a simple choice between "*complete* involvement in culture or *complete* withdrawal" (CET, 11; emphasis in original). They must decide on their own terms which forms of involvement are compatible with Christian commitments and which are not. This is something that must be decided contextually. "It is certainly true," he adds, that he has "been critical of liberal social and political presuppositions, particularly as these are played out in American society. . . . The ahistorical character of liberal social and political theory strikes me as particularly pernicious, as in the name of freedom manipulative social relations are legitimated" (CET, 12). But Hauerwas reminds his critics that he has "written about why and how Christians should support as well as serve the medical and legal professions, Christian relations with Judaism, how we might think about justice, as well as an analysis of the moral debate concerning nuclear war" (CET, 7). So it should have been clear that he is not recommending complete withdrawal even from liberal political orders.

Furthermore, Hauerwas explicitly denies "that the only community in which Christians can or should live is the church." "Christians rightly find

themselves members of many communities. Thus I am not only a Christian but a university teacher, a Texan, a United States citizen, and a devoted fan of the Durham Bulls" (CET, 15). The point of this remark, I take it, is to acknowledge that, as a citizen of the United States, he can acquire certain obligations to his fellow citizens. But Christian integrity, he insists, requires careful scrutiny of putative obligations arising from any social bond other than the church. "What is required for Christians is not withdrawal but a sense of selective service and the ability to set priorities." In particular, "Christians must withdraw their support" from any social or political order that "resorts to violence in order to maintain internal order and external security" (CET, 15).

Hauerwas has repeatedly argued that Yoder's conception of the church, when properly stated, does not entail an unacceptably rigid form of church-world dualism. He charges his critics with a failure to appreciate Yoder's position on its own terms. Their bias, he says, derives from the severely skewed distinction between "church" and "sect" drawn by Ernst Troeltsch (CET, 7). I do not propose to challenge Hauerwas on the question of how Yoder and Troeltsch should be interpreted. Indeed, I suspect that if Hauerwas and his critics could agree to write and speak for a full decade without using the epithets "sectarianism" and "liberalism," we would quickly find out how much they really have to say. Both of these terms are loaded in ways that skew the debate. The term "sectarianism" can all too easily be used to imply, misleadingly, that Christians "may always, as a matter of their own decision, be respectable—as though martyrdom were a temperamental disposition or an ecclesiastical policy."[11] People with a conscience can always be faced with a social and political order that must simply be rejected in the name of their basic commitments. The question is always open whether ours is such a moment. It is true that Hauerwas sometimes writes as if no such total rejection of American society is necessary just now. But he underestimates the extent to which his heavy-handed use of the term "liberalism" as an all-purpose critical instrument continually reinforces the impression that total rejection is in fact required. This, I believe, is what keeps the charge of sectarianism alive.

The real issue, then, is what happens when Hauerwas combines Yoder's church-world distinction with MacIntyre's antiliberalism. In responding to the charge of sectarianism, Hauerwas has said almost nothing about the significance of his debts to MacIntyre. That this is the issue should have been clear from the start. If Yoder's outlook, taken separately, were the real issue, then the critics would have been writing mainly about him, and Hauerwas would be viewed as a relatively minor figure—a herald preparing the way for the master. But in fact it is Hauerwas's amalgam of themes from Yoder and MacIntyre that generates the controversy. It is therefore crucial to determine what MacIntyre adds to the mix.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, MacIntyre's traditionalist rhetoric depends on a traditional-modern dualism, the intended effect of which is to eliminate ambivalence in one's response to modernity. "Modernity" and "liberalism" become almost interchangeable categories, two names for a scene dominated by vicious individualism in the epoch after virtue ceases to matter. When this rhetoric is conjoined with Yoder's conception of the church, the result, regardless of Hauerwas's intentions, is an especially rigid form of church-world dualism. This, I take it, is at the root of what Hauerwas's critics are complaining about. *One cannot stand in a church conceived in Yoder's terms, while describing the world surrounding it in the way MacIntyre describes liberal society, without implicitly adopting a stance that is rigidly dualistic in the same respects that rightly worried Hauerwas in 1974.* A defense of this stance that focuses solely on Yoder's conception of the church begs the question.

There is, however, another reason that the controversy over sectarianism soon escalated rather than subsiding. Not long after publishing *Christian Existence Today*, Hauerwas seemed to be turning away from his previous interest in questions of justice. By the time he published *After Christendom* in 1991, his rhetorical posture appeared to divorce the "language of faith" from the "language of justice" in the same way he had formerly criticized Yoder for doing.[12] Chapter 2 purports to explain "Why Justice Is a Bad Idea for Christians." Hauerwas likes to shock first and qualify later, and in this case the fine print is slightly less worrisome than the bold. The chapter begins by contending that "the current emphasis on justice and rights as the primary norms guiding the social witness of Christians is in fact a mistake" (AC, 46). Hauerwas does not support this contention by appealing to Yoder; indeed, he would have trouble doing so, for I see no evidence that Yoder argues in this way. Instead, Hauerwas appeals to arguments from MacIntyre as warrant for criticisms of Rawls (AC, 47–50, 60–62) and suggests that liberation theology may have "underwritten a sense of liberation [that is] at odds with the gospel" (AC, 53). On the final page of the chapter, however, he indicates cryptically that it is not his intention to imply that Christians "must give up working for justice in the societies of modernity." Is the point, then, that *the liberal conception of justice* is a bad idea, whereas *working for justice* for sound biblical reasons is a good idea? Hauerwas does not say. Neither does he take it upon himself, in any work that I know of, to explain what those biblical reasons might be.[13] What seems clear, however, is that the "language of justice" has now dropped almost completely out of Hauerwas's thinking.

To see the effects of this, consider the contrast between the way Hauerwas discusses the social processes in which selves are shaped and the way democratic feminists do. According to Hauerwas, most of our actions, beliefs, and character traits are not what they are as a result of decisions we

make on the basis of reasoning. They result rather from our having been raised in a certain way and from our daily participation in the practices and institutions of our society. The process begins in infancy. We learn to play one set of games rather than another. We hear stories and learn to recognize and assess the kinds of characters they involve. Imitating our elders, we participate in the rituals of daily life. In one society this might mean bowing and scraping in the presence of certain people. In another it might mean shaking hands firmly and looking people squarely in the eye when you meet them. The possible variations are endless, but it matters greatly to which ones we happen to be exposed, because that determines what kinds of people it is possible for us to be. Hauerwas thinks that Christian ethics needs to be constantly aware of the ways in which social practices shape selves. He thinks that the basic question to ask of any society is what kinds of people it produces. If the basic character types made possible by a society are bad or vicious, he thinks, then you know the most important thing about the society in question.

Gloria Albrecht, who has written an interesting feminist critique of Hauerwas, agrees that societies shape selves through games, storytelling, and other practices.[14] She also agrees that an important question to ask of any society is what kinds of people it produces. She even agrees that critical reasoning can operate only within some delimited social location or other and that ethics therefore always needs a qualifier, just as Hauerwas says it does. But she thinks that Hauerwas does not come entirely clean about his own social location. I would say that one reason for this is that he does not employ the language of justice when discussing the ways in which he and his audience have been shaped into particular sorts of people. He therefore ends up proposing an ethics that tends, by default, to reinforce unjust arrangements.

Albrecht and Hauerwas obviously differ over what kinds of people would count as genuinely virtuous. She thinks that democracy in general and feminism in particular have taught Christians important lessons about what the virtues are. I take Albrecht to be reminding us that justice is one of the virtues, just as Aquinas said it was. But justice, as the virtue that gives each person his or her due, cannot take for granted in our setting that a patriarchal authority structure—whether it be found in church, family, business, or the state—adequately reflects what men and women actually deserve. We do need to look at how societies create the kinds of people that inhabit them. But if we do that in a way that shows genuine concern for all of the kinds of people involved, we will see, according to Albrecht, that Hauerwas is insensitive to a range of vices that his form of traditionalism fosters.

When some feminists refer to their goal as the liberation of women, they seem to imply that their project involves taking away the social constraints that are now in place so that the real essence of women will be able to shine

forth for the first time. Albrecht recognizes, however, that there will always be some social constraints or other. You cannot just take away social constraints altogether. The question is what the social constraints are going to be, not whether there are going to be any. Whichever practices and institutions replace the current ones will in turn create the kinds of men and women there can be in that social setting. Hauerwas makes a similar point in some of his writings against liberation theology (e.g., AC, 50–58). If you get carried away with the ideal of liberation, he says, you end up thinking that the ultimate goal is to be freed from all social constraints. But a self that was freed from all social constraints would not be free to do much of anything. To be free to do most things that are worthwhile, one needs to acquire skills and habits by participating in practices and institutions. One becomes free to excel in soccer, jazz, essay writing, or cathedral building by participating in activities that place constraints on one's behavior, where not just anything one does counts as acceptable, where people of superior experience and accomplishment can serve as role models and offer criticism. The ideal of perfect freedom or complete liberation does not help us here. Hauerwas is right about all of this—if not always fair in characterizing the views of the "liberals" and "liberationists" he is criticizing.

His positive purpose in making this argument is to show that the categories of virtue, tradition, and narrative are crucial to ethics. He prefers these categories to the concept of liberation because he thinks they help him get at the question of what kinds of people our society is producing and the even more basic question of to what social practices and institutions we should be committed. Albrecht would grant that it is incoherent to strive for a society in which we would be completely free of constraining influences. If a young woman is going to become an excellent jazz musician, she will have to deal with standards of competence and excellence and strive to constrain her musical performances accordingly. She will be well served by apprenticing herself to someone more experienced and accomplished than herself and, up to a certain point in her development, by imitating models of excellence. But a prerequisite for becoming free to play jazz well is the freedom to play at all. Another is access to competent teachers who care about helping her get better and offer her encouragement. If the institutions currently in place deprive her of that opportunity because she is a woman, the constraints being placed on her will be constraints from which she needs to be freed. In other words, she will need to be liberated from the kinds of social constraints that either exclude women from social practices or inhibit their performance once they are allowed to engage in them. You can strive to be liberated from constraints of those kinds without thinking it is possible or desirable to do away with constraints altogether.

One thing women need to be liberated to participate in, I would argue, is the democratic practice in which we try to take responsibility, as a people,

for the activities and institutions that constitute our common life together. The institutions in question include the family, the firm, the market, the university, and the church. The practices include nurturing the young, the production and distribution of goods, the pursuit of learning, and worship. Hauerwas seems not to imagine this democratic, critical activity as a practice that involves the cultivation of virtues or the construction and telling of narratives.

He thinks of democratic questioning not as a valuable social practice, like jazz or baseball, but as one of the acids of individualism eating away at tradition. In his vision—and here it is MacIntyre's influence that matters—liberal democracy and tradition appear as opposites, necessarily opposed to each other. Because he thinks of them in this way, he slides into thinking that the only way to shape virtuous people is to favor the particular kind of premodern, authoritarian tradition he has in mind. In this book, I have been defending the notion that democratic questioning and reason-giving are a sort of practice, one that involves and inculcates virtues, including justice, and that becomes a tradition, like any social practice, when it manages to sustain itself across generations. I reject as incoherent the quest for a social situation completely free of constraints.[15] Freedom, in my view, is a kind of constraint by norms. The question before us, as I see it, is to what norms we are entitled to commit ourselves, given everything else we know. If, as I will argue in part 3, norms are creatures of social practices, then the question boils down to which practices and institutional arrangements we ought to foster. The choice is not between an incoherent quest for unconstrained existence, on the one hand, and authoritarian practices and hierarchical institutions, on the other. Nor, for that matter, is the choice between an ethics of conduct and an ethics of character, between deontic and aretaic considerations. Rules are important because they make explicit the normative constraints on conduct that arise in social practices and institutions. These normative constraints make possible specific kinds of expressive freedom, different roles and aspirations, and therefore different kinds of people. Reference to the virtues is important because it allows us to make explicit our ideals for judging the kind of people we have become, which in turn allows us to double back and ask whether changes are called for in social practices and institutions.

Commitment to democracy does not entail the rejection of tradition. It requires *jointly* taking responsibility for the criticism and renewal of tradition and for the justice of our social and political arrangements. As Hauerwas originally put the point when criticizing Yoder, it is doubtful that "any discriminating social judgments by the Christian can be made without buying in at some point to the language of justice" (VV, 219). The responsibility we share for the justice of our political arrangements inside of and outside of our religious communities not only concerns who gets to play what

roles; it also concerns what the basic roles and character types are going to be. Albrecht is saying that, in our day, taking responsibility for the social roles and character types in our social system raises the question of how we might adjust all of our practices and institutions so as to give shape to selves who are capable of treating women justly. This question was already on the minds of Mary Wollstonescraft, Harriet Martineau, and Virginia Woolf, none of whom aspired to a society absolutely free of constraint.[16]

Hauerwas, however, shows little interest in feminist complaints about what kinds of people our society produces and the roles it makes available to them. The role he is most interested in—and understandably so—is that of disciple. Discipleship, he might say, is open to all Christians. The trouble is that the normative constraints it involves are bound to be neglected unless the church can keep its mind on its own proper vocation. Even in the Middle Ages, according to Yoder, the mainstream church had already succumbed to the temptation of taking an essentially non-Christian interest in justice. The trouble started when the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. Suddenly, Christians were being asked to advise emperors on how to run an empire. When Catholic Christianity became the official religion of that empire, Yoder says, it lost connection with its true calling as a community of peace and hospitality intended to serve as a foretaste of God's kingdom. The Catholic attempt during the medieval period to run a world civilization on Christian principles of justice in fact made Christianity too much a thing *of* the world. Christian moralists found themselves addressing the odd question of how to rule empires and fight wars lovingly. According to Hauerwas, this tied them into all sorts of intellectual knots, including the talk of double-effect that lies at the core of just-war thinking. They became very adept at telling Christians where and when and how to coerce or kill somebody in the name of Christ.

All of this happened, Hauerwas claims, because Christians stopped caring enough about the implications of their own master narrative, which is a story about God's way of dealing with evil. What God does in response to the evils of the age is to suffer nonviolently on the cross in perfect virtue. This is the way of life (and sacrifice) to which Christians are called. Christians abandoned the ethos of the early church precisely when they started trying to rule society lovingly. All they were really doing when they did that was to place a veneer of love-talk over the realities of imperial violence. Christians who concern themselves nowadays mainly with the struggle for justice are simply the democratic descendants of Constantine. They are busy basting the rotten carcass of governmental violence with holy water, but succeed in changing neither the taste nor the smell of the thing.

It is not clear how Hauerwas proposes to combine this anti-Constantinian narrative with the antimodern narrative he takes over from MacIntyre. One difficulty in combining them, of course, is that they locate the crucial

dramatic reversal—the fall, if you will—in different places. Yoder locates it around the time of Constantine's conversion, whereas MacIntyre locates it around the time of Luther and Machiavelli. Perhaps Hauerwas wants to claim that the broader social world within which Christians find themselves has always had the disadvantage of being outside the City of God, but that its spiritual and ethical condition only worsened, horribly, in the modern period. Yoder, then, explains how the church became confused over its vocation. MacIntyre, on the other hand, explains how things got worse, morally and spiritually, for everyone outside of the church when liberals proposed to dispense with the kind of overall narrative framework that would allow them to make sense of their lives ethically. Pagans in the ancient world could at best exhibit splendid vices, given that they did not worship the true God, but at least they were trying to live virtuously in terms of a shared narrative framework. Their modern successors, having lost their grip on the concept of virtue and being content to live in a society that treats commitment to large-scale narratives as a private affair, are simply vicious.

By combining the two stories in something like this way, Hauerwas leaves the world outside the modern church in a doubly darkened condition. It is a world not only outside of the church, but also after virtue. As such, its vices are not splendid but especially ugly. It is this way of describing these vices that leads many of his readers to assume that he sees the world of liberal democracy as wholly lacking in grace. Notice, however, that Yoder intended his historical narrative as a criticism of the church, not as a criticism of the world. It was therefore possible, in principle, for Hauerwas to develop Yoder's conception of the church in a nondualistic direction, as seems to have been his intention in 1974. All he needed to do was to emphasize that the world, like the church, is a realm ordained and ruled by God—an arena in which those with the eyes to see can perceive the workings of God's gracious providence. He could reinforce this emphasis by adopting the Barthian view, discussed in chapter 4, above, that "the boundary between Church and the profane still and repeatedly takes a course quite different from that which we hitherto thought we saw." The main effect that MacIntyre's traditionalism has had on Hauerwas's thinking is to hinder the possibility of taking Yoder's "politics of Jesus" where he had once wanted to take it. For he seems no longer to be moving in the direction of a world-engaging conversation about the biblical injunction to build communities—ecclesial, familial, and national—in which justice and peace visibly embrace. One reason for this is that justice has largely dropped out of the picture. Another is that what Barth saw as an ever-shifting boundary between church and world appears to have hardened in Hauerwas's rhetoric into a rigid and static line between Christian virtue and liberal vice. It is clear that he does not intend to allow the boundary to harden in this way at the level of doctrine. But his antiliberal rhetoric can easily give the impression that the boundary has hardened in practice. In practical terms, Barth was engaged in a project quite unlike Hauerwas's. He wanted both to utter an absolutely unequivocal "No!" to Nazism and to counteract the tendency of the confessing church to believe that it could have the gospel without progressive politics.[17] Hauerwas utters his "No!" to liberalism, but there is little in his work that resembles Barth's active commitment to democracy and socialist reform.

A detailed doctrinal comparison of Hauerwas and Barth on the nature of the church would take us too far afield. In *The Peaceable Kingdom* (166–67 n. 5), Hauerwas quotes favorably from two passages in *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2. The first addresses the need for a humble conception of the church as "itself only a human society moving like all others to [Christ's] manifestation." The second asserts that "if the community were to imagine that the reach of the sanctification of humanity accomplished in Jesus Christ were restricted to itself and the ingathering of believers, that it did not have corresponding effects *extra muros ecclesiae*, it would be in flat contradiction to its own confession of its Lord." Hauerwas goes on to claim that a suitably humble conception of the church as "a natural institution in no way lessens the demands the church puts on any society in which it finds itself—not the least of which is the demand for the free preaching of the gospel." Barth, of course, as the principal author of the Barmen Declaration, would agree. More recently, however, Hauerwas has criticized Barth for denying the necessity of the church as a medium of faith and failing to account for the role its social practices play in the sanctification of believers.[18]

There is an important theological controversy developing here. From Barth's point of view, the issue is whether the church maintains a proper recognition of the distance between the human social practices it embodies and God's freedom to act graciously wherever and however he sees fit. From Hauerwas's point of view, the issue is whether the church can be given its due as a herald and foretaste of the kingdom of God. A Barthian critic might want to argue that Hauerwas's one-sidedly negative polemic against liberal society—his failure to distinguish what he calls liberalism from democracy—is the fruit of a theological error. But it seems to me that one could resist Barth's especially austere view of the church without endorsing Hauerwas's description of "the world" in its current form as an expression of "particularly pernicious" liberal ideas. His debt to MacIntyre's antiliberalism remains the key issue.

Many of Hauerwas's theologically orthodox critics welcome his call for increased emphasis on the visibility of the church, insofar as he offers a corrective to liberal and liberationist theological programs that tend to *reduce* the church to a movement for social democracy. They also welcome his bold criticisms of secularist liberalism as an ideology intent on exclud-

ing the voice of theology from public discussion. Their worry is that Hauerwas habitually expresses these valuable points in a way that threatens to vitiate his message. Several temptations are at issue: (1) an uncharitable attitude toward the world, especially in its democratic forms; (2) a failure to distinguish adequately between disappearing into the world and pursuing justice as a responsible member of one's national community; and (3) excessive pride in the visible church as a virtuous community. The first and third temptations combine to form another: (4) excessive certainty that one possesses the virtue of discernment, the capacity to tell the difference between the way of the world and the stirrings of the Spirit. The critics would not say that Hauerwas always succumbs to these temptations. The question is whether he is prepared, on the whole, to take sufficient care in guarding against them, especially in works designed to reach the broadest possible audience.

Recently Hauerwas remarked that people who think he writes too much should tell him which parts to leave out. The quip comes in the introduction to *In Good Company*, and it leads into a series of reflections that merit quotation.[19] Hauerwas says that there "are two standard criticisms against those who write a great deal: (1) we are repetitious, or (2) we are not careful" (IGC, 12). He adds:

> I do not believe, however, that my work is "careless" though I know what I am trying is risky and the risk is increased by my "contrarian" or polemical style. The risks I take are of the academic sort and, therefore, not all that "risky." I know that I recklessly cross academic lines, which makes me vulnerable to those who know "more," but given the task before theology I cannot conceive of any alternative. Such risks are minor given the challenges before the church. (IGC, 13)

This passage casts Hauerwas in the role of a taker of risks on behalf of a noble cause. It says that he is the one made vulnerable by his risky business, as if there were no danger here of misrepresenting his interlocutors or the society he is discussing. The risk he runs, he implies, is the merely "academic" one of feeling embarrassed when charged with wrongdoing by the academic border police.[20]

In a note connected to the same passage Hauerwas names his principal targets: "my 'contrarian' style is necessitated by my polemic against theological and political liberalism. The liberal, of both kinds, is committed to 'englobing' all positions into liberalism" (IGC, 224 n. 32). What Hauerwas does not face with sufficient candor is the fact that his desire to reduce all opponents to a single figure, "the liberal," gives him an interest in ignoring the details of what the targets of his critique actually say and do. Once they have been reduced in this way, the same arguments can be used on all of them. Reduction and repetition are both rhetorically intrinsic to the proce-

dure. The issue of interpretive charity, then, is whether he takes appropriate care to get his opponents right, to listen to what they are saying and observe what they are doing, before bagging them as argumentative quarry. And the opponents are not merely fellow intellectuals like Rawls, Niebuhr, and Albrecht, but his fellow citizens, who, by accepting his portrayal of them, may come to view the social world outside of the church as *merely* "pernicious" and forget how to trust and identify with one another. For an author of his prominence and style, the risks are not merely academic.

How would this be described in the Aristotelian language he often appropriates? It would be called "unfriendliness." The careless misrepresentation of others would be called "negligence," and repeated instances of the same behavior would be called a bad habit, a "vice." Yet he now has an audience larger than that of any other theological ethicist in the English-speaking world. Only a small percentage of his readers read the books he criticizes, so they can only applaud the amusing professor who defends virtue against the heathen. If Hauerwas were to leave out the passages in which he offends against the vocation of charitable interpretation, he would have to leave out a great deal. But the remaining parts would be both voluminous and valuable. I think especially of his extensive writings on care for the disabled and retarded, which express the sort of patience with deformity that I have praised in Whitman,[21] as well as his reflections on medicine and suffering and his many insightful contributions to virtue theory.[22] When he does not succumb to the temptation of repeating his diatribes against liberal society, he is often an imaginative and generous thinker.

Recall that one of the questions Hauerwas posed to Yoder in 1974 was how the pacifist church proposed to disentangle itself from complicity in the evils of the world so as to exemplify genuine virtue, given that killing is only the most obvious form of impropriety at issue. Here, too, the early Hauerwas is his own best critic, for he has done little to clarify how Christians are supposed to go about disentangling themselves from the liberal society and militarist state he denounces. A similar message of fidelity to the ethos of early Christianity would come across differently if spoken by a Dorothy Day, a Tolstoy, or even by an actual Mennonite. For, in those cases, the living example of the messenger constitutes the ethical substance of the message while also demonstrating exactly what must be sacrificed for the disentangling to count as authentic. In Hauerwas's case, it is hard to see that any nonverbal disentangling has been attempted at all.

A cynic might say that the secret of Hauerwas's vast influence in the church in the 1980s and 1990s lay in the imprecision of the sacrifice he appeared to be demanding of his followers. Surely he was not proposing that the strength of one's sentimental identification with the church could by itself secure noncomplicity with the evils of the world. His favorite patristic text appears to be Origen's *Exhortation to Martyrdom*.[23] But in the

absence of a clear statement of the price Christians must be willing to pay, his audience was able to indulge itself in fantasies of martyrdom without experiencing actual poverty or persecution at all. Many of Hauerwas's readers probably liked being told that they should care more about being the church than about doing justice to the underclass. At some level they knew perfectly well how much it would cost them to do justice. So they hardly minded hearing that justice is a bad idea for Christians. It was tempting to infer, half-consciously, that following Jesus involves little more than hating the liberal secularists who supposedly run the country, pitying poor people from a distance, and donating a portion of one's income to the church. Hauerwas has not done much to guard his readers against this temptation.

Votes cast by Christians influence the rate of taxation, the condition of the environment, the fate of the underclass, and the nature of foreign policy. Far from making this point effectively, Hauerwas relentlessly criticizes theologians who draw attention to it. They are guilty of diluting the wine of the gospel with the water of liberalism. The alternative, from his point of view, is to let the church be the church. The slogan is succinct, and it has caught on among those who find the "social gospel" of Christian liberalism thin. But there is no wisdom in replacing one reductive interpretation of the gospel by another. Reducing the gospel to democracy and reducing it to ecclesiology are hardly the only alternatives. Christians have every reason to concern themselves with the integrity of the church and with the question of what way of life it is meant to exemplify. Yet they are also, as Hauerwas once pointed out, members of families, unions, professions, colleges, ethnic groups, and nations. They are all active consumers, and many hold positions of influence in corporate and governmental bureaucracies. Christian ethics has traditionally taken all of these roles as falling within its scope, and made it its business to evaluate existing social arrangements in light of stringent standards of justice and love. In doing so, it has entered into conversations and alliances with groups outside of the church. In the modern era, the conversations have often been about democracy; the alliances have involved such aims as the abolition of slavery, the equal recognition of women, and the avoidance of cruelty. In his polemical writings, the ones that have made him famous, Hauerwas seems to see in all of this little more than a corruption of the gospel—the spoiled fruit of a misguided Constantinianism. His critics are struggling to articulate a more balanced view that would be more charitable both to the tradition of Christian ethics from Augustine to Barth and to the history of Christian political involvement from the Putney debates to the March on Selma.

The core of Hauerwas's anti-Constantinian teaching is absolute pacifism, justified on biblical grounds as a vocation of discipleship to Christ. Most of his readers have found this commitment hard to swallow, but they

have often been prepared to treat it as a side-issue, while focusing instead on his critique of liberalism. Hauerwas, to his credit, has long insisted on the centrality of pacifism to his outlook. He has not, however, made clear what his pacifism demands, practically speaking. Given that military conscription is no longer the law of the land, his followers face no governmental pressure to serve in the armed forces. He does not, as Hunsinger does, hold up Pax Christi, World Peacemakers, and the sanctuary movement as exemplary concrete practices. To my knowledge, he has advocated neither the withholding of taxes that finance the military, nor participation in costly acts of civil disobedience, nor refusal of communion to soldiers and their commanders. For this reason, Hauerwas's pacifism has often come across more as a quixotic gesture than as the demanding doctrine he intended it to be. If nothing much follows from it, what is there to worry about?

The social significance of his position appears to be changing, however, in the months since September 11, 2001. In the new political situation, pacifism as such is a controversial matter. To advocate it at a time when cells of terrorists are actively plotting the murder of one's fellow citizens is to place those citizens at risk. With the implications of his pacifism suddenly in clear focus, it is dawning on Hauerwas's audience that he is saying something they don't necessarily want to hear. Saying "Amen" to his jeremiad now requires more courage. Meanwhile, a rapidly widening rift has become visible between the quite different forms of traditionalism represented by Hauerwas and Neuhaus. With the latter lamenting the passing of Christendom, adding his blessings to militarism, and proclaiming America's providential role in global politics, it is becoming much harder for the new traditionalists to present a united front in opposing a society supposedly dominated by secular liberalism. What, in the end, do Hauerwas and Neuhaus agree on, aside from calling themselves Christians? The very thing that links them, ironically, to Islamic radicals—namely, the proposition that secular liberalism needs to be opposed because it destroys the tradition that inculcates true virtue. But it is now plain to all concerned that very different traditions are being proposed as remedies for secular liberalism's alleged deficiencies, even by those who speak for Christianity.[24] It would not be a bad time to question whether traditionalism provides an adequate critical vocabulary for diagnosing what has gone wrong with our society and for prescribing remedies, whether by peaceable or other means.

Hauerwas's theological ethics can succeed on its own terms only if it faithfully espouses the life and teachings of Jesus in their entirety. With the pacifism in his position receiving the emphasis he has always intended it to have, his main challenge will now be to explain more clearly than before why some apparently strict teachings from the New Testament warrant a rigorist emphasis while others do not. He has taken a clear stand against abortion, which is not mentioned in the New Testament but strikes him as

obviously incompatible with a commitment to nonviolence. Perhaps he has somewhere drawn morally rigorous conclusions on topics concerning which the New Testament would seem to be a costly teaching for many of the people in his audience—remarriage after divorce, for example, or the chances of a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. If so, the pronouncements have escaped my notice.[25] It is hard, at this point, to escape the conclusion that his ethics rests on an extremely selective reading of the Bible.[26]

The language of justice, which Hauerwas once prized as a way of being faithful to the biblical call to righteousness, is currently of paramount importance in the struggle against terrorism. It is the language one needs when explaining why we have just cause to bear arms against terrorists, why our armed forces should not be firing at civilians, and why we should not be supporting regimes that depend on us to thwart the democratic aspirations of their own people. And there are many other worthy purposes in social ethics for which this language seems essential—such as the critique of global capitalism, the reform of tax law, and the restructuring of familial roles. If Hauerwas were to stop thrashing his liberal straw man, rediscover the language of justice, and put that language to use in prophetic works of social criticism, his reviewers would surely stop charging him with sectarianism. And much good would ensue. He is as well positioned as any intellectual to pose the challenge of the twenty-first century to American Christians.[27]

Hauerwas wants to articulate the situated ethos of a living tradition, not a utopian ideal or categorical imperative based on pure reason. We have seen that the new traditionalism rejects the formalism of modern ethical theory. The reasons it offers resemble the ones Hegel invoked against Kant two centuries ago. Like Hegel, it seeks a *sittlich* alternative to formalism. It aims to make explicit the ethical life of a community. In this sense, it is expressivist. But what community is at issue here? The new traditionalism does not harbor the hope Hegel and Whitman had of articulating the self-consciousness of a nation. It finds modern society "*generally perverted*" by the "activity of individuality," and therefore aims to articulate the claims of "virtue" over against "the way of the world."[28] In doing so, as we have seen in the previous chapter, it must, however, resolve the problem of point of view. It must find a place *in* the modern world, but not *of* it. Otherwise it will lack an intelligible standpoint for its critique of that world. It does not want to adopt the posture of mere nostalgia. It therefore claims to make explicit the ethical substance of a *living* community of *premodern* virtue. For MacIntyre, the relevant community is a form of Thomistic Catholicism, and he can readily point to the parishes that embody this outlook. Hauerwas claims, with equal self-assurance, to be speaking for the actual church of communion, homilies, Bible study, and potluck dinners. But where are we to find the community of nonviolent discipleship he has in mind? He is a Methodist, not a Mennonite, and has strong ties to Catholicism. So

one wonders where he locates the visible legacy of the martyrs of the early church. Hauerwas is usually much less concrete than Hunsinger, who takes inspiration from the Barmen Declaration and holds up contemporary American examples of resistance and civil disobedience to clarify what it means to identify with the confessing church today. Hauerwas concludes his Gifford Lectures, *With the Grain of the Universe*, with a chapter entitled "The Necessity of Witness," in which he offers John Howard Yoder, John Paul II, and Dorothy Day as representatives of the church as he understands it. His reference to Day appears to have been an afterthought. It consists of only a single, brief paragraph (230) that does not even begin to come to terms with the politics of the *Catholic Worker*, whereas both Yoder and John Paul II are treated at some length. Nonetheless, it gives me hope that Hauerwas may be heading in a more promising direction.

In its Hauerwasian form, virtue's rejection of the way of the world leads to an unpleasant dilemma. On the one hand, the stronger its claim to represent virtue as distinct from the way of the world, the more quickly it degenerates into a form of "conceit" that cannot honestly be sustained. The actual church does not look very much like a community of virtue, when judged by pacifist standards. A large percentage of those who call themselves Christians favor capital punishment, the possession of nuclear weapons, and using force to defend their nation against terrorists. On the other hand, admitting that the community of virtue itself exhibits the vices it accuses the world of exhibiting causes the substance of virtue to evaporate into mere ideality, leaving it "a virtue in name only, which lacks substantial content." Either way, it is in danger of collapsing into something it purports to criticize. This is why Hauerwas has difficulty in articulating the "for" of his position as clearly as he articulates the "against." An extended, sensitive treatment of Dorothy Day and her politics would make the "for" both clearer and more concrete. It would also give Hauerwas an opportunity to retrieve his earlier commitment to the language of justice. So long as he shows little interest in persuading Christian citizens of their obligations to the least well-off, "the knight of virtue's own part in the fighting [will remain], strictly speaking, a sham-fight." Mere pacifism—in which the memory of distant martyrs and the vision of the peaceable kingdom are divorced from a visible practice of social justice—is "like the combatant who, in the conflict, is only concerned with keeping his sword bright."