SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
WAKE FOREST, NORTH CAROLINA

THE PRESENCE OF THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM:

SHAPING CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS FROM JACQUES ELLUL

AND STANLEY HAUERWAS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
PETER MICAH ANDERSON
MAY 2017

SOUTHEASTERN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

Ph.D. Dissertation Approval

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Dissertation Title:

THE PRESENCE OF THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM:
SHAPING CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS FROM JACQUES ELLUL
AND STANLEY HAUERWAS

This Dissertation has been approved.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my wife, Rachel, whose warm companionship, faithful encouragement, and constant presence continue to open my life to the riches of divine love revealed in Christ. To my children, Simon, Lydia Ivy, Annabelle, Gwendolyn, and my unborn son, whose affection, creativity, and joy have resuscitated my soul more times than I can count. Without my wife and children, I could not have endured to the end. To my brother, Joshua, whose life displays the riches of God's grace and His sovereign choice in drawing sinners back into fellowship.

To my parents, Daniel and Rosalie, who have lived out a firm, passionate faith in God for many years and established a home whereby I entered the school of Christian virtue. Their sacrifices for the kingdom have left a distinct mark on my way of life. To my siblings, both by blood and marriage: Jon and Sarah, Brian and Lisa, Ashe and Leah, Patrick and Audrey, Joshua and Jessica, Rebecca and Scott, Rebekah and Michael. To Bob and Kay, the greatest in-laws a man could ever know and love.

To Mark Farnham, whose mentorship and friendship exemplifies God's ongoing desire for his children to live in close fellowship. To Wesley Davey, Joshua Smith, and Matt Mullins, my friends and companions in the faith. To my major professor, Dr. Mark Liederbach, who has shown patience, forbearance, and trust in his drawing out the best of me throughout my doctoral studies. I hope this work is a small repayment of your

investment in me. To the members of Christ Church Rolesville, who worship faithfully, pray hopefully, and live lovingly.

And finally, to the one, true God who has blessed me with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. May the efforts here establish your church in faithfulness, awaken your people to a living hope, and move our lives into service out of your immeasurable love. May these past hours of toil be received as an acceptable sacrifice of worship and thanksgiving.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABQ	*American Baptist Quarterly*
ASCE	*The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*
ASSDR	*Archives de sciences sociales des religions*
AsTJ	*The Asbury Theological Journal*
AthI	*American Theological Inquiry*
AThR	*Anglican Theological Review*
BapTh	*Baptistic Theologies*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CD	Church Dogmatics
CGR	*The Conrad Grebel Review*
ChrCent	*Christian Century*
ChrCr	*Christianity and Crisis*
ChSo	*Church & Society*
CJH	*Canadian Journal of History*
ConJ	*Concordia Journal*
CovQua	*The Covenant Quarterly*
CroCur	*Cross Currents*
CulEnc	*Cultural Encounters*
Di	*Dialog*
EAud	*Ex Auditu*
Ecclesiology	*Ecclesiology*
EcRev	*Ecumenical Review*
EF	*The Ellul Forum*
Encounter	*Encounter*
ERTh	*Evangelical Review of Theology*
EthPer	*Ethical Perspectives*
EvQ	*The Evangelical Quarterly*
FaFr	*Faith and Freedom*
FaPhil	*Faith and Philosophy*
FirT	*First Things*
FoiVie	*Foi et vie*
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
Hum	*Humanitas*
IJPR	*International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*
IJPT	*International Journal of Public Theology*
ImpRe	*Implicit Religion*
Int	*Interpretation*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JEBapS	*Journal of European Baptist Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JPre	*Journal for Preachers*
JRefTh	*Journal of Reformed Theology*
JRel	*The Journal of Religion*

JRE	*Journal of Religious Ethics*
JSCE	*Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*
JSFSC	*Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care*
JTI	*Journal of Theological Interpretation*
JTSA	*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*
LEPhil	*Les Études Philosophiques*
LF	*L'Europe en formation*
LRA	*La Revue administrative*
LQ	*Lutheran Quarterly*
MoTh	*Modern Theology*
PhTo	*Philosophy Today*
Prism	*Prism*
ProEccl	*Pro Ecclesia*
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
RFDDIP	*Revue Française D'Histoire Des Idées Politiques*
RefJ	*Reformed Journal*
RePhil	*Recherches Philosophiques*
RevEx	*Review & Expositor*
ScEs	*Science et Esprit*
SCJ	*Stone-Campbell Journal*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SoJo	*Sojourners*
SwJT	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TET	*The Expository Times*
Them	*Themelios*
Théophilyon	*Théophilyon*
ThSt	*Theological Studies*
ThTo	*Theology Today*
TJ	*Trinity Journal*
WesThJour	*Wesleyan Theological Journal*
WW	*Word & World*
ZDT	*Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie*
Zy	*Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*

ABSTRACT

The need for holistic solutions to diverse problems presents the church with an opportunity for a social witness shaped by the gospel. As a step toward accomplishing this end, this dissertation aspires to establish a new paradigm for understanding Christian social engagement as fundamental expressions of the character of God through the virtuous witness of the church. To begin, chapter 1 contains the introduction to the dissertation, beginning with a statement of the thesis, namely, the church embodies a prophetic social ethic in the world through presence, possibility, and place as expressions of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Following the articulation of this thesis will be definitions of "faith," "hope", and "love." A proper understanding of these terms is crucial to the dissertation, and each will be elaborated further as the project progresses. This chapter closes with an overview of the project by explaining research methodology and brief chapter summaries.

Chapter 2 begins the explanation of the proposed virtuous social ethic: presence. Drawing together particular contributions from Ellul and Hauerwas to reveal how Christian faith enacted in social ethics requires the faithful ecclesial witness of God's people in the world. The goal of this chapter is to unpack this development by synthesizing particular emphases from the theological ethics developed by Ellul and Hauerwas. The resulting combination strengthens each respective position to encourage healthy Christian social presence from a disciplined theology of faithful presence.

Significantly, Ellul and Hauerwas' encourage Christian social witness is empowered by the revelational foundations of Scripture and biblical community. As well, the enduring witness of the church in the face of social instability, coercion, and injustice remains the peaceful paradigm of Jesus Christ. Only through genuine faith granted by the sovereign choice of God is the church able to maintain a prophetic and incarnational presence in the world. This chapter concludes by developing a theology of faithful presence revealed in the disciplined faithfulness of God's holy, redeemed people.

Chapter 3 moves from presence to possibility. The first part of this chapter explores how Ellul and Hauerwas see Christian hope driving and shaping the redeemed community. That is, joining Ellul's hopeful Christian freedom with Hauerwas' eschatological ethic encourages the church to embrace a broader vision for moral action. Such a living hope drives the Christian community to seek the substantive social good shaped by the dynamic awareness of God's lordship over all creation.

The second part of this chapter connects the wider moral vision developed from Ellul and Hauerwas with a mutual emphasis on localizing moral action. While hope shapes the Christian's global perspective, both Ellul and Hauerwas maintain the necessity of lived, localized, present social witness. Finally, this chapter proposes a new Christian realism based not on philosophical or rational categories but on an eschatological hope for human flourishing founded in Scripture, revealed by Jesus Christ, and enacted by the local church.

Chapter 4 moves to the third part of the proposed Christian social ethic: place. Through a loving relationship with the world, the church does not neglect cultural needs nor capitulate to social pressures but practices a dynamic commitment to Christ through

enacting God's love. Christian social ethics are thwarted before they begin without an effort to know and understand context.

The first part of this section examines the way Ellul and Hauerwas describe the love exemplified by the church in relationship with God and the world. Specifically, Ellul's emphasis on living in relationship with the world complements Hauerwas' commitment to truthful community and Christian presence among the sick and suffering. The second part of this chapter further unpacks the lived significance of the loving God's world. Ellul's dialectic social ethic emphasizing man's need for divine intervention, Hauerwas points to the practiced presence of Jesus as the church's path to loving social witness. As a synthesis of the first two sections of this chapter, the final section explores how the Christian living in loving relationship with the world demands a rich theology of place emphasizing personal relationship, apologetic disposition, and temporary expressions.

Chapter 5 will wrap up this study by providing review, final analysis, and areas for further study. The church has a divine responsibility to embody the goodness and character of God in the world. Yet, the church often reacts in extremes by cultural capitulation or sectarianism. In light of this, the church must develop a balanced approach to the cultivation and practice of Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love. Even more, in the face of social marginalization, the church must maintain a creative yet distinctly Christian approach to social ethics. The hope of this study is to provide a constructive analysis of proposals made by Jacques Ellul and Stanley Hauerwas in order to empower the church to rightly embody the character of God for the glory of God and the good of the world.

To Rachel

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Thesis

The thesis of this dissertation is that the church embodies a prophetic social ethic in the world through presence, possibility, and practice as expressions of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. The need for holistic solutions to diverse problems presents the church with an opportunity for a social witness shaped by the gospel. As a step toward accomplishing this end, this dissertation aspires to establish a renewed emphasis for understanding Christian social engagement as fundamental expressions of the character of God through the virtuous witness of the church.

To accomplish this, this dissertation will examine the social ethics of Jacques Ellul and Stanley Hauerwas as helpful voices in shaping a virtuous strategy for Christian social witness in the post-Christian era of the Western world. Combining the critical insights of Ellul and Hauerwas provides a mutual improvement of both ethical systems rising from similar foundations and objectives. This will be the primary research interest and the original contribution to the field as no such philosophy of Christian social ethics has been established from a synthetic analysis of Ellul and Hauerwas. Even more, this study will serve as an original exploration of Ellul's unrealized vision of crafting a Christian ethic based on the theological virtues.

My criterion for this specific approach rises from the shared moral vocabulary and similar approach to theological ethics by Ellul and Hauerwas. While coming diverse

perspectives, Ellul and Hauerwas offer each other a fresh conversation partner in exploring morality, virtue, and social presence.[1] Several points illumine this relationship by defining the beneficial and insightful connections between these two thinkers.

Overall, Ellul and Hauerwas evidence distinguishable overlap in their spirit and approach to virtue ethics and theology. Both men emphasize the ethical distinctiveness of peaceableness in the Christian community that, in turn, motivates much of their insightful socio-political and ecclesiological critiques.[2] Both Ellul and Hauerwas emphasize the church *being* or embodying an ethic rather than merely *possessing* an ethic. Both Ellul and Hauerwas point to the singularity of Jesus Christ in Christian witness, a means to establishing a living witness in the world. Finally, Ellul and Hauerwas recognize the essential role of a distinctly Christian morality as an indispensable component to living God's will in the world. Without the church knowing it is the church, the world cannot know it is the world.

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[1] Jacques Ellul, a French professor of jurisprudence, and Stanley Hauerwas, a self-declared high church Mennonite, are not immediately drawn into conversation. Historically, Ellul is compared with Kierkegaard, Barth, or Marx. For examples of such analysis see Clifford G. Christians and Jay M. Van Hook, eds., *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Jeffrey P. Greenman, Read Mercer Schuchardt, and Noah J. Toly, *Understanding Jacques Ellul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012); Lawrence Joseph Terlizzese, *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005); Andrew Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World: The Life and Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2002).For Hauerwas, comparison has been limited to such figures as John Howard Yoder, Karl Barth, Alisdair MacIntyre, Jürgen Moltmann, and even Friedrich Schleiermacher. For examples of such analysis see Ben C. Ollenburger and Gayle Gerber Koontz, eds., *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking* (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2004); Gerald W Schlabach, "Continuity and Sacrament, or Not: Hauerwas, Yoder, and Their Deep Difference," *JSCE* 27.2 (2007): 171–207; Arne Rasmusson, *The Church As Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Nicholas M. Healy, *Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); John Bromilow Thomson, *The Ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas: A Christian Theology of Liberation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

[2] Stanley Hauerwas cites Ellul's influence on his position on Christian non-violence and does not hesitate to mention he read Ellul extensively in his early years. Ellul's direct influence was discussed with Hauerwas in an email from Stanley Hauerwas on February 2, 2016.

While possessing strong similarities in spirit and approach, Ellul and Hauerwas evidence important differences in approach that expand and improve on key areas. That is to say, each figure offers the other means for helpful correction, adaptation, and analysis as individual strengths mutually offset critiques in their respective approaches to moral theology.

To elaborate, where Hauerwas is critiqued for sectarianism and tribalism, Jacques Ellul provides a timely voice emphasizing actionable Christian ethics with a specific warning against cultural pragmatism and technological subversion.[3] Where Ellul is criticized for a deficient ecclesiology, Stanley Hauerwas' ecclesial ethic emphasizes the church as an embodied ethic proclaiming the centrality of the biblical revelation of Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of church practice as an ethical paradigm sufficient for making moral decisions.[4] Critically engaged, this project partners a stronger development of virtue, revelation, and faithful community to complement the persuasive critiques supplied by Ellul and Hauerwas. Cooperatively analyzed, the provocative voices of Ellul and Hauerwas provide a constructive analysis for a critical yet faithful Christian social ethic.

As a combination of Ellul's *The Presence of the Kingdom* and Hauerwas' *The Peaceable Kingdom*, the project titling also represents a philosophical approach to this research. The church represents the peace of God offered to the world through Jesus

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[3] Ben C. Ollenburger and Gayle Gerber Koontz, eds., *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contributions to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking* (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2004); Arne Rasmusson, *The Church As Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Nicholas M. Healy, *Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); John Bromilow Thomson, *The Ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas: A Christian Theology of Liberation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); Gerald W Schlabach, "Continuity and Sacrament, or Not: Hauerwas, Yoder, and Their Deep Difference," *JSCE* 27.2 (2007): 171–207.

[4] Greenman, Schuchardt, and Toly, *Understanding Jacques Ellul*, 143.

Christ and the social implications wrapped within this reality provide a powerful social ethic. The political and social unrest can be faced down through the embodied virtue of the Christian community. Out of a thorough appreciation and critique of social and cultural setting, the church exercises a loving presence in an unstable world. In the face of complex social interactions, the church practices a realistic, local, and possible ethic as the living hope of the resurrected Christ. Through a powerful faith, the loving social ethic of the church remains active, engaged, and present to a divided world.

Definition of Terms

In order to properly orient this study, several key terms must be defined. Specifically, faith, hope, and love require further clarification and lay the foundation for rightly reading what follows. Understanding such terms rightly assists in capturing the nature and scope of this study.

Faith

In this dissertation, faith encompasses the Christian's total turning away from sin and toward God. Biblically, faith represents the harmony of belief in God and action for God.[5] Faith cannot be limited to merely the affirmation of a particular set of presuppositions or truth-claims but a total surrender to God and his will. Very simply, faith expresses the fundamental disposition or response of the human person to God and Christian faith supplies the basis whereby all other faiths are judged.[6] Christian faith is not limited to an intellectual assent to truth or factual categories but a total spiritual

[5] James 1:22–25; 2:17; 1 John 3:18.

[6] Charles R. Pinches, "Faith," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, November 1, 2011), 299.

transformation of human dispositions.[7] Such faith involves knowledge and assent alongside the way of life marked by the persistent practice of turning away from sin and self and toward God.

Hope

In general, hope drives a person into the future unavoidably tensile and unrealized amidst a given place, time, and set of experiences.[8] However, the hope developed in this dissertation retains a more specific focus. By understanding any existential tension as strong surety in the Triune God rather than general positivity, Christian hope signifies a distinct disposition schooled and shaped by a biblical understanding of God's sure promises revealed in Jesus Christ.[9] Distinguishing between true and false hope necessarily couches this virtue between an informed faith and a sacrificial love.[10] Tied to biblical notions of endurance and patience and shared with all creation, hope "fills the span between one coming of Christ and the next" focusing on the revealed reliability and eschatological promises of a sovereign God.[11]

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[7] Pinches draws attention to James 2:17–19 to emphasize this connection and provides biblical warrant for this definition. He writes, "The Greek noun *pistis* (verb *pisteuō*; adjective *pistos*) is used more than 240 times in the NT, with various nuances. Sometimes the verb *pisteuō* is rendered 'to believe.' Which connotes assent to certain truths. Yet one might hold the truth but lack faith. So James warns, 'You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder' (2:19). James concern is that faith not be merely cerebral or internal: 'Faith [*pistis*] by itself, if it has no works, is dead' 2:17."

[8] Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Robert Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 127.

[9] Charles R. Pinches, "Hope," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 375.

[10] The contextual significance of Paul's ordering in 1 Corinthians 13 should not go unnoticed but indicates the essential ordering of theological virtues from faith into hope and expressed in love. Pointing to the example of Abraham expounded in Romans 4, Pinches concludes, "Christian hope never stands alone; it is supported by, is almost interchangeable with, faith and love." Ibid., 375–376.

[11] Ibid., 376.

Love

In this dissertation, love begins and ends with God where one loves God for God's own sake, above all else, and all others in God.[12] Rather than merely an emotional disposition or even willful decision, proper love lives in right relationship with God, allowing will and emotion to be tamed by God's eternal Spirit for proper relationship with all other created order.[13] Biblical love is a self-giving commitment or devotion to God and fellow man.[14] Loving God demands a single-mindedness, obedience and worship; loving others demands sacrificial service without the motivation for personal gain.[15] Such love cannot be truly self-generated but flows in and through proper relationship with God.[16] Rightly loving God and neighbor serves as the most important commandment given by Jesus and a proper love for others depends upon a full, rich love for God.[17]

Importance, Contribution, and Originality of this Study

The presence of conflict between ethnic groups, differing social classes, and even differing notions of statehood reminds us of the need for meaningful Christian witness rather than cultural capitulation. The complexity of problems in the global village does

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[12] William C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 292; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1948), II–II, Q. 23, Art. 1.

[13] Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology*, 297–300.

[14] Robertson McQuilkin and Paul Copan, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics: Walking in the Way of Wisdom*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: IVP Academic, 2014), 31.

[15] Ibid.

[16] "We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:19–21 ESV).

[17] "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live'" (Luke 10:25–28 ESV).

not remove the responsibility to act in ways that alleviate suffering and promote the common good.[18] Christian theology provides a unique yet historical voice in contemporary society. The possibility for mutual cooperation among diverse ethnic groups, social demographics, and national loyalties grants the church a special opportunity to proclaim the person and work of Jesus Christ by promoting human flourishing through a robust and timely social witness. An awareness of contextual concerns and the possibility of meaningful action require a virtuous presence by the community of faith.

In a closely connected world spanning countries and continents, a healthy Christian social ethic furnishes a meaningful perspective by praising helpful and enlivening public practices while decrying exploitative structures. While Christian voices are increasingly unwelcome in the public sphere, the necessity for creative and loving dialogue remains essential for social well-being.

This study represents a unique opportunity to employ the insight of two critical figures in Christian ethics with specific interest in social ethics. On the one hand, Ellul is criticized for failing to outline the specific means for Christians to develop and shape Christian virtue as well as neglecting to spend significant effort outlining the communal realities of Christian ethics.[19] An abiding critique of Hauerwas proposes his social ethic is

[18] Marshall McLuhan coined the term "global village" to describe the effect of electronic technology in making the world a village connected by instantaneous and constant streams of information. For his full development, see Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, Centennial Edition. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Marshall McLuhan and W. Terrence Gordon, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Critical edition. (Berkley, CA: Gingko, 2003).

[19] Greenman, Schuchardt, and Toly, *Understanding Jacques Ellul*, 142–143.

not very "social" and leads to a dangerous sectarian ecclesiology.[20] This study seeks answer these critiques by showing the particular vision for Christian social witness developed within Ellul and Hauerwas—when interpreted through the grid of presence, possibility, and practice—coordinate to encourage an enlivening social presence even in liberal democracies in the Western world. Indeed, the particular social witness developed will encourage a distinctly Christian presence in the face of social injustices. To my knowledge, a synthetic study of these two thinkers does not currently exist.

In Ellul studies, several works address the general shape and significant themes in Ellul's thought yet do not direct their research specifically toward identifying, expositing, and framing the social ethic of Ellul. Daniel Clendenin focuses on theological method but does not address social ethics.[21] David Gill examines Ellul's use of the Bible in his ethics but does not attempt to frame Ellul's ethics.[22] Lawrence Terlizzese proposes hope as the central theme and hermeneutical key to rightly appreciating the misunderstood negativity within Ellul but does not spend significant time unpacking ethical implications.[23] Jeffrey Greenman's work is aimed at bringing an accessible introduction to key ideas within Ellul studies without great depth of research in any one area.[24] Darrell Fasching does address the social implications of Ellul's ethic, yet he is primarily interested in defending

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[20] Jeffrey Polet, "Being 'Other Cheeky': Moral Hazard and the Thought of Stanley Hauerwas," *Hum* 22.1/2 (2009): 99–124; Michael J. Quirk, "Beyond Sectarianism?," *ThTo* 44.1 (1987): 78–86; Charles Pinches, "Considering Stanley Hauerwas," *JRE* 40.2 (2012): 193–201; Michael S. Northcott, "Reading Hauerwas in the Cornbelt: The Demise of the American Dream and the Return of Liturgical Politics," *JRE* 40.2 (2012): 262–80.

[21] Daniel B. Clendenin, *Theological Method in Jacques Ellul* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987).

[22] David W. Gill, *The Word of God in the Ethics of Jacques Ellul* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1984).

[23] Terlizzese, *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul*.

[24] Greenman, Schuchardt, and Toly, *Understanding Jacques Ellul*.

Ellul's critique of the technological society rather than the overall social witness gleaned from Ellul's way of thinking.[25] Andrew Goddard provides a detailed introduction to Ellul's work and touches on very important themes in social ethics (i.e. violence, law, and state and politics) but my study seeks to establish an overall paradigm for Christian social ethics as partially gleaned from Ellul rather than defining, explaining, and outlining key themes.[26]

My research will certainly draw on Ellul's sociological critiques but is not a direct defense of his entire project *per se*. I hope to reaffirm a distinctly Christian social ethic consistent with Ellul himself but not directly defending his entire project. Even more, I hope to be much more specific than previous works on the social implications of Ellul's ethics.

For Hauerwas, several key works identify the possibilities within Hauerwas literature for Christian social ethics without identifying either the synergy with Jacques Ellul or the direct connection with Hauerwas' emphasis on virtue.[27] Samuel Wells and Arne Rasmusson address the various levels of the sectarian charge often directed at Hauerwas yet without extensive recognition of the direct implications such a charge has on Christian social ethics in Hauerwas. Wells notes the charge along with the main proponents then supplies Hauerwas' response with insights on this particular response. Rasmusson examines the sectarian charge strictly through political lenses with interest in

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[25] Darrell J. Fasching, *The Thought of Jacques Ellul: A Systematic Exposition* (Toronto: Edwin Mellen, 1981).

[26] Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*.

[27] Healy, *Hauerwas*; Robert J. Dean, *For the Life of the World: Jesus Christ and the Church in the Theologies of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Stanley Hauerwas* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016); Rasmusson, *The Church As Polis*; Samuel Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny: The Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

rescuing Hauerwas from the potential political consequences of Hauerwas' position. Nicholas Healy spends his work critiquing the ecclesiological center in Hauerwas' work not discounting Hauerwas' social ethics but rather his thin theological foundations, using his study as an attempt to prove Hauerwas as an heir to Schleiermacher.[28] Miika Tolonen develops Hauerwas' social ethics in a Nordic context with specific attention paid to an embodied ecclesiology emphasizing truthfulness and nonviolence as essential components in Christian ethics yet there is not extensive attention paid to Hauerwas' emphasis on virtue.[29] Finally, John Thomson examines Hauerwas' emphasis on Christian liberty and freedom in his ecclesiology noting significant influence by Karl Barth in order to focus on how Hauerwas develops notions of power and authority without attention to the implications in social ethics or virtue studies.[30]

Several edited volumes also attempt to address various topics in Hauerwas' thought though they do so with mixed success.[31] Mark Nation and Samuel Wells' edited volume on Hauerwas' theological ethics consists of articles inspired by key concepts within Hauerwas' thought (e.g. virtue, politics, violence, medicine, etc.) but the chapters

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[28] Healy's critique is a helpful one and affords an opportunity for this study to clarify the ethical power inherent in Hauerwas' approach. Yet Healy's approach largely misses the point as he does not answer Hauerwas on his own terms. Rather, Healy simply offers the necessary outcomes of his own theological presuppositions, presuppositions of a kind frequently criticized by Hauerwas. For example, Healy's "non-theological" response represents the bare logic criticized in Hauerwas' entire ethical project. See Healy, *Hauerwas*, 73–99. Through an exploration of the social significance of Hauerwas' ecclesial ethic, this study seeks to respond to Healy's critiques in some small measure.

[29] Miika Tolonen, *Witness Is Presence: Reading Stanley Hauerwas in a Nordic Setting* (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2014).

[30] Thomson, *The Ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas*.

[31] Mark Thiessen Nation and Samuel Wells, eds., *Faithfulness and Fortitude: Conversations with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000); Charles R. Pinches, Kelly S. Johnson, and Charles M. Collier, eds., *Unsettling Arguments: A Festschrift on the Occasion of Stanley Hauerwas's 70th Birthday* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010); L. Gregory Jones, Reinhard Hütter, and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, eds., *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2005).

mostly interact with sources other than Stanley Hauerwas himself.[32] This study would seek to provide insights for Christian social actions by directly interacting with Ellul and Hauerwas and harmonizing their work as beneficial voices speaking from the margins of Christian social presence for the life and health of the church and the world.

Research Methodology

My method for research will be as follows. Firstly, I will engage in a close reading of both Jacques Ellul and Stanley Hauerwas focusing on specific interrelationships converging around Christian social ethics and ecclesiology as such discussions represent critical notions for establishing a Christian social ethic. Specifically, Ellul's ethical writings *The Presence of the Kingdom*, *To Will and To Do*, and *The Ethics of Freedom* provide an excellent description of Ellul's Christian social ethics but I will not limit my interactions to these texts if the project dictates interaction with his other works.[33] For Hauerwas, paying close attention to his key ethics texts *The Peaceable Kingdom*, *The Community of Character* and *Resident Aliens* will be essential to understand the ecclesial focus of his theological ethics and the sectarian criticism.[34] As such, exploring Hauerwas' *Vision and Virtue, Against the Nations, In Good Company*, and *Christians Among the*

[32] Colin Gunton's chapter very clearly shows this confusing reality. His section on virtue begins with a scholarly head nod to Hauerwas then quickly transitions into a conversation with an entirely different author. See Colin Gunton, "The Church as a School of Virtue? Human Formation in Trinitarian Framework," in *Faithfulness and Fortitude: Conversations with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000), 211–32.

[33] Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, trans. Olive Wyon, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989); Jacques Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, trans. C. Edward Hopkin (Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1969); Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976).

[34] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991); Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, exp. 25th anniv. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2014).

Virtues will also be fruitful for these are his attempts to answer the sectarian criticisms and provide a positive construction of Christian social action.[35]

Secondly, after a thorough analysis of the Ellul and Hauerwas' development of the theological virtues in Christian social ethics, I will synthesize Ellul and Hauerwas, creating a complementing, sometimes competing, but always enriching contribution. After offering such a synthesis and critical interaction, each chapter affords an opportunity for establishing particular conclusions or outcomes for Christian social ethics, emphasizing the unique contributions of Ellul and Hauerwas. Furthermore, this project takes a continental approach in analysis, representing an exploration in Ellulian and Hauerwasian thinking, emphasizing the contributions of allowing both streams of thought to expand, critique, and correct the other.

Ultimately, this project seeks a synthetic analysis of Ellul and Hauerwas in order to constructively address the need for Christians to live well in a sinful world.[36] The analysis and critique of this study are intentionally more constructive than deconstructive in an effort to build a virtuous social ethic rather than tear down existing methodologies present in Ellul and Hauerwas. While certain adaptations or clarifications within Ellul and Hauerwas might be required, the efforts of this study are to take insightful notions related to faith, hope, and love and combine them for a mutually beneficial synthesis.

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[35] Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Stanley Hauerwas, *Against the Nations* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues*.

[36] My approach is quite similar to David K. Clark's efforts to craft a carefully stated "middle" way between apparently competing positions. David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Crossway, 2010), xxv.

Indeed, in an era of increased social polarization, unity and cooperation must first begin in the household of God in order to testify of the sincere unity granted by Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, having established the criteria and common ground for this synthetic critique, this study will seek to develop a virtuous Christian social ethic emphasizing faithful presence, hopeful possibility, and loving practice as expressions of the theological virtues and fundamental components to Christian moral witness. This study will allow the ecclesial focus of Stanley Hauerwas and the ethical praxis of Jacques Ellul to balance the discussion as well as proposing a healthy, virtuous paradigm for creative yet faithful Christian social ethics.

While Ellul and Hauerwas offer insightful ethical studies, no single focus stands without the need for slight correction or clarifications creating an opportunity for additional support for Ellul and Hauerwas as necessary. As well, the proposed tripartite approach provides a charitable and unique thematic reading of Ellul and Hauerwas while also enacting the social implications of their life and writing.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 begins the explanation of the proposed virtuous social ethic: presence. Drawing together particular contributions from Ellul and Hauerwas to reveal how Christian faith enacted in social ethics requires the faithful ecclesial witness of God's people in the world. The goal of this chapter is to unpack this development by synthesizing particular emphases from the theological ethics developed by Ellul and Hauerwas. The resulting combination strengthens each respective position to encourage healthy Christian social presence from a disciplined theology of faithful presence.

Significantly, Ellul and Hauerwas' encourage Christian social witness is empowered by the revelational foundations of Scripture and biblical community. As well, the enduring witness of the church in the face of social instability, coercion, and injustice remains the peaceful paradigm of Jesus Christ. Only through genuine faith granted by the sovereign choice of God is the church able to maintain a prophetic and incarnational presence in the world. This chapter concludes by developing a theology of faithful presence revealed in the disciplined faithfulness of God's holy, redeemed people.

Chapter 3 moves from presence to possibility. The first part of this chapter explores how Ellul and Hauerwas see Christian hope driving and shaping the redeemed community. That is, joining Ellul's hopeful Christian freedom with Hauerwas' eschatological ethic encourages the church to embrace a broader vision for moral action. Such a living hope drives the Christian community to seek the substantive social good shaped by the dynamic awareness of God's lordship over all creation.

The second part of this chapter connects the wider moral vision developed from Ellul and Hauerwas with a mutual emphasis on localizing moral action. While hope shapes the Christian's global perspective, both Ellul and Hauerwas maintain the necessity of lived, localized, present social witness. Finally, this chapter proposes a new Christian realism based not on philosophical or rational categories but on an eschatological hope for human flourishing founded in Scripture, revealed by Jesus Christ, and enacted by the local church.

Chapter 4 moves to the third part of the proposed Christian social ethic: practice. Through a loving relationship with the world, the church does not neglect cultural needs nor capitulate to social pressures but practices a dynamic commitment to Christ through

enacting God's love. Christian social ethics are thwarted before they begin without an effort to know and understand context in order to live the love of Christ in tangible ways.

The first part of this section examines the way Ellul and Hauerwas describe the love exemplified by the church in relationship with God and the world. Specifically, Ellul's emphasis on living in relationship with the world complements Hauerwas' commitment to truthful community and Christian presence among the sick and suffering. The second part of this chapter further unpacks the lived significance of the loving God's world. Ellul's dialectic social ethic emphasizing man's need for divine intervention, Hauerwas points to the practiced presence of Jesus as the church's path to loving social witness. As a synthesis of the first two sections of this chapter, the final section explores how the Christian living in loving relationship with the world demands a rich theology of partipation emphasizing personal relationship, apologetic disposition, and temporary expressions.

Chapter 5 will wrap up this study by providing review, final analysis, and areas for further study. The church has a divine responsibility to embody the goodness and character of God in the world. Yet, the church often reacts in extremes by cultural capitulation or sectarianism. In light of this, the church must develop a balanced approach to the cultivation and practice of Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love. Even more, in the face of social marginalization, the church must maintain a creative yet distinctly Christian approach to social ethics. The hope of this study is to provide a constructive analysis of proposals made by Jacques Ellul and Stanley Hauerwas in order to empower the church to rightly embody the character of God for the glory of God and the good of the world.

CHAPTER 2
PRESENCE: FAITHFUL ECCLESIAL WITNESS

Understanding the place of the theological virtues in Christian social action begins with noting how faith shapes the Christian's social presence. This chapter begins this process through a study of faithfulness, community, and witness in the theological ethics of Jacques Ellul and Stanley Hauerwas. Drawing together particular contributions from Ellul and Hauerwas reveals how Christian faith enacted in social ethics requires the faithful ecclesial witness of God's people in the world. The goal of this chapter is to unpack this development by synthesizing particular emphases from the theological ethics developed by Ellul and Hauerwas. The resulting combination strengthens each respective position to encourage healthy Christian social presence from a disciplined theology of faithful presence.

The thesis of this chapter is that the Christian virtue of faith demands the church pursue incarnational presence through the peaceful practices and communal realities of a distinctly Christocentric ecclesiology. The first part of this chapter examines how faith and faithfulness as developed in Ellul and Hauerwas establishes a foundation for living a virtuous life described as faithful ecclesial witness. The first section of this chapter highlights the first concept, faithfulness from Ellul and Hauerwas. Two particular aspects frame this discussion.

First, Ellul's emphasis on election to vocation highlights how deeply the faithful presence of the church depends upon the sovereign faithfulness of God. Ellul rightly

points out how Christian existence granted by the free choice of God requires the church to embody a prophetic and incarnational presence in the world. The totality of Christian moral witness relies upon the gracious presence of God revealed by Jesus Christ. After all, it is God who works in man to both will and to do for His good pleasure.[1]

Second, Hauerwas emphasizes faithfulness as a holy vision granted through relationship with God, uniting the reality of life in Christ with the truth of living in the world. Hauerwas' focus on the spiritual requirements for seeing and obeying God's commands grants significant insight. Indeed, as Hauerwas rightly asserts, God faithfully shapes and forms his people as a community enabled to be present in and for the life of the world.

Alongside the positive contributions of Ellul and Hauerwas, two particular points require nuanced appreciation in order to synthesize the corresponding development of virtue and faithfulness. For Ellul, the connection between election to vocation and universalism raises significant issues in light of a fuller appreciation of the soteriological foundations of Christian ethics. For Hauerwas, a stronger appreciation for the normative realities of Christian moral practices would further deepen the already significant contribution of his rich appreciation for sanctified moral vision.

While the first section of this chapter examines faithfulness in Ellul and Hauerwas, the second part of this chapter explores the ecclesial center of Christian social ethics. Specifically, through a shared emphasis on *being* a Christian in community rather

[1] Ellul's ethical prolegomena makes use of this phrase from Philippians 2:13. A central pillar of Ellul's argument in *To Will and To Do* is God's centrality to establishing, forming, and shaping all Christian ethics. Ellul, *To Will and To Do*.

than merely *doing* the right thing both Ellul and Hauerwas reinforce the biblical demands for righteous living. Two areas explain and broaden this helpful distinction in their work.

First, both Ellul and Hauerwas accentuate the church *as* an ethic rather than merely *having* an ethic, necessitating a unity of theology and ethics. Christian virtues are fully revealed in Scripture and can only be understood theologically. Thus, the church must avoid separating the knowledge of God's character from the practice of God's presence. Hauerwas, in particular, emphasizes the life of Christ as the essential context for fully understanding the commands of Christ.

Secondly, Ellul and Hauerwas share a dependence upon God's revelation for an explanation of life, practice, and character. By proclaiming the kingdom of God as a worshipping community, Ellul and Hauerwas seek to unseat the destructive forces of moral individualism, pure rationalism, and perceived philosophical neutrality in moral discourse. In place of bare individualism, both men lead the way to a fuller appreciation of how the faithful community united together should embody a faithful social ethic. As a result, their shared emphasis leads to a virtue cultivated by biblically informed practice descriptive of God's character. In life and practice, the church demonstrates the righteousness of God. Ellul and Hauerwas rightly point out how maintaining faithful presence depends upon the revelation of God and any hopes for a clear witness rest in embodying God's declarations for the church and the world.

While Ellul and Hauerwas state a strong commitment to biblical revelation throughout the development of an ecclesial-centered ethic, a deeper appreciation for the hermeneutical tensions between the biblical text and the reading community would enrich their emphasis. Instead of Ellul's transcendental hermeneutic and Hauerwas' postliberal

hermeneutic, a proper reading of Scripture integrates the world of the text, the world of the reader, and the world of the author for a more balanced application of Scripture in moral reflection.[2] Such an integrated reading allows ethical reflection to honor both the significance of the moral community and Scripture's authority.

The third part of this chapter grows out of the faithful church explored in parts one and two and completes the unifying theme of this chapter, faithful ecclesial presence. Specifically, Ellul and Hauerwas point to Jesus Christ as the definitive revelation of the character and direction of the faithful community's presence. Two specific notions developed in Ellul and Hauerwas reveal this focus**.**

First, Hauerwas highlights how the social significance of Christ's life, death, and resurrection offer a powerful public testimony for the church to emulate. He points to the practice of the Christian faith as necessarily social with far-reaching implications for ethical action built upon Jesus Christ, the author and sustainer of the faithful community. Hauerwas rightly engages the lived realities of the gospel yet his focus on orthopraxy longs for a deeper recognition of the connections between right belief and right action.

Second, both Ellul and Hauerwas point to the peaceful Christian response to violence as a substantive moral language for a sanctified social witness. In contrast to man's tendency toward destruction and violence, the church's peaceableness voices God's truth through life and practice in a deceptive world subverted by Satan's Edenic subterfuge. As a convincing social testimony, the faithful community's capacity for

[2] W. Randolph Tate offers a helpful grid for analyzing the particular approached developed by Hauerwas and Ellul as well as offering a helpful way forward. See W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 3rd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008).

creative peace informed by biblical categories proclaims Christ's victory over the powers of this world.[3]

Ellul and Hauerwas supply a helpful perspective on the enduring witness of the church in the face of violence, coercion, and injustice through the peaceful paradigm of Jesus Christ. With such positive contributions in mind, the moral significance of peaceableness in Hauerwas and Ellul deserves to be strengthened by an integration of their insights into the larger concerns of Christian social witness. Understood within the overall biblical development of Christian morality, Ellul and Hauerwas provide a stirring reminder of the reconciling power of the gospel.

The final section of this chapter briefly frames a vision of faith in social ethics crafted from the previous discussions from Ellul and Hauerwas. Specifically, faithful social ethics requires a disciplined theology of virtuous presence growing out the ecclesial center of ethics through the Christological focus of the faithful community. Taken alongside nuanced approaches to soteriology and hermeneutics, their shared emphasis on grace, sovereignty, and holiness assists in guiding Christian virtue.

As Ellul and Hauerwas point out, faith is a holiness involving a separation from the world to God. Yet any separation must not be irresponsible otherworldliness but rather disciplined presence. The faithful church cannot avoid the social responsibilities of virtue but gladly accepts the responsibilities of the disciplined life of faith. The church

[3] In this vein, Ellul and Hauerwas join together with John Howard Yoder on the nature and source of Christian ethics. While Hauerwas draws heavily from Yoder, and never denies such a connection, Ellul precedes Yoder and Hauerwas chronologically while also providing similar claims regarding peace, ethics, and violence. For a fuller development of Yoder's Christocentric ethic, see John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

faithfully establishes a meaningful presence in the world through the virtuous practices of Christian community.

Faithful: The Theology of Virtuous Presence

Exploring the virtue ethics of Ellul and Hauerwas reveals the place of faithfulness in the Christian social action. Two particular points are especially helpful in revealing this theme. First, Ellul's focus on election to vocation provides a helpful perspective in establishing an ethic based upon God's grace, which sustains the faithful Christian life. Ellul's emphasis also provides a helpful reminder that moral action is taken as the natural expression of a redeemed way of life empowered by the Holy Spirit rather than the simple acknowledgment of particular moral propositions.[4]

Second, communal virtue plays a critical role in Hauerwas' development of the moral life and supplies a helpful perspective on the unique communal identity supplied by Jesus Christ for his people. Through his emphasis on the church, Hauerwas creates an excellent foundation for appreciating the importance of the virtuous community in social ethics. Holy vision granted through communal relationship with God the Father, Son, and Spirit unites the reality of life in Christ with the truthfulness required for living in the world.

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[4] Mark Saucy also points to the growth of grace empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual change graciously granted in the gospel develops a moral community capable of virtuous living. He writes, "The new covenant's hope for a new heart deeply impressed with the awareness of God's favor and love by the Spirit provides insight into the psychological processes that direct the disciple's transformation into the image of Christ…. Engaged by the personal Spirit who brings the grace of God in the face of Jesus to us, our heart answers by taking in and conforming itself to the one who loves it. The result is a process whereby believers themselves can join to work out their salvation (Phil. 2:12) as they consciously place the reality of Christ before their hearts. The dialogic nature of our relationship with God provided in the new covenant moves in an ever-deepening spiral of knowledge that both shapes and moves our hearts." Mark Saucy, "Personal Ethics of the New Covenant: How Does the Spirit Change Us?," *EvQ* 86.4 (2014): 356–357.

Ellul's emphasis on election to vocation points to the significance of God's sovereignty in Christian social ethics but also draws attention to the troubling soteriological foundations for his position. That is, Ellul's universalism reveals the need to clarify the relationship between the sovereignty of God and the election of a people for service and faithfulness in the world. Indeed, Ellul's universalism does not completely undermine his contribution to Christian social ethics but does reveal the necessity for clearer commitment to the moral significance of the church's singular redemption.

Alongside a helpful critique of Ellul's universalism, Hauerwas' communal focus also deserves some careful adaptation. Specifically, Hauerwas' position lacks a strong appreciation for the normative realities of Christian moral practices that would further deepen his significant contribution to social ethics. Nevertheless, when taken with particular adaptations, Ellul and Hauerwas provide a contribution to a deeply faithful witness depending upon a God who shapes and informs his people, enabling his people to be present in and for the life of the world. After all, the genesis, cultivation, and continuation of a faithful Christian social witness begin and end in God alone. Faithful presence depends upon the sovereign faithfulness of God, acting as the firm foundation whereby the community lives virtuously. Through genuine faith granted by the free choice of God the church maintains a prophetic and incarnational presence in the world.

Ellul's Election to Vocation

Ellul's emphasis on election to vocation highlights how deeply the moral witness of the church depends upon God himself. Faithful presence in the world can only be employed because of the sovereign grace of God. As well, Ellul points out that the Christian's faith

is completely dependent upon God's faithfulness to rightly embody a prophetic and incarnational presence in the world.

Sovereign Grace in Christian Social Ethics

Ellul's emphasis on election to vocation grants clarity in applying his understanding of God's sovereign grace to his development of morality and ethics.[5] For Ellul, God redeems mankind for service in the world as those no longer dominated by sin, alienated from God, and fated for death. Instead of separation, God grants genuine and radical freedom through the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.[6] Ellul writes, "Jesus Christ as Lord makes it clear that what is established is not divine authoritarianism but freedom. In Jesus Christ, who is fully obedient and also fully free, the will of God is freedom."[7] While the effects of Eden are not totally removed in the current situation, God's sovereign action in Christ totally reconciles man to God.[8] Ellul emphasizes the free and gracious action of God opening man to the possibility of living well in the world.

While the work of Christ restores fellowship between God and man, Ellul also points out how God's reconciling movement toward man does not rely upon man's faith or on the repristination of human existence but the free decision of God.[9] Mankind still suffers the consequences of sin but the Christian works tirelessly to allow the lordship of Christ to affect his daily life.[10] The freedom granted by God's decision grants the

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[5] As will be noted at the end of this section, Ellul's understanding of sovereign grace provides a very helpful starting point for reflection on moral action. However, his insistence on applying sovereign grace to all mankind presents considerable doctrinal difficulties.

[6] Saucy, "Personal Ethics of the New Covenant," 356–357.

[7] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 14.

[8] Ibid., 79.

[9] Ibid., 80.

[10] Ibid., 82.

Christian power to live and act according to God's good will. Living in this tension between human responsibility and divine decision, the church provides a faithful testimony to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of God's gracious action, mankind is granted the gift of freedom in Christ displayed by the actions of the life of faith.

The life of faith grows out of dynamic relationship with a faithful God freely ordaining a unique people to witness his goodness, grace, and design to the world. Christian ethics is no longer a decision of solely means or ends but of fulfilling God's will. God's unwavering commitment to his people preeminently revealed in Jesus Christ unites the means and ends of Christian social ethics. Ellul writes,

> The point at which we ought to start is that in the work of God the end and the means are identical. Thus when Jesus Christ is present the Kingdom has 'come upon' us. This formula expresses very precisely the relation between the ends and the means. Jesus Christ in his incarnation appears as God's means, for the salvation of man and for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, but where Jesus Christ is, there also is this salvation and this Kingdom.[11]

The life of Christ in the life of the church enables a unique presence indicative of God's gracious actions for the world.

Even more, Ellul emphasizes the potency of Christian social witness depends upon the ongoing practice of vocational loyalty to God's purposes for his church. By looking ahead to a future guaranteed by God himself, the Christian freely embodies virtue as an expression of the divine calling.[12] Ellul writes,

> Projected thus into the authentic future, pressing on ahead, the Christian is not simply moving toward socio-political fulfillment nor is he merely engaged in man-made progress. He is pressing on to the kingdom of God, which, even as he advanced toward it, he has to manifest in the cultural and socio-political context,

[11] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 64.
[12] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 142.

> as he has also to manifest grace of liberation from self in personal commitment to the ever new vocation which he has from God.[13]

Furthermore, the freeing power of God's choice does not absolve mankind of social responsibility but rather demands a specific way of life.[14] Christian freedom through God's election is a freedom for service to God.[15] Ellul's understanding of divine election moves man from arrogantly standing against God to humbly facing toward God, opening the way for lived morality impossible without God's enabling. Through genuine faithfulness granted by the sovereign choice of God the church maintains an incarnational presence in the world.

God's Faithfulness and the Christian's Actions

For Ellul, election also relates to faithfulness and moral action because Christian vocation enables social participation that cannot be fulfilled by any other human being.[16] Only the Christian possesses the resources to accomplish the biblical moral vision. God sends the Christian into the world as salt, light, and sheep acting as a sign of God's redemption, lighting the way to God in the midst of perilous and violent times.[17] Such a situation puts the Christian in agonistic tension, living in between the kingdom of heaven and the world. Yet such tension ought not prevent Christian action. On the contrary, the Christian faithfully practices the necessities of witness by embodying the inspired and timely methods of service. As such, Christian vocation cannot be limited to the interior of life

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 176.
[15] Ibid., 120.
[16] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 3.
[17] Ibid., 3–4.

but revolutionizes outward responsibilities to live in, improve, and sanctify the world for the glory of God.[18]

As Ellul notes, faithful Christian service to the world represents action for the world based upon the freedom of God. The faithful community plays a unique role in the world that ought not be changed. Otherwise, the distinctiveness of Christian social witness becomes confused with man's methods for solving social problems. Ellul explains, "In this situation, it is not our instruments and our institutions which count, but *ourselves*, for it is ourselves who are God's instruments; so far as the church and all its members are God's 'means' they ought to constitute the presence of the 'end' which is characteristic of the Kingdom."[19] Because of the truth revealed in Christ, the presence of virtuous community lives in prophetic relationship with established social structures.[20]

The strength in Ellul's development of election to vocation resides in his foundational commitment to faith in action. The progress of the Christian walk dictates living out the redemptive realities of God's grace. When expositing James 1 Ellul writes,

> The first step was the new birth (1:18). The second was listening to the Word (1:19). The next step is putting this Word into practice (1:22). These three steps belong together because the life in Christ is one. Because we are born anew, we are called to live, and thus to act. Doing so involves putting things into practice. In the same vein, those who do not act do not live; and we will encounter this several times in the letter of James.[21]

The close connection between God's redemptive action and the Christian's new way of life cannot be limited to merely normative descriptions.[22] Election to vocation

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[18] Ibid., 15, 17.

[19] Ibid., 65.

[20] Ibid., 65–66.

[21] Jacques Ellul, *On Being Rich and Poor*, ed. Willem H. Vanderburg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 123.

[22] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 72–73.

emphasizes that God's sovereign work in redemption energizes a way of life enriching to the world.[23]

Ellul's emphasis on sovereign grace and God's faithfulness highlights the divine dependence fundamental to the church's existence and moral practices. Biblical faith challenges more than an individual's intellectual commitment. More than a better way of thinking about the world, God's people receive a better way of living in the world. The church is saved to action and Christian faith necessitates a lifestyle of committed action in the world. Morality is less a question of doing good deeds but of embodying faith and bearing fruit in keeping with the person and work of Jesus Christ.[24] Rather than crippling the church, the freedom of the Christian creates a context for working out God's will in the world.

Much in the vein of Martin Luther's *The Freedom of the Christian*, Ellul emphasizes both the Christian's freedom from the world as well as the Christian's freedom to serve the world.[25] The Christian participate sincerely in social realities using the life of faith to declare God's proclamations for the world. Christian faith acts as the setting whereby the Christian lives freely and acts virtuously. Without faith, social action claiming to be Christian descends into selfish, egocentric moralism that searches for salvation apart from the gracious work of God in Christ Jesus, a prospect distasteful to Ellul.[26] In contrast to empty moralism, the intervening presence of the Holy Spirit in the

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[23] Jeffrey P. Greenman, Read Mercer Schuchardt, and Noah J. Toly highlight also highlight the importance of Ellul's development of living out God's redemption in a fallen world. Greenman, Schuchardt, and Toly, *Understanding Jacques Ellul*, 127–128.

[24] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 217–219.

[25] Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, trans. Mark D. Travink (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008), 50.

[26] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 211.

believer "personalizes" the world and creates the capability for accomplishing God's good will.[27]

Furthermore, the Christian's fundamental call is not merely to plan out programs or methodologies but to evidence a singular loyalty to the gospel in life and practice.[28] Christian morality is a matter of "living in a way worthy of the gospel, worthy of the Lord, worthy of God."[29] Faithful presence emphasizes the social power of a called people virtuously practicing their divinely ordained vocation. Ellul explains, "Faith is the birth and the life of the new man, who is permitted to do and who will do what is good and pleasing in the eyes of God, for it consists in laying hold of and assenting to the divine justification."[30] As recipients of God's special favor, the church represents a unity between means and ends established and authorized by Jesus Christ.[31] After all, it is God who orders all things, including the affairs of all of human history.[32]

Hauerwas and the Virtuous Realities of Story-Formed Community

Where Ellul accentuates election to vocation, Hauerwas focuses on the communal identity of being called "Christian" and the narrative necessary to sustain Christian social ethics.[33] Positively, such a shared emphasis plays a critical role in moving moral impetus

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[27] Ibid., 213.

[28] While Ellul does not strongly emphasize the intellectual assent required by faith, he does recognize the choice required in living the life of faith. He describes faith as a response, but faith also directly implies a living disposition bringing transformation an individual's entire behavior. Ibid., 251.

[29] Ibid., 215.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 65.

[32] Ibid., 66.

[33] The story-formed community lays the foundation for Hauerwas' development of social ethics in *The Community of Character*. In the first chapter, he outlines ten theses for reforming social ethics based upon the narrative realities of Christian existence. Then, he proceeds to use a story, *Watership Down*, to illustrate the relationship between story and morality. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 9–35.

and development away from individualistic moralities and back into the communal realities of faith. Faithful presence relies upon communal identity without disconnecting the individual from moral reflection. As well, the story of Christian existence told and retold in Scripture provides the categories for the church to be God's people in the world. Instead of solitary moral significance, the individual comes to know what is virtuous only through participation in the community.

Narrative and Community-Shaped Virtue

Hauerwas' commitment to narrative virtue stems from his development of Christian community in moral formation. When beginning *A Community of Character*, Hauerwas outlines ten theses as the foundation for the ethical explorations of the rest of his study.[34] He points out the "narrative structure of Christian convictions" as the basis for transforming fate into destiny in Christian social witness.[35] Furthermore, stories enable the Christian community to undermine sinful tendencies toward self-deception in order to live "out of control" and witness to the social significance of Jesus Christ.[36]

With this foundation laid, Hauerwas displays the significance of not simply any story but on story, "the centrality of Jesus for Christian identity."[37] Social ethics grows directly from an actualization of the theological or orthodox realities of Christian faith built upon Jesus Christ, as lived moral realities of godly virtue.[38] Hauerwas writes,

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[34] Ibid., 9–12.

[35] Ibid., 9–10. Transforming fate into destiny is also the title of Samuel Wells' critical work in Hauerwas studies. A central argument in Wells' work proposes that Hauerwas' transformative emphasis is the overarching expression in his theological ethics and "epitomizes" Hauerwas' work. Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, 1.

[36] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10–12.

[37] Ibid., 36–37.

[38] Ibid., 40.

> This is not to suggest that ethics does not address an identifiable set of relatively constant questions—the nature of the good or right, freedom and the nature of human behavior, the place and status of rules and virtues—but any response to these questions necessarily draws on the particular convictions of historic communities to whom such questions may have significantly different meanings.[39]

Hauerwas asserts that outside of community, the individual remains locked out of truthful moral discourse, relying instead on independent, self-determined truth that more often leads to self-deception rather than virtue.[40]

In contrast, moral education of the individual in the Christian community offers a fruitful practice through disciplined relationships and Christian narratives.[41] Hauerwas concludes, "Once ethics is focused on the nature and moral determination of the self, vision and virtue again become morally significant categories."[42] Living in virtuous community recasts moral categories. Through his reflections on the individual in community, Hauerwas rightly emphasizes the necessity of connecting individual morality with communally practiced realities. Genuine moral sight cannot be achieved without the individual participating in truthful connections within the faithful community.

The significance of community also reveals details of Hauerwas' explanation of salvation and faith. Specifically, Christianity does not depend upon human decision but the very existence of the faithful church. Hauerwas' own memoirs identify salvation in

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[39] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 1.
[40] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 89–94.
[41] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 148–149.
[42] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 2.

term of election rather than cognition.[43] Foundationally, election remains more corporate than individual. This is stated clearly in *The Peaceable Kingdom* as Hauerwas unpacks the narrative character of Christian ethics. He explains,

> To be redeemed, as I suggested above, is nothing less than to learn to place ourselves in God's history, to be part of God's people. To locate ourselves within that history and people does not mean we must have some special experience of personal salvation. Redemption, rather, is a change in which we accept the invitation to become part of God's kingdom, a kingdom through which we acquire a character befitting one that's heard God's call.[44]

Such a statement represents the tensions and possible inconsistencies of Hauerwas' position. While he looks askew at standardizing "personal salvation," he also affirms the necessary "acceptance" of God's invitation.[45]

Initially, such a position seems contradictory yet in truth merely represents a systematic insistence on moving moral education away from the individual and back into the community. Hauerwas seeks to emphasize how daily practices of faithfulness are necessarily linked to discipleship in faithful community. Thus, Hauerwas concludes, "Now an intense personal experience may be important for many, but such experiences cannot in themselves be substitutes for learning to find the significance of our lives in God's ongoing journey with creation."[46] In this way, discipleship and virtue confirm our election into the body of Christ rather than isolated decisionism defining what the

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[43] Hauerwas' own testimony throughout the book indicates very little "decision" to become a Christian but rather takes the position that his faith is determined from looking back upon his life at a pause in his existence. Such a recognition might seem light on marks of conversion comfortable in many Protestant traditions yet such a description is, not surprisingly, simply Wesleyan. Man best understands God's sovereign election as a truth grasped after a backward glance rather than a sure truth sought looking forward to any faith commitments.

[44] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 33.

[45] Hauerwas' understanding of redemption may not satisfy some Christian traditions but certainly offers a more robust appreciation for the distinction between the unregenerate and the elect. As such, he stands in direct contrast to Ellul's universalism critiqued in the next section of this study.

[46] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 33.

individual Christian is and becomes. Hauerwas continues, "The Christian's character is not the result of a strict deduction from basic belief to act. This is not only often a logically doubtful procedure, but it also over-intellectualizes the nature of the Christian life."[47] Soteriological confidence comes through the ongoing practice of Christian faith, representative of God's faithfulness to his people, rather than particular personal experiences. God enlivens the faithful community regenerated to participate in gospel truth through the virtuous realities of Christian existence.

The Story of Christian Identity

Hauerwas also offers a warning in building Christian identity. Distinct ecclesial practices rooted in community comes with strong temptations to deny the truths of human existence by altering the way the Christian story is told, discarding the narrative roots of Christian community.[48] Any attempt at universalized morality or minimized Christian language does not simply alter the method or ability to meaningfully speak in the world. In other words, denying the way the story of faith is told denies the story altogether. Hauerwas explains, "Narrative is not secondary for our knowledge of God; there is no 'point' that can be separated from the story. The narratives through which we learn of God *are* the point."[49] Fundamentally, the way God has revealed himself is not incidental to the information that is revealed.[50] Moreover, dividing the content of the Christian faith from mode of the Christian life encourages a fractured faith.

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[47] Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 210.

[48] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 24–37.

[49] Ibid., 26.

[50] Ibid., 25–26.

Hauerwas also provides a helpful reminder that the division between principle and presentation imperils faithful presence by replacing distinctive moral language with overgeneralized or watered down notions of truth, morality, and ethics. In fact, many philosophical claims for moral neutrality are merely masked appeals from man's depravity and self-deception. Hauerwas warns, "Not only has modern philosophical ethics failed to speak to man's actual condition, but through its assumption that man is free and able to do good it has only added to man's illusions."[51] There is a constant temptation to assume neutral self-awareness creating narratives and practices contrary to the gospel. Hauerwas writes, "The Christian Gospel does more than provide clarification of the human condition; it charges us to order that existence, including our own lives, in accordance with it. Put in more traditional terms, the justified Christian must be the Christian that produces good works."[52] Through Jesus Christ, God has redeemed a unique people, given them a unique story, and empowered them to faithfully witness the transformative power of God.

Ultimately, both Ellul and Hauerwas emphasize a faithful presence dependent upon the sovereign faithfulness of God. Ellul's emphasis on election to vocation alongside Hauerwas' development of communal truthfulness revealed important distinctive in the life of faith. First, by electing a people for his good pleasure, God creates and sustains a community enabled to participate in the world. Second, the distinctiveness of the Christian life does not hinder social witness but enhances the explanatory power of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Finally, living as God's people

[51] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 33.
[52] Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 188.

requires seeing the world God's way and telling God's story as he has revealed it. After all, faithful witness depends fully upon a God who shapes and informs his people, enabling his people to be present in and for the life of the world. By calling and creating a faithful community to virtue, God establishes an ecclesial center for practicing the life of Christ.

Living as Individuals in Community

Alongside the positive contributions of Ellul and Hauerwas, there are also areas where both thinkers deserve certain adaptations for a fuller development of faith in social action. For Ellul, the connection between election to vocation and universalism raises significant issues in light of a deeper appreciation of the soteriological foundations of Christian ethics.[53] Yet, combining his emphasis on a lived faith with a stronger commitment to repentance as an aspect of faith provides a helpful way forward. For Hauerwas, a stronger appreciation for the normative realities of Christian moral practices would further deepen the significant contribution of his rich appreciation for sanctified moral vision. Strengthening these aspects only serve to enhance the already significant contributions of Ellul and Hauerwas to a faithful social ethic.

Redemption to Action

While election, freedom, and vocation represent distinctly orthodox Christian doctrines, Ellul's emphasis on election to vocation reveals an underlying presumption that must be

[53] For a helpful review of Barth's influence on Ellul and Ellul's hermeneutics, see Geoffrey Bromily, "Barth's Influence on Jacques Ellul," in *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Jay M. Hook and Clifford G. Christians (Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981); David W Gill, "Jacques Ellul's View of Scripture," *JETS* 25.4 (1982): 467–78.

challenged in order to make use of his development of election to vocation.[54] That is, Ellul's belief in universal salvation raises some questions regarding the connection between redemption and Christian morality.[55] Instead of fully accepting Ellul's development of universal reconciliation and election to vocation, emphasizing God's sovereign grace and faithfulness of a particular, elect people as redemption to action produces a richer theological foundation for faithfulness.[56] Further, nuancing Ellul's stress on sovereign grace reinforces the ethical significance of salvation and redemption.[57]

Adapting Ellul's emphasis on a faithful presence of the kingdom of God does not necessitate a commitment to universalism but highlights the inherent tensions of his dialectic theology.[58] In fact, Ellul's theology encourages some measure of distinction

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[54] For further studies on the place of election in Christian vocation see Robert Kolb, "Called to Milk Cows and Govern Kingdoms: Martin Luther's Teaching on the Christian's Vocations," *Concordia Journal* 39, no. 2 (2013): 133–41; Scott Harrower, "A Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Vocation," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 39, no. 3 (2015): 218–28.

[55] This feature of Ellul's theology is also debated within Ellul studies to no real consensus. Nevertheless, the attention paid to universalism here tends toward the position that universalism does not necessitate a dissolution of Ellul's ethic, a position also taken by both Marva Dawn and Ken Morris. Rather than a cause for total rejection, Ellul's universalism presents a challenging exposition of the difficulties in his Barthian theological heritage emphasizing the ethical importance of eschatology rather than a rigorous exposition of soteriology. That is to say, Ellul's eschatology informs his soteriology and ethics rather than the reverse. Darrell J. Fasching, "The Ethical Importance of Universal Salvation," *EF*.2 (1988): 5–7; Marva Dawn, "A Second Forum Response to Fasching," *EF*.2 (1988): 7; Ken Morris, "The Importance of Eschatology for Ellul's Ethics and Soteriology," *EF*.2 (1988): 5–6.

[56] Unpublished interview with David Gill (1982) cited in Morris, "The Importance of Eschatology for Ellul's Ethics and Soteriology."

[57] While Ellul does not see this relationship between universal salvation and ethics as a difficulty, further analysis is warranted to substantiate this non-essential relationship. As such, avoiding an affirmation of universal salvation requires careful attention to Ellul's language and understanding of the Christian's moral witness. The fullest exposition of Ellul's universalism is expressed in *What I Believe* and his commentary on Revelation, *Apocalypse*. See Jacques Ellul, *Apocalypse* (New York: Seabury, 1977); Jacques Ellul, *What I Believe*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).

[58] Andrew Goddard provides the fullest treatment of Ellul's universalism and its development in his theology. See Andrew Goddard, "The Totality of Condemnation Fell on Christ: Universal Salvation in Jacques Ellul," in *All Shall Be Well: Explorations in Universal Salvation and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, ed. Gregory MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 325–54.

between faith and unbelief without fully accepting the universal scope of redemption.[59] Because his theology necessarily emphasizes the Yes and No of God, Ellul opens himself to the strong possibility for tensions between salvation and judgment, redemption and damnation.[60] Such tensions within Ellul could be understood as the presence of God's damnation of the unregenerate and the salvation of his elect people. Even more, Ellul affirms a difference between divine redemption and rejection even without supporting eternal damnation.[61] Most importantly to this distinction, Ellul fails to explain *how* all men will be saved, leaving this as a possibility within his ethical structure built on emphasis on divine transcendence.[62] By direct result, Ellul's commitment to God's freedom opens his theology to the possibility for eternal judgment upon a segment of humanity rejected by God.[63]

Understanding the space for divine judgment presents an opportunity for qualification and clarification. John Frame provides a straightforward and complementing alternative to the place of sovereign grace and God's faithfulness in establishing Christian

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[59] Ellul clearly understands the difference between Christians and unregenerate as those who know God accompanies them through life and those who do not know God with all men moving toward resurrection. Ellul, *On Being Rich and Poor*, 131. As well, Ellul's distinction further illustrates the tensions of universal election developed from Barthian theology. See Gerald R McDermott, "Will All Be Saved?," *Themelios* 38, no. 2 (2013): 232–43.

[60] Daniel Clendenin provides a helpful development of this notion in Ellul's thought. Clendenin, *Theological Method in Jacques Ellul*, 138–139.

[61] On the contrary, Ellul could not be clearer on his commitment to universalism and the salvation of all mankind. Jacques Ellul, *In Season, Out of Season*, trans. Lani Niles (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 58, 78, 202; Jacques Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age: Jacques Ellul Speaks on His Life and Work*, ed. William H. Vanderburg, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Seabury, 1981), 104.

[62] When developing the connection between freedom and Christ's intervention in human history, Ellul simply states the reality without explaining the exact outworking of this connection. See Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 76–83.

[63] Jacques Ellul, *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity: Conversations with Patrick Troude-Chastenet*, trans. Patrick Troude-Chastenet (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 112; Ellul, *What I Believe*, 206.

morality.[64] When developing the significance of virtue in Christian ethics, Frame points out the critical role of redemption in the implantation and development of the theological virtues.[65] He writes, "A virtue ethic that is Christian will focus on a description of the regenerate heart. It will describe the biblical virtues and show how they motivate us to good works."[66] Christian virtue roots itself in God's righteousness and grows out of the Christian narrative, the story of God planting virtue in the heart of his people.[67]

Not only does Frame connect virtue with theological action but he also points out that faith and repentance are, in fact, two sides of the same coin.[68] He writes, "Faith is turning to Christ, and repentance is turning away from sin. These two turnings are the same motion. You can't turn toward Christ without turning away from sin, and vice versa."[69] Furthermore, Frame's understanding of repentance and faith here is not the same as Ellul's understanding. Ellul does point to the need for a turning back to God but this turning has no affect on the ultimate state of the individual or community.[70] In contrast, Frame understands election as God's choice between individuals, families, and people.[71]

Ultimately, Ellul weakens his development of election to vocation by neglecting the essential importance of particular redemption to any development of the theological

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[64] Frame provides a magisterial development of ethics through a triperspectival approach balancing normative, existential, and situational emphases in Christian ethics. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008).

[65] Frame's entire section on motivation and virtue in Christian ethics is particularly helpful. Ibid., 324–348.

[66] Ibid., 326.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 331.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 83.

[71] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 258.

virtues. Instead of election to vocation, the Christian experiences redemption to action. Frame's helpful addition of repentance to the virtue of faith provides a neccessary broadening of Ellul's elaboration of faith in action.

Ethics as Formation

Not only does Ellul's emphasis on election to vocation require a deeper appreciation of repentance, election to vocation also requires a more nuanced appreciation of the formative role of spiritual rebirth in moral development. Because Ellul stresses "being" rather than "doing," his ethics progress away from a developed soteriology and toward a practiced virtue.[72] Thus, Ellul does not spend significant time unpacking the redemptive transition of the Christian from death to life.[73] Instead, Ellul's concept of faithful presence seeks to refine the realities of *being* a Christian rather than disputing how one *becomes* a Christian.[74]

Ellul is more interested in the life and practice of the church rather than the theological boundaries of being a Christian. He states it this way, "It is not because people choose Christ that they become Christian, it is because Christ has chosen them. It is not because Christians choose to go out into the world that they work there, it is because Christ sends them there."[75] Based upon this attention to *being* in morality, Ellul's ethics develop election to vocation as a totalizing vision for social action opened to all by

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[72] Goddard, "The Totality of Condemnation Fell on Christ: Universal Salvation in Jacques Ellul," 352.

[73] "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13–14 ESV).

[74] Instead of clarity, Ellul's treatment of universal salvation relies on a development of the "secret lordship" of Jesus and the possibility of regressing into the life of alienation and bondage, which Christ has freed the Christian out of. Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 82–86.

[75] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 32.

the freeing work of Christ rather than a soteriologically thick description of regeneration.[76]

Rather than election to other-worldly salvation, Ellul constantly reinforces the lived realities of redemption. The lived knowledge of God moves the Christian to practical, lived expressions of God's will. Ellul writes, "The fact of knowledge, as the Bible everywhere teaches, is a fact which concerns the whole person and engages the whole life…. From this standpoint knowing is decisive not just supplementary."[77] The Christian embodies a practice of God's presence unable to be mimicked in depth, scope, and sincerity by empty intellectual or philosophical commitments.

Essentially, the practicality and implementation of Christian ethics motivates his soteriological explorations. Ellul concludes,

> Morality in scripture is not made up of rules but of a certain manner of life defined by the situation of being the people of God, of being predestined, and this is indicated by the frequently employed phrase "worthy of." It is a matter of living in a way worthy of the gospel, worthy of the Lord, worthy of God. Now this is nothing other than the expression of faith. Faith is the birth and the life of the new man, who is permitted to do and who will do what is good and pleasing in the eyes of God, for it consists in laying hold of and assenting to divine justification.[78]

Salvation and the life of faith produce a particular kind of person tuned into God's purposes not simply for spiritual rest but for work.

Even with the clarity of Ellul's emphasis on "being" in his development of faithful social ethics, the moral significance of spiritual change in Ellul's thinking requires further strengthening. As Jeffrey Greenman points out, "Ellul calls for transformed moral agents, but give virtually no account of the process of

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[76] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 77.
[77] Ibid., 86–87.
[78] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 215.

transformation."[79] In light of this gap, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's development of ethics as formation provides a helpful addition to Ellul's focus on "being" a Christian.[80]

Contrary to Ellul, the cross of Christ does not proclaim a universal change of eternal status but a profound condemnation of human sin with eternal consequences. Bonhoeffer writes, "God judges people because, out of sheer love, God wants them to be able to stand before God. It is a judgment of grace that God in Christ brings on human beings."[81] Further, only in the acceptance of this act of love does the human being begin to practice Christlikeness in daily existence.[82] In this way, the incarnation of Jesus Christ becomes the absolute declaration of humanity's needs as well as God's particular satisfaction of such impossible demands.[83]

Greater still, only the life of faith awakens the Christian to the sober responsibilities of willing and doing for God's good pleasure.[84] Bonhoeffer states, "The

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[79] Greenman, Schuchardt, and Toly, *Understanding Jacques Ellul*, 142.

[80] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, West, and Douglas W. Stott (Fortress, 2008), 76–102.

[81] Ibid., 90.

[82] Ibid., 90–91.

[83] Ibid., 88.

[84] Patrick J. Hartin clarifies the strong connection between redemption and action in his analysis of James. He writes, "This message of James on the relationship between faith and action is invaluable for Christianity today. Every ethical admonition in the Letter of James is a call to emulate the actions of God's compassion and mercy (5:11) as well as that compassion and mercy illustrated through the faithfulness of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (2:1). Concern for the marginalized within the society (1:27); concern for the poor (5:1–6); the avoidance of discrimination (2:1–13); avoiding speaking ill of others (4:11); concern for foe sick (5:13–16); bringing back a brother who has strayed (5:19–20)—all these are concrete admonitions that James addresses to his readers in their interaction with one another. Our Western world places great importance upon the individual, very often in isolation from the community. James's letter is a wonderful reminder that challenges us to realize that God calls us into relationship with himself not just as an individual but also as a member of a community. Authentic Christian life and existence demand that Christian believers activate their faith together with other Christian believers as those reborn into the community of the 'twelve-tribes in the Dispersion.' The Letter of James is a powerful voice challenging the reader to realize that together we are called as a community to respond in the manner of Jesus to foe needs of our world. The letter is a welcome antidote to the tendencies today both within our world and within Christianity that seek at times to reduce the Christian faith to a purely individualistic and private religion. Patrick J. Hartin, "The Letter of James: Faith Leads to Action (The Indicative Leads to the Imperative)," *WW* 35.3 (2015): 230.

human being, accepted, judged, and awakened to new life by God—this is Jesus Christ, this is the whole of humanity in Christ, this is us. The form of Jesus Christ alone victoriously encounters the world. From this proceeds all the formation of a world reconciled with God."[85] The person and work of Christ provides more than a flat reconciliation of the world to God. Instead, Jesus empowers his church to fulfill God's will before the eyes of the world.[86]

While Ellul's emphasis on "being" over "doing" obscures the fundamental importance of redemption, allowing a richer appreciation of the spiritual reorientation required in ethics strengthens Ellul's approach. Bonhoeffer's development of ethics as formation supplies a helpful addition to Ellul's lived ethics. Altogether, Christian ethics practices the lived realities of God's redemption in the life of the world.

Normative Foundations for Story-Formed Communities

Just as Ellul's development of election to vocation requires careful contouring, Hauerwas' helpful focus on narrative ethics also demands a balance. While the church is certainly a story-formed community, Christian morality also grows out of a significant resource of moral commands in Scripture. For example, the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7 are examples of the direct relationship between the covenant community and moral norms given by God.[87]

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[85] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 92.

[86] "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18 ESV).

[87] Two excellent applications of the normative demands of the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount articulated in Christian ethics are found in Frame's *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* and Stassen and Gushee's *Kingdom Ethics*. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*; Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003).

With this in mind, Hauerwas' attention to narrative in the moral life might best be appreciated when balance with the larger tension within Christian ethics. John Frame points out that narrative, command (norm), and virtue elements in Christian ethics complement one another and serve to fill out a the larger ethical emphasis found in Scripture.[88] Unfortunately, as the previous section demonstrates, Hauerwas elevates narrative above either virtue or command thus creating a false dilemma. David Jones points out that instead of denying the significance of normative demands, biblical ethics seeks to address the character, conduct, and goals of each moral event.[89]

The balance between God's moral demands given as direct command and God's moral requirements displayed in the story of Jesus should not be pitted against one another. Hauerwas' approach might encourage such false conflict. Instead of contradiction or hierarchy, the unity of narrative, command, and virtue serves to heighten and broaden the horizons of Christian ethics under the lordship of God.[90] As Frame points out, God's authority over all created order requires human response but does not arrive as bare command.[91] Nor does God's authority arrive as bare narrative. Instead, God entered human history to live life and redeem his people, participating in biblical narrative in the Incarnation.[92] Because of the Incarnation, narrative cannot be either relegated to a second category nor should it be elevated to an ultimate principle. Instead, the story of redemption told and retold throughout Scripture finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ and sustains the church's passionate outworking of God's sovereign will.

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[88] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 31.

[89] David W. Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013), 20–22.

[90] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 47.

[91] Ibid., 46–47.

[92] Ibid., 47.

The communal realities of virtue ethics developed by Ellul and Hauerwas remain insightful with ongoing significance to explorations of Christian social action. Even more, an emphasis on Christian faithfulness enacted in social ethics does not necessitate Ellul's universalism but further highlights how God's redemptive purposes for his people necessitate faith as action. As Ellul intentionally connects virtue with the salvific realities of participation in God's kingdom the church becomes enlivened to freely live in covenant relationship with God. After all, God alone establishes, confirms, and sustains the faithful presence of the church. In this knowledge, the church moves forward with courage, confidence, and unity.

While Ellul's election to vocation and Hauerwas' story-formed community do not emphasize the individual's entrance into covenant community, both contributions still provide a timely reminder of God's gracious gift in creating a community redeemed by Jesus Christ. Such a shared emphasis brings a helpful reaffirmation of the shared responsibilities and formation of virtue in social ethics. Taken together, we see how the faithfulness of God drives the faithful action of his people, living out God's commands in virtuous community.

Ecclesial: Ellul and Hauerwas on the Church as an Ethic

Exploring the place of faith and faithfulness in Ellul and Hauerwas reveals a deep appreciation for God's sovereignty and the power of the Christian narrative to shape the church. With this in mind, it is fitting to examine how Ellul and Hauerwas also draw out the central role of the church, the expression and product of God's faithfulness, in Christian social ethics. This section will seek to survey significant themes in Ellul and

Hauerwas that reveal the ecclesial center critical to the practice of faithful ecclesial presence. Three specific studies frame this section.

First, the unity of theology and ethics stressed in Ellul and Hauerwas displays an emphasis on the foundational realities of virtue, ethics, and morality as expressions of and from the church for a witness to the world. Accordingly, focusing too heavily on knowing what to do rather than whom to be reveals a potentially dichotomous relationship between theology and ethics. Once again, Christian faith cannot be limited to intellectual or factual assent but more accurately identified as a holistic change of disposition.[93] Second, Ellul and Hauerwas underscore the importance of God's revelation in rooting the church in firm reliance on the triune God thusly affecting every area of human existence. Such attention to divine revelation does not negate rationality but increases the distinctiveness of Christian thought and practice in social discourse. Third, the church intentionally depends upon God for informing moral practices and accepting a life lived "out of control."

The Unity of Theology and Ethics

The foundation for much of Hauerwas' theological ethic resides upon the inseparable connection between Christian belief and moral action.[94] Christian practice presents the clearest display the incarnational realities of the church as Christ's body. Contrary to

[93] Such a balance points back to the established union between belief and action indicative of Christian faith defined in chapter one.

[94] Ariaan Baan also notes this relationship in his study of Hauerwas' theology. He states, "Hauerwas believes that theological ethics and systematic theology can only be meaningful discourses related to each other. On the one side he argues that ethical 'ought-issues' cannot be divorced from the theological 'is-issues.' We can only know what people ought to do, if we know what kind of creatures they are, in what kind of world they live in, and how God is involved in this world." Ariaan W. Baan, *The Necessity of Witness: Stanley Hauerwas's Contribution to Systematic Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 5.

unhealthy dissections of thought and actions, thoughts about God (theology) and actions taken for God (ethics) cannot be separated. Hauerwas writes, "Theology begins in the church and works its way out, rather than beginning in a university department of religion and dribbling back to the church as the practical application of great thoughts."[95] Thankfully, Ellul and Hauerwas both afford a particularly helpful description of the inherent unity between belief and action. That is, the church *is* an ethic, a community brought from death to life through the person and work of Jesus Christ.[96] Ellul notes, "Man always looks for the good which will determine a 'deed' – whereas in Jesus Christ it is always a matter of 'being.'"[97] Contrary to any assumptions that merely possessing correct information about God sufficiently supports moral behavior, the way the community *is* describes what the community actually believes.[98]

Addressing Stated Versus Actual Beliefs

The tensions between stated and actual beliefs expose the inadequacy of merely

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[95] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live: Exercises for Christian Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 57.

[96] Miika Tolonen provides an extended development of the church as social ethic in Hauerwas' theological ethics. See Miika Tolonen, *Witness Is Presence: Reading Stanley Hauerwas in a Nordic Setting* (Eugene, OR: Resource, 2014), 21–57.

[97] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 28.

[98] Ellul and Hauerwas echo Barth's emphasis on the unity between faith and action. Henry Stob points out this important theme in Barth. He writes, "Barth holds that Christian Ethics is not an independent discipline, but part and parcel of *Dogmatics*. He is unwilling to separate a description of man's good life from a description of God's saving acts. He will not sever Christian love from Christian truth. Were Ethics to be cut off from Dogmatics, the latter would, he thinks, become an intellectual frivolity existing aloof from life. On the other hand, were Dogmatics to be cut off from Ethics, the latter would have to substitute Holy Man for Holy God, a thing proscribed by Christian principles. In harmony with these ideas, almost all that Barth has to say about Christian living is incorporated into his discussions of Christian truth in the *Church Dogmatics*, a procedure which, he recognizes, was followed earlier by John Calvin in his *Institutes*." Henry Stob, "Themes in Barth's Ethics," *RefJ* 12.4 (1962): 19.

intellectual consent to orthodox information in stimulating a virtuous life.[99] Essentially, there cannot hope to be theologically-derived morality without a virtuous application. Ellul points out how the Christian moral life requires doing and being what God requires. Ellul writes,

> Revelation tells us that to be in the covenant of God is much less a matter of doing some thinking of being someone, and in reality of living by the grace of God. Action, the bringing to pass of the good, the carrying out of some moral law (whether it be the moral law to realize oneself, to fulfill oneself, to behave as a knowing subject: all that belongs to exactly the same category as the execution of the moral imperative) has no value in itself. It is a matter of living, and of pursuing day after day a certain kind of life, filling a certain area of reality with the presence of truth. Of course, to the extent to which it is a matter of living, that life will express itself in a certain conduct, in an action. But the action only has value as it is the expression of a certain life.[100]

Prescriptions calling for belief prior to action could encourage a false dichotomy not simply in the theology and ethics of the church but a division in the gospel of Jesus Christ. In truth, God calls his people to *be* a presence in the world rather than merely consent to certain presuppositions.

Hauerwas uses a description akin to Ellul when asserting that the church's primary task in public witness is not a social strategy or methodology but a constant striving to *be* the servant community established in Jesus Christ.[101] Simply stated, "As such the church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic."[102] Echoing the life of Christ and the commands of Scripture, the church serves the poor, widows, and

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[99] David Jones also notes this tension and points out how moral events reveal the actual source of authority to the individual participating in the event. He writes, "[T]he actions of a man betray his heart; the externals expose the internals; profession shows confession; and *ethics reveal theology.* In sum, then, by observing the way moral positions are defended, as well as the congruity (or lack thereof) between stated beliefs and actual practice, believers can monitor their own source of moral authority and return to the Word of God when necessary." Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, 20.

[100] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 215.

[101] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 99.

[102] Ibid.

orphans not as a contemporary expression of justice but as an enduring witness to the truthfulness of Jesus Christ. Without such Christologically motivated actions, the world cannot hope to grasp what justice actually means.[103] Even more, a faithful presence helps the world understand what it means to be the world as the community of faith points to the realities of God's kingdom.[104] And such a distinction allows the gospel to be on full display. In summary, the boundaries of the church are established by what the church *is* not merely what the church *believes*.

Jesus Christ in All of Life

Not only does Ellul's and Hauerwas' unity of theology and ethics proclaim the incarnation but this unity also brings every aspect of the Christian life, not simply theology and ethics, under the lordship of Jesus Christ. No aspect of the Christian's faithful presence should be filtered into separated spheres such as theology and ethics, decision and character, or motive and action. Such an endeavor runs contrary to the fundamental realities of being a Christian in the community of faith. Ellul writes, "A life does not consists of a series of the separated acts, each one isolated from the others, but of a continuity of which each act is an expression."[105] Actions represent the culmination of a character rather than the simple bi-product of particular commitments. Ellul concludes, "[S]entiments and attitudes of Sunday cannot be separated from those of weekdays, that there is not one domain of the sacred and another of the profane, that worship should lead to practice, that declarations of faith should be incarnate in daily

[103] Ibid., 100.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 29.

life."[106] As Jesus describes the reality of good trees producing good fruit and evil trees producing evil fruit so moral choices represent an exposition of the soul rather than a practice in theoretical reasoning.

Furthermore, actions reveal genuine beliefs by testing the foundational commitments of any community, that is, the actual beliefs as addressed in the prior section. Hauerwas explains, "Christian ethics, in so far as it is an intelligible discipline at all, is dependent on a community's wisdom about how certain actions are prohibited or enjoined to the development of a particular kind of people."[107] By unifying theology and ethics, the faithful community offers a holistic moral vision for the entire world to see. Possessing such a character displaying the faithfulness of God turns out to be more than the outcome of our choices. Instead, virtue cultivated through a faithful Christian presence becomes the channel for our belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ.[108]

The incarnational display and holistic approach of Ellul and Hauerwas reveals the benefits of unifying theology and ethics. Yet, the necessity of unifying theology and ethics might also be stated negatively. When the community of faith neglects a theological ethic, the community risks proclaiming a dualistic God, dividing God's character from God's action.[109] Without recognizing it, ethics has become a sub-category of theology working to abstract moral actions such as truthfulness from the communal practices of being truthful. Such a position represents an unfortunate modern development. Contrary to the early church and many church fathers, modern Roman

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[106] Jacques Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom* (New York: Seabury, 1972), 101.
[107] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 54.
[108] Ibid., 39.
[109] Ibid., 50–71.

Catholic and Protestant theologians recognize some kind of cleavage between theology and morality.[110] Yet, not many would admit to an independent morality separated from theology due to the dualistic consequences of such a position.[111] Ethics does not simply represent a set of applied ideas or beliefs but instead serves as the potent disclosure of what any particular community actually believes.

By disciplining our faithful presence around a unified theological ethic, the community is enabled to make morally praiseworthy decisions. According to Ellul and Hauerwas, *formation* not *information* roots the faithful community.[112] Even more, *doing* indicates a great deal about our *being* as an expression of the fundamental truths of being Christian.[113] Separating theology and ethics affords the opportunity to establish an ethic separated from the person of God.

If ethics is the product of theology, the knowledge of God becomes separated from the action of God, an unacceptable conclusion to either Ellul or Hauerwas. Ellul

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[110] Ibid., 53.

[111] Ben Witheringon III offers a very helpful synopsis of this dilemma as well as its roots in the Reformation. Namely, the Reformation emphasis on imputed righteousness and man's position before God shortchanged the moral prerogatives for Christians to do the right thing. Thus, ethics becomes separated from theology, a very unnatural position. Ben Witherington III, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

[112] Andrew Goddard also notes this principle from Ellul and actually connects Ellul's moral thinking directly with Hauerwas. He writes, "Because God's Word cannot be restricted to only some areas of the world's life and the Christian is called to a life which lives this Word, Ellul (in what may be seen as a precursor to the recent resurgence of interest in the ethics of character through the work of writers such as Stanley Hauerwas) highlights from his early writing that the Christian life is a matter of *being* someone who lives the grace of God more than *doing* certain things." Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, 103.

[113] Ellul develops this through a reading of Israel's history. Israel knew what was required of them yet they consistently chose to do evil, indicating much about the status of those in the covenant community rather than revealing an insufficiency in either knowledge or revelation. Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 32–33.

states it this way, "Let us once again recall with emphasis that what constitutes the Christian life is not morality but faith, and the center of faith is not that good, but Jesus Christ. At this point Christian ethics breaks off all *possible* relations with every morality whatsoever."[114] Separating theology from ethics risks separating Christian morality and the faithful community from Jesus Christ. In fact, making ethics merely one aspect of the theological endeavor minimizes the place of Jesus Christ in the life and practice of the church. The stakes could not be higher. After all, if theology seeks to describe God and created order, divinely revealed morality represents the beginning, middle, and end of the entire community.[115]

Revelational Foundations

Surveying the theological ethics of Ellul and Hauerwas reveals how faithful presence builds out from an ecclesial center emphasizing the social implications of being the church. Furthermore, being faithful to God requires a unity of theology and ethics representative of the unified, Trinitarian God revealed in the Bible. Such an approach provides a unique opportunity to firmly root our identity in the revelation of Jesus Christ, the emphasis of this next section. As Hauerwas explains, "The task of contemporary theological ethics is to state the language of faith in terms of the Christian responsibility to be formed in the likeness of Jesus Christ."[116] The faithful community practices the presence of Christ indicative of the faithfulness granted by God for the sake of his glory

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[114] Ibid., 90.

[115] While biblical theology might be a marked improvement on prior generations of theological exploration, the modern theology's derivative approach to ethics still remains. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 54.

[116] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 29.

in all created order. Yet, such roots cannot be planted without adequate attention to the biblical revelation in two specific ways.

First, the faithful community roots morality in God as he has revealed himself, allowing this revelation to shape every area of life. Practicing a biblical ethic prevents the moral prerogatives of Christian ethics from being individualized away from the communities where they are revealed, practiced, and coherent. Secondly, submission to the Scripture *qua* divine revelation enables the faithful community to employ God's means for God's purposes without unhealthy and unnecessary complications laid onto the text. Reading Scripture without such submission risks voiding the ethical power of the text.

Practicing a Revelational Ethic

While defining the scope and foundations for morality challenges every approach to Christian ethics, Ellul and Hauerwas afford particular insight through a strong affirmation of God's self-revelation for every area of life.[117] Ellul explains the special significance of Scripture this way,

> I therefore confess that in this study and in this research the criterion of my thought is the biblical revelation, the content on my thought is the biblical revelation, the point of departure is supplied by the biblical revelation, the message is the dialectic in accordance with which the biblical revelation is given to us, and the purpose is a search for the significance of the biblical revelation concerning ethics.[118]

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[117] William Schweiker provides an excellent summary of the difficulties in addressing not simply foundations for ethics but also establishing a history of Christian ethics. See William Schweiker, "Tradition and Criticism: Problems and Approaches in the History of Ethics," *ASCE* (1992): 291–301.

[118] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 1.

By direct result, Scripture serves as the only valid moral presupposition for constructing, supporting, and displaying virtue.[119]

Without attributing the proper moral authority to Scripture, mankind does not construct a valid alternate or independent morality but a derivative counterfeit. Ellul states it this way, "There is no such thing as general or universal morality. There are actual moral systems and there is a morality which derives from revelation."[120] Man cannot stumble upon some particular unrevealed aspect of God's character apart from God's intervention. Instead, Ellul points out how often man constructs morality as a confirmation of the truth man has sought to hide, namely, that good (God) exists and man is alienated from it.[121] Thus, the Christian repeats the sin of the alienated man when ignoring or minimizing the singular moral significance of Scripture for faithfully living out God's presence in the world. Naturally, any hope for sustaining a faithful presence is lost without the intervening power of God's revelation.

In contrast, Ellul's emphasis on the foundational place of Scripture affords a unique pattern for the church. Namely, when Scripture forms the basis for moral judgments, the virtues revealed by Scripture move into every area of life. Allowing God to authoritatively speak undermines any attempts to shape a life where Christ is absent. Ellul explains, "He (God) is the Creator of politics, as of economics, and consequently nothing escapes his judgment or his grace, and everything finds itself included in this decision of God, which is the good."[122] Furthermore, while the Christian community

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[119] In fact, Ellul attributes original sin to the desire to construct morality apart from God and God's revealed goodness. Such idolatry continues today through moral discourse interested in defining and defending a universally accessible morality apart from the clear categories revealed in Scripture. Ibid., 13.

[120] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 361.

[121] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 14.

[122] Ibid., 30.

gains particular insights as the inspired readers of the texts, the Bible speaks to the life and morality of all mankind.[123] In Ellul's words, "Man is called upon to realize that all his life concerns God and that his work is judged in its global sense."[124] When Scripture grounds the church's practices, morality becomes a narrative for displaying Christian virtue through a presence faithful to God's self-revelation.

Reading Scripture in Community

Ellul and Hauerwas show a strong commitment to the power of Scripture read and practiced by the church. Furthermore, as Ellul points out, Scripture demands holiness so an approximation of reflecting God cannot adequately supply moral categories or moral significance to life. Instead, faithfully being present in the world requires a practice of the radical holiness of God revealed through Scripture.[125] The faithful community learns faithfulness through the biblical record of God's faithfulness.[126]

Hauerwas also offers a strongly worded connection between virtue and Scripture by establishing the church as the hermeneutical context for rightly reading Scripture. According to Hauerwas, the Bible only makes sense read within a community representative of the character of God.[127] As the faithful community continually reexamines the place of Scripture in moral discourse, virtuous practices reassert the ongoing importance of God's revealed morality for sustaining the church.

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[123] Ibid., 2.

[124] Ibid., 29.

[125] Ellul explains it this way, "There is not degree of the holy, no border zone, no approximation, since that which is holy is, in point of fact, that which is separated. In the same way, when Jesus declares that whoever has violated the least commandment has violated the whole law, he rejects the more and the less." Ibid., 31.

[126] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 67.

[127] Ibid., 55.

In fact, Hauerwas emphasizes how much notions of "moral authority" or "scripture" only make sense as much as the community created by faith truly displays the triune God.[128] Hauerwas concludes, "The scripture functions as an authority for Christians precisely because by trying to live, thing, and feel faithful to its witness they find they are more nearly able to live faithful to the truth."[129] Very simply, Scripture makes moral demands of the Christian representative of the kind of community necessary to discern and display the realities of biblical revelation.[130]

As such, there cannot hope to be a full understanding and adequate representation without the communal context of God's people. In this way, faithful community builds upon God's revelation without objectifying the text or validating all interpretations.[131] At the same time, the community submits to God's truthful declarations for the Christian's experiences. The contextual parameters of God's people becomes both a means of understanding the explicit commands of Scripture, as well as a colorful and virtuous in breaking of God's kingdom lived out in human existence.[132] Without such an ecclesial center, correctly interpreting Scripture and creatively acting out Scripture becomes impossible.[133]

While Scripture must define the parameters and language of faithful presence, Hauerwas also points out that promoting a more revelational morality does not force an

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[128] Ibid.

[129] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 66.

[130] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 56.

[131] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 68.

[132] Ibid., 70.

[133] In fact, such a proposition forms the basis of Hauerwas' entire argument in *Unleashing the Scripture*. Wherein, he states, "North American Christians are trained to believe that they are capable of reading the Bible without spiritual and moral transformation." Stanley Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), 15.

abdication of reason or rationality *per se.* Hauerwas simply sees the Christian faith as the only reliable starting point for ethical reflection.[134] If cultural logic stands in open opposition of Christian virtue, the resulting conflict represents an irreconcilable difference.[135]

Nevertheless, Christian virtue seeks the mutually beneficial cooperation between theology and reasonableness to explain, define, and defend moral behavior.[136] Instead of destroying rationality, faith in Jesus Christ enlightens and reveals aspects of human existence that might be overlooked, understated, or misunderstood.[137] Thus, critical reflection is not a fundamental evil but a tempting pragmatism that leads the community away from the singular moral authority of Scripture. The genuinely faithful presence establishes moral significance through embodying the foundational story of Jesus Christ. The Christian community's faithful presence only survives based on a core commitment to the triune God, as he has revealed himself to be.[138]

Divine Dependence

The ecclesial center of the faithful presence developed by Ellul and Hauerwas

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[134] Interestingly, it is on this point that Hauerwas affirms the normative power the Bible. He writes, "[F]or Christian ethics, the Bible is not just a collection of texts but scripture making normative claims on a community." Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 56. His desire seems to be to refuse a biblical ethics derived from or separated out of some portion of the biblical text. In order to preserve the "biblical" part of biblical ethics, he constantly reinforces the role of the Christian community and discipleship. In short, the faithful community protects the integrity of Scripture. Ibid., 57.

[135] In this way, Hauerwas sounds similar to H. Richard Niehbur's development of Christ against culture. See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1956), 45–82.

[136] Hauerwas is often described as a fideist but this reflects more a misunderstanding than substantive critique. As will be shown, Hauerwas simply points to a basically Christian notion that the church operates in unique ways, often going against the grain of popular "logic" or "reasoning." For precise criticisms, see Pinches, "Considering Stanley Hauerwas"; Quirk, "Beyond Sectarianism?"; Polet, "Being 'Other Cheeky'"; Northcott, "Reading Hauerwas in the Cornbelt: The Demise of the American Dream and the Return of Liturgical Politics."

[137] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 29.

[138] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 67.

emphasizes the unity of theology and ethics while also maintaining biblical priority. One further idea concludes this section. Namely, a faithful presence uniting the knowledge and action of God through biblical fidelity practices total dependence on God, the essence of a life lived through faith. Two particular elements in Ellul and Hauerwas explain the life of faith as a life of dependence on God alone. First, Ellul emphasizes the fundamental importance God makes in man's ability to know and practice the good. Second, Hauerwas' emphasis on narrative reveals the importance of faithfully telling, retelling, and embodying the stories of Scripture as a disciplined submission to living "out of control."[139]

Knowing God's Good Will

As Ellul explores the dependent life of faith, he does so exploring the necessity of God's action in the life of man that man might know himself and all else in the world. Ellul writes,

> When the commandment of God is known in truth, in the revelation and in grace, then it *unmasks* the lie of our commandments and of our morality. It *opposes* the human high-handedness that chooses its own good and comes to terms with the permissions and the marks of "satisfactory." It *rules out* the reservation whereby man wants to reassure himself by obeying God conditionally. It *strips* man of his power to judge good and evil by himself.[140]

God's commands do not act as self-enclosed declarations but as metaphysically rich descriptions, identifying not simply what a man must *do* but who a man must *be*. In fact, this overt connection between intent and action challenges any universally accessible

[139] Living "out of control" is a repeated emphasis in Hauerwas but finds fundamental significance here as one of Hauerwas' central ethical propositions. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 11.

[140] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 96–97.

moralities based upon the inability for mankind to know God's intent apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ.[141]

Any community seeking to build action or belief on any other foundation ceases to represent the faithful presence God demands of his people. Ellul asserts that any morality built apart from God's commands cannot hope to go far enough in the search for truth, love, or justice.[142] Instead of universal accessibility or collective demands, any overlap between "natural" moralities merely indicates the deep, ongoing commitment God practices toward humanity.[143] Ellul concludes, "The command of God, as distinct from every other morality, has only one meaning and purpose: to bind us to Jesus Christ."[144] As a faithful Christian presence is dependent on divine revelation, God's commandments take on a power to not simply recast what the community believes but how a community behaves. When the community lives in recognition of such complete dependence, God receives the glory out of the life of faith. Viewing human existence through any other lens repeats Adam's sinful independence, building a morality apart from God through the desire for absolute, self-determinative power.[145]

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[141] Ellul echoes a Barthian skepticism of the bare accessibility of divine revelation apart from the life of faith. George Hunsinger uses Barth's development of the life of Christ as an explanation of Barth's position here. Hunsinger explains, "The events surrounding Jesus Christ, as Barth understood them through their scriptural attestation, were infused from beginning to end with a deeply ineffable quality, yet their ineffability was not something accessible to naked observation, but apprehensible only by faith…. The essential ineffability of these events did not make them any less real, Barth proposed, but it did make them essentially inaccessible to reductive forms of apprehension and analysis such as historical-critical method." George Hunsinger, "Beyond Literalism and Expressivism: Karl Barth's Hermeneutical Realism," *MoTh* 3.3 (1987): 211–212.

[142] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 91.

[143] Ibid., 92.

[144] Ibid., 97.

[145] Ibid., 13.

Living God's Redemptive Story

What Ellul begins through emphasizing a dependence of the faithful community through the primacy of God's revelation, Hauerwas continues by exploring the fundamental place of narrative in community life. Hauerwas states, "Christian convictions constitute a narrative, a language, that requires a transformation of the self if we are to see, as well as be, truthful…. Furthermore, to be a Christian is not principally to obey certain commandments or rules, but to learn to grow into the story of Jesus as the form of God's kingdom."[146] Only through such a narrative can the church hope to understand the cross and resurrection as the center of creation.[147]

Even more, recognizing the "narrative-determined" realities of human existence becomes the primary means of determining the depth of and divine remedy for sin. Hauerwas writes, "As narrative-determined creatures we must learn to locate our lives in God's life if we are to have the means to face, as well as do something about, our infidelity and rebellion against our true creator."[148] By refusing to submit to God's narrative, humanity does not destroy all forced narratives but merely repeats the original failure of Eden. That is, mankind willfully overreaches in an attempt to control our own destiny, making "a challenge to God's authorship and a denial that we are characters in the drama of the kingdom."[149] Contrary to such blatant self-reliance, the truthful Christian narrative accepts God's designs, submits to God's plan, and pursues God's glory. Thus, Hauerwas concludes, "Man's capacity for self-determination is dependent on his ability

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[146] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 30.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid., 31.
[149] Ibid.

to envision and fix his attention on certain descriptions and to form his actions (and thus his self) in accordance with them. A man's character is largely the result of such sustained attention."[150] Practicing faithful presence means submitting to dependence on God's story for remembering God's actions and embodying God's character.

The divine dependence emphasized by both Ellul and Hauerwas supplies a very helpful reminder when crafting a faithful ecclesial presence. The church's faithful presence practices deep dependence on the triune God and the Scriptures. Moral reflection journeying too far away from these foundations becomes unmoored from the redemptive realities revealed by God.[151] Hauerwas writes,

> The moral use of scripture, therefore, lies precisely in its power to help us remember the stories of God for the continual guidance of our community and individual lives. To be a community which lives by remembering is a genuine achievement, as too often we assume that we can insure our existence only by freeing ourselves from the past.[152]

Practicing the Christian narrative connects a life of dependence upon God to the trustworthy authority of Scripture, establishing and maintaining virtuous communities of faith through divine power. Instead of autonomous human ingenuity, the dependence inherent in faithful presence opens the church to live as God's people for the life and health of the world.

Communal Ethics of the Ethical Community

Both Hauerwas and Ellul emphasize the ethical power of a moral community exercising

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[150] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 58.

[151] Hauerwas explores this notion more when reflecting on the historical nature of virtue. He concludes that the church must retain its unique moral history that roots character and virtue in a particular story. Otherwise, Christian morality becomes fragmented and irrelevant. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 125–128.

[152] Ibid., 66.

faithful presence through revelational dependence on God enacted through a committed unity between theology and ethics. In this way, the church practices the social responsibilities representative of genuine virtue, faithfully facing the real problems of the world. Two particular motifs in Ellul and Hauerwas emphasize such a way of life and work together in filling out a richer appreciation for faithfulness lived in community.

First, Ellul's focus on the church as the living exposition of the kingdom of God challenges the Christian to act out their part for the glory of God and the preservation of the world. Second, Hauerwas' exploration of friendship and the powerful reality of worshipping with friends highlight the significance of the unity found in the body of Christ for moral action.[153] The church is not a community integrated for self-interest but for worship and service. In this way, the church provides adequate moral and emotional stability before the watchful eyes of the world.[154]

The Presence of the Kingdom

The ecclesial center of faithful presence established by Ellul and Hauerwas provides a theological foundation focused on Scripture and dependent on God for protection and life. As such, Ellul, in particular, underscores how the faithful church displays God's

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[153] Hauerwas develops the theme of friendship out of Aristotelian foundations and into the deeper challenges of living a meaningful and intentionally Christian friendship in this world. For fuller developments of these theme see Stanley Hauerwas, "Happiness, Virtue and Friendship: Theological Reflections on Aristotelian Themes," *AsTJ* 45.1 (1990): 5–48; Stanley Hauerwas and Laura Yordy, "Captured in Time: Friendship and Aging," in *Growing Old in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 169–84; Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier, *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008).

[154] Such an approach might best be exemplified in Hauerwas' treatment of abortion. He successfully and persuasively reframes this problem in terms of the type of moral formation, communal distinctives, and perspective on life that separates the church from the world. In essence, the decisions of the church represent a more powerful moral statement than any theoretical commitment. See Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1988), 162–165; Stanley Hauerwas, "Abortion, Theologically Understood," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael G. Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 603–22.

distinct vision for the world shaped by the kingdom of God. Ellul writes, "Every advance realized in church and society must immediately be analyzed, criticized, measured by the kingdom yardstick."[155] In fact, the kingdom calls for radical change measured by God's designs rather than human endeavors. The church participates in this work as "ambassador, sentinel, or sacrificer," attuned to the opportunities to not simply participate in society but to revolutionize all aspects of society through a "radical application of the word of God."[156]

By living out the realities of God's kingdom, Ellul points out how the church's moral witness becomes a means for testifying to God's work in Christ Jesus. Thus, the faithful church displays the faithful God, the hopeful church displays the sovereign God, and the loving church displays the loving God. God works in and through his people to fully display the promised realities of his divine rule. Ellul clarifies, "The Bible shows us a God at work in political and civil history, using the works of men and bringing them into his action for his promised Kingdom."[157] The moral imperative of living in between heaven and earth presents the impossible possibility of a practiced morality emphasizing the goodness, righteousness, and faithfulness of God.[158]

Positively, Ellul points out the significance of ministering to the needy neighbors and following the demands of God to practice love of neighbor. Accordingly, corporately

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[155] Jacques Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, trans. Cecilia Gaul Kings (New York: Seabury, 1969), 45.

[156] Ibid., 45–47.

[157] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 41.

[158] Ellul borrows Reinhold Niebuhr's terminology and confirms Niebuhr's proposals in *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* as well as aligning some of his ethical reflections directly with Niebuhr's work. See Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, repr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013). Ellul writes, "Niebuhr's phrase characterizing the ethical situation of the Christian as an 'impossible possibility' is a happy one, and it along that same line that the present studies on finitude and requirement are worked out. In a word, this ethic is not applicable *or* inapplicable." Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 266–267.

bearing witness to the truth of God through confession and faithfulness, the faithful presence of God's people testifies to God's intervention in the world.[159] Much like the prophets of the Old Testament, Ellul sees the church faithfully living out Christian ethics as proclamation of God's ongoing commitment to the world, "…which will help a person to keep going even when it seems to him that God no longer speaks, because this ethic contains, in spite of everything, an echo of the truth which once was spoken by the Lord to his church."[160] Additionally, by acting in the power of the Holy Spirit, the faithful community denounces the false kingdoms of the world in order to display God's kingly purposes for all creation. Ellul concludes, "God's commands always relate to an action connected with the establishment and proclamation of his covenant, with his promised kingdom which is close upon us."[161] Through such incarnational presence, the church enacts the necessity of witnessing God's commands to and for the world.

While kingdom faithfulness represents a very public statement of faith, Ellul also refuses to sacrifice the message of Jesus Christ for any given social agenda. Rather, by the unique power of God's redemption, the Christian considers how to actually be *present* in the world rather than merely a *part* of the world. Ellul proclaims,

> What the church ought to do is to try to place all people in an economic, intellectual—yes, and also in psychological and physical—situation, which is such that they can actually *hear* this gospel—that they can be sufficiently responsible to say yes or no, that they can be sufficiently alive for these words to have some meaning for them.[162]

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[159] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 256.
[160] Ibid., 257.
[161] Ibid., 84.
[162] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 118.

In this way, the church revolutionizes a world that is transforming people into swine who become unable to receive the divine pearls of the gospel.[163] Through rediscovering the meaning of human activity, the church subverts the prideful despotism driving much in human culture in order to reestablish meaningful human interactions.[164]

The faithful presence of the kingdom undoes the distorted criterion presumed and forward by racism, classism, and prejudice, freeing man to be "recreated upon a personal and living plane."[165] Ellul concludes, "The Christian life is not characterized by good, but by salvation. It is not well doing, but being well received by God. The gospel establishes no moral distinction, but proceeds to a revelation of grace."[166] The gospel fundamentally reorders the individual as one made faithful through the work of grace in Christ Jesus. Without capitulating to the world's ideology or utterly neglecting Christian responsibilities, the church acts virtuously as a living presence of God's rule.

Worshipping with Friends

Where Ellul emphasizes how the ecclesial center of faithful represents bridges God's kingdom to the world, Hauerwas seeks to reconnect intent and action by restoring an emphasis on the church as an ethical community in contrast to broader moralizing attempts toward universalized moral norms. Hauerwas explains this connection, "In one sense the importance of the principle of universizability in current ethics is an attempt to provide a basis for a theory of obligation because we are no longer members of a morally

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[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Indeed, Ellul's universalism makes an even stronger statement supporting the ultimate equality among humanity. That is, because Jesus bore the condemnation for all mankind, there cannot be any ground for prejudice or favoritism but only equality fitting the gracious salvation granted by God to all men and not simply a select few. Ibid.

[166] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 43.

coherent community that unites intention and circumstance in one description of the moral act."[167] Rather than emphasizing the individual's place in shaping the community, the emphasis is how the community shapes the morality of the individual.[168]

From Hauerwas' development of community, questions of morality begin to center around the *kind* of morality being shaped *in* the individual *by* the community rather than the specific set of principles an individual gains and employs to answer difficult questions.[169] As Hauerwas states, "The moral good cannot be limited to the self's external conformity to moral rules or ideals; goodness is a way of being that which brings unity to the variety of our activities."[170] Approaching morality as social witness inherently shapes moral discourse and the pursuit of holiness toward communal realities rather than individual preference. Hauerwas explains, "Such holiness is not an individual achievement but comes from being made part of a community in which we discover the truth about our lives."[171] Moral formation represents more than intellectually convincing

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[167] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 81, fn. 26.

[168] In this specific section, Hauerwas addresses equality and faithfulness in Christian friendship and his argument is indicative of his larger development of morality known in relationship and community rather than by the individual. Indeed, such virtuous realities are the ultimate expression of the happiness Hauerwas develops within his entire discussion on friendship. Stanley Hauerwas, "Happiness, Virtue and Friendship: Theological Reflections on Aristotelian Themes," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 45.1 (1990): 39–40.

[169] Such a development reflects Hauerwas' use of *journey* and *trip* in explaining friendship, community, and virtue. Specifically, viewing morality and ethics as a *trip* forces on into overly complicated casuistry describing where one wants to go (a moral decision) and how to get there (moral reasoning). This ought to be avoided. Rather, Christian virtue and the moral life more accurately reflect a *journey*. That is, our lives are not constituted by decisions but by dispositions and orientations that form our lives which, in turn, produce particular actions. See Ibid., 21–22.

[170] Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 179.

[171] Hauerwas, *In Good Company*, 155.

paradigms or socially praiseworthy moral ends. The Christian life represents the ongoing participation in the body of Christ as Christ build up his church in love and unity.[172]

Instead of maintaining an isolated morality, becoming a virtuous person necessitates a life defined within a worshipping community of friends participating in the relationships established in the Trinitarian God of the universe.[173] Hauerwas simply states, "It is through friendship that we are further initiated into activity befitting virtue as we learn to be faithful to self through being faithful to another."[174] After all, Jesus calls his own disciples to engage one another as friends, creating a diverse community bound together not by shared cultural norms, political commitments, or personal preference but by the person of Jesus Christ.[175] The true disciple discovers the moral and spiritual power of friendships extending beyond mere human interests toward friendship with God himself.

While human community mirrors divine unity, no relationship in existence affects Christian morality more than genuine intimacy with Jesus Christ. In fact, the separation of morality from ontology represents a monumental tragedy in the history of moral philosophy whereby ethics is cleaved from theology.[176] For Hauerwas, when morality and existence become separated, morality becomes the subject of empty rationality, consequentialism, and utility. Thus, through account of friendship and worship,

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[172] "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:15–16 ESV).

[173] Hauerwas, "Happiness, Virtue and Friendship," 43–44.

[174] Ibid., 29.

[175] Ibid., 43–44.

[176] Harry John Huebner, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: History, Movements, People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 91–92.

Hauerwas takes important steps toward reviving the connection between moral behavior and the type of persons who engage in morally praiseworthy actions. Even more, genuine friendship, rooted in the community's faithful practice of God's presence, affords the individual Christian a context for lasting accountability and necessary spiritual formation.

Establishing the importance of worship and friendship ties morality back into the ecclesial center of faithful presence. That is, the very act of the church gathering from diverse social, occupational, economic, and geographic realities is itself a morality.[177] Hauerwas simply states, "By being established, at least culturally established in liberal societies, it became more important that people *believe* rather than be incorporated into the church."[178] Emphasizing the communal realities of faith moves away from overly individualistic conceptions of morality and protects the church from neglecting the discipleship mandates of the church.[179]

As such, the church provides a distinctive vision of Jesus Christ to the world convinced of the individual's place as the final authority. As Ellul concludes,

> And herein a recurring problem for morality finds its solution: How can a morality possess authority? How can it be heard by the person to whom it is addressed? In the world there are numerous answers to these questions: the weight of society, reason, the authority of a witness, etc. But in the case of the Christian life the answer is simple. *This morality has authority to the degree in which it derives from faith and relates to the revelation of God*."[180]

As both Ellul and Hauerwas emphasize, genuinely faithful presence does not supplant the essential Christian reliance on Scripture but allows divine revelation to revive the communal demands of faith. As an outpost of God's kingdom, the church represents a

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[177] Hauerwas, *In Good Company*, 157.

[178] Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 25.

[179] Stephen I. Wright, "Theological Interpretation and the Christian Year: Time, Narrative, and Performance," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 9, no. 1 (2015): 1–21.

[180] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 252.

beacon of hope through a vibrant life of friendship and worship. Even more, such a disposition does not rely on self-generated morality but on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. The Christian community offers a distinctly different path forward, the peaceful paradigm of God incarnate, Jesus Christ.

Integrated Hermeneutics for the Faithful Community

While Ellul and Hauerwas state a strong commitment to biblical revelation throughout their theological ethics and insist on the primacy of the formative aspects of the Christian faith, a deeper appreciation for the hermeneutical tensions between the biblical text and the reading community would enrich their contributions.[181] According to Ellul, the Bible contains the word of God and the Scriptures, as divine revelation, refuse to be calcified in space and time.[182] Instead of a locus of meaning in the text, meaning rises from the reader's interaction or dialogue with the text. As a result, Ellul emphasizes the Holy Spirit's role in speaking the word of God to him who reads the Scriptures.[183]

According to Hauerwas, the text does not exist prior to the reader and any quest for the original meaning of Scripture fails to understand the nature of revelation.[184]

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[181] Samuel Wells notes Hauerwas' reading of Scripture aligns closely to the postliberal theology of figures such as George Lindbeck, Hans Frei, and David Kelsey. Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, 54. In particular, Wells identifies postliberalism's emphasis on intertextuality as a critical component to Hauerwas' reading of Scripture and, in particular, his emphasis on narrative. He writes, "[T]he issue of whether there is one story or many is highly significant for Hauerwas and the postliberals. Central to the postliberal emphasis on narrative is the intertextual insistence that the Bible sees itself as a story, and demands to be read as such. Ibid., 63.

[182] Jacques Ellul, *Prayer and Modern Man*, trans. C. Edward Hopkin, repr. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 102.

[183] Ibid.; Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 264. Ellul's ongoing avoidance of locking either Scripture or ethics into one particular place, time, and context is admirable but may undermine the essential place of divine revelation in moral reflection. As well, such a position highlights Barth's influence on Ellul's hermeneutics. Jacques Ellul, "Karl Barth and Us," *Sojo* (1978): 22–24.

[184] Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture*, 20. While initially unsettling, Hauerwas' point provides a timely reminder of the intimacy shared between text and reader, between triune God and man. Hauerwas seems to be emphasize the written word making his point more sustainable but not without the need for a broader understanding of Hauerwas' entire approach to Scripture.

Hauerwas writes, "Scripture can only be rightly interpreted within the practices of a body of people constituted by the unity found in the Eucharist."[185] Hauerwas' intends to underscore the importance of the church and discipleship in reading Scripture, but he may overemphasize the narrative character of Scripture.[186] To clarify, Hauerwas does not state that all of Scripture is the narrative genre but all of Scripture tells a very particular story (God's redemption revealed through Israel and Jesus Christ) of a very particular people (God's people) for a very particular purpose (form a community faithful to God alone).[187] As a result, ethics becomes a case of competing narratives between those who have been shaped by Scripture and those who have not.[188] Reading Scripture rightly requires a community and a world true to the character of God.[189]

Unfortunately, both Ellul and Hauerwas seem to subtly shift the locus of biblical revelation and any subsequent meaning completely into the world of the reader and a reader-centered approach to biblical interpretation.[190] Such a movement drives them both to emphasize the place of formation over information, misunderstanding the fundamental

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[185] Ibid., 23.

[186] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 28–29. Hauerwas also makes a provocative statement pointing out the tertiary role of the church in biblical higher criticism and "fundamentalist" hermeneutics. He writes, "By privileging the individual interpreter, who is not capable of discerning the meaning of the text apart from the consideration of the good ends of the community, fundamentalists and biblical critics make the Church incidental." Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture*, 25–26.

[187] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10–12.

[188] Ibid., 54.

[189] Ibid., 55.

[190] Hays is particularly harsh on Hauerwas at this point recognizing the lack of deep reading, the necessity of particular hermeneutical presuppositions (pacifism), and the lack of comparative analysis to name a few specific critiques. Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 258–260.

realities of stimulating formation *through* the appropriate use of information.[191] While an appreciation of the reader's relationship with the text is helpful, shifting this emphasis too far imbalances and skews the actual realties of reading Scripture.[192] W. Randolph Tate writes,

> According to this view (reader-centered approaches to meaning), the text engages the reader as the reader engages the text. Meaning, then, is an invention by the reader in collaboration with the text rather than the intention of the author. The reader is constrained by the text, but is not divested of interests and presuppositions. The text is re-contextualized through the multicolored lenses of the reader. The fact is, however, that the hermeneutics of the world in front of the text involve more than the dialogical relationship between the reader and the text.[193]

Tate continues by affirming the hermeneutical realities when a reader approaches the biblical text.[194] However, Hauerwas and Ellul seem to overemphasize the interaction between text and reader and downplay the propositional qualities of Scripture. Neglecting the wider considerations of including the world of the author and the world of the text for the sake of the world of the reader reduces the diverse yet unified nature of revelation.

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[191] Kelly M. Kapic provides a helpful description of the interaction between formation and information in the church's spiritual life. Her entire article is helpful but her conclusion is particularly insightful. She writes, "Spiritual formation never takes place in a vacuum, but always is informed by our beliefs, including presuppositions about God and ourselves. Accordingly, our lives are theologically shaped for good or ill. Believers who desire to participate faithfully in worship, prayer, and Christian living must work hard to bring together a theology that understands the key themes of the Word of God (think systematic theology) with the practices that encourage genuine spiritual growth." Kelly M Kapic, "Systematic Theology and Spiritual Formation: Encouraging Faithful Participation Among God's People," *JSFSC* 7.2 (2014): 202.

[192] Sally Brown offers a reminder for hermeneutical modesty when speaking of hermeneutical principles as well as communal interpretive strategies. Further, critique of particular hermeneutical methodology requires a deep awareness of personal presuppositions prior to rejecting totally competing hermeneutical strategies. She writes, "We can learn neither to project our own sense of hermeneutical logic on the communities we are observing, nor to take entirely at face value a community's claims to hermeneutical consistency." Sally A Brown, "Exploring the Text-Practice Interface: Acquiring the Virtue of Hermeneutical Modesty," *ThTo* 66.3 (2009): 40.

[193] Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 5.

[194] Tate includes the social location of the author and reader, the ideologies of authors and interpreters, the nature of language, race, class, and gender of author and reader, the economics of author and reader, the textuality of history, and the historicity of text as examples for consideration. Ibid.

Instead of Ellul's transcendental hermeneutic or Hauerwas' postliberal hermeneutic, integrating the world of the text, the world of the reader, and the world of the author offers a more balanced application of biblical revelation in moral reflection by leveraging the legitimate realities of all three contributions.[195] The conversation between the world of the text and the world of the reader, informed by the world of the author, supplies a rich and reliable reading of Scripture for the people of God.[196] Ethical reflection rightly drawn from biblical revelation honors the significance of the moral community as well as the realities of the divine and human authorship of Scripture.

Witness: The Peaceful Paradigm of Christ from Ellul and Hauerwas

Focusing on the ecclesial center of faithful presence emphasizes a theological morality for the church and from the church before the watching world. In correspondence to such centered, ecclesial morality, faithful presence enacts a particular ethical orientation motivating particular behaviors inside and witness outside of the church.[197] Hauerwas and Ellul provide timely reminder of the church's place in moral reflection. If the church acts as the nexus for moral reflection, Jesus Christ supplies the trajectory for the virtuous life. Even more, intently following Christ in his life, death, and resurrection refocuses the Christian on the powerful witness of peace in the midst of a hasty world impatiently seeking a final peace only available when Christ returns.

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[195] Richard Hays, Nicholas Healy, Kevin Hector, and Samuel Wells provide helpful explanation and analysis of Hauerwas' reading of Scripture. See Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny*, 62–89; Healy, *Hauerwas*, 56–62; Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 254–266; Kevin W Hector, "Postliberal Hermeneutics: Narrative, Community, and the Meaning of Scripture," *TET* 122.3 (2010): 105–16. For Ellul, see David Gill and Andrew Goddard's contributions. Gill, *The Word of God in the Ethics of Jacques Ellul*; Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, 102–114.

[196] Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 5–7.

[197] Mikka Tolonen offers a unique and helpful study of Hauerwas' understanding and use of witness in social action. See Tolonen, *Witness Is Presence*.

The practices of moral community reflect a fundamental commitment to the ways of Jesus Christ. Defined by the kingdom realities of worship and genuine community, the church abides in a violent world as a peaceful presence of faith, hope, and love. Christian virtue calls the individual in community to an intensely difficult way of life sustained and shaped by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Ellul proposes,

> We are to wage the warfare of faith, our only weapons those Paul speaks of: prayer, the Word of God, the justice of God, the zeal with which the gospel of peace endows us, the sword of the Spirit…. And if we thing this is easy, it is because we know nothing about life in Christ, because we are so sunk in our materialistic culture that we have quite forgotten the meaning of God's work in us, quite forgotten what we are called to in the world.[198]

Christian peace speaks a strange truth to the world. Greater still, when the church departs from embracing this uniqueness of peace or from participating in efforts to promote peace, the witness of the cross diminishes.[199] Faithful presence accepts the difficulties of allowing peace to be its moral language. In this way, the church offers the path of peace through cross of Christ to a world that seeks self-generated comfort and stability. Ellul and Hauerwas broaden these concepts two specific ways.

First, faithful presence relies on the truthful accounts of peace offered in Christ Jesus and expounded by the Scriptures and testimony of the saints. Until moral language of the community of faith regains a truthful perspective on what constitutes lasting peace, social witness remains limited. Second, the peace of God supplies a uniquely Christian moral language by offering the church a faithful means of seeking the good of the world without active participation in destructive methodologies. That is, freedom does not arise

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[198] Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 165.

[199] Glen Stassen offers a helpful approach to combine peaceful action with social witness through the transformative initiatives of Jesus. Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

from achieving security through violence but total reliance on the miraculous mercy of God in Jesus Christ. When peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness mark the community of faith, the world glimpses the full splendor of the gospel.

The Social Possibilities of the Work of Christ

Exploring the lasting peace established in Christ represents a journey into a genuinely Christian social ethic, formed and informed by the cross and resurrection. The church represents the place where the peace of God overturns the destructive sinfulness of the present world. Furthermore, the faithful community embodies a peaceableness declaring the effectiveness of God's work in Christ. The gospel's truth about the world and the church must not be downplayed but broadcasted. As such, Hauerwas and Ellul represent a challenging explanation of Christian existence within a violent and coercive world with two important contributions.

First, Hauerwas points out how peaceableness cannot be understood as a simply a bi-product of particular theological commitments, although such commitments remain vital to faith, or the consequences of certain moral judgments, although such judgments give shape to the Christian community.[200] For Ellul and Hauerwas, the way of peace is not simply one possible Christian position but a definitive statement on the shape and significance of Jesus Christ in this present world. Second, Christian peace, as understood by Ellul and Hauerwas, offers a unique cultural statement as the revolutionary declaration of God's reversal of sin's power. Contrary to humanistic conceptions of man

[200] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 85.

determinative power over his existence, the Christian possesses the true freedom to choose the way of peace through God's total victory in Christ Jesus.

God as the Author of Life

For Hauerwas, peacemaking and peacableness founded through Jesus Christ act as the presuppositions, distinguishing features, and defining goals of the Christian community's recognition that life belongs to God alone.[201] Fully surrendering to such a narrative necessarily recasts communal values and goals into a distinctly Christian presence framed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hauerwas explains, "The church does not give us just any peace, but the peace of Christ. Such comfort and such peace may be troubling indeed for both the church and the world, but they are not less comfort and peace for that."[202] A perspective disciplined under the revelation of the Messiah defines every aspect of the Christian moral life because a "Christology which is not a social ethic is deficient."[203] By direct result, a false dichotomy or merely procedural connection between belief and action exposes a suspect Christology rather than a deficient model for cultural engagement.

Yet reconnecting theology and ethics challenges the American church because of a diverse understanding of who holds authority and what constitutes freedom. In the face of alternative definitions, faithful presence proclaims that peaceableness is not one of several alternatives of the church but a foundational truth established in and through the gospel. Hauerwas concludes, "In him (Jesus) we see that living a life of forgiveness and

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[201] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 91.
[202] Ibid., 162.
[203] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 37.

peace is not an impossible ideal but an opportunity now present."[204] The incarnation affords the church the meaning, content, and possibility of faithful presence.[205] Alternative stories about freedom and peace are temptations to reject the costly truths of the gospel for anthropocentric achievement.

Through the incarnation and the singular witness of Jesus Christ, the church avoids common misrepresentations of Christian freedom and hope too closely tied to discussions of nationalistic foundations, particularly in America. Hauerwas writes, "The inability of Protestant churches in America to maintain any sense of authority over the lives of their members is one of the most compelling signs that freedom of religion resulted in the corruption of Christians who now believe they have the right to 'make up their own minds.'"[206] What constitutes a convincing moral argument seems to have moved away from the church and into the heart of the individual.

Even more, overemphasizing freedom of religion in an American context present troubling possibilities for the church.[207] Without a unifying narrative counteracting the various false narratives of the world, Christologically-centered practices of a unified church might be lost.[208] Singularly to Christianity, the gospel possesses power to break down social, economic, and geographic boundaries through a faithful and truthful retelling of God's redemptive acts revealed in Scripture.

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[204] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 85.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 88.

[207] Prophetically, Hauerwas recognizes the unstable truce between Christianity and liberal democracies at this stage in modern society. In short, Hauerwas is able to predict the contemporary legal crises presented by the conflict between particular moral norms prevalent in popular society (i.e. homosexuality and contraception) and the legal protections of the First Amendment. Such conflicts represent the maturations of the liberal democracies developed in the very foundations of the United States. Ibid., 69–74.

[208] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 51.

Christ as the Christian Moral Vision

Understanding our presence in the world requires analyzing virtue's chances in the modern disposition, especially in the presence of seemingly innumerable choices. Such a glut of diverse options inherent to American democracy and a digital age represents a both significant moral challenge and a special opportunity.[209] In the face of such diverse options, the Christian community is afforded a unique privilege to offer a distinctly Christian vision for the world.

As the world searches for grounding through exponentially increased choice, the singular witness of faithful presence grants God's people a quiet and confident voice of truth, a genuine sense of freedom. Hauerwas concludes, "To be free is to set a course through the multitude of possibilities that confront us and so to impose order on the world and one's self."[210] The emphasis here represents the genuine opportunity for Christians to successfully wade through the multitudinous distractions of modernity to safely establish a sense of reality both sincere and truthful.

A godly sense of peace, as Hauerwas describes, is not contingent on socio-political status, economic stability, or psychoemotional state but fully reliant on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Only through Jesus Christ, may the Christian find a true sense of self and community forged in the trials and tribulations of Christian existence determined by the sovereign decision of God. In this way, the Christian community lives peaceably, unified by the gospel. An existence devoid of moral coherence cannot hope to be

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[209] Hauerwas observes the oppressive realities of "choice" by stating, "Moreover, one of the greatest ironies of our society is that by attempting to make freedom an end in itself we have become an excessively legalistic society." Ibid., 75.

[210] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 58–59.

peaceful.[211] Consequentially, violence supplies the means for ensuring some measure of social stability and individual meaning without adherence to the demands of God.

In fact, genuine Christian freedom to act righteously is not formed simply out of cultural norms or social-political constructs but ultimately from the freeing power of Jesus Christ.[212] Unlike many popular sentiments, suffering represents a critical element of Christian existence rather than an absolute evil to be avoided.[213] According to Hauerwas, Christians seek a different kind of freedom than that known and praised in modern social and political realities. He states, "As Christians, we do not seek to be free but rather to be of use, for it is only by serving that we discover the freedom offered by God."[214] In this way, genuine Christian freedom expresses the self-denial fundamental to the person and work of Christ. The faithful presence suffers for the sake of the world because freedom comes not in a deepening self-absorption but by fully engaging in the needs of another.[215]

Alongside Hauerwas' emphasis on the communal realities of freedom, Ellul emphasizes the powerful freedom bestowed only by God in and for the individual Christian. Ellul concludes, "Freedom, the freedom which God gives, is to be understood from the very first as a power or possibility. It is a power to act and to obey."[216] Apart from the freeing presence of Jesus Christ, one only knows bondage and indecision

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[211] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 5.

[212] Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 53.

[213] Hauerwas' fuller treatments of suffering are seen in his work in medical ethics. See Stanley Hauerwas, *God, Medicine, and Suffering*, repr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994); Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

[214] Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 53–54.

[215] While such a concept arises from Hauerwas' larger critique of liberation theologies, the point still remains. The church's presence in the world should not be dependent to any sense of freedom or justice as defined from within social order but as declared by Jesus Christ. The church defines freedom from the "top down" rather from the "bottom up." Ibid., 54.

[216] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 103.

masked as false security. Indeed, the human experience apart from Jesus Christ represents a false perception of reality, a half-truth, enslaving the individual with a yoke of infinite choice. Rather, the power to will and to do comes from God and opens the opportunity for the believer to enact the work of God in the world.[217] Through the freeing declarations in Jesus Christ revealed by the Spirit of God, man is offered the one way for meaningful sight and action.[218]

Christian belief dictates that freedom cannot exist outside of the person and work of Jesus Christ. While such an exclusive declaration seems dangerous, virtuously distinct communities do not inhibit personal freedom but open the individual to the true freedom granted by God.[219] Virtue established in and cultivated through truthfulness enables genuine freedom. There cannot be freedom outside of community in a rigid individual autonomy. In fact, such autonomy merely represents its own kind of communal identity; the collective commitment to individualism itself creates a community albeit a disjointed and fractious collective. Claims for existing totally outside of any community denies reality and only enslaves the individual to the unrealistic demands of serving as the final arbiter of not only morality but all aspects of human existence.

Christian Peace as Moral Language

A strong commitment to cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ has an immediate affect on the social strategies of the faithful community. Any criticisms of the social effectiveness of peaceful action deeply misunderstand the nature of violence on several important

[217] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 213–214.
[218] Ibid., 213.
[219] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 2.

levels. First, Ellul points to Christian participation in violence as a presupposition of at least partial goodness in human violence during this present age.[220] Furthermore, such a presupposition represents a denial of the realities of violence in the modern era.[221] Ellul's description of violence provides a helpful analysis of this oversight. By requiring the faithful community to practice more realistic approaches to the use of mortal force, the faithful community regains a unique position in society.[222]

Second, the Christian's participation in violence risks misrepresenting the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christian communities ought to display the peaceful presence of Jesus Christ exemplified in the cross and resurrection by demanding total commitment to God's designs for human existence as revealed in the New Testament. Yet this full commitment must be disciplined. Radically separating the world from the church would be just as destructive as totally assimilating the world's practice of power into the life of faith.[223]

Christ's Peaceful Reign in the Church

Ellul points out how violence establishes a cultural continuity that cannot be easily

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[220] Even just war theorists admit to only an approximate justice or partial peace achieved through violence. J. Daryl Charles and Timothy J. Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity: Questions and Answers from a Just-War Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: Crossway, 2010), 21, 58, 85, 170. Thus, when accepting partial justice, one is only left to assume the remaining achievement is injustice. It seems just war theorists then propose a "lesser evil" approach to violence and accept, however tacitly, some measure of injustice or evil as an acceptable partner or byproduct in social, political, and ecclesial endeavors.

[221] Along this line, Craig Watts points out the significant oversight of many who neglect the psychological and emotional consequences of war on soldiers. Attempts to facilitate "loving" violence encounters a problem when questions of loving protection are applied to the life of the individual perpetrating the violence. See Craig Watts, "Just War, Pacifism and the Ethics of Protection," *Encounter* 71.1 (2010): 35–62.

[222] This section is a condensed explanation of Ellul's larger discussion of violence, politics, social witness, and Christian realism. Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 94–115.

[223] Ibid., 25.

escaped, an oversimplification of the political, social, and economic concerns of life.[224] For example, many of America's social, cultural, and political foundations rest on war, violence, and dissent.[225] Such foundations mix dangerously with a constitutional freedom to bear arms, creating a difficult balancing act between individual freedoms and peaceful community.[226] Ellul concludes, "Whenever a violent movement has seized power, it has made violence the law of power."[227] When built upon a violent foundation, social behaviors perpetuate a totalitarian embrace of morally indistinguishable means and ends.

For Ellul, distinguishing between justified and unjustified violence, liberation and enslavement, is impossible.[228] More directly, man's appeal to violence "indicates incapacity to grasp the actual problems and incapacity to act."[229] Ellul emphasizes how often faithfully displaying the goodness, peace, and righteousness of God demands a distinctive, creative way of life framed by the person and work of Jesus Christ. Much

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[224] Ibid., 94.

[225] While such a strong statement might be disputed, the constitutional commitments to individual rights, bearing arms, and liberty so-called create a challenging environment to pursue peace. American peace coincides with an ongoing practice of violence or at least the threat of violence. The American church must grapple with being a moral community shaped in a country established on violence without coopting the particular practice of the dominant social setting. Such reflections are the primary explorations and assertions in Hauerwas' *War and the American Difference*. Stanley Hauerwas, *War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

[226] Perhaps the more challenging problem is how the church might response to such widespread social and cultural commitments to self-preservation. In this vein, Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owen offer an insightful analysis of the unprecedented levels of gun violence in the United States as well as a compelling vision for a faithfully Christian response to this dilemma. Samuel Wells and Marcia A. Owen, *Living Without Enemies: Being Present in the Midst of Violence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011).

[227] Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 101.

[228] Ibid., 99.

[229] Ibid., 60.

more than effectiveness or finality, social commitments framed by radical forgiveness and formed by the gospel's demands define the Christian's faithful presence.[230]

Furthermore, the Christian use of violence presumes the possibility of fully grasping the psychological, social, moral, spiritual, and physical realties of participating in violent actions. Ellul states it this way, "It is absolutely essential for us to realize that there is an unbreakable link between violence and hatred. Far too often intellectuals, especially, imagine that there is a sort of pure, bloodless violence, an abstract violence, like that of Robespierre, who dispassionately ordered executions."[231] Attributing a moral goodness to violence denies its inherent destructiveness, establishing Christian virtue on the false promises of violence rather than the truthful narratives of peace in Jesus Christ.[232] In the end, Ellul sees violence as a self-justification foreign to the gospel. Violence equates socio-political or cultural agendas with God's eternal purposes, establishing and maintaining power instead of submitting to God's means to accomplish God's purposes.

While God will receive the glory for human behavior, Ellul sees such a position on violence as confusing God's sovereign and free reign with God's moral blessing. As Ellul states, "The 'Lordship of Jesus Christ' does not mean that everything that happens, happens by the decision of the Lord. No, the world remains the world, but whether or not

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[230] L. Gregory Jones and Célestin Musekura develop a compelling exploration of these notions in *Forgiving As We've Been Forgiven*. Jones and Musekura offer the Christian community a gift by exploring how truthfulness, selflessness, and repentance might shape a community for peaceful action. L. Gregory Jones and Célestin Musekura, *Forgiving As We've Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010).

[231] Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 104. Ellul seems to be addressing the horizontal, human practice of violence and not the vertical, divine relationship with violence. Indeed, Ellul's laws of violence (continuity, reciprocity, sameness, incomplete pragmatism, and self-justifying) all address the human experience of violence rather than the biblical record of God's action either in the Old Testament or Revelation, a noticeable shortcoming in Ellul's work on violence.

[232] Ibid., 95–97, 100.

it knows it the world is subject to that Lord."[233] Simply because some particular choice is allowed to occur in human history while also producing seemingly desirable results does not rationalize, normalize, or precondition the Christian's participation in such actions.[234]

Even more, the Christian use of violence does not represent the only way to protect the innocent and act in love for neighbor.[235] In fact, only Christians perceive the spiritual realities of human conflict and injustice.[236] Ellul concludes, "Only Christians can contend against the powers that are at the root of the problem."[237] For Ellul, violence cannot hope to holistically resolve social disputes. Conflict resolution does not necessitate violence except in instances devoid of creative, faithful Christian virtue.[238] Indeed, these two concepts must be separated for Christians to live truthfully with one another and in the world.

Living Peace in and for the World

While encouraging distinction from the world, Ellul resists the total separation of the church from the world. Any spiritually committed separation must be disciplined. After all, radically separating the world from the church would be just as destructive as totally

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[233] Ibid., 25.

[234] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 102.

[235] Craig Watts offers an insightful analysis of the misconception that pacifism does not advocate protection for the innocent. Further, Watts points out the considerable victimization of the soldier in philosophical systems that rationalize violence leading to peace. Watts, "Just War, Pacifism and the Ethics of Protection."

[236] For a fuller description of Ellul's understanding of spiritual conflict, see Marva J Dawn, "The Concept of 'The Principalities and Powers' in the Works of Jacques Ellul" (University of Notre Dame, 1992).

[237] Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 164.

[238] Ellul makes a further compelling argument that the principles of just warfare established in the Middle Ages cannot hope to categorize the types of violence inflicted in a complex modern era. While possessing strong rational power, just war theory loses considerable explanatory power in age of terrorism, globalization, and propaganda. Accessing the realities of warfare in the modern era presents a significant challenge to any responsible Christian thinker. Ibid., 6–7.

assimilating the world's practice of power into the life of faith.[239] Instead, the faithful community cultivates practices that do not simply avoid conflict but reinforce the Christian necessity for truthfulness, sincerity, and repentance. Sadly, the church's participation in socio-political violence might work to undermine the powerful testimony of godly conflict resolution, the conciliatory power of Christian faith, and restorative qualities of gospel-powered forgiveness. In these cases, shortsighted, nationalistic methods establishing political peace replaces the gospel of Jesus Christ with an alternative message aligning Christian identity more closely to national concerns than redeemed community.[240]

Rather than the total lack of conflict, Hauerwas points out how, in fact, Christian non-violence demands a more radical honesty than mortal violence.[241] That is, the community of faith that is utterly dependent on God's creative and origination action remains dependent on his ongoing presence to sustain and shape the church's unique witness of peace. Christian non-violence does not imply an absence of action but of a different kind of action.[242] The church must remain salt and light, a foretaste of the

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[239] Ibid., 25.

[240] Ellul writes, "What Christ does for us is above all to make us free. Man becomes free through the Spirit of God, through conversion to and communion with the Lord. This is the one way to true freedom. But to have true freedom is to escape necessity or, rather, to be free to struggle against necessity. Therefore I say that only one line of action is open to the Christian who is free in Christ. He must struggle against violence precisely *because*, apart from Christ, violence is the form that human relations normally and necessarily take." Ibid., 127.

[241] Ibid., 148.

[242] Ellul expands on this notion by stating, "Certainly it (Christian non-violence) inhibits the action of the capitalist bent on conquering new markets, the action of guerillas, etc. But it does require action…. Those who think that technological or political action is the only kind there is are, of course, free to go on thinking so. The worse for them. In any case, it is not by aligning Christianity with those sociological forms that the specific form Christian action should take today will be discovered." Ibid.

kingdom of God and an outpost of the kind of peaceful practices representative of the future in store for all created order.[243]

Without a disciplined path to peace, any social order, communal stability, or national cooperation diminishes. The means to peace remains just as significant as the accomplished state of peace.[244] The peace Christ weeds out sin and unmasks the genuine conflicts sustained by sin. Just as conflicts are inherently social, so peace must be. Just as conflict is spiritually rooted, so peace must be. Greater still, the peace brought by Jesus is not a peace of rest but rather a peace of truth.[245] Hauerwas poignantly writes, "Just as love without truth cannot help but be accursed, so peace without truthfulness cannot help but be deadly."[246] This truthfulness finds fullest expression in the person of Jesus Christ enacted in the worshipful presence of the church.[247]

Rather than a conquering church mirroring the nationalistic approaches to reconciliation, Hauerwas points out how the church must allow the fundamental and global unity found in Christ to motivate social choices. Indeed, what it means for Jesus to be worthy of human worship is explicable only in terms of his social significance.[248] The

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[243] Ellul makes an interesting argument here by drawing attention to the two-fold responsibility of Christian pacifism. Not simply does the church speak contentment to the poor and oppressed but also responsibility and stewardship to the rich. Ellul states, "I believe that, too often in history, Christians betrayed their faith by preaching resignation to the poor without at the same time constraining the rich to *serve* the poor. The Bible says that the Christian in an inferior position must not seek revenge, make demands, revolt; but in return the superior must become the servant of the inferior. Generally in preaching submission the church has forgotten the other side and thus has stood with the oppressors; it lent its moral authority to armed violence or to wealth and power." Ibid., 150–151.

[244] In many ways, this line of reasoning remains common among the historic Christian approaches to war, violence, and justice. However, the definition of appropriate "means" and "ends" differ greatly. Watts, "Just War, Pacifism and the Ethics of Protection," 37–39.

[245] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 92.

[246] Ibid.

[247] As Richard Hays points out and Hauerwas confirms, Hauerwas follows John Howard Yoder in his development of peace, non-violence, and Christological primacy. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 254; Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, xxiv.

[248] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 37.

Christian community must learn to challenge the false peace of this world built more on Satan's deceptions than God's revealed truth, and resist the temptation to despair in a world bent on destroying itself.[249] Hauerwas concludes, "I hope this will make it clear that for Christians peace is not an ideal known apart from our theological convictions; rather the peace for which we hunger and thirst is determined and made possible only through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ."[250]

The faithfulness of Christian presence hinges on a biblical creativity working to awaken the broader cultural imagination to understand that violence and coercion are not the only possibilities.[251] Hauerwas seeks a faithful presence transcending cultural, national, and social concerns to embody the peaceful reign of Christ completed at the cross.[252] Rather than militaristic solutions ordained by a nation, Christian presence promoting peaceful alternatives established through the singular action of God in Jesus Christ, revealing his glory and redeeming a people for his purposes.[253]

However, such a vision of faithful presence does not offer a quick, easy path for maintaining a virtuous witness to the peace of God. Alternatively, the stubbornness of the

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[249] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 95.

[250] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, xvii.

[251] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 95.

[252] Alan F. Johnson offers a very helpful analysis of the intimate connection between Scripture, authority, war, and the American way of life. Alan F Johnson, "The Bible and War in America: An Historical Survey," *JETS* 28.2 (1985): 169–81.

[253] Daniel M. Bell Jr. draws attention to the corporate nature of Hauerwas' pacifism as a critical means of understanding the kind of peace in Hauerwas' moral theology. Specifically, pacifism as an intellectual or philosophical commitment cannot provide hope to the world. Rather, the church as a corporate community of peace exposes the ruptures in creation as well as offering the inbreaking of God's kingdom to display the divinely ordered alternative. He writes, "The peacefulness that characterizes God's way in the world and so should characterize God's people is not an idea or theory or even an unofficial church statement but the particular politics that is the witness of the communities life. *I* cannot be a pacifist in the since how are wants advocates; only *we* can be." Daniel M. Bell Jr., "The Way of God with the World," in *Unsettling Arguments: A Festschrift on the Occasion of Stanley Hauerwas's 70th Birthday* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 129–130; emphasis his.

gospel motivates a total commitment to a life not simply avoiding violence but actively representing the way of peace for the protection and promotion of life.[254] Ellul notes how the Christian's rejection of violence acts as a fundamental declaration of man's unique place in created order, a declaration of God's original design established in creation and restored in the cross. Ellul writes, "The Christian faith implies rejection and condemnation of both revolutionary violence and the violence of the established powers. 'Thou shalt not kill' (as Jesus explained it) is to be considered not a law but a guiding principle in accomplishing the supreme task *of man*."[255] In contrast to natural desires evidenced in the violent behavior of animals, the Christian man finds truly himself a man when he is able to totally reject physical violence and submit to the guarantees of the gospel instead of pursuing the possibility for a lesser peace achieved through human means of coercion and security.[256]

This total rejection does not result in a social isolation or tribalism but a restored purity of public witness. The practiced presence of virtuous peace portrays the gospel in life and practice. Christian faith should not avoid such a radical position but embrace the revealed ardor of the gospel revealed through and embodied by Jesus Christ. The total commitment to Jesus Christ shapes the faithful community, enabling peaceableness to become the moral language of faithful social witness.

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[254] Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 145.

[255] Ibid., 145–146.

[256] Ellul proposes Christians are capable of rejecting all forms of violence yet his position warrants a more nuance definition of violence in the face of his own distinctions between physical, psychological, and spiritual violence. Ibid., 146. Jeffrey M. Shaw, Peter K. Fallon, and David Lovekin offer helpful exploration of some of these issues but further exploration is warranted. Jeffrey M. Shaw, "Two Views of Propaganda as a Form of Violence," in *Jacques Ellul on Violence, Resistance, and War* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 105–12; Peter K. Fallon, "Propaganda as Psychic Violence," in *Jacques Ellul on Violence, Resistance, and War* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 113–28; David Lovekin, "Technology and Perpetual War: The Boundary of No Boundary," in *Jacques Ellul on Violence, Resistance, and War* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 129–44.

Ellul and Hauerwas supply a helpful perspective on the enduring witness of the church in the face of violence, coercion, and injustice through the peaceful paradigm of Jesus Christ. They also offer a helpful reminder of eschatological promises of Jesus Christ and the Christian social responsibility to practice sacrificial reconciliation. With such positive contributions in mind, the moral significance of peaceableness in Ellul and Hauerwas deserves to be strengthened by integrating their contribution into the larger testimony of the Christian tradition. After all, the foundation for Christian ethics should not be reduced to a singular moral principal but work to shape a sound, disciplined practice of integrating the full counsel of God to every area of life.

The Difficulties of History

Ellul's historical setting provides a great deal of helpful perspective on the nature and scope of violence but may also serve to unbalance his emphasis on pacifism and supply his unqualified definition of violence. In the face of the tragedy and human suffering during and following World War II, Ellul crafts strong rhetoric against the Christian and violence.[257] However, making such a strong statement against the moral compromise of Christians and violence throughout history presents a challenge to fully appreciate or support.[258]

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[257] It is illuminating to read Ellul's thoughts regarding the post-World War II era where he was personally involved, as a jurist, with the trying of war criminals. He states, "My position was the following: as long as the enemy was active and strong, we had to do everything possible to defeat them. Once we had defeated the enemy we had to be as liberal as possible. We must forgive not seek revenge, nor sanction after the event when we were in a position of power and had the upper hand." Ellul, *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity*, 82. Ellul's position seems to contradict his strong positions against violence but might also be yet another reflection of the dissonance inherent in his dialectic theology.

[258] For Ellul's historical survey of Christian positions on violence see Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 1–27.

Positively, Ellul's definition of violence does recognize the deeper questions of Christians and war.[259] Namely, rather than assuming the inherent goodness of violence in a fallen world and developing a Christian vision for war, the morality of all violence must be considered first. Ellul's strong critique of violence furnishes a helpful reminder that war is always a sign of human rebellion and sinfulness. Negatively, Ellul does not qualify sufficiently his own definition of violence and even overstates the necessary scope of action in war and national conflicts.[260] Ellul's definition of violence would profit from a greater explanation of the differences between physical, psychological, and spiritual violence.[261]

In many ways, Ellul offers his privileged reading of Christians and violence without adequately citing or addressing the diversity in the body of Christ throughout history.[262] A more balanced approach to the historical developments Christian positions on war, peace, and reconciliation would recognize the breadth and scope of the church. As a result, reflections on violence, conflict, and the peace of Christ would more fully

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[259] Andrew Goddard provides the most helpful study of Ellul's position on violence with its strengths and weakness. Andrew Goddard, "Ellul on Violence and Just War," in *Jacques Ellul on Violence, Resistance, and War* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 25–40.

[260] Goddard notes Ellul's imprecise definition of violence supplies an impossible and even dangerous position to apply practically. Ibid., 34–36. While Goddard's critique rightly points out Ellul's overgeneralizations and the need for social application as the Christian grapples with violence and social ordering, Goddard seems to overlook Ellul's study focuses on physical and psychological violence rather than the spiritual violence inherent in the gospel. Beyond the theological significance of Jesus himself noted the divisive realities of the Christian faith (Matthew 10:34). Ellul does not compound these distinctions sufficiently and even Goddard points out the possibilities for Ellul's position in social and political witness. Ibid., 37–38.

[261] Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 169.

[262] James Turner Johnson does an excellent job highlighting the particular tensions within not simply Christian just war theory and pacifism but within just war theorist themselves. James Turner Johnson, "On Keeping Faith: The Use of History for Religious Ethics," *JRE* 7.1 (1979): 109–114.

appreciate the contoured story of God's people in relationship to these concepts.[263] Greater still, subjecting his own perspective to the same scrutiny as he has done with others would provide fuller reading of not simply Christians and violence but other issues worthy of historical and ethical analysis.

Christian Unity Within a Violent World

Similarly to Ellul's historical imbalance, Hauerwas' overemphasis on peaceableness and non-violence limits the possibilities for his insights across a broad spectrum of Christian communities. Hauerwas' approach offers no little nuance or appreciation for the diverse and valuable perspectives within the church. Positively, Hauerwas' emphasis on peace reasserts the Christian prerogative to strive for and live out the peace granted through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hauerwas deserves credit for drawing attention to the importance of living out the peace achieved by Jesus Christ.

Through this truth, the church gains a greater dependence on the gospel as the only hope for peace in the church and in the world. By revealing Jesus Christ, God the Father unveils a unique yet all-encompassing pattern for living in the world. The presence of Jesus in human history alters every aspect of created order, including our ethics.[264]

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[263] Scott Rae, John and Paul Feinberg, and Daniel M. Bell Jr. provide two of the more helpful surveys of the Christian positions on violence. Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 243–260; John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Crossway, 2010), 635–696; Daniel M. Bell Jr., *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church rather than the State* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 39–71.

[264] Oliver O'Donovan does well in outlining Jesus' significance to Christian ethics, going even as far as saying Christian ethics depends upon the gospel, specifically, on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 11–13.

Yet, Hauerwas' emphasis on peace in Christian ethics neglects to fully explain the rich diversity in Christian tradition on questions of war and peace.[265]

Very clearly, Hauerwas sees the question of violence as the central issue for any Christian social ethic and it is at this point Hauerwas warrants some criticism.[266] Instead of one singular issue framing an entire discussion of Christian morality, peace serves as one particular quality among many displayed in the church. Surveying Scripture and church history reveals similar concerns for justice, mercy, peace, and love as fundamental expressions of the gospel.[267] More to the point, Jesus' own teaching on peace and peaceableness from the Sermon on the Mount shares contextual importance with surrounding statements on purity, mercy, and suffering.[268]

Furthermore, Hauerwas perceives of the question of war and peace as definitive in the church's understanding of God himself.[269] He writes,

> The reason I believe Christians have been given permission … to live without resort to violence is that by doing so we live as God lives. Therefore pacifism is not first of all a prohibition, but an affirmation that God wills to rule his creation not through violence and coercion but by love. Moreover he has called us to be part of his rule by calling us into a community that is governed by peace. Therefore pacifism is not simply on implication among others for Christians. Pacifism is not just another way that some Christians think they should live.

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[265] As Hays points out, perhaps more troubling than using peace as the unilateral paradigm for Christian ethics, Hauerwas' "freewheeling approach to biblical interpretation" inherent in his postliberal narrative hermeneutics displays a low regard for Scripture. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 254. Hays also points out how Hauerwas would proclaim a deep appreciation for biblical revelation while neglecting to interact deeply with the text itself. Ibid., 258–259.

[266] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 114.

[267] It seems Hauerwas has reduced a diverse reading of Scripture back to one singular hermeneutical principle, pacifism, and reread all of Scripture accordingly. Such an approach is dangerous and ignores the progressive nature of biblical revelation. Hays also notes this as an issue with Hauerwas' hermeneutical method.

[268] "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those how are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:7–10).

[269] David Bell Jr. also notes this connection in Hauerwas' pacifism. Bell Jr., "The Way of God with the World."

> Rather pacifism is the form of life that is inherent in the shape of Christian convictions about God and his relation to us.[270]

Stated this way, it is difficult to fully accept the unilateral priority of pacifism for the church without rejecting as false a long tradition of just war theory in the church. Rather than a long history of faithful interpretation, it would seem Hauerwas assumes the church has been totally wrong for the last several hundred years. Instead of totally rejecting any possibilities for just war tradition, Ellul and Hauerwas' strategy would benefit from seeking a harmonious unity in driving the church to love God and love neighbor.

Furthermore, Hauerwas' development of peace and pacifism tightly relate to the hermeneutical priority he gives to Jesus Christ. However, Jesus Christ is not merely a moral exemplar providing the ultimate example of peace but he supplies substantive commands for his church to follow the way of peace. Further, discounting the larger implications of divine justice involving any measure of violence, even from God himself, risks altering fundamental doctrines regarding Christ's atoning work.[271] Ironically, Hauerwas' own critiques of the Americanization of Christianity and the privileged discussion of violence seem to be overlooked in the presumptions of his own moral system.[272]

Hauerwas' stress on the power of the cross and resurrection affords a helpful reminder of how the gospel affect social action. Yet the church has a responsibility to understand and unite the diverse Christian positions within the church itself in order to craft a faithful social witness in a divided world. Furthermore, Christian pacifists such as

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[270] Stanley Hauerwas, "Pacifism: Some Philosophical Considerations," *FaPhil* 2.2 (1985): 99.

[271] See Bell Jr.'s article for a good example of this consequence. Daniel M. Bell Jr., "God Does Not Demand Blood: The Cross and Divine Charity," *ChrCent* 126.3 (2009): 22–26.

[272] For the fullest application of Hauerwas' critique of American exceptionalism in Christian thought, see Hauerwas, *War and the American Difference*.

Hauerwas and Ellul may have more in common with Christian just war theorists than they realize.[273] Thus, for the church to maintain a faithful witness in the world, a disciplined reading of history, appreciating the faithful tradition of both just war and pacifism, as well as a more balanced approach to moral presuppositions provides a positive way forward in establishing a faithful ecclesial witness.

Conclusion: The Faithful Presence of Disciplined Virtue

Living out the Christian virtue of faith demands the church pursue incarnational presence through the peaceful practices and communal realities of a distinctly Christocentric ecclesiology. The first part of this chapter examined the place of faith and faithfulness in Ellul and Hauerwas by exploring the foundations for living a virtuous life. God's sovereign rule creates, shapes, and sustains the faithful community as an expression of the church's vocation. The second section explored the moral significance of the church as a social ethic rather than merely having an ethic. By forcing an embodied ethic, faithful presence retains a unity of belief and action through dependence on God's revelation. Part three unpacked the Christological orientation of peaceful presence. Intently following Christ in his life, death, and resurrection refocuses the Christian on the powerful witness of peace in the midst of a world convinced by the false justice wrought by violence and coercion.

This final section chapter provides a few points of application when seeking a vision of faith in social action crafted from the previous discussions from Ellul and Hauerwas. Specifically, faithful social ethics requires a disciplined theology of virtuous

[273] Johnson, "On Keeping Faith," 113; Richard B Miller, "Christian Pacifism and Just-War Tenets: How Do They Diverge?," *ThSt* 47.3 (1986): 448.

presence growing out the ecclesial center of ethics through the Christological focus of the faithful community. Taken alongside the nuanced approaches to soteriology and hermeneutics discussed in prior sections, an emphasis on grace, sovereignty, and holiness guides Christian action in every aspect of life.

As Ellul and Hauerwas point out, faith is a holiness involving a separation from the world to God.[274] Yet any separation must not be irresponsible otherworldliness but rather disciplined presence. The faithful church cannot avoid the social responsibilities of virtue but gladly accepts the responsibilities of the disciplined life of faith. The church faithfully establishes a meaningful presence in the world through the virtuous practices of Christian community. Several important implications from Ellul and Hauerwas assist in constructing a disciplined virtue of faithful presence.

Faithfulness: Living in Harsh Reality

Genuine faith resists the tendency to live or think outside of reality, that is, genuine faith opposes the escapism prevalent in a post-Christian culture. While Hauerwas is accused of a sectarian ethic, his emphasis on the distinctiveness of the church in contrast with sinful humanity provides a helpful reminder that the Christian way of life ought to be different from the world.[275] Thus, the Christian does not drive the church into reclusive cultural abandonment but into courageous confrontation with reality as God has revealed it to be. The Christian lives the life most in tune with the realities of existence as one who lives in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

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[274] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 7; Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10.

[275] For specific criticisms see Polet, "Being 'Other Cheeky'"; Quirk, "Beyond Sectarianism?"; Northcott, "Reading Hauerwas in the Cornbelt: The Demise of the American Dream and the Return of Liturgical Politics."

Christian faith does not remove the problems and anxieties of human existence. After all, every man must stare down the bitter realties of suffering and death.[276] Yet, Christian faith steels the community against the storms of life. Hauerwas asserts, "To be Christian means to face these realities for what they are, without deception or illusion. To perceive them in this way may mean, however, that the Christian is freed to act in a way that would not otherwise be possible."[277] Such possibilities finds its primary exemplification of the Christian's peaceableness in the midst of a violent and vindictive world insistent on right by might rather than charitable acts of faithful witness of Jesus Christ. While such a notion seems extreme, the point remains. The radical rejection of all things Christian in wider society necessitates a radical faithfulness for the sake of God's glory in the world.

Disciplined: Working God's Will

Correctly understanding the nature and cultivation of virtue assumes that the moral life involves a lifetime of disciplined hard work. Action does not arise out of a vacuum, in a vacuum, or into to a vacuum. The temptation to settle for much less than a life of character reinforces the importance of faithful presence to social witness. As the community of faith lives as the church, the truth of Scripture guards against the blind acceptance of moral compromise and fabricated moral neutrality. The church cannot settle for moderately good individuals who have the appearance of virtue.

Greater still, the Christian's faithful witness cannot accept the insufficient cultural models celebrating prominence, financial stability, or social status. Compromised social

[276] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 45.
[277] Ibid., 46.

patterns are but cheap imitations of the virtuous realities offered in, through, and by the community of faith. After all, the gospel demands more than partial goodness. The church seeks to be good through and through.[278] Through faithful presence, God reveals the creative possibilities of the Christian moral life to a social order lacking vibrancy and sustainability. In this way, faithful presence not only encapsulates the moral potential of the Christian community but also reveals the potency of divine grace in social ethics.[279] And without divine grace, the community risks becoming an end in and of itself rather than a manifestation of the merciful God who continually calls out a people for His own good pleasure.[280]

Virtue: Sanctified Social Presence

Faith requires a sincere holiness given and sustained by God himself. Such holiness is separation, service, and witness for God.[281] Ellul describes the life of faith as a conflict between the certain, unwavering demands of God with the idolatrous, self-justifying realities of the world.[282] Such a conflict does not lead to a total break between the church and the world but rather a redemptive dialogue. Ellul clarifies, "The break has to come first, but it implies rediscovery of the world, society, and one's neighbor in a new type of relationship. Holiness in isolation is inadequate. It demands relationship."[283] Separation from the world defines Christian holiness as far as distinctions in witness and life elucidate the gospel before the world. Any other separation implies false distinctions, a

[278] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 195.
[279] Ibid., 195–196.
[280] Ibid., 196.
[281] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 7.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.

holiness without presence in and among the world. Contrary to such segregation, the Christian represents those most in tune with God's purposes for all created order.

In the end, the morally disciplined community faithfully present in the world provides an essential resource to society. A virtuous witness to the one, true God represents a more significant contribution to contemporary society than pragmatic or syncretistic social strategies.[284] Any separation of virtue and social strategy creates a distinction without a difference. Namely, the most effective social strategy developed and practiced within the church remains the embodied faithful declaration of Jesus Christ through the peaceful practices of Christian virtue.

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[284] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 3.

CHAPTER 3
POSSIBILITY: HOPEFUL SOCIAL ACTION

The life of Christian virtue engages the full scope of human experiences. Growing from the faithful ecclesial witness explored in the last chapter, the next section focuses on the motivating power of the living hope granted in Jesus Christ as developed in particular aspects of Ellul and Hauerwas' theological ethics. The thesis of this chapter is genuine Christian hope enables tangible, creative social action out of an insightful awareness of the global significance of moral communities shaped by the eschatological promises of God. Moving from presence to possibility, several important notions from the life and thought of Ellul and Hauerwas work together to shape a Christian social ethic hopefully engaging the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

The first part of this chapter explores how Ellul and Hauerwas see Christian hope driving and shaping the redeemed community. Taken together, the shared contribution offers a broad vision for the moral possibilities in vibrant Christian hope. Ellul and Hauerwas encourage a living hope sustained by Christ, the church's present and future redeemer in two specific emphases.

First, Ellul reveals how hope fuels a global moral vision of Christian morality as an alternative to the alienating realities of human existence. The Christian lives in agonistic tension, seeking to participate in the world yet practicing a holy way of life. In the face of *technique*, Ellul points to the Christian's hopeful way of life enlivened to prayer, confession, Sabbath, and Scripture reading.

Second, alongside Ellul's hopeful Christian freedom, Hauerwas' eschatological ethic challenges the church to embrace a broader vision for moral action. That is, Hauerwas emphasizes the eschatological character of Christian ethics in order to root moral action upon the demands of life lived under God's rule. By displaying eschatological hope, Christian moral creativity grows. Even more, the faithful community, disciple in a living faith, displays the hope of the kingdom by rightly engaging the world, motivated by a dynamic awareness of God's lordship over all creation.

The strength of such an eschatological global vision from Ellul and Hauerwas lies in the possibilities for application. Practicing the hopeful way of life outlined by Ellul out of an eschatological foundation found in Hauerwas refreshes the necessity for a distinctly Christian response to diverse and complex issues. However, the kind of virtue existent in Ellul and Hauerwas is difficult to measure due to Ellul's indiscriminate universalism and Hauerwas' overemphasis on the commands of Jesus apart from their relationship with the rest of Scripture. Without denying the ethical potential, living Christian hope must avoid moral idealism and seek a balanced approach to virtue and divine commands.

The second part of this chapter connects the wider moral vision developed from Ellul and Hauerwas with a mutual emphasis on localizing moral action. While hope shapes the Christian's global perspective, both Ellul and Hauerwas maintain the necessity of lived, localized, present social witness. Two points act as reference points by offering a means of analysis and synthesis.

First, Ellul's locally enacted global perspective shapes the balanced expression of virtuous Christian social ethics practiced by the church. The personalist philosophy

developed by Ellul drives the faithful community to meaningful moral action motived through a full emphasis on the individual's importance to moral discovery. By emphasizing the individual, Ellul seeks to make morality manageable and less abstract in the life of the individual Christian. As well, connecting Ellul's personalism with his Christian faith emphasizes tangible, virtuous action for the good of the world and the glory of God. By embodying a living faith inspired by divine hope, believers are empowered to visibly manifest God's character in every facet of life. Every believer can and must act out of hope, living out the gospel before a watching world.

Second, Hauerwas offers an expanded, enriching addition to Ellul's personalism by emphasizing not merely the individual in moral discourse but one specific individual, Jesus Christ. The incarnate Lord supplies a rich, eschatological vision for enacting a hopeful Christian ethic as the church avoids distinctions between the proclamation and proclaimer of God's kingdom. Apart from the hope displayed in the incarnation, the rich realities of God's rule expounded in Jesus' kingdom teaching remain unattainable or theoretical ideals for the Christian community.

Ellul and Hauerwas offer a strong contribution to Christian ethics by pointing to the living hope exemplified in the church. However, Ellul's emphasis on the individual Christian deserves to be strengthened by a more explicit description of how the individual Christian firmly rooted in the church embodies hope within community. With a broader appreciation for community, Ellul's and Hauerwas' contribution provides a helpful emphasis on moral action growing out of a strong, incarnational emphasis in the Christian life.

The final section of this chapter seeks to leverage a marriage of Ellul's personalist approach and Hauerwas' eschatological ethics to encourage a greater recognition of the moral possibilities open to the church by acting out of the deep hope of the gospel. Empowered by divine hope, the church's social ethics focuses on the real moral options opened by the gospel while also remaining aware of the limits imposed by a fallen world. In this way, a more hopeful Christian realism shifts away from seeing social ethics as a series of "impossible possibilities." Alternatively, hope drives the church toward tangible action. As the church's moral vision expands in accordance with the scope of God's promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the vast challenges of a virtuous life become rich opportunities for a full display of the gospel through social action empowered by God's sovereign rule.

Hopeful: Ellul and Hauerwas on the Freeing Hope of the Christian Life

Cultivating a lived practice of hopeful action requires a deep commitment to the larger implications of global realities. Through an open awareness of broader social and cultural situations, the Christian seeks to practice a realistic and timely way of life in keeping with God's holy character and His sovereign commitment to care for all created order. Two emphases in Ellul and Hauerwas assist in regaining a freely hopeful Christian ethic aware of the global reach of Christian morality.

First, Ellul points out how the globalized uniformity of *technique* impairs moral action and necessitates a Christian response. The church must regain virtuous practices empowered by the Holy Spirit rather than consenting to *technique*'s raw pragmatism. The church cannot rush God's process for moral action but must remain vigilant in maintaining the trusting disposition in God's ongoing commitment to redeem and restore

the world revealed in Jesus Christ. Ellul rightly points out how Christian hope frees the church to embody and enact the divine responsibilities granted in Jesus Christ.

Second, Hauerwas connects the hopeful action with the eschatological shape of Christian faith. Practicing a hopeful way of life depends upon the present and future promises of God. When God's sure promises drive the church's practices, morality becomes the lived expression of sure hope.

Both Ellul and Hauerwas remind the church of the larger implications of the living hope revealed by Jesus Christ. Yet, both Ellul and Hauerwas benefit from the broadening of two points. Ellul's universalism requires a more robust appreciation of divine judgment as an essential component of Christian hope. Since Ellul provides a helpful diagnosis of man's moral alienation and rightly insists on concrete implications in practicing Christian hope, an orthodox soteriology deepens the possibilities for Ellul's insights. For Hauerwas, he rightly detects the eschatological significance of Jesus Christ in moral formation but misses the opportunity to leverage the Old Testament's significance in anticipating, supporting, and expanding the promised hope revealed in the Messiah. When the vision of hope possibility spans the entire biblical narrative, the church receives a richer presentation of God's purposes in the past, present, and future.

Think Globally: Ellul on *Technique* and Moral Action

Through the dictum "Think globally, act locally," Ellul unpacks the necessary relationship between the Christian and the ordained situation for virtuous action.[1]

[1] While personalism will be further addressed in part two of the present chapter, it is important to note its significance here and the tension between thinking globally and acting locally in Ellul's ethics. Ellul implies this phrase originated in the Gascon personalism initiated by Ellul and Charbonneau. Ellul, *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity*, 67.

Ultimately, through the development of *technique* (think globally) and a personalist ethic (act locally), Ellul ably critiques pragmatic moral norms of the contemporary technological society by revealing the crippling effect of globalization on moral thinking and action.[2] In his critique, Ellul offers a glimpse forward toward an ethic of hope freed to a life of service to God and to the world.

Ellul's emphasis on thinking globally offers significant insight on his larger social and ethical developments, connecting well with Hauerwas' eschatological ethic. Ellul emphasizes a global perspective by unpacking the far-reaching affect of *technique* on moral action. For him, mankind is robbed of genuine freedom offered by God and only as this freedom reestablishes man's proper relationship with God does virtue regain its proper significance.

Ellul might be best known for his development of *technique* in his writings engaging the power of technical systems over human existence.[3] Ellul understands *technique* to be "the *totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute*

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[2] Technique challenges on a global and local scale by not simply influencing social change but also modifying the individual's ideas, lifestyles, and behaviors. He states, "La transformation est à la fois globale (concernant l'ensemble de l'humanité, tous les aspects de la société, de la civilisation) et personnelle (modifiant nos idées, nos modes de vie, nos comportements," Jacques Ellul, "Réflexions sur l'ambivalence du progrès technique," *LRA* 18.106 (1965): 380.

[3] As Ellul's best known work, *The Technological Society* introduces and develops the concept of *technique*. In brief, *technique* represents the organization of the system whereby means dominate ends, where efficiency defines morality. As a self-directing, self-augmenting, universal monism, *technique* dominates mankind and created order through an overemphasized instrumentality.Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1964). Ellul also develops important themes related to technique in *The Technological Bluff*. Specifically, Ellul argues that an easily distracted consumer society is becoming caught up in a rapidly developing, uncontrollable technological system. Such a system seeks a technical solution to every problem even as the world is integrated into larger, fragile, and insecure systems. In the end, Ellul emphasizes that these solutions raise more and greater problems than they solve. Responsibility, contemplation, civility, and spirituality suffer the consequences of life in the technological society. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Bluff*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).

efficiency (for a given state of development) in *every* field of human activity."[4] While Ellul's definition of *technique* raises basic questions across the breadth of human society, the direct interest here is on *technique*'s influence on virtue and social ethics.[5] Furthermore, Ellul does not specifically mention *technique* but working from his assertion that *technique* seeks absolute efficiency in every field of human activity necessarily includes studies of morality. As such, Ellul's ethical emphasis on Christian character and practiced virtue serves as an alternative to the pragmatic efficiency offered under the far-reaching effects of *technique*.

Even more, the scale of Ellul's critical analysis raises awareness of the global significance of localized virtue. The connections between rationality and outcomes in Ellul's definition of *technique* present a dilemma in the modern appreciation of morality, virtue, and social witness.[6] Furthermore, how does the church establish, cultivate, and sustain moral identity amidst the modern pragmatic milieu emphasizing outcomes and verifiable success? Such a question reasserts the importance of exploring how Christian hope reimagines the global effects of *technique* as an opportunity for Christian freedom.

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[4] Ellul, *The Technological Society*, xxv; emphasis his.

[5] Several secondary resources by Andrew Goddard, C. George Benello, and David Lovekin provide excellent explanations of Ellul's development of *technique*. Specifically, chapter 3 in Andrew Goddard's *Living the Word, Resisting the World* and chapter 3 in David Lovekin's *Technique, Discourse, and Consciousness* afford a broad, conceptual analysis of *technique* in Ellul's greater sociological project. C. George Benello provides good insight on Ellul's critique of modernity through *technique* as well as a general overview of Ellul's development of *technique*. Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, 117–153; C. George Benello, "Technology and Power: Technique as a Mode of Understanding Modernity," in *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Clifford G. Christians and Jay M. Hook (Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 91–107; David Lovekin, *Technique, Discourse, and Consciousness: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jacques Ellul* (Lehigh University Press, 1991), 82–116.

[6] Andrew Goddard astutely points out this observation of rationality, *technique*, and ends but this study specifically addresses this relationship in moral reasoning. Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, 135–136.

Three particular aspects of Ellul's hopeful ethic assist in focusing the faithful community on the global significance of tangible moral action for God's glory. First, in the face of sinful alienation, only the genuine freedom offered through hope in Christ opens the believer to creative moral action. Christian hope frees humanity to a life of action and such freedom signifies the ethical aspect of the virtue of hope. Second, the tension between the church and the world offers an opportunity to evidence God's will to the world through obedient Christian submission to God. Third, in order to proclaim hopeful freedom to the world the church must do more than simply declare a hope. The church must *become* the hope the world seeks. Through distinctly Christian practices, Christian virtue participates in social and cultural structures. By fulfilling an opportunity for moral imagination in expressing God's will, the Christian moral life gains shape from the biblical foundations for hope in a fallen world.

Alienation and Hopeful Christian Virtue

While Ellul is sometimes portrayed as a Luddite, pessimist, or technophobe, such representations merely misunderstand his hopeful engagement with sociological or cultural realities.[7] Instead of negativity or despair, Ellul's perspective on Christian possibilities grows out of the deep hopefulness unique to the redeemed community. Any criticism Ellul levels through sociological analysis seeks to highlight the futility of a life turned away from God. Such a turn away from God can only be a life without true hope.[8]

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[7] Lawrence Terlizzese provides the fullest development of the place of hope in Ellul's corpus and uncovers the vital place of the Christian in gloomy or naive social orders. Where Ellul seems negative, he simply seeks to uncover the depths of hopelessness in modern society in order to offer the true hope found only in Jesus Christ. Terlizzese, *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul*.

[8] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 79.

Ellul's emphasis on hopeful freedom brings a unique moral vision. Rather than some vague positivity insistent on a better tomorrow, senseless commitment to repeatedly unsuccessful endeavors, naïve trust in man's abilities, or a misreading of history's endurance, true hope rests solely in God.[9] True hope is man's response to God's work on his behalf and cannot be sustained apart from God's action.[10] Moreover, hope founded in Jesus Christ guards the Christian against the moral malaise and despair of living in a world where God seems silent.[11] Greater still, the incarnation offers a renewed opportunity for mankind to display God's character in the midst of growing cultural and social isolation.

With this foundation for hope, Ellul's development of *technique* and criticism of the virtues of the technological society takes on special significance.[12] That is, hopeful Christian action draws back from the uniform totality of *technique* to establish a dynamic incarnation of God's kingdom. When the church exercises hope, the faithful community lives out the true and lasting freedom afforded through Jesus Christ, a participation in the visible in-breaking of God's kingdom. Ellul explains, "Hope is entry into the kingdom of heaven which is already here and which manifests itself through our freedom. It is actual participation in anticipated life and glory. We are already heirs."[13] Hope offers the church

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[9] Ibid., 12–13.

[10] Ibid., 13.

[11] Ellul develops this notion at length in *Hope in Time of Abandonment*. Therein, he emphasizes that the modern ere is experiencing the silence of God as divine condemnation for social and cultural commitment to idolatry rather than loyalty to the Word of God. Jacques Ellul, *Hope in Time of Abandonment*, trans. C. Edward Hopkin, repr. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012).

[12] Ellul explains it as the "currents of power" struggling for supremacy against God's total control. The complexity of this battle unfolds across a multitude of levels and options for conflict on the battleground of ordered creation. In this context, man is always both dominating and dominated. Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 46.

[13] Ibid., 16.

a means of shaping a moral vision through faithful communal commitments.[14] Thus, hopeful Christian virtue serves as a strong contrast to the bondage of alienation from God and the means of convincing the individual person of the moral possibilities of life. In the face of globalized systems, the individual often feels isolated and weakened. A hopeful vision of God's kingdom counteracts the oppression of *technique* through divine reminders of God's continued work in the world through the faithful community of saints.

While alienation represents a term Ellul borrowed from Marx, Ellul's usage differs greatly from Marx.[15] In contrast to Marx's emphasis on alienation as a theory of history, Ellul's use of alienation emphasizes the false sense of freedom engendered in modern societies evidenced in man's alienation from all that brings life meaning.[16] Theologically, the rupture between man and God finds ongoing vigor in the false freedom offered in the world.[17] Furthermore, the determinative principles of socio-political

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Marx used alienation to critique man's condition in a capitalist economy and as a means of developing his materialistic views on history but Ellul emphasizes an alienation of man from God represented by an insistence on moralism as a means to maintain false freedom. For a helpful collection of Marx's development of alienation see Karl Marx, *Karl Marx: A Reader*, ed. Jon Elster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 29–78. Furthermore, it is important to note again how much Ellul saw Marx merely as the rational or cognitive formulation for what Ellul had come to experience from life in concrete reality rather than a full-bodied philosophy on the whole human existence. This might be Ellul's most important departure from Marx. Christianity and biblical revelation offered a superior explanation for the plight of humanity where Marx would never hope to find positive statements about hope and human possibilities. See Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age*, 7. David C. Menninger also points out Ellul's significant departures from Marx identifying dialectic methodology as the primary point of similarity between Marx and Ellul. Yet, even Ellul's dialectics differed from Marx as Ellul's dialectic integrated Christian doctrine rather than Marx's social and material elements. David C. Menninger, "Marx in the Social Thought of Jacques Ellul," in *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 17–31.

[16] Peter Singer provides a helpful and concise review of alienation in Marx's view of history in Peter Singer, *Marx: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[17] Andrew Goddard points to the themes of rupture and communion as the dialectic polls in Ellul's theology. Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, 59–116.

structures and the extreme power of *technique*'s pragmatism over man stifle moral creativity.[18]

In the face of such determinism, Ellul points to genuine Christian hope enacted through morality as critical to establishing lasting freedom, a freedom found in Jesus Christ.[19] Radical hope given by God to man drives the Christian to concrete action. Ellul explains, "If hope is the response of man to God's love and grace, freedom is the response of God to man's hope, giving man the possibility of living out hope concretely and effectively in daily life after a fashion which is not just hypothetical or sentimental."[20] Hope is the virtue whereby the community of faith walks out God's grace in the world. Without God's intervention, mankind remains alienated from the freeing power of God.

Being alienated from God does not simply create distance between human experience and divine freedom. Instead, humanity experiences a total isolation from God and all created order leading to an absolute bondage where man, as a law to himself, simply tightens the shackles of sinful existence.[21] Satan's greatest deception is that obedience to God leads to bondage.

Yet, in such willing obedience does mankind find true freedom, true hope. Ellul concludes, "For if obedience to sin, the flesh, and the world is bondage and alienation, obedience to the will of God is freedom, and cannot be anything else."[22] Submission to God's work does not bind man but opens him to the true freedom offered by God.

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[18] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 34.
[19] Ibid., 12.
[20] Ibid., 13.
[21] Ibid., 50.
[22] Ibid., 62.

Through hopeful action, the Christian counteracts the effects of alienation and reestablishes a larger vision of God's good purposes for created order. Nevertheless, such action often leaves the Christian feeling a strange dynamic of God's saving call and the ongoing necessities of continued presence in the world.

Living in Agonistic Tension

Being opened to hopeful freedom does not simply remove the challenges of human existence. The freedom received from God also brings the Christian into a life of tension. The Christian is called to supreme faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ, living in the world representing "another order, another Master (than the 'prince of this world'), another claim (than that of the natural heart of man)."[23] As an expression of this singular loyalty, the Christian also has a deep obligation for participatory existence in this present life. Without flaunting Christ's total victory through social neglect or compromising the gospel's significance through cultural syncretism, the church compassionately ministers in the world. The intolerability of the world's situation should not bring pleasure or glee but deeply sympathetic participation.[24]

Maintaining this tension remains vital to balancing the demands of God's revelation and the resistance of the fallen world. Rightly holding this moral tension between the Christian and the world does not cripple the faithful community but revives a dependence on hope granted by God. The freedom opened to the Christian by hope in God empowers the community to act and to obey God's will revealed through

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[23] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 35.
[24] Ibid.

Scripture.[25] As Ellul states it, "Freedom, the freedom which God gives, is to be understood from the very first as a power or possibility."[26] Empowered by the Spirit of God through the work of Christ, Christian hope employs every part of the community in dynamic yet dependent social action. Ellul concludes,

> Freedom is not one element of the Christian life. It is not one of its forms. It does not express itself accidentally, or according to circumstances, or through encounters. In some circumstances temperance is the work of faith, in others faithfulness, in others strict justice, in others extreme clemency. Freedom, however, is not like this. It is not a part or a fragmentary expression of the Christian life. It *is* the Christian life.[27]

Freedom offered in the hopeful life serves as the perfect climate for bearing spiritual fruit. Freedom maintains the proper dynamic to grow faithful acts of worship to God in service to the world.

In fact, the existence of freedom granted by God determines the character of all moral choices. Without such freedom, Christian ethics cannot exist.[28] A Christian and any other man might complete the same actions yet the substance of the choice takes on a different character when motivated by freedom or the bondage of sin. Ellul explains, "Freedom is living in God's own freedom through this fellowship and in the unbroken unity of all creation in which there is no separate or incoherent bits and pieces between which to choose."[29] Freedom unifies moral action not on the basis of *technique*'s pragmatism but on the coherence of God's revealed will. Apart from God's gift of freedom in Christ, good deeds represent an expression of social or cultural pressures

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[25] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 62.
[26] Ibid., 103.
[27] Ibid., 104.
[28] Ibid., 111.
[29] Ibid., 114.

rather than a dynamic presentation of hope. Even more, the Christian is offered a specific form for freedom in relationship with the world. Rather than isolating the Christian community, faithful Christian freedom demands a practiced proclamation of Jesus Christ.

The Forms of Christian Freedom

Because *technique* demands technical solutions in a technological society so the technological society must also establish a technological virtue. The more man's technological innovation advances in precision and efficiency so must the moral man become innovative, precise, and mindful.[30] In order to proclaim hopeful freedom to the world the church must do more than simply declare a hope. The church must become the hope the world seeks, taking on the divinely ordained forms and practices of Christian freedom. After all, Christian moral action does involve presenting signs of the kingdom but this often represents an overly pietistic or disengaged vision. Ellul explains, "The exercise of freedom which we are given should involve more than putting up signs (of the kingdom). It should involve the actualization by the world of the hope which is given."[31] Christian social action represents nothing less than the embodiment of a virtue in the church being established and shaped by a hope given by God.

In stark contrast to such dynamic social action, *technique* flattens moral action by enforcing uniformity rather than dynamism in spite of increasingly complex moral issues. Indeed, Ellul's connection between the means and ends reveals a crisis of moral action in the technological society. Specifically, the overabundance of information accessible to the modern individual does not empower and inform but overburdens. The Christian

[30] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 187.
[31] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 16.

receives God's call to act in substantial ways but finds meaningful action increasingly difficult in the midst of an overpowering stream of information and processes.[32] Can creative Christian virtue be sustained in the face of dominating tendencies of globalization? Strikingly, character and virtue lose their place in moral development in a society insistent on measurable methodologies with scientific repeatability.[33]

In the face of these difficulties, a hopeful Christian ethic takes on a specific shape in the world. Against any presumptions of ambiguity in the Christian moral vision of freedom and participation, Ellul offers four forms of Christian freedom: prayer, confession, observing Sabbath, and reading Scripture. Ellul develops these four practices as expressions of freedom as the Christian's service for God and the world.[34]

Prayer

The first form of Christian freedom is prayer, representing a rebuttal of social forces tempting the Christian to fear or self-reliance.[35] True prayer is the ultimate expression of the freedom of man living in full relationship with God, as established by God for and with man. Without hope in another, man cannot pray. Ellul explains, "Prayer, whether it

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[32] Such issues are direct much of Ellul's study of propaganda in human society as a means of integrating individuals into larger cultural constructs for control and submission. He states, "Not only is propaganda itself a technique, it is also an indispensable condition for the development of technical progress and the establishment of a technological civilization. And. as with all techniques, propaganda is subject to the law of efficiency." Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda*, trans. Konrad Kellen (New York: Random House, 1965), x.

[33] Ellul provides a helpful connection between technique and the scientific search for assurance, repeatability, and liberation. See Jacques Ellul, "La technique considérée en tant que système," *LEPhil* 2 (1976): 147–66.

[34] Ellul develops these expressions of prayer, confession, Sabbeth, and reading Scripture from two specific volumes of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. See Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. G.T. Thomson and Harold Knight, CD Vol. I/2 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004); Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. Harold Knight et al., CD Vol. III/4 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

[35] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 126.

is petition or praise, is an act by which man accepts a life by grace and hence a life in free response of gratitude which is the most complete form of freedom."[36] As an act of absolute authenticity, true prayer necessitates a man who has opened his hands completely to receive what God offers.[37]

Without fear, pretense, or obligation, prayer expresses the freedom granted the Christian as the man opened to a God who is near, listening, and ready to answer.[38] The prayer of God's people refutes the materialism and verifiability insisted on in the world. Rather, the long, slow walk of trust in God himself generates a lifestyle framed the spiritual communion of prayer.

The Confession of Faith

The confession of faith represents the second form of Christian freedom. Through the active declaration of a renewed relationship with God, the Christian displays a radical hope in Jesus Christ shaping a life around God and not self. In this way, the Christian takes on a way of life foreign to the selfish human experience by declaring a more significant source of truth than the self.

Thus, the Christian's life and ultimate hope becomes an expression of God's revelation not human self-realization. As one raised from death to life, the Christian speaks God's words after him, not on man's authority but based upon God's truthful self-revelation. Ellul states it thus, "I can have the audacity to risk speaking about God

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[36] Ibid., 126–127.

[37] Ellul dedicates an entire book to this premise. *Prayer and the Modern Man* offers prayer as the ultimate critique of man's self-sufficiency. Only the man who has moved away from himself and totally upon God is open to the power and possibilities of prayer. This work represents a deeply spiritual work with very insightful and wise counsel from Ellul. Jacques Ellul, *Prayer and the Modern Man* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970).

[38] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 127.

because I have the freedom if not the knowledge to do so, and because this very freedom helps me know what I could not know by experience or reason."[39] Through confessing God as he has revealed himself to be, the Christian man exercises his freedom as an ongoing act of dependence on God.[40] The source of identity, expression, and meaning grows from the ongoing commitment to speak God's will in the world.

Sabbath

The third form of Christian freedom finds expression in the faithful practice of the holy day or Sabbath. By faithfully exercising the freeing enterprise of Christian rest, the community of faith displays the hopeful possibilities of life spent wholly dedicated to God.[41] Because of the fall, man's work has been subjected to futility and painful monotony.

Yet, the practices of Sabbath remind the believer of the freeing power of Christ's resurrection. Sabbath orients the Christian's work toward a confidence in God's total defeat of sin and death. That is, practicing the holy day testifies of the freedom offered the Christian and all creation. Ellul states, "To celebrate rest is to offer both God and man a sign of freedom in the authenticity of life."[42] Even more, this practiced rest does not reflect the forms of empty leisure and cessation of action offered by the world. Such leisure does not free but binds and enslaves man through the deceptiveness of escapist

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[39] Ellul makes note of those who attempt to undermine the reliability of language yet puts himself in an awkward spot. As one who denies contemporary definitions of inerrancy and infallibility, Ellul opens himself to the same criticisms he seeks to debunk. Ellul then must resort to an awkward reliance on the act itself as truthful because it is an act not because confession testifies to truth. Ibid. David Gill offers the best development of Ellul's use of Scripture, especially his use of revelation in moral reasoning and ethics. See Gill, *The Word of God in the Ethics of Jacques Ellul*.

[40] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 128.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 129.

practices.[43] Alternatively, the restful opportunities prayer and worship on the Sabbath shapes the Christian life around divinely ordained rhythms. Such a discipline demands a deeper hope and displays a richer lifestyle than offered by the world.

The Reading of Scripture

The final practice of genuine freedom offered by Ellul, the reading of Scripture, returns the Christian to the intimate connection between the faithful, virtuous life and divine revelation. As participants in the new life in Christ, God opens the believer's eyes, ears, and heart to the riches of Scripture. Ellul states, "He (God) gives us freedom to look into that which is most inconceivable and incomprehensible through he form which he himself has chosen, namely, scripture. Without this gift of freedom we would be unable either to read scripture or to see in it God's word."[44] The natural man cannot hope to grasp either the realities or categories offered in the Bible.[45]

The unregenerate man's attempts to read, understand, and practice Scripture apart from spiritual conversion reveals an entrenched commitment to self-importance, approaching God on anthropological assumptions rather than theological realities. Enlivened by the Holy Spirit, the Christian reads Scripture rightly not because of innate ability or universal accessibility but based upon God's gift of freedom. In this way, the Christian freely participates and enacts the story of God's ongoing redemptive activity in

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[43] Ibid., 130.

[44] Ibid.

[45] On this point, Ellul follows Karl Barth's theological lead very closely. He sees a distinction between the written text of Scripture and the living Word of God yet Ellul seems to evidence an inability to readily distinguish between the two. Ellul states, "What one ordains and the other requires are therefore practically inseparable.... It is clear that every living word of God cannot be different from that which is attested precisely in the Bible.... It turns out that the God who spoke to men in the Bible is also our God, and directly ours, thanks to their witness." Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 274 fn. 1. For a full development of Ellul's view of Scripture, see Gill, "Jacques Ellul's View of Scripture," 467–78.

the world as well as fulfilling an essential role in proclaiming God's will to the world. Ellul concludes, "If true service is to be rendered to God, we must commit ourselves–and we can do so now that we are de-alienated–to this enterprise of the word that issues forth from scripture."[46] By freely reading Scripture as those freed by profound hope, the Christian testifies of the Triune God's sovereign action in a fallen world and his offer of hope offered in Jesus Christ. By reading and re–reading the oracles of God, the church allows God's declarations to shape life as the faithful community participating in a fallen world.

The Community of Hopeful Possibility

Taken together, these forms of Christian freedom open up the community to a life of hopeful possibilities. Prayer, confession, Sabbath, and reading of Scripture offer God's means of establishing and witnessing the powerful realities of divine hope. By embodying the forms of genuine freedom, the Christian allows hope to define and reinforce the unique moral practices of the faithful life.

Furthermore, manifestations of God's will do not represent arbitrary decisions discernable apart from divine revelation. Rather, Scripture creates, forms, and sustains Christian ethics. Ellul states, "The word of God is the source, guarantee, and thrust of freedom and of its witness. It is also the limit, for it puts on obligation on him who bears it."[47] The Christian who freely reads and hears God's word enters the life of obedience and opens the world to the path toward relationship to God. The reading of Scripture does

[46] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 131.
[47] Ibid., 124.

not leave the Christian unaffected but demands a distinct course of action. The reading of Scripture does not ignore the world but proclaims the necessity of reconciliation to God.

Instead of a technological morality emphasizing efficiency and outcomes, communities shaped by divine hope and the forms of Christian freedom are opened to participate in redemptive social action. However, such action should not be aimed at exclusive appropriation of cultural realities but in genuine relationship with the world. Ellul explains, "We cannot establish a Christian factory or a Christian philosophy. What we are to do is rather to manifest the reality in which our incarnates the kingdom of God."[48] The hope of the Christian creates a genuine creativity for engaging and participating in the world but the inherent tension of Christian existence must be maintained. Freedom for God must not be confused with emancipation, arbitrariness, or autonomy but as the perpetual recognition of redemption's work in opening the Christian to free service to God.[49]

Quite simply, the world seeks a universal means to accomplish moral ends without recognizing the place of spiritual regeneration and ecclesial identity necessary to such endeavors. Sadly, virtue struggles to be a significant moral category in the technological society driven by pragmatism and repeatability. By reimaging moral action through the genuine freedom offered to the Christian, the church becomes a social force standing against the subversive powers of the world. Or as Ellul strongly states, "Only the Christian can open the way for freedom to enter the world."[50] Furthermore, the church cannot responsibly disengage from society nor should it capitulate to social realities. The

[48] Ibid., 17.
[49] Ibid., 120.
[50] Jacques Ellul, "Between Chaos and Paralysis," *ChrCent* 85.23 (1968): 747.

faithful community thoroughly examines what might lead to substantive social good beginning at the local level. The Christian participating *as a Christian* in the world presents a decisive moment in human history.

Hauerwas and the Eschatological Shape of Christian Social Ethics

Ellul's emphasis on Christian freedom widens Christian moral reflection by emphasizing hope's expansive possibility. For Hauerwas, broadening the Christian vision means remembering the eschatological shape of Christian morality. Practicing a hopeful way of life depends upon the present and future promises of God. Two specific areas assist in outlining Hauerwas' eschatological moral vision.

First, Hauerwas emphasizes the Christological necessities of genuine hope. The realties of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection drive Christian ethical reflection because hope rests on God's fulfilled promises revealed in Christ. Second, discipleship acts as the church's means for encouraging hopeful moral formation. Hauerwas' treatment of the moral demands of God's rule in relationship to the fundamentally eschatological realities of Jesus Christ further explains the type of hopeful action indicative of the Christian community. In short, the ethical demands of Jesus displayed by his life, death and resurrection put the moral demands of God's kingdom on full display in and for the believing community's spiritual formation.

The Christological Hope of Eschatological Ethics

Without the life of Christ, the teachings of Christ cannot hope to be attainable. Thus, Jesus' kingdom teachings such as the Sermon on the Mount become much more than unachievable ideals intended for only private relationships and not public life. Instead of

moral impossibility, the Sermon on the Mount represents an intentional description of how the church must live out the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.[51] As an exposition of kingdom ethics, the Sermon on the Mount represents a fundamentally hopeful approach to the difficulties of life in a sinful world. Through the gospel, the moral demands of God's rule become possible for the Christian community as those birthed and shaped by the gospel. Rather than putting God's moral norms out of reach, the incarnation brings God's demands within the scope of human possibility.

As an exposition on the power of a hopeful Christian ethic, the Sermon on the Mount presents a compelling text for unpacking the moral demands of living under God's rule.[52] As such, the Sermon does not represent an unrealistic ideal but an exposition of life in the kingdom of God. Hauerwas explains, "Like the prophets he called Israel back to obedience to the law—a law that appeared strenuous. But there is not indication the rigorous demands of the Sermon on the Mount were meant only as some unrealizable ideal. To believe so is to lose the eschatological context of Jesus' teaching."[53] The church takes on the character of Jesus as an expression of not simply maxims for daily living but as incarnational approaches to social action. The basis for Christian social action cannot

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[51] Beginning with Luther's law/gospel dualism and Calvin's privatization of the Sermon's commands, scholars have continued to push toward the application of the Sermon on interpersonal levels but not public or social interactions. John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. II (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 8.56; Martin Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount (Sermons) and the Magnificat*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 21, Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1962), 1–295. Such privatization sadly pushes virtue out of public life and into private relationships while also encouraging a competing relationship between private and public virtues. Some examples include J. Daryl Charles, "'Do Not Suppose That I Have Come': The Ethic of the Sermon on the Mount Reconsidered," *SwJT* 46.3 (2004): 62–63; Lisa Sowle Cahill, "The Ethical Implications of the Sermon on the Mount," *Int* 41.2 (1987): 144–56; Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, repr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013).

[52] Hauerwas understands the kingdom of God first and foremost as the "claim of God's lordship, his rule over all creation and history." As such, Hauerwas follows Origen's lead and focuses on Jesus as the *autobasileia*, the kingdom in person. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 44–45.

[53] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 85.

be reduced to goals or objectives determined apart from God's declarations to and for mankind.

The whole Sermon does not encourage individual Christians to simply do better than other moral systems nor does it seek the most effective means of accomplishing a particular end. Rather, the Sermon paints out a distinctly eschatological moral vision for faithful practices informed by the realities of the world and framed by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.[54] Hauerwas explains, "We are called to be like God: perfect as God is perfect. It is a perfection that comes by learning to follow and be like this man whom God sent to be our forerunner of the kingdom."[55] Without the freeing hope offered in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the church cannot sustain the determined practices of faithful witness in a world of instant access, consumption, and independent moral determinism. Instead of ignoring the transformative commands of the Sermon on the Mount, the community of faith must embrace a hopeful vision revealed by a transcendent God immanently incarnated in Jesus Christ.

The eschatological character of the Sermon on the Mount also emphasizes the significance of Jesus' moral vision expressed throughout. Hauerwas states, "The eschatological context helps explain why the sermon begins, not by telling us what to do, but by helping us to see."[56] The church is only able to act upon and in a world that can be seen. Without a biblical vision of God's kingdom, social actions resort to pragmatism, emotion, or desperation. Hauerwas explains, "We are not to accept the world with its hate and resentments as a given, but to recognize that we live in a new age which makes

[54] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, 25 Exp Anv edition. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2014), 86.

[55] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 75.

[56] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 88.

possible a new way of life."[57] Christian social ethics grows out of the larger vision of God's ongoing relationship with the world displayed through the gospel. The Christian community cannot escape the fundamentally eschatological nature of Christian ethics.[58] When Christian ethics removes eschatology from ethics, the people of God resemble an empty moralism and hope is lost. But with a robust eschatology, a dynamic community develops, hopeful in the promises of God.[59]

Discipleship as Hopeful Moral Formation

Building on the possibilities of living out the kingdom demands of Jesus, the ongoing practices of Christian discipleship drive social action beyond private community concerns toward larger social needs. Christian social ethics grows out of an abiding practice of the transforming practices of the gospel. Even more, undermining the power of sin in the world requires a disciplined community living out the hope of the kingdom today. Hauerwas explains, "So discipleship, seen through this eschatology, becomes extended training in letting go of the ways we try to preserve and give significance to the world, ways brought to an end in Jesus."[60] Christian discipleship brings peace through an active submission to God's sovereignty displayed in Jesus Christ.

The eschatological hope of Christian ethics does not drive away the desire to serve the world but grants a radical new perspective on what is possible through the revolutionary reality of the gospel. In fact, learning of the need for forgiveness and the supplied redemption granted by God's own Son supplies a powerful narrative that shapes

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[57] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 85.
[58] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 87.
[59] Ibid., 90.
[60] Ibid., 88–89.

the practice of all Christian virtue, especially hope.[61] Hauerwas explains, "Furthermore, that the answer to our sin is the free gift of redemption in Christ focuses are hope: its source is in a God who forgives us, and its object is this forgiveness, which responds to our deepest need, of which we have lately learned."[62] The direct relationship between the deep need for redemption and the promise of the gospel demands a reimagined paradigm for hopeful action based upon the freedom granted in Jesus Christ.

The moral demands of God's rule revealed in Jesus Christ go much farther than explaining what a good society should look like. For Hauerwas, discipleship points to such an exponential increase in lived commitment to the practiced example of Christ. The gospel furnishes such a reshaped perspective as a Christologically formed eschatological ethics challenges individual commitments and communal practices. Hauerwas explains,

> To be sure, Jesus' demand that we forgive our enemies challenges our normal assumptions about what is possible, but that is exactly what it is meant to do. We are not to accept the world with its hate and resentments as a given, but to recognize that we live in a new age which makes possible a new way of life.[63]

Christian hope does not desecrate the beauty and the world but seeks to use biblical wisdom to serve the world for God's glory but on God's terms.[64] Resolving the command to live well in the world with the difficulties of knowing how to live well requires more than clarity on God's demands. The moral demands of life in God's kingdom necessitate living examples of the kind of peace, hope, and forgiveness offered in the gospel.

The moral significance of God's rule displayed in Jesus Christ displays the way God rules in the world. That is, God's very nature shines out in the demands for

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[61] Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues*, 120–121.
[62] Ibid., 121.
[63] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 85.
[64] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 87.

forgiveness, sacrifice, and mercy woven throughout Jesus' declarations of God's rule and reign.[65] Hauerwas rightly points out ho Christian discipleship pursues the hopeful virtue of God's kingdom for more than a compelling morality or social persuasion. He explains,

> The kingdom ideal that Jesus proclaimed is no new idea nor does he seem to have given it some startling new meaning. Rather he proclaims that the kingdom is *present* insofar as his life reveals the effective power of God to create a transformed people capable of living peaceably in a violent world.[66]

Practicing the moral demands of the kingdom of God evidence a growing passion for displaying the moral significance of Jesus Christ. Through the growth and expansion of God's rule, the church prepares the world for the way of life where God truly reigns as Savior and king. As God rules in the church, the faithful community can accurately display his sovereign care to the world.

Yet, the church must not be confused with kingdom itself. As Hauerwas explains it, the church represents a foretaste of the kingdom made visible. He writes, "The church must be the clear manifestation of a people who have learned to be at peace with themselves, one another, the stranger, and of course, most of all, God."[67] The practices of disciplined hope grow out of a deep conviction that God's presence abides in and through his people. Hauerwas concludes, "By learning to be followers of Jesus we learn to locate our lives within God's life, within the journey that comprises his kingdom…. We learn to be like God by following the teachings of Jesus and thus learning to be his disciples."[68] In this way, the ongoing pursuit of Christian discipleship does reflect merely a commitment to a series of commands or presuppositions. While certainly not less than adherence to

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[65] Ibid., 91.
[66] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 83; emphasis his.
[67] Ibid., 97.
[68] Ibid., 75.

God's commands, pursuing a life lived under God's rule takes the shape of the incarnation, embodying as well as proclaiming the truths of the kingdom. Apart from this visible representation of the kingdom, the church becomes entrenched in ethical debates based only on theoretical possibilities rather than the hopeful alternatives revealed by the gospel.

Greater still, the hope practiced does more than enrich the lived experiences of the church. The hopeful discipline of the church rises to answer the social necessities of a world demanding justice and equality for all. Demanding justice or equality is one thing but knowing exactly what they mean represents another.

Under God's rule, the church practices a way of life shaped by Jesus Christ, offering a genuine alterative to practices of the world. Hauerwas explains, "Through Jesus' life and teachings we see how the church came to understand that God's kingship and power consists no in coercion but in God's willingness to forgive and have mercy on us."[69] In this way, the way of life opened up through the gospel brings the Christian community to hope not in vindication, absolute autonomy, or decisionism but hope. As Hauerwas states it, "Unless we learn to relinquish our presumption that we ensure the significance of our lives, we are not capable of the peace of God's kingdom."[70] When God's rule shapes moral categories, the Christian is freed to forgive, love, and reconcile as Christ exemplified. Without the power of divine hope, Christian moral choice does not retain the necessary dynamism for creative and meaningful participation in the world.

[69] Ibid., 85.
[70] Ibid., 86.

The Promise of Hopeful Christian Morality

The promise of the hopeful Christian morality developed from Ellul and Hauerwas lies in the possibilities for application. Practicing the hopeful way of life outlined by Ellul with the eschatological perspective developed by Hauerwas revives the necessity for a distinctly Christian response to diverse and complex social issues by infusing the church's morality with biblical hope. However, the account of virtue proposed by Ellul and Hauerwas is difficult to fully accept without clarification on two particular points.

First, resetting Ellul's soteriological foundations for Christian hope leads to a richer appreciation of Christian freedom and a strengthened application of his insights. While Ellul provides a helpful diagnosis of man's moral alienation, the universal application of divine reconciliation undermines a biblically honest hope. Further, Ellul rightly insists on concrete implications in practicing Christian hope but an orthodox soteriology deepens the possibilities for applying his insights.

Second, Hauerwas rightly notes how eschatology shapes Christian hope yet the Christian moral vision cannot be limited to only the New Testament account of God's promised future. God supplies a broad and vibrant description of his sovereign plan for his people in both Old and New Testaments. Surprisingly, Hauerwas' emphasis on a story-formed community and Christian discipleship neglects to fully implement the significant narratives of the Old Testament. Furthermore, Hauerwas seems to overemphasize the present realities of God's kingdom encouraging a moral idealism. Without denying the ethical potential of both Ellul and Hauerwas, living Christian hope recognizes the biblical scope of God's redemptive work and avoids idealism in order to seek a balanced approach to virtue and divine commands.

The Inward Reality and Outward Activity of Hope

While Ellul's development of *technique* presents a compelling analysis of social realities, his application of a globally conscious Christian ethic requires a nuanced approach for a fuller application. Specifically, Ellul's final application of hope as Christian freedom is limited by his universalism, restraining a fuller application of his larger philosophical critiques within concrete actions.[71] In fact, the struggle to connect Ellul's assessment of man's condition with his explanation and application of Christian freedom lies in his commitment to universal salvation.[72] In this way, the issue in applying Ellul's vision of hope is not methodological, cultural, linguistic, or philosophical, but soteriological necessitating a resolution on the same level.[73]

Built upon the realities of divine judgment, Luther's development of Christian freedom offers a helpful addition to Ellul's insights.[74] While offering a stronger appreciation for the biblical difference between faith and unbelief, Luther's balance between the inner and outer person complements the tensions within Ellul's ethics.[75] Christian freedom acknowledges the Christian as "completely free of everything" while

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[71] See chapter 2, pages 34–41, for an expanded development of Ellul's universalism within his theological ethics.

[72] Interestingly, Ellul develops the universality of freedom in between his assessment of man's condition (loss of freedom) and the object of man's freedom. Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 21–66. In many ways, rejecting Ellul's assertions regarding universalism causes issues in understanding his diagnostic work with his social application. However, as reviewed in chapter 2, rejecting Ellul's universalism does not necessitate a total departure from his ethical study. Rather than diminishing his work, an orthodox soteriology energizes Ellul's analysis. See pages 34–41 of this study for further analysis.

[73] Such a distinction may also be a wider concern to the field of Christian ethics as Kent Van Til points out. Kent A. Van Til, *The Moral Disciple: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 7–8.

[74] Luther's exposition of Christian freedom, *The Freedom of the Christian*, is appended to a letter he wrote to Pope Leo X wherein Luther challenges the soteriological foundations of the Roman Catholic Church based upon a worry that the church has become a pathway to hell. In this way, Luther's insistence on faith in Christian salvation grows out of a deep conviction that some will experience God's favor and others will fall under God's wrath. Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 33–45.

[75] Ibid., 61.

also being "a servant, completely attentive to the needs of all."[76] Luther writes, "All our works are to be directed toward the benefit of others. Given the abundance of our faith, our life and works become a surplus to be used freely in service of the neighbor."[77] True to Ellul's intent but more faithful to God's revelation, Luther's attention to God's particular redemption of the church assists Christian hope in maintaining a unique identity among the false freedoms offered in the world.

In this way, Ellul's vision for genuine freedom gains greater significance for moral development and social action.[78] Rather than merely an existential alternative, which can be enacted and neglected, God's particular and unchanging decision to save a peculiar people broadens the grand significance of divine salvation and hopeful morality. Such a salvation offers the true and better hope explained by Ellul while also testifying to the singular opportunity granted through union with Christ. When understanding God's redemptive choice as both free and limited, the Christian can truly "think globally," hoping in God's sovereign purposes for the world.[79]

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[76] Ibid., 50. Alongside this balance, Luther's emphasis on God's word, commitment to a living Christian faith, and a strong emphasis on the work of Christ represent other shared emphases. Ibid., 53, 60, 79–83.

[77] Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 81.

[78] Ellul recognizes essential components in crafting a hopeful morality. For example, he identifies the alienating affects of sin on social action and man's perpetual idolatry in pursuing good apart from God. Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 48–50. As well, Ellul rightly affirms richness of life in Christ and the deep resources granted by God for freely living in the world. Ibid., 70–72.

[79] Ellul's reminders of distinct Christian practices benefits from a deeper connection between the forms of hope (prayer, confession, Sabbath, and Scripture reading) and the concrete realities of human existence (e.g. politics, science, economics, and sociology). His development of the forms of Christian freedom only comprises a small section of his larger work. Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 126–132. Yet, the section covering concrete implications is extensive but offers a more wandering analysis of political, economic, biological, and familial issues. Ibid., 369–510. The overlap between the sections holds potential but suffers from a typical Ellulian tendency for sweeping statements and winding discussions.

A Lived Eschatology

Just as Ellul's soteriological shortcomings present an opportunity for a strengthened vision for hope in the face of divine judgment, Hauerwas' eschatological vision also warrants nuanced strengthening. Specifically, eschatology certainly shapes Christian hope yet the Christian moral vision cannot be limited to only the New Testament account. Because of this imbalance, Hauerwas seems to overemphasize the present realities of God's kingdom, encouraging a moral idealism.

In contrast to limiting hope and an eschatologically shaped Christian ethic to the New Testament, the entirety of Scripture testifies to the present and future promises of God.[80] Indeed, Hauerwas' deep commitment to the future hope found in Jesus Christ profits from a deep appreciation for the anticipation and buildup reiterated throughout the Old Testament. In many ways, the Old Testament anticipation amplifies and gives a biblical shape to church's ongoing desire for God to act in the world. Rather than replacing or diminishing the hope of the Law and the Prophets, Jesus Christ widens, deepens, and expands the covenant morality revealed in the Old Testament.[81] Robert McQuilkin and Paul Copan provide a helpful description of this connection. They write,

> In his incarnation, life, death, resurrection and the blessed hope of his return, Jesus gives a new *meaning* and *motivation* to the moral core of the Old Testament. The believer's orientation is Christ, the new Adam (Rom 5; 1 Cor. 15) and *the* image of God (Col 1:15; Heb 1:13); he has come to restore our fallen humanity and to gradually transform us into his image (2 Cor 3:18). The goal to be realized when he finally brings heaven and earth together (the new heavens and new earth).[82]

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[80] For example, Christopher J. H. Wright highlights the vast scope of redemption outlined not in Jesus' account but in the Old Testament vision of God's salvation. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 137–144.

[81] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 912–917.

[82] McQuilkin and Copan, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, 19; emphasis theirs.

A balance in applying both Old and New Testaments encourages a broader recognition of the healthy tensions between present moral realities and future divine promises. In this way, a cooperative reading of the entire biblical canon would prevent an over realized eschatology, conflating the promises of God's future kingdom with the possibilities in the world's present condition.

Similar to the deepening offered in a nuanced approach to Ellul traced in the previous section, Hauerwas' emphasis on Christian discipleship in moral formation also takes on new life when infused with the wider appreciation of divine commands found in both Old and New Testaments.[83] While some discontinuity exists between old and new covenants, Hauerwas could exercise greater care in appreciating the hermeneutical and exegetical trajectories of the eschatological hope revealed by Jesus Christ.[84] Without denying the ethical potential of both Ellul and Hauerwas, living Christian hope recognizes the biblical scope of God's redemptive work and avoids idealism in order to seek a balanced approach to virtue and divine commands.

Social Action: Ellul, Hauerwas, and the Lived Christian Hope

Ellul and Hauerwas offer a global vision of hopeful moral action dependent on the eschatological promises of God. As well, Ellul and Hauerwas both emphasize the role of

[83] Wright's work in Old Testament ethics represents an excellent example of this relationship. While Wright affirms the importance of story and narrative, he does not allow story and narrative to be elevated over law. Instead, the law is given in the context of a story and may be rightly applied when gaining insight on such a story. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 19.

[84] David Jones offers a good alternative to Hauerwas' imbalanced appreciation for law and divine commands when approaching the nature and use of law in ethics. Specifically, his exploration of authority over law, authority under law, and authority is law provide particularly helpful insights. Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, 40–52.

a smaller, more localized manifestation of God's character. Three specific areas assist in developing the character of Christian social action emphasized in Ellul and Hauerwas.

First, while Ellul's challenges Christians to "think globally," he also affirms the need for the church to "act locally." In developing a commitment to local action, Ellul draws upon his French personalist roots. Ellul's personalist ethic reminds the church of the moral significance of the individual and the individual's actions.

Second, alongside Ellul's hopeful Christian ethics shaped by personalism, Hauerwas emphasizes how a hopeful social ethic also relies upon a broader perspective on the eschatological promises of God. Hauerwas presents a moral vision emphasizing the eschatological realities of Christian life fully revealed in Jesus Christ, shaping Christian action on the hopefulness of God's rule. The gospel offers a total vision for the Christian life explained and exemplified in the Son of God.

Third, Ellul and Hauerwas offer a shared vision of living Christian hope dynamically and freely, trusting in God's sovereign care instead of false freedom. While Ellul offers a stirring portrait of the Christian's role in society, his emphasis can be too individualistic. Hauerwas' commitment to the individual believer's communal identity rounds out Ellul's challenges for a living hope for a balanced appreciation of the individual and communal moral witness. Simultaneously, morality is an individual and communal effort. Furthermore, the individual within the redeemed community retains eternal significance in moral action. Combined with an emphasis on the moral significance of tangible, communal action, Christian ethics regains the hopeful possibilities for living out the gospel even in perilous circumstances.

Act Locally: Ellul's Personalist Social Ethics

Orienting Ellul's emphasis on hopeful action within the global understanding of human connection and oppression draws out the significance of not simply thinking globally but acting locally. Understanding the practices that give shape to hopeful social action begins with an examination of larger realities but cannot cease on this level. Two particular efforts assist in connecting Ellul's global focus outlined in part one of this chapter with local action necessary to a proper Christian social ethic.

First, realizing how Ellul's personalist philosophy influences his social ethics and grounds his explorations of the moral power of the Christian engaged in the faithful community and dedicated to the hopeful expression of the gospel. Appreciating the important development of this spirited social action drives Ellul to emphasize the ethical significance of the virtuous person in faithful community. Second, appreciating the philosophical backdrop for Ellul's social critiques reveals his intense hope in God's revelatory power in the world. Ultimately, Ellul's critiques are an expression of Christian hope rather than cultural pessimism.

The Individual in Moral Discourse

Personalist philosophy arose as Europe stood on the brink of World War II.[85] Driven by Roman Catholic priest Emmanuel Moinier, personalism sought to reimagine social and political philosophy based on a middle ground between extremes on the political right

[85] For a very helpful introduction to the background and early developments of personalism see Johan de Tavernier's article. Johan de Tavernier, "The Historical Roots of Personalism," *EthPer* 16.3 (2009): 361–92.

and left.[86] While initially drawn to the emphasis on small, grass roots communities of personalism, Ellul became disillusioned by the apathy and hostility from Mounier and others within the more recognized personalist movement.[87] Ultimately, Jacques Ellul and his close friend Bernard Charbonneau forged a particular stream of personalist philosophy based in Bordeaux.[88] While personalism as a wider movement did not endure, the reflections of this period of time remained influential on Ellul's life and thought.

Ellul's emphasis on the importance of the individual Christian's moral condition grows from the personalist respect for the dignity and inherent value of the individual as a person. The domination of social and political structures on the individual presents a pressing problem for fostering a healthy relationship between the individual and the community.[89] More specifically, the individual fades into anonymity by obeying unknown laws without any input or participation, weakening the individual's value to

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[86] Ralph Carl Nelson, "Emmanuel Mounier, Between Proudhon and Marx," *ScEs* 31.2 (1979): 207. Mounier's most developed vision for personalism can be found in *Le personnalisme* published in France in 1950 and in English in 1952. Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism*, trans. Philip Mairet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1952); Emmanuel Mounier, *Le personnalisme*, 17e édition. (Presses Universitaires de France - PUF, 2001).

[87] Ellul gives several reasons for the difficulties with the personalist groups. First, the staunchly Catholic Mounier drove many Protestant adherents to the fringes of the movement. Ellul, *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity*, 68. Second, the deep commitment to social revelation proposed by personalism became undermined by the movement's insistence on centralized authority in Paris rather than the confederated federalism proposed by Ellul and Charbonneau. Ibid., 67. In the end, the strains on moving personalism out of theory to practice proved too much for the minority movement that disbanded just prior to World War II. Ellul, *In Season Out of Season*, 37.

[88] Several articles provide a helpful introduction to the personalism unique to Ellul. See Christian Roy, "Aux sources de l'écologie politique: Le personnalisme 'gascon' de Bernard Charbonneau et Jacques Ellul," *CJH* 27.1 (1992): 67–100; Patrick Troude-Chastenet, "Christianisme, personnalisme et fédéralisme dans l'oeuvre de Jacques Ellul," *LF* hiver-printempts.315-316 (1999); Patrick Troude-Chastenet, "La politique de Jacques Ellul," *FoiVie* 111.1 (2012): 21–37; Christian Roy, "Ecological Personalism: The Bordeaux School of Bernard Charbanneau and Jacques Ellul," *EthPer* 6.1 (1999): 33–44. Even more, Charbonneau and Ellul outline their personalist vision in a manifesto penned in the early 1930s. Bernard Charbonneau and Jacques Ellul, "Directives Pour Un Manifeste Personnaliste," in *Les Années Personnalistes*, repr. (Bordeaux: Association internationale Jacques Ellul, 2003), 63–79.

[89] Charbonneau and Ellul, "Directives Pour Un Manifeste Personnaliste," 63–65.

society.[90] In the face of broader concerns for monetary profit, centralization of power, and efficiency, the individual becomes a means to an end.[91]

Ellul sees the larger forces of *technique* at work in undermining the social place of the individual. Under the grip of social "gigantism" inherent in *technique,* the individual man cannot help but be smothered by the centralization of power established through social structure rather than personal dignity.[92] Ellul states it simply, "When man is resigned to no longer be the measure of his world, he is dispossessed of any measure."[93] The concentration of social features such as production, wealth, population, and political power minimize the individual's value.[94]

In production, the individual acts as the component for greater efficiency.[95] To the wealthy, the individual serves as the tool for securing and maintaining capital.[96] In population centers, the individual dissipates into obscurity as just another face in the crowd or number in a system. As the state's power centralizes, the individual becomes

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[90] Ibid., 63.

[91] Ibid., 64.

[92] Ibid., 65.

[93] Ibid., 66.

[94] Thomas Hanks offers a very helpful study of Ellul's relationship to liberation theology. He concludes, "When we in Latin America read Ellul's writings today, it is vital that we remember that they proceeded neither from the Third World, nor from the "liberationist" era (1968-1985) of our history. We must draw from them lessons for our own context. Ellul's profound analysis of the political dimension of modern life—its opportunities, perils, and deceptions—and of the role of the church (clergy and laity) therein, was written for a different situation. The situation of most middle class Christians in the older democracies (such as England and the U.S.) is so different that their theologians usually cannot even imagine what our questions are, let alone provide us with adequate answers or orientations." Thomas D. Hanks, "The Original 'Liberation Theologian,'" *CroCur* 35.1 (1985): 17–32.

[95] Charbonneau and Ellul, "Directives Pour Un Manifeste Personnaliste," 66.

[96] Ellul offers a perspective on labor influenced by Marx's development of man's alienation and the exploitation of labor but Marx's influence may only be pushed so far. In fact, Ellul described Marx's benefit to his own thinking being limited to meaningfully explaining his social setting rather than offering a fully applicable philosophical system. Ellul, *In Season Out of Season*, 117–138.

the currency for achieving and maintaining political power. Through all these circumstances, the larger structure tends to disregard the social value of the individual. Ellul's personalist philosophy seeks to reverse the relationship between society and individual. Rather than social factors determining the value of the individual, the individual becomes the measure of social and cultural promise.

Ellul's high regard for the dignity and moral significance of the individual finds ongoing significance in his explorations of ethics and social action. While society is often tempted to reduce the individual to a resource for exploitation in pursuit of some larger, more abstract social, political, or economic vision, the individual person must retain the power to initiate social change.[97] Without overstating the relationship between individual and community, Ellul rightly considers the power of individual people making virtuous choices in pursuit of a shared social vision. Indeed, the individual cannot hope to excuse himself from his connections to others because such individualized expressions breathe life into community.[98] In contrast to homogeneous corporate identity, individuals contour society.

Furthermore, discussions of man's happiness, liberty, or justice remain part of societal language but the larger cultural imagination no longer has any idea of the content of these phrases or the conditions they require.[99] In this condition, the Christian provides an essential place for clarifying the unity of means and ends in all social action. Ellul explains, "In this situation it is not our instruments or our institutions that count, but

[97] Ellul emphasizes the change in language regarding man, morality, and social pursuits. That is, discussions no longer utilize the philosophical language of "means" and "ends" but in terms of "facts." Yet, Ellul himself does not avoid this language in explaining this change, a choice which certainly confuses the point he is attempting to make. Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 50–51.

[98] Ibid., 5.

[99] Ibid., 54.

ourselves, for it is ourselves who are God's instruments; so far as the church and all its members are God's 'means' they out to constitute the presence of the 'end' which is characteristic of the Kingdom."[100] The eyes of the world rest not simply on the entire community of faith but on the individual as well. Through the intimate interrelationship shared between men, women, and children, the Christian is able to display the glory of God in a pursuit of the hopeful Christian life. Christian freedom occupies the individual life and lifestyle lived in relationship with other individuals.[101]

Emphasizing Lived Moralities within Christian Community

Ellul's personalist philosophy not only revives a healthy respect for the individual's dignity in social ordering but also insists on actionable principles lived out in community rather than simply theoretical or intellectual explorations.[102] As Ellul puts it, social change must be rooted in lived moralities rather than theoretical moralities.[103] Meaningful social revolution cannot be expressed in purely intellectual movements but through a radically virtuous life focused on actions instead of structures.[104] Even more, the personalist community lives within the constraints of present social orders with an optimistic vision for the future, promoting a social order accomplished through measurable action and mutual compromise.[105] Personalism seeks a decentralization of

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[100] Ibid., 65; emphasis his.

[101] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 270.

[102] Charbonneau and Ellul, "Directives Pour Un Manifeste Personnaliste," 70–71.

[103] Ellul dedicates two entire chapters to theoretical moralities and lived moralities respectively in *To Will and To Do*. See Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 127–139, 159–171.

[104] Charbonneau and Ellul, "Directives Pour Un Manifeste Personnaliste," 70.

[105] Ibid., 71–72.

authority as a structural step toward intentional relationship fostering social action through committed and localized connectivity.[106]

The commitment to a lived morality weaves throughout Ellul's emphasis on virtue. Ellul's lived morality points to the ever-present need and Christian prerogative for God's people to *be* a perceptible witness to God's kingdom. Ellul states, "Freed in Christ and living to God's glory, we have to live this out visibly."[107] As such, the redemption of the Christian cannot be separated from the application of the gospel to life. Ellul reveals his strong Reformed roots by insisting that true Christian freedom does not exist in the Christian unless it is tangibly lived out. It is not enough to think the right thoughts about God, to have a correct theology but the church must constantly engage in ethical reflection flowing from relationship with God. The Christian who refuses to live out the gospel cannot be living in right relationship with God.

Flowing from this divine relationship, ethics and practiced virtue affords the Christian a context for understanding the ongoing bond between theology and the world. It is dangerous to assume theology *qua* theology furnishes a Christian aptitude for life in the world. Instead, ethics creates the space for several important practices. Ellul explains,

> It (Christian ethics) can only be the reminder that the specific conduct of the Christian is the indispensible consequence of faith. It should at the same time be the equipping of the believer with an instrument of reflection and explanation concerning himself and his problems. Finally, it will be a reminder that the earnestness of the theological commitment should be registered in an earnestness of commitment to the world, and it will establish, for the particular time in which it is valid, the conditions and limits of that commitment.[108]

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[106] Ibid., 72.
[107] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 222.
[108] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 248.

The visible action of the Christian does not avoid the circumstances of the present world but acts out as the present time and place allow. The Christian works to support a healthy place or environment for man to hear and receive the gospel.[109]

Ellul's emphasis on tangible action and practiced hope reinforces the necessity of cultural and social imagination in freely living out the hopeful Christian existence. In this way, Christian virtue represents an ongoing exercise in spiritual contextualization. Ellul states, "We are freed always in relation to our precise, concrete, lived out situation in the world. When freed, we remain in the world, and it is in the world, not in the sky or the future or anywhere else, that we have to live out our freedom."[110] Present realities in politics, society, business, entertainment, and basic human conditions do not necessarily impede Christian freedom but influence the parameters for lively social witness.[111] Without a shared understanding of the commonness of human existence, the church becomes too abstract for timely social witness. Without a distinct understanding and practice of virtue, the church capitulates to the predominant moralities constructed for the benefit of social order rather than God's glory.

The place of personalism in Ellul's development of virtue, ethics, and hopeful Christian action sketches the philosophical foundations of important aspects of his later thought. Personalism's emphasis on the significance of the individual to moral reflection stretches out into an ethic highlighting the individual Christian's importance to cultivating and sustaining the witness of the kingdom of God. As well, because personalism emphasizes concrete social interactions, Ellul's ethical emphasis on the

[109] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 307.
[110] Ibid., 295.
[111] Ibid., 305.

moral power of a tangible, living Christian witness in a given place and time. Ultimately, virtue and community life flows from the firm foundations of Christian hope rather than cultural pessimism or social escapism. Appreciating the philosophical backdrop for Ellul's social ethics reveals an intense hope in God's revelatory power in the world.

Hauerwas and Jesus as Eschatological Ethic

Alongside Ellul's hopeful Christian ethics shaped by personalism, hopeful social engagement also relies upon a broader perspective on the eschatological promises of God. More specifically, Hauerwas presents a moral vision emphasizing the eschatological realities of Christian life fully revealed in Jesus Christ, shaping Christian action on the hopefulness of life lived under God's rule.[112] Two particular areas highlight this dynamic in Hauerwas and assist in revealing the eschatological foundations of hopeful possibility in Christian social ethics.

First, the person and work of Jesus Christ reorients the Christian moral vision toward the full display of the kingdom of God revealed in the incarnation. Understanding the realities of God's rule involves careful attention to not simply the teachings of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus but also the lifestyle of the kingdom revealed by Jesus. Second, Christian social ethics grows out of an abiding practice of the transforming practices of the gospel. Even more, undermining the power of sin in the world requires a disciplined community embodying the totality of the Christian moral vision revealed by Jesus Christ. In this way, the faithful community displays a living hope of the kingdom today.

[112] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 104.

The Gospel's Centrality to Christian Witness

The moral significance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ brings the kingdom of God into the life and practice of the church. The powerful and hopeful narrative of Jesus Christ does not present merely an optimistic moral vision filled with ethical possibilities opened by a clearer grasp of God's eschatological will for all creation. As Hauerwas puts it, "It makes all the difference in the world how one regards the end of the world, 'end' not so much in the sense of its final breath, but 'end' in the sense of the purpose, the goal, the result."[113] Without the embodied truth of Jesus, the teachings of God's kingdom simply do not make sense. The moral power of the Christian practices breaks down when the church simply expounds Jesus' teaching but neglects Jesus' life. Through the incisive example of the incarnation, the church proclaims and displays the moral power of Christian hope.

Because of Jesus Christ, Christian social action demands a particular kind of people practicing God's character in the face of cultural or social resistance. The stark realities of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection bring the kingdom of God into human existence. Hauerwas explains,

> No matter how hard we try, it is difficult to shake the picture that the resurrection is the resuscitation of the corpse that we would recognize is confronted by it. Of course that is exactly what the resurrection is not. It is not the resuscitation of the corpse the rather the final eschatological act by God through which the Kingdom stamp is put on this man Jesus as the decisive life for the inauguration of a new age. Resurrection is the reconfiguration of all we know, have known, and will know. It is that which forces a redescription of all history as well as the movement of the planets. Resurrection is kingdom come in the person and work of this man Jesus.[114]

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[113] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 62.
[114] Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture*, 52.

More than an event that presents a possible future or resolve for today, the resurrection molds the essence of Christian existence around the eternal hope granted through Jesus. Without the practiced presence of the kingdom declared through Jesus Christ, the church cannot expect to maintain the form of life essential to being and becoming the people of God. Neglecting the *way* Jesus lived prevents understanding *what* Jesus proclaimed.

In fact, the realities of the gospel maintain a particular relationship whereby the church walks a path determined by God not simply for Jesus alone but for all those who follow after him. Refusing the total revelation of Jesus means refusing God's revealed path for virtue. For example, the resurrection represents more than a happy ending to the story of Jesus. Hauerwas explains, "The resurrection, therefore, is not an extra-ordinary event added to this man's life, but a confirmation by God that the character of Jesus' life prior to the resurrection is perfectly faithful to his vocation to proclaim and make present God's kingdom."[115] God's act in raising Jesus from the dead rescues the church from idolatrous commitment to self-created moralities and opens us to the kind of God revealed through the life of Jesus.[116] Holding the life, death, and resurrection together opens the church to the hopeful promises revealed in Jesus. The lived truth of Jesus serves as the context for understanding and applying the moral norms of living under God's rule.

The Totality of Christocentric Social Ethics

Building from a rich appreciation for the gospel in social ethics, Hauerwas emphasizes the sufficiency Jesus Christ, his life, death, and resurrection, to moral reflection.

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[115] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 79.
[116] Ibid.

Furthermore, Hauerwas sees a separation of the eschatological significance of the Jesus' death and resurrection from discussion of Christian virtue as a cleavage of the one who proclaims the kingdom from the kingdom itself.[117] After all, "Jesus is nothing less than the embodiment of God's Sabbath as a reality for all people."[118] Just as an orthodox soteriology disappears without the death and resurrection, so ethics falls short of God's character without the hopeful realities of Jesus' total obedience to the Father.[119]

Indeed, Hauerwas rightly recognizes how Christian ethics cannot hope to makes sense without the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[120] He concludes, "God's kingdom, God's peace, is a movement of those who have found the confidence through the life of Jesus to make their lives a constant worship of God."[121] Because of God's work through Jesus Christ, the people of God become a community driven away from coercive or violent means of social change. Rather, the fullest vision of Jesus as Messiah draws out the power of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation as viable social alternatives. The cross of Christ opens the believer to the necessity of abandoning the hope of self-preservation in favor of the hope of resurrection life.

Such social expressions not only bring hope and vitality to human relationships but also restore respect and care for all created order. The peaceful cooperation between man and creation ruptured by the fall finds harmonious restoration not in a return to some

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[117] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 45.
[118] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 87.
[119] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 48.
[120] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 71.
[121] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 87.

state of nature but an eschatological vision of the kingdom of God.[122] The Christian is freed to protect life not on the basis of force or coercion but through the sacrificial example offered by the cross of Christ. Strikingly, attempts to safeguard creation or honor the sacredness of life on pragmatic grounds ultimately fail because the church's hope depends on the eschatological connection inherent within the Christian life. Hauerwas explains, "Our concern to protect and enhance life is a sign of our confidence that in fact we live in a new age in which it is possible to see the other as God's creation."[123] Valuing life in such a way makes morality more than end in itself but a submissive obedience to God's example of sacrifice and hope offered in Jesus Christ.[124]

The Christian commitment to protect life flows from an eschatological commitment to all life, even the lives of our enemies.[125]Although the work of Christ inaugurates a kingdom of peace, Hauerwas recognizes the ongoing sinfulness and futility of the present state. The promises of globalized unity and harmony are not yet fully realized.[126] Yet this cannot be the criterion for abandoning the kingdom expressions of sacrifice, love, and hope embodied by Jesus. The church must still strive toward the kind of life that makes such eschatological peace possible. Hauerwas concludes, "Through this crucified but resurrected savior we see that God offers to all the possibility of living in

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[122] For a helpful survey of the cooperative relationship between theology and creation care, see Thomas Johnson, "Faith and Reason Active in Love: The Ethics of Creation Care," *ERTh* 38.4 (2014): 292–306; Andrew J. Spencer, "Beyond Christian Environmentalism: Ecotheology as an Over-Contextualized Theology," *Them* 40.3 (2015): 414–28.

[123] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 88.

[124] Stanley Hauerwas, *Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 44–45.

[125] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 88.

[126] Walter Brueggemann also offers a substantial case for the peaceful opportunities open to Christians from a deeper appreciation of Isaiah 11:1–9. As he states it, Christian peacemaking needs a text would be "beyond us in imagination, that speaks in a mode that shatters our settled categories, that is the resounding voice of God overriding our modest and frightened pictures of what is possible." Walter Brueggemann, "Peacemaking: An Evangelical Possibility," *ChSo* 81.1 (1990): 8–20.

peace by the power of forgiveness."[127] The church cannot simply wait for God's final statement of peace in the *eschaton* but trust in his definitive statement of peace in the incarnation. Instead, the eschatological hope of a present reality displayed through the person and work of Jesus drives the faithful community toward social engagement, virtuous practices, and incarnational lifestyles.

Not only does the hopefulness of life lived in surrender to God bring true joy, but hopeful practices built on God's kingdom reassert divine insight on how to care for the world. In effect, the church's moral practices take shape from a hope in the God who has promised that faithfulness to his kingdom will be of his use in caring for his world.[128] Hopeful practices shaped in the faithful community discipline the church away from an undiscerning eye toward the world, human goodness, or blind optimism. Rather, the deep and abiding conviction of God's faithfulness undergirds the moral practices of the church. God is faithful and will faithfully care for his world. In the light of this relationship between social effectiveness, moral formation and the revelation of God's rule in Jesus, Christian morality engages the world through hopeful possibilities rather than merely materialistic or rational categories.

Christian Hope as Moral Action

Faithful Christian witness enacts the hope granted by the freedom of God, encouraging a constant renewal of Christian morality derived from the revelation of God in Christ

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[127] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 89.

[128] Hauerwas writes, "[O]ur hope is not in this world, or in humankind's goodness, or in some sense that everything always works out for the best, but in God and God's faithful caring for the world." Ibid., 104.

Jesus.[129] Furthermore, the embodied practices of hopeful possibility open the Christian to the dynamic power of a Triune God's active and reliable work in and through his people. Ellul and Hauerwas offer a cooperative reminder of how the individual Christian enacting the way of Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit supplies a fundamental expression of hope found only in God.[130] Two particular areas represent positive contributions from Ellul and Hauerwas as well as opportunities for further strengthening of their overall approach.

First, Ellul and Hauerwas rightly encourage an ethical renewal growing out of a strong, incarnational emphasis in Christian moral reflection. However, Ellul's emphasis on the individual Christian deserves to be strengthened by a more explicit description of how the individual Christian firmly in the church embodies hope within community. Taken alongside a broader appreciation for morality within the redeemed community, the individual maintains a rich context for living out divine hope.

Second, Ellul and Hauerwas rightly assert an active participation in the world based upon a spiritual understanding of the moral possibilities for the world. Christian hope, informed by faith and moved by love, challenges false freedoms and supplies a deeper appreciation for God's sovereign care in light of human limitations. By living out of control in the world, the church displays an active hope before the world.

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[129] Ellul and Hauerwas assume a particular understanding of revelation and Scripture addressed in a chapter two of the present work. Without unnecessary rehearsal, the biblical foundations for hope would benefit from the more balanced integration between the world of the reader, the world of the text, and the world of the author described in a previous section. See pages 66–70 of the current study for further analysis.

[130] Ellul puts it this way, "We are saying that the Christian life should be a constant renewal, a creation of abundant novelties expressing the richness of the Holy Spirit." Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 253.

Incarnated Ethical Renewal within Christian Community

When the ethical connection between dynamic relationship with God and his freeing acts for his people is lost, the church resorts to static expressions of morality. The Christian seeks more than merely a rule or principle for action. On the contrary, Christian hope supplies revitalized embodiment of God's will in the world. When integrated together, Ellul and Hauerwas provide a helpful emphasis on the disciplined practice of hope granted by the Spirit of God supplies sufficient strength to see God's purposes and accomplish God's will.[131]

Practicing Hope as Personal Morality

According to Ellul and Hauerwas, the relationship between hope and renewal in Christian ethics flows from the incarnational foundations of freedom in Christ. Ethics plays a decisive and inevitable role in reminding the church of the importance of the Incarnation in Christian existence, creating a tangible expression of God's eternal love.[132] Ellul states, "Ethics is there precisely to bring down to the level of tangible problems the demand of the absolute which the Christian experiences within himself, and to oblige him to take seriously the relativity of human situations."[133] In contrast, philosophical or intellectual

[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 261.
[133] Ibid., 260–61.

examinations of ethics pursue eternally enduring statements of right and wrong rather than appreciating the temporary nature of Christian morality.[134]

Such enduring applications of the life of faith do not represent a monotone, calcified application of God's revelation but point to the necessity of enacting the life of faith in the world. Instead of rigid calculation, Ellul emphasizes how the Christian embodies a conscious awareness of the changing expressions of God's revelation through humble acts of service.[135] He explains, "It (Christian morality) will consist in the application of particular and concrete situations of Christians of the requirements and promises of the faith in Jesus Christ concerning the behavior, the mode of action and the life of the new man."[136] Christian virtue expresses the way of being present in the world, a relationship to the given facts of the world.[137] Christian ethics must constantly be renewed for a given place and time not some past or unreal world, obtaining authority based solely on faithfulness to God.[138]

Living Hope in Christian Community

Ellul's emphasis on a lived morality provides helpful direction to the individual Christian. However, he does not adequately address the larger, communal realities of

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[134] Ibid., 299–300. Ellul recognizes Reinhold Niebuhr's critique of ethics derived from a theology bypassing modern man's problems by creating irrelevant precepts and the elimination of the tensions between grace and eschatology. Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*. However, Ellul's understanding of the temporary nature of Christian morality does not fully endorse Niebuhr's total project but reflects Ellul's insistence on the primacy of God's command over bare human ingenuity in shaping moral thinking. Further, Ellul remains suspicious of totalitarian moral systems deduced from Scripture for a given place and time yet proposed as timeless moral systems. The temporariness of Christian ethics cannot be identified with an inability to live God's will or the inaccessibility of God's commands but the constant interaction between revelation and contextualized moral application driven by God's ongoing address to man enlivened by the Holy Spirit. Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 204–205, 213.

[135] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 249.

[136] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 252.

[137] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 250.

[138] Ibid., 251–52.

Christian hope.[139] Ellul's revival of the individual significance to both society and moral discourse warrants commendation yet the individualization of Christian faith must be avoided. In light of a richer appreciation for the community in the formation and spiritual sustenance of the individual, Ellul's assertions gain an even greater impact.

According to Ellul, God redeems a people, comprised of individuals, for his glory among the nations.[140] Despite this foundational claim, Ellul most frequently charges the individual Christian to moral action rather than making claims on the corporate church.[141] Alongside Ellul's challenge for individual action, Hauerwas' appreciation for the communal roots of Christian ethics offers a helpful voice. As Hauerwas notes, the redeemed Christian is not saved to isolation but becomes part of God's kingdom, fundamentally communal language rooting Christian practices and morality.[142]

While the individual assists in resisting a homogeneous approach to moral reflection, the community still represents the essential context for rightly understanding and fully appropriating hopeful social ethics.[143] Ellul's individualistic language limits the scope of his hopeful vision, benefitting from a broader acknowledgement of the church. Furthermore, the unity in diversity offered within the biblical community reveals the rich tapestry of grace woven through God's redemptive choice.[144] The individual fulfills

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[139] Greenman, Schuchardt, and Toly, *Understanding Jacques Ellul*, 143–144; David Gill, "Jacques Ellul's Ethics: Legacy and Promise," *EF*.39 (2007): 7–8.

[140] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 1.

[141] This individualistic approach can be noticed in Ellul's emphasis on "The Christian in the Word" in *The Presence of the Kingdom* and "The Object of Freedom and the Will of Man" in *The Ethics of Freedom*. Ibid., 1–20; Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 101–220.

[142] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 97.

[143] Ibid., 33.

[144] "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph 4:4–7 ESV).

God's design through the active recognition and participation in the believing community.

Hope and Radical Christian Social Engagement

As Ellul and Hauerwas rightly note, faithfulness to God's revelation does not close the Christian to life in the world but gradually opens the believer to a hopeful and radical relationship with the world. Fueled by hope, the church practices a cooperative, corrective, or confrontational connection with the world.[145] The connection established by hope grants the church the opportunity to genuinely be heard as a community addressing the actual needs of the world. Ellul writes,

> The freedom won in Christ is alive, unlimited, without restrictions or obligations. It enables us to throw off constraints and admonitions. It is true freedom: freedom to chose, to decide, to go where I want to go, to break that which dominates, to transgress prohibitions, to profane what man holds sacred, to conform if conformity is chosen and yet not to conform, to enter into and break free from commitments, to give and to take back again.[146]

Jesus Christ has broken the negative power of any social or cultural oppression and his freeing work opens the believer to definitive hope. Because of this, the Christian fully casts himself into life as an embodiment of God's love.

In the World, Not of the World

Glorifying God and loving the world insists on a hopeful Christian community insistent on preventing the world from going its own way. While the Christian does not simply seek to make the world function better, the hope offered in Jesus Christ grants a genuine

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[145] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 96–102. As well, Hauerwas and Willimon develop at length the significance of practicing Christian living within the world in *Resident Aliens* and *Where Resident Aliens Live*. See Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*; Hauerwas and Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live*.

[146] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 186.

and achievable expectation for the world. Ellul develops a threefold relationship of the lived hope of the Christian: an evangelistic role, a missionary role, and a mediatory role.

In an evangelistic role, the church moves outside itself to bring the life of God to the experiences of man. Ellul exhorts, "The church cannot continue to be a self-enclosed and self-incurved entity more or less tied up with sociological and class structures."[147] Moreover, the church strives for the intentional practice of using every avenue of life (vocation, relationships, business, etc.) for the conversion of men to Jesus Christ.

In a missionary role, the church steps back from clear expressions of the gospel to seek participation in every walk of life. Ellul explains, "The objective here is presence rather than conversion. Jesus Christ is to be present among all creatures through his witnesses. There have to be Christians who take part in all activities and enterprises, who do not refuse to take part in this or that venture or commitment for moral or other reasons."[148] While some wisdom must surely be exercised in the practice of missionary presence, the Christian presence reminds the world of God's covenant promises.

In a mediatory role, the church resists the desire to create self-interested or tribal identities in particular avenues of life.[149] That is, Christians sacrificially serve among the world, participating and, if necessary, suffering, so that the world might see the goodness and glory of God. Once again, Ellul emphasizes the Christian's participation with the world rather than an otherworldly separation. The church exists in the world for the

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[147] Ibid., 299.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Because Ellul emphasized a bottom up approach to social action, instigating cultural shifts grows out of communal movements breaking in on oppressive social structures, prejudices, and systems. For example, Ellul worked to establish groups of businessmen, workers, and professionals meeting together to discuss the shaping power of the gospel to these areas of life. Ellul, *In Season Out of Season*, 62–66.

preservation and service.[150] In this way, moral action flows from a deep hopefulness shaped by the redeemed life sustained by grace and motivated to reveal God's love to the world.[151]

Living Out of Control

When divine hope moves in and among the church, the Christian displays a distinctive way of life established in the world through unique and tangible expressions of hope. Alongside Ellul's emphasis on the person living in the world, Hauerwas' eschatological ethic steels the church to face the harsh realities of a fallen world. After all, Christian hope does not rest in false freedom but faces the brutal necessities of life lived in a sinful world.

The hopeful community absorbs suffering as a people shaped by the person and work of Jesus. A truly incarnational community displays the reconciliation opened to the world by the cross. In refusing to seek retaliation but absorbing the sinful violence of the world, the church embodies God's act through the cross.[152] Hauerwas confirms, "We discover that the patient hope that requires us to wait in the face of violence is not some means to a greater good, but the good itself."[153] The peaceful church exemplifies more than another alternative in the world but the incarnated practices of Jesus. Instead, the

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[150] The individual Christian cannot escape the responsibility of guarding against sinful social oppression. Even more, sinfully oppressive social or cultural actions do not prevent God to act on man nor does it degrade the redemptive power of Christ. Ellul writes, "It is the Christian who has become aware of this (societal) sin and therefore cannot have any other purpose, other than human vocation to prevent the existence of conditions that made that sin possible." Charbonneau and Ellul, "Directives Pour Un Manifeste Personnaliste," 69.

[151] By advocating a smaller, more intimate approach to social action, Ellul sees Christian social action hopes to affect change in broader society growing from the inside out. Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 16.

[152] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 145.

[153] Ibid., 146.

hopeful expression of life surrendered to God's sovereign care fills the community with an eternal joy that makes a life of peace possible.[154]

In the dynamics of a renewed ethic of hope, the church cannot embrace false narratives of freedom but embrace a life lived in full relationship with God. Ellul explains, "Fellowship (with God) does not involve choice, Freedom is living in God's own freedom through this fellowship and in the unbroken unity of all creation in which there are no separate and incoherent bits and pieces between which to choose."[155] The life of faith lived in genuine hope elevates human experience beyond a series of bare, rational choices.

The living faith exemplified in vibrant community expands the Christian's vision to continually engage every area of creation. True Christian freedom implies that each Christian seeks the unique outworking of God's kingdom within a given setting. Nevertheless, the practice of moral renewal ought not discourage social action but open the believer to the possibilities for living out union with Christ. Because righteousness has already been given to the church, the community must accept God's call, embody God's Son, and faithfully live God's will.[156]

By letting go of the illusions of safety and security outside of God's kingdom, the church grows beyond a happiness built upon circumstance, power, or prestige. By accepting and practicing divine hope, the church receives the joyful realities of a life

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[154] Ibid., 147.
[155] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 114.
[156] Ibid., 117.

shaped by the gospel.[157] From this life of joyful hope, the moral prerogatives of the kingdom grow into meaningful action for the world.

Conclusion: A New Christian Realism

Tying together Ellul's personalist ethic and Hauerwas' eschatological ethic reveals hope's significance to establishing and practicing Christian social ethics. Genuine hope frees the Christian to embody a living manifestation of God's sure promises. As well, Ellul and Hauerwas' raise the significance of hopeful social action beyond moral opportunity or cultural convenience toward Christian obligation.

Ellul's emphasis on the individual Christian's place in moral discourse further highlights Hauerwas' Christological eschatology. The moral significance of the divine man, Jesus Christ, raises the moral power of the redeemed person brought into union with him through his life, death, and resurrection. Ellul's insistence on tangible action coupled with Hauerwas' kingdom ethic reimagines moral possibility in a grounded ethic of possibility shaped from God's sovereign rule rather than human limitations. Because of such eternal hope, the Christian community shapes a new Christian realism based not on material or rational categories but on a far-reaching eschatological hope for human flourishing founded in Scripture, revealed by Jesus Christ, and enacted by the local church. [158]

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[157] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 148.

[158] For a full development of Christian realism, see Robin W. Lovin, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism* (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Robin W. Lovin, "Christian Realism for the Twenty-First Century," *JRE* 37.4 (2009): 669–82; John Marsden, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the Ethics of Christian Realism," *IJPT* 4.4 (2010): 483–501.

The Reality of Christian Hope

Shaping a social ethics as an embodiment of Christian hope requires honest assessment of reality in light of God's revelation. Without a deep foundation in Scripture, hopeful action in a fallen world cannot be sustained. Two significant notions enable a profitable connection between hope and realism in order to shape an active social ethic.

First, while Christian realism confirms the church's ability to see the facts for what they are, the church must be spiritually dependent on divine categories for created order to thoroughly grasp their true significance.[159] As such, embracing neither the limits nor expansiveness of human knowledge, hopeful Christian realism redefines possible knowledge and possible action through a life lived in relationship with Jesus Christ. Second, Christian social action grounded in genuine hope engages the world through the power of spiritual vision. As a people opened to seeing what truly is and what might be, the gospel-centered community affords the world a unique portrait life patient, prayerful, and realistic ethics. Guarded against blind optimism and depressed cynicism, hopeful action grows out of the ongoing dynamic of life lived in God's care.

The Creativity of Christian Social Ethics

When Christian moral vision becomes limited by what can be known about the world, the Christian understands and practices social ethics on the basis of human determinations rather than divine possibilities. While the Christian resides between the necessities of a sinful world and the desire for a better way, the church works to

[159] Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 81.

reestablish God's framework for understanding the world.[160] Even more, the natural man only sees the world through human understanding whereas the Christian must live beyond such rough categorizations.[161]

Sin and sinfulness should certainly be accounted for in any moral system. However, causing such factors to insubordinately affect the church's witness in the world misunderstands the power of the gospel. Indeed, the Christian possesses the means to discern the deeper issues drawing mankind to violence, alienation, and cultural fragmentation. Living out a Christian social presence remains distinctly possible without neglecting or downplaying the underlying any given theological realities. Certainly, not all situations represent the same distinguishing features or social possibility. All division and oppression find shared roots in the spiritual conflict between the Prince of this world and the King of all creation.[162] In this way, the Christian provides not merely a "realistic" ethic but a "revelational" ethic.

The limits of Christian realism do not simply fence the knowledge of moral possibilities for the world but also constricts the promising actions open for the Christian. Placing too much emphasis on faulty assumption that humanity can fully grasp the scope of moral actions apart from God's revealed overestimates man's material or rational categories. In many ways, the "impossible possibility" of Christian realism focuses more on the impossibilities and less on the possibilities. Christian hope reverses this trend.

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[160] At this point, Ellul praises Reinhold Niebuhr's criticism of any ethic seeking to be the final and absolute standard. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, repr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996). Yet, Ellul sees Christian ethics suffering from the same tendencies. Thus, Ellul calls to mind Barth's transcendental emphasis on the encounter and confrontation of God's divine command and concrete human existence. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God, Part 2*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. Harold Knight et al., CD Vol. II/2 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 645–646.

[161] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 10.

[162] Ibid., 9–11.

Divine hope opens the Christian to willingly sacrifice all possessions, relationships, and personal safety for the sake of neighbor love.[163] Hopeful Christian realism means the Christian knows clearly what he or she is doing based upon divine revelation and not cultural, social, or philosophical equations.[164] That is, a Christian's hopeful action must avoid painting false lines around possible actions based upon insufficient criterion drawn largely from human possibility rather than divine opportunity. When the paradigm for God's action becomes God's revelation, the Christian regains the creative opportunity for free action in God's world.

The Intersection of Human Necessities and Divine Realities

While offering a unique vision for all created order, Christian hope does not exist simply as an alterative to a realistic perspective on the world. Alternatively, Christian hope serves as a complementing, signifying aspect of lived existence. Such a warning must remain on the forefront of the Christian's practices of hopeful virtue. Rather than escaping tangible truths of current existence, hope needs reality to be accessible and reality needs hope to be tolerable. Ellul explains, "Hope finds its substance in realism, and the latter finds its possibility in hope. Without living hope there is likewise no human capacity to consider the actual situation. Man can ever stand reality."[165] Without hope, reality becomes an unbearable exercise in frustration. Yet without reality, hope loses existential anchoring. Pessimistic realism gives rise to cynicism, unrealistic hope to idealism, and both situations culminate in disillusionment.

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[163] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 468.
[164] Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*, 82.
[165] Ellul, *Hope in Time of Abandonment*, 275.

Even more, the Christian cannot truly possess hope without a full recognition of the despairing state of current situations. Christian hope requires disciplined waiting, persistent prayer, and truthful realism.[166] Under the oppressive social and cultural demands of continuous access to information, the knowledge of urgent global needs, and aggressive technological advances, the self-controlled waiting of Christian hope stands apart. Driven by prayerful dedication to God's sovereign choice regarding created order, the church joyfully inhabits reality armed by the spiritual power of union with Jesus Christ.[167] Ellul concludes,

> Hope does not begin to *exist* except in the harshness of an expanding implacable force, in the unanswerable nature of the problems confronting the person, in social oppression and mechanization, in the midst of conflict. Elsewhere, one has no use for hope. One gets along quite well without it. All that is needed is to let things go, to leave man to himself and let nature take its course. Hope is power and action only in the presence of naked reality.[168]

Furthermore, without the clear declaration of social, political, and economic needs, Christian social ethics lacks the necessary context for the supreme hope of Jesus Christ.

Hope also frees the faithful community to provide the intersection for human necessities and divine realities, employing the ordinary categories of life with spiritual vitality.[169] Rather than unnecessary dependence on larger sociological challenges, the accumulation of numerous individual decisions for God's kingdom gives rise to a larger alteration of social orders rooted in the spiritual transformation of the individual. Ellul expands on this notion, "For it is at this level alone that one sees 'Christ in us' at work….

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[166] Ellul unpacks these ideas in *Hope in a Time of Abandonment*. See Ibid., 258–283.

[167] Ellul makes this a part of a larger attempt to remind Christians of the significant power of prayer to not simply provide spiritual nourishment but a daily practice of the kind of Sabbath rest offered by God. Ellul, *Prayer and the Modern Man*.

[168] Ibid., 278; emphasis his.

[169] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 470.

What we have always to remember is that according to the gospel movement among men is from below upward and never from above downward."[170] Any social transformation comes from the bottom and not the top through the power of God's presence among his people.[171] Ultimately, the freedom offered through radical hope causes the Christian to reject false notions of autonomy or independence but submit all actions to God's declaration of freedom, directed by God's Word and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Through such ongoing relationship with God, the faithful communities hope recasts a vision of the world, social ethics, and the destiny of created order.

The Moral Significance of Christian Vision

Without destroying a morality rooted in reality, Christian social action grounded in genuine hope reminds the church the ethical significance of spiritual vision. In fact, the Christian's awareness of present realities necessitates the constant recognition of divine promises of a future existence continually being made present today. As Hauerwas puts it, "Morally the world is always wanting to be created in correspondence to what it is but is not yet."[172] The Christian community lives in commitment not to "religion" in a general sense but as a faithful people submissive to the kingship of Christ.[173] Such submission recognizes the church's absolute accountability to God as those free not to

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[170] Ibid., 478.

[171] Andy Crouch develops a similar expression of such a "bottom-up" notion. Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013). In contrast, James Davison Hunter advocates a "top-down" approach for cultural renewal where Christians occupy a few strategic positions for advocating large-scale change. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[172] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 73.

[173] Hauerwas, *In Good Company*, 202.

simply live through independent moral ingenuity but thrive under spiritually responsible social action.[174]

Seeing the World God's Way

The hopeful Christian vision plays a direct role in shaping the ethical paradigms and practices of the people of God. Using an example from C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, Hauerwas explains,

> Ethics is the modest discipline which uses careful language, distinctions, and stories to break the intellectual bewitchment that would have us call lamps the sun and adultery love. *Christian ethics is the systematic investigation of the astounding claim that the world and our self is only rightly seen and intended in the light of what God has done in the person and work of Jesus Christ*, for Narnia is real exactly because Aslan created and sustained it through his sacrificial love.[175]

Through the gospel realities of death and resurrection, the church regains not simply a portrait of divine love but the form of moral practices necessary for making the gospel present in the world. In each social setting, the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection play out the ongoing dynamic of living well in radical surrender to the revolutionary joy of the gospel. After all, the Christian's life, past, present, and future, become a part of the larger story of God's ongoing redemption and restoration of created order.

In order to establish a different kind of Christian realism, Hauerwas also reminds the Christian community of the narrative quality of the life of faith, hope, and love. The biblically shaped community forms moral imperatives not solely by principles or policies but through the practiced embodiment of the story of God's calling of Israel and of the

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[174] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 115.
[175] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 102.

life of Jesus.[176] Through such a story of enacted truthfulness in worshipful community, virtue rises out of narrative as a Christian epistemology formed within the Christian community and granted by God. Indeed, the biblically dependent convictions of the church stand in stark contrast to the storyless realities of the world.[177]

Without a true story granted by God, human hopelessness cannot help but be violent and destructive. In stark contrast, the Christian story offers a stirring opportunity to envision God's designs while achieving God's purposes for a particular place, people, and time. Even more, the character of a community provides the testing grounds for any epistemological claims by the Christian faith because, according to Hauerwas, assessing the truthfulness of any religious conviction cannot be separated from the truthfulness of the persons who make those claims.[178]

Living in the World God's Way

Yet such action requires a careful perception not of what is realistic but rather what is actualized through the Christian faith. That is, Christian hope finds strength not in what is "realistic" in a purely rational or philosophical sense but what is true as revealed by God.[179] Furthermore, this redefined Christian realism offers more than optimism but genuine hope. Optimism can exist without truth but hope requires honest recognition of what has happened, what is, and what might be in light of what God has done in Christ.[180]

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[176] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 101. At this point Hauerwas may overstate the possibility for accessing moral prerogatives merely from lived practices. Yet his assertion still provides a timely reminder of the fundamental connection between God's revealed will, divine commands, and the living witness of the church. Strong assertions regarding accessible divine commands are worthless to the morally inactive or socially inept community.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid., 10.

[179] Ibid., 200.

[180] Ibid.

After all, viewing life possessing a healthy realism depends on the foundations for defining reality. For the Christian, God's existence fundamentally changes empty possibility into faith-filled activity. Such a shift toward truth makes all the difference in Christian ethics. Even more, the prospect of measureable results or outcomes must be submitted to the biblical understanding of time, success, and change.[181]

Without a proper sense of what is true, any attempts at hopeful statements for the world risk falling into cynicism and despair.[182] Truth necessarily shapes hope and cynicism necessarily brings despair. Hauerwas states, "Despair is to hope what hypocrisy is to truth: hypocrisy proves how much we need truth in our lives; despair proves how much we need hope."[183] Perhaps more importantly to the present discussion, hope enacted in such a way empowers Christian ethical imagination. Without such imagination, morality becomes dependent on the power to furnish, maintain, and expand our own existence. Even more, hope understands the limits of power and relies upon the depth of relationship shared with God.[184] By being truthful about the limits of power, the church becomes a force for change and possibility while also guarding against the raw cynicism that inevitably brings despair.[185]

In many ways, such creative social action presents the greatest power of the Christian social vision. Hauerwas writes, "As Christians our ethical task is to see the world as it is in the confidence that we can look upon and face the agony of this world

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[181] Ellul, *In Season Out of Season*, 67.

[182] Hauerwas develops this most fully in an essay on the life and death of Thomas More. See Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 199–220.

[183] Ibid., 201.

[184] Ibid., 211.

[185] As Hauerwas explains, "The hopeful life must bend to the demands of truth or it will, by a paradox as certain as the fact that power corrupts, lose its hope, become mere optimism, then turn to cynicism, and finally issue in a despairing life." Ibid.

without it destroying us."[186] Indeed, the church is the only reality capable of providing the true story of the world. Without the disciplined, theological realism of the church, the world cannot hope to recognize itself much less facilitate a virtuous society capable of producing virtuous people.

Only as Christians serve the world from such a surrendered perspective, as those "out of control" of national and world history, can there be a genuine exploration of what might be done for the glory of God and good of the world.[187] The Christian participates in a revolutionary relationship with the world, constantly challenging, deconstructing, and reviving the material perceptions of human existence. Ellul explains, "This, then, is the revolutionary situation: to be revolutionary is to judge the world by its present state, by actual facts, in the name of a truth which does not yet exist (but which is coming)—and it is to do so because we believe this truth to be more genuine and more real than the reality which surrounds us."[188] The vision of God's kingdom revealed in Jesus Christ makes all the difference for shaping the correct perception both of what is, what has been given, and what is to come.

The communion of God and man heightens possibility of knowing what can and must be accomplished. The Christian confronts the spiritual realities of the world rather than the material forces that exert themselves upon all created order.[189] Ellul proclaims, "It is only in Jesus Christ that we have any possibility of understanding this wild adventure on which we have started, for in the midst of these shadows he is here, the

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[186] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 117.
[187] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 11.
[188] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 38.
[189] Ibid., 2.

Person, the Event, in the midst of the whirlwinds of facts, the Author and the Finisher of our faith."[190] In being opened to the salvation offered in Jesus Christ, the Christian perpetually hopes in an ongoing redemptive quality of life lived under God's watch care.

[190] Ibid., 109.

CHAPTER 4
PRACTICE: LOVE AS ACTION

The last section of this study takes the discussion toward the final theological virtue, love, as a definitive means to understanding and embodying Christian practices in the world as the total way of life necessary to live out God's design for the world. The thesis of this chapter is Christian love involves living in relationship with the world through the means and practices ordained by God as the active and sacrificial embodiment of the gospel. Through a loving relationship with the world, the church does not neglect cultural needs nor capitulate to social pressures but practices a dynamic commitment to Christ through enacting God's love within given social realities.

Building a virtuous Christian social ethic extends from the faithful ecclesial witness as hopeful social action. Greater still, as 1 Corinthians 13 so vividly portrays, right thoughts, compelling language, and sincere action are meaningless without divine love.[1] As such, Ellul and Hauerwas provide critical concepts essential to practicing love in Christian social ethics.

The first part of this section examines the way Ellul and Hauerwas describe the love exemplified by the church living in relationship with God and the world. For Ellul, his dialectic worldview encourages a revelatory relationship between the church and the

[1] "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:1–3 ESV)

world.[2] In cooperation with Ellul's emphasis on the enacted, revelatory ethics of Christian love, Stanley Hauerwas emphasizes truthfulness and suffering as the embodied expressions of Christ's work in and through the church. Hauerwas rightly emphasizes the gospel's demands for a life of truthful and compassionate practices in active, present relationship with the real-life struggles of the sick and suffering.

While Ellul and Hauerwas offer a stirring account for a love lived in relationship with the world, loving the world requires more than dialectic relationship and situational solidarity. Ellul's dialectic worldview provides an insightful critique of social settings but would benefit from a stronger recognition of divine love revealed in God's holy demands in Scripture. As well, Hauerwas rightly notes truth's essential place in Christian morality yet his contribution benefits from a more explicit acknowledgment of the positive place God's law plays in Christian virtue. By deepening these aspects in Ellul and Hauerwas, the church's loving relationship with the world retains its fundamentally biblical shape.

The second part of this chapter unpacks the lived significance of the loving relationship developed in part one. Instead of disassociation or capitulation, Ellul grants proper emphasis on how Christian ethics supplies important sociological foundations for bearing spiritual fruit in and for the world through an apologetic and temporary voice in society. Alongside Ellul's dialectic worldview emphasizing man's need for divine intervention, Hauerwas points to the practiced presence of Jesus as the church's path to loving social witness.

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[2] Jacob Van Fleet makes an important contribution to the study of dialectics in Ellul studies and the term "dialectic worldview" is borrowed from his work. However, Van Fleet does not spend significant time relating dialectics to virtue ethics and divine love as is done here. See Jacob E. Van Fleet, *Dialectical Theology and Jacques Ellul: An Introductory Exposition* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2014).

In this way, the church enacts the loving relationship between the Triune God and the world. Hauerwas grants a helpful reminder of how Christian love represents a persistent and faithful enacting of God's presence with the world. On top of these positive contributions, further strengthening a commitment to the biblical foundations for virtue affords Ellul and Hauerwas' lived virtue clearer insight and greater power in driving tangible, loving social action.

As a synthesis of the first two sections of this chapter, the final section explores how the Christian living in loving relationship with the world demands a intentional, practiced theology. Taken together, Ellul and Hauerwas remind the church that Christian social ethics are thwarted before they begin without a practiced and present doctrine for living. Loving practices first means embodying the preserving power of personal relationships built upon trust and forgiveness.

Sustaining healthy relationships requires more than shared preferences or sentimentality. Loving relationships necessitates an apologetic disposition committed to seeing the world as it is while simultaneously working toward justice, mercy, and peace. Consequently, the church continually refreshes social presence, understanding the temporary nature of Christian ethics. That is, the church allows revelational realities to mold social practices for the sake of God's glory in the world.

Love: Ellul and Hauerwas on Love as Relationship

Ellul and Hauerwas both emphasize the relational realties of loving God in the world. For Ellul, his dialectic worldview connects lived realities with divine revelation by challenging the Christian to listen to the world and live in relationship with the world. For Hauerwas, his development of love as embodied acts seeks a moral community speaking

truthfully and being present in human suffering. By challenging the church to move into meaningful relationship with the world the church provides a lived vision of the gospel in the world.

When viewed through Ellul's socio-political perspective and Hauerwas' emphasis on embodied virtue, Christian social ethics become more than abstract theological reflection. Christian social action becomes the practiced awareness of enacting God's revelation in a given social setting. Furthermore, by providing a stronger recognition of the positive realities of truth revealed in God's holy law, Christian love within social action deepens, displaying the Christ's sacrificial love for all created order.

Ellul's Dialectic Worldview

Ellul's socio-political environment exerted great influence over his social voice and the moral demands of Christian ethics. More central to this study, Ellul's reading of Karl Marx provides a backdrop for understanding the dialectic relationship of love emphasized in Ellul's virtue ethics. In his dialectic worldview, Ellul seeks the strongest connection between lived social concerns and a living Christian ethic.

As such, Ellul exemplifies a prophetic Christian ethic lovingly engaging the world growing from a sociological awakening instigated by Marx but filtered through divine revelation.[3] Ellul's approach to living out the Christian faith in relationship with the world reminds the church of the critical importance of right belief and right action working together, honestly addressing the felt needs of the people, place, and time where

[3] David C. Menninger offers an extremely helpful essay on the connection between Marx and Ellul. Menninger points out how Ellul transcended Marx's original project as Marx mostly served as a point of departure for Ellul rather than a final destination. David C. Menninger, "Marx in the Social Thought of Jacques Ellul," in *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 17–31.

the church exists. In Ellul's case, he exemplifies sensitivity in the midst of great social and political transition by examining and critiquing cultural currents through a Christian disposition.[4]

By employing this approach, Ellul offers a way forward in living out God's love through the necessary tensions of living in dialectic relationship with the world. Fundamentally, Ellul utilized his Christian faith to clarify the deeper crises unearthed but inadequately addressed by a dominant social voice, Karl Marx.[5] The sociological and theological interaction practiced by Ellul exemplifies the loving relationship needed between the church and the world as a means of practicing God's will in a particular place and time. Two particular points provide an explanation of the broader social elements necessary for living in relationship with the world while also highlighting the relationship between Marx and Ellul.

First, Marx helped Ellul gain a conviction for the Christian church's need to practice social solidarity with a despairing world. Ellul does not accept Marx's entire social analysis but moves to recognize how Jesus Christ offers the proper means and

[4] While a student at the University of Bordeaux, Ellul encountered Karl Marx, and he sought to utilize this source through the rest of his life. Marx would eventually become a powerful influence on what would later be termed "Christian anarchism." Ellul unpacks a full analysis of the relationship between biblical Christianity and political anarchy in his work *Anarchy and Christianity.* See Jacques Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).

[5] Ellul offers a longer discussion of Christian Marxism in *Jesus and Marx* alongside several helpful critiques of Christian "ideologies" exchanging the purity of the gospel for sake of social appropriation. See Jacques Ellul, *Jesus and Marx: From Gospel to Ideology*, repr. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012).

context for embodying true love.[6] Second, Marx called Ellul's attention to larger social and political unrest encouraging Ellul to furnish a Christian perspective on all of life.

A Christian Perspective on "Being" Equal

At the deepest level, Marx gave Ellul an explanation for the extreme poverty he came to know well throughout his own life as well as the social inequalities he observed in broader society.[7] Not only had Ellul experienced personal poverty, he also observed the intellectual, social, and relational poverty of his era.[8] Marx provided a voice and a commentary whereby such widespread inequality could be identified and critiqued.[9]

What began as a system for explaining his early life grew into an awareness of the larger social and political oppression of Ellul's day. Marx's critiques of capitalism set Ellul on a path not simply against any particular economic or social structure but toward a broader social commentary encompassing the cultural, social, and economic pressures

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[6] In the end, all that Ellul retained from Marx was a commitment to practical dialectics, a way of seeing the lived realities of dialectic tension instead of merely immaterial pressures asserted by Hegelian dialectics. Even more, Ellul began from a distinctly Christian disposition further distancing himself from Christian Marxism or fully embracing Marxist ideology. Menninger, "Marx in the Social Thought of Jacques Ellul," 23.

[7] Menninger highlights this personal connection between Ellul and Marx as a kind of comradery of disposition rather than full-fledged philosophical agreement. He writes, "At its core, Ellul's appreciation of Marx retains a very personal tone. That is, Marx represents for Ellul a model of the social theorist's personal resistance to impersonal social forces. There is a concrete and fundamental solidarity between the image of Marx as a pioneering, solitary critic of the entire western economic system, and that of Ellul as critic of the whole culture of western technology. Both images can be fairly interpreted as depicting the drama of struggle between man and the dumb weight of the universe, a struggle which has been transferred in the modern era from the natural environment to the social realm." Ibid., 18.

[8] Jacques Ellul, *In Season, Out of Season*, trans. Lani Niles (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 117–138.

[9] Ellul explains his personal connection to Marx's critiques, "My father was unemployed. I considered it was dreadfully unjust that a man of his ability should find himself in such a predicament. I was to find an explanation for the tragedy of my father in Marx's analysis of capitalism and the crises of capitalism." Jacques Ellul, *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity: Conversations with Patrick Troude-Chastenet*, trans. Patrick Troude-Chastenet (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 55.

felt throughout the Western world.[10] Yet for Ellul, it is Jesus Christ and not the state that must offer a solution for man's misery. Political or economic solidarity pales in comparison with the peace gained from fully embodying the life of the gospel.

Practically, Ellul's commitment to side with the poor and marginalized in society deepened beyond his own lived experiences. Rather than allowing the despair of life's difficulties to overwhelm his Christian convictions, Ellul leveraged Marx's critiques of particular social realities in order to build a vocabulary for naming the challenges of human life, robbing them of unnecessary power.[11] Greater still, Ellul's Christian faith enabled him to grow beyond such a sociologically significant voice in Marx to understand his current situation in connection to deeper issues of sin and divine reconciliation rather than materialistic determinism. Such an adaptation allowed Ellul to develop his insightful and prophetic critique of the persistent and pervasive ills of social oppression.

By giving Ellul a means to analyze and understand his lived experiences, Marx encouraged Ellul to foresee the culture of consumption evident within the consumer capitalism of the present day.[12] Ultimately, Ellul's ethic developed under Marx's influence persistently sought to understand the social and economic distance between men equal in the eyes of God yet segregated or separated along class, economics, or ethic

[10] While Ellul lists several ways Marx and Communism serve as helpful voices of critique for the church, he remains strongly critical of Christian Marxism on its commitment to violence, misrepresentation of biblical revelation, and ideological pragmatism. Ultimately, Ellul recognize how movements such as Marxism can challenge the church to reevaluate how much gospel language, practices, and policies are tempted to syncretize with a given social setting. Ellul, *Jesus and Marx*, 5–10.

[11] In a similar fashion, the Christian use of psalms of lament often indicate a robust commitment to God's deliverance rather than a hopeless concession to suffering, pain, or death. See Gabriel Mendy, "The Theological Significance of the Psalm of Lament," *AThI* 8.1 (2015): 61–71.

[12] Ben Langford offers a similar critique of modern capitalist societies and the uncomfortable connection between consumerism, capitalism, and economic growth. Ben Langford, "Shaping Desire: Consumer Capitalism and the Eucharist," *SCJ* 17.1 (2014): 35–46.

lines. Rather than nursing a bitterness or sense of injustice at his own experiences, Ellul gained a voice for appreciating the realities of his life as well as the intense social pressures on the oppressed, the weak, and the marginalized. Recognizing such pressures drove Ellul to craft a moral vision insistent on the Christian practice amidst lived realities of human existence, the church participating as equals with the world rather than leaving the world to perish.

Likewise, when the Christian embraces his shared existence with the world, Ellul sees social action growing out of deep love for the world. A loving relationship shared between the church and the world forces Christians to shape a shared language in a particular way. Rather than avoiding the gospel, the Christian explains, critiques, and understands the entire human experience in order to more fully bring Jesus Christ to bear on all of life.[13]

Christian theology successfully engaging the world presents a comprehensive commitment to a relational conception of social, political, and economic situations.[14] Shared language and mutual experience offer a way of being present and in relationship with other humans undergoing the same struggle. Ellul explains,

> Thus he (the Christian) must plunge into social and political problems in order to have an influence on the world, not in the hope of making a paradise, but simply in order to make it tolerable—not in order to diminish the opposition between this world and the Kingdom of God, but simply in order to modify the opposition between the disorder of this world and the order of preservation God wills for it—not in order to "bring in" the Kingdom of God, but in order that the gospel may be

[13] In a very helpful way, Ellul points out that Marxism does not introduce any novel ideas to Christianity but instead functions as a wake up call to return to gospel-centered practices. Such thinking might be applied to various sociological or political ideologies as a reminder of centrality of God's revelation in the mist of any social, cultural, or political setting. Ellul, *Jesus and Marx*, 9.

[14] Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 68.

> proclaimed, that all men may *really* hear the good news of salvation, through the death and resurrection of Christ.[15]

Dialectic relationship establishes a commonality in struggles amidst economic poverty, cultural oppression, and social isolation. The social considerations of a particular time and place create the context for a unique gospel-shaped witness of Christian participation.

Yet, the Christian cannot confuse social solidarity for the redemptive realities of Jesus Christ. Rather than affording a total portrait of Christ's work, shared sociological bonds encourage an embodied representation of divine love.[16] Shared circumstances provide the context for testifying to the power of the gospel and loving relationship affords a path for revealing God's redemption in the world by enacting God's will in even the most adverse social settings.

Through loving and living in the midst of tangible struggles, the church embodies a loving relationship aware of the deeper spiritual oppression of sinful separation from God. Ellul concludes,

> It is a matter of mingling with the world while strictly refusing to be lost, while retaining the specific character, the uniqueness, of the truth revealed in Jesus Christ and of the new life we have received from him. It is a matter of supplying the savor of the salvation, of the truth, of the freedom and of the love which are in Christ, and never letting oneself be taken over by the perdition of the world, with its strength, its splendor and its efficiency![17]

Alongside the shared notions of human struggle, divine love affords a deeper understanding of life's greatest joys even in the midst of social turmoil. Christian love opens the church to accept an existence of perpetual dependence on God's sovereign

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[15] Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, trans. Olive Wyon, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 35.

[16] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 72.

[17] Jacques Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom* (New York: Seabury, 1972), 43.

power. The people of God live as those fully awakened to the costly love required to reconcile sinful humanity to a holy and righteous God.[18]

Christian Social Awareness

While Marx encouraged Ellul a shape a distinctly Christian voice to explain the false promises of consumerism and the realities of human oppression, Marx also encouraged a second area of Ellul's sociological reflection. Marx encouraged Ellul to develop the categorical framework for examining and critiquing the disturbing social and political climate of his day.

Specifically, Ellul rightly perceived the increasing instability of the Western world in his day in the face of rising fascism and right wing extremism in Europe.[19] Understanding social needs and the political signs of a particular era requires a keen, wise approach to life cultivated in a people daily enacting the truth of Jesus Christ and living in loving relationship with the world. The church cannot critique what it does not know and cannot know while living in isolation or capitulation.

For Ellul, Marx provided the backdrop for crafting a prophetic voice in troublesome times. As Ellul puts it, Marx was an "astonishing discovery of the reality of this world" at a time when very few people were speaking out against the injustice of a

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[18] Once again, Ellul's universalism influences his ethics but this does not remove his insights. In fact, a limited atonement still stirs the church to passionate action, understanding the cost in redemption as well as the consequence of rejection to God's grace in Jesus Christ. Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 5.

[19] With fascism developing rapidly in Italy and Nazism taking over Germany, Western Europe was becoming increasingly unstable. Ellul recognized the dangers of his day and attempted to meaningfully explain his political climate while also speaking out against the perils brought by oppressive political regimes. Such an approach actually cost Ellul his lectureship at Strasburg Law School and eventually led to a retreat into the French countryside to protect his Jewish wife. Ellul, *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity*, 73.

"capitalist world."[20] As he became more and more familiar with Marxist thought, Ellul discovered a system not only analyzing the mechanics of capitalism but an ideology establishing a total vision of the human race, society, and history.[21] Yet Ellul did not fully embrace Marx but embraced the demand for crafting a timely Christian voice in the world. Ellul recognized the sociological power of Marx's practical dialectic but used Marx as a starting point.[22] In contrast to Marx, Ellul sought to establish a more explicitly Christian system to meaningfully explain the perils of his political climate.

Disciplined Sociological Analysis

Just as Ellul exercised a disciplined approach to applying Marx's social commentary, the church must also learn the patient practices of listening well to the declared realities of the world proclaimed by the world.[23] All social declarations must be filtered through the Christian moral vision displayed in Jesus Christ.[24] Yet, without a deep understanding of the social realities of a given place and time, as well as a compassionate, charitable spirit

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[20] Jacques Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age: Jacques Ellul Speaks on His Life and Work*, ed. William H. Vanderburg, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Seabury, 1981), 5.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ellul, *Jesus and Marx*, 13–14.

[23] While Marx represents an important contributor to Ellul's sociological analysis, Ellul recognizes the impossibility of merely applying Marxism in a given social setting. He writes, "Even more importantly, by ignoring the conflict between a transcendent God and a materialist philosophy, Christians also fail to address a practical matter: until now, without exception, in every country where it has been applied, Marxism has given birth to the worst sort of dictatorships, to strictly totalitarian regimes (including China and Vietnam)." Ibid., 13.

[24] David Martin's exploration of the interrelated disciplines of sociology and theology provides a fascinating example of the necessity of all Christians, theologians and laypersons alike, to understand the sociological underpinnings of cultural realities. Because contemporary society prevents human beings from readily escaping the almost constant influence of media, government, and other societal structures, the Christian must listen to "the world" with godly ears rather than seek escape. See David Martin, "Sociology and Theology: With and Against the Grain of 'the World,'" *ImpRe* 18.2 (2015): 159–175.

toward cultural commentators, the community of faith may cultivate an unhealthy or even sinful relationship with the world out of social or political naiveté.[25]

Of all people, the Christian should ably and freely live with eyes opened wide to the state of the world, unafraid of the past, present, or future.[26] Further, the entire community of faith supplies a vital voice of enacted relationship addressing the larger human condition to combat the deceptive oppression Satan employs to distort reality.[27] The prophetic awareness afforded the Christian through union with Christ nourishes a deep sense of the actual conflicts in social order. The loving relationship with the world allows given human realities to act as the unique setting for specific Christian moral action.[28] As such, a willing or neglectful ignorance of social, political, and cultural

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[25] Ellul applies this thinking when exploring the morality of the world in *To Will and to Do*. What he describes is a Christian ethic not idealized or made absolute within any given setting but freed from man's moral alienation by the work of Christ. Christian ethics requires constant work in analyzing the biblical integrity of any given ethical instruction amidst particular social and political demands. He describes it this way, "We cannot go along with any glorification which would tend to make of morality more than it is, which is what nearly all do who live a completely worthy life or construct a satisfying ethical system. We cannot transpose into an ideal and an absolute morality that, in its wording as well as its practice and authority, is a real fact. Morality does not transcend man. It is of man." Jacques Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, trans. C. Edward Hopkin (Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1969), 112–113.

[26] Ellul points to cultural syncretism as a primary example of the church's dual failure to protect humanity and stand wholly on revelations. He explains, "Syncretism is a triumph of the prince of lies. In it neither the one side nor the other is true or credible. The unity at all costs that will supposedly lead to God is the ultimate subversion of revelation." Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 48.

[27] Ellul unpacks these notions when applied to politics and social settings in *The Political Illusion*. As well, Ellul uses this notion in his definitive attack on modern myth and the Christian responsibility to "desacralize" the idolatrous practices of social order in *The Subversion of Christianity* and *The New Demons*. See Jacques Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, trans. Konrad Kellen (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Jacques Ellul, *The New Demons*, trans. C. Edward Hopkin (New York: Seabury, 1975); Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity*, 52–68.

[28] The prophetic witness mentioned by Ellul here might closely parallel the tension between wisdom and foolishness, purity and impurity, tradition and rootedness, meekness and aggression, or veneration and derision. Much like Ellul's social ethics, Perillo's development of the "holy fool" emphasizes the cultural and social impact rather than the philosophical or ideological payoff. He states, "Holy folly questions the status quo without advocating a clear direction forward because it stresses the need for engagement, not conclusion…. The fool invites the person to question his or her fundamental commitments. These fundamental commitments are at the heart of the fool's activity, and fools help reveal that external actions are often just a sometimes weak sign of a person's commitment and attention." Jesse Perillo, "The Prophetic without Power and Disruption without Direction: The Witness of Holy Fools," *JSCE* 36.1 (2016): 150–151.

alternatives deprives the Christian social witness of the objective and tangible concepts held in the world.

Revelational Social Prescriptions

Rightly understanding the world assists the church in the "fierce and passionate destruction of myths, of intellectually outmoded doctrines" through a pursuit of objective reality rooted in the lived experiences of close, tangible relationships with other people.[29] By looking at present social, political, or cultural problems on their own terms, the Christian begins to move beyond the expressed truths to subvert the underlying realities of philosophy, ideology, or social structure standing against God's purposes.[30] Because the church roots itself in the unchanging truth of divine revelation, loving social practices of the church necessitate an honest grappling with the present state of human existence on its own terms in order to shape Christian social action in pursuit of God's glory.

Alongside the social critiques of capitalism and social instability of his day, Marx afforded Ellul the skills to critique the church as an institution while still maintaining a strong commitment to the church as a movement and community of faith. For Ellul, the sociological realities of the church stood in tension with the religious and spiritual dimensions of the church as a community of faith.[31] Specifically, Marx's emphasis on the contingent character of morality, that is, morality's inseparable connection with economic

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[29] Ellul describes it this way, "We must no longer think of 'men' in the abstract, but of my neighbor Mario. It is in the concrete life of this man, which I can easily know, that I see the real repercussions of the machine, of the press, of the political discourses and of the administration." Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 99.

[30] Ibid., 100.

[31] This is a remarkably astute application of Marxist thinking and an obvious instance where Ellul's dialectic thinking pays dividends. It goes without saying that dialectic thinking does not meaningfully advance a discussion in every circumstance but such an application is nigh an impossibility without Ellul's dialectic approach.

structures and class relationships, as well as its role in the interplay of social forces provided categories for understanding Ellul's own context and personal struggles.[32] Such an act represented a direct critique of the moral authority assumed by the institutional church and provided a helpful platform for intellectual and spiritual dialogue.[33]

Hauerwas and the Embodied Expressions of Christian Love

Alongside Ellul's emphasis on a dialectic worldview shaping a life of Christian love, Hauerwas looks to Christian practices of truthfulness and suffering as the embodied expressions of divine love in order to deepen the fundamental connection between Christian morality and the church's life lived out in the world. Throughout his moral theology, Hauerwas continues to emphasize the gospel's demands for a life of truthful and compassionate practices in active relationship with the sick, suffering, and marginalized.[34] In this way, Hauerwas not only states the necessity for a lived Christian virtue but also connects such living love to the liturgical realities of being present with those suffering as an expression of the gospel.

Truthfulness as Love

The power of Christian moral action flows from a deep connection with the person and character of God. Because of this divine foundation, the loving social presence demanded by the gospel requires particular qualities in the relationships developed within the church

[32] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 291.

[33] Ellul, *In Season Out of Season*, 217.

[34] Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Stanley Hauerwas, *God, Medicine, and Suffering*, repr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994); Stanley Hauerwas and Laura Yordy, "Captured in Time: Friendship and Aging," in *Growing Old in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 169–84; Stanley Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

and with the world. Hauerwas explains, "A Christian ethic is ultimately an ethic of truth or it is neither Christian nor an ethic substantive enough to deal with the human condition. Love can only be authentic when it faces honestly the conditions under which we must love in this existence. Love cannot be blind, but it must see the world as it is."[35] More importantly, the Christian's first social task is to help the world know it is the world.[36]

The Truth about Social Change

Furthermore, Hauerwas warns of the temptation to view such social renewal as the inevitable conclusion of the Christian life lived through virtuous action. He states, "For we cannot give charity if we think that charity is a means to renew the world—that is, if charity is justified by its effects. For we live in a world wherein charity almost always must choose between lesser evils."[37] Such a hierarchical approach to moral decisions diminishes the love of Christ revealed through his life, death, and resurrection and makes Christ merely a means of social change and not a full revelation of God's sovereign will. Loving action represents a selfless action without a desire for personal gain and enacting particular choices based on the potential for social effectiveness risks becoming selfish.

In order for the world to know itself, the church fully commits to taking the form of Christ in the world.[38] This involves neither rejection of the realities of human existence nor withdrawal from the world but studied understanding the nature of the conflict

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[35] Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 117.

[36] Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1988), 102.

[37] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 138.

[38] Ibid., 140.

between Christ and the world. The dilemma is not in deciding between various social alternatives but reliance on truth in the face of temptations to surrender to oppressive self-deception. Hauerwas states,

> The tension is not between realized and unrealized, but between truth and illusion. The church is that community that trusts the power of truth and charity and thus does not depend on any further power. The world is exactly that which knows not the truth and thus must support its illusions with the power of the sword.[39]

Loving the world means operating creatively within social orders by sustaining life, promoting virtue, and serving all for the sake of God's truth in the world. Instead of withdrawal or capitulation, the church actively serves the world as those under the power of truth.[40]

Such living truth works against every tendency toward self-justification in human behavior. Rather than seeking out truthful claims about reality, humanity seeks validating structures or ideals that support existing moral desires.[41] Hauerwas concludes, "For none of desire the truth about ourselves and we will do almost anything to avoid it. Our social orders are built on our illusions and fantasies that are all the more subtle because they have taken the appearance of truth by becoming convention."[42] The church embodies truthfulness as the essential foundation for unmasking the deceptiveness of the human heart.[43] In this way, the distinctions between Christian moral presence and broader

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[39] Ibid., 141.

[40] Ted Peters offers a very helpful critique of the power of self-deception in moral reasoning and the need for God's grace in moving the church toward loving social action. He writes, "Like a mirror, justification-by-faith reveals who we are and announces that God justifies us by grace. This means we do not have to self-justify. Liberated from self-justification, the Christian is free to love for the sake of the beloved." Ted Peters, "The Spirituality of Justification," *Di* 53.1 (2014): 58.

[41] Hauerwas explores this notion in great length through his examination of Albert Speer's *Inside the Third Reich*. Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 82–98.

[42] Ibid., 141.

[43] "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

cultural practices evidence necessary differences not simply in outcomes but in substance and orientation, that is, a fundamental difference in self-awareness about the world.

The Truth about the World

Unless the church serves the world with Christian distinction, the world has no means to know itself and the actual definitions of justice, love, fairness, and equality. The church practices an essential role in the world as a herald of God's declarations regarding created order. Hauerwas states, "The church, by insisting on nothing less than the community of charity, must force the world to face the truth of its own nature."[44] Nothing could be less loving than for the church to deny the realities of the world for the sake of political expedience, social acceptance, or cultural prominence. Hauerwas maintains, "The gospel is a political gospel. Christians are engaged in politics, but it is a politics of the kingdom that reveals the insufficiency of all politics based on coercion and falsehood and finds the true source of power and servant hood rather than dominion."[45] In fact, the gospel does not remove the harshness of living in a sinful, violent world but equips the Christian community to live virtuously in such a world.[46]

The church enacts the ways of God not as an expression of purely human understanding or entrenched social practices. Rather, the church seeks the truthful expression of God's love living among the world, practicing the revelation of Jesus in all of life. Hauerwas explains, "The question is not whether the church is a 'natural' institution, as it surely is, but how it shapes 'nature' in accordance with its fundamental

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[44] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 10.

[45] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer In Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 102.

[46] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 138.

convictions. 'Nature' provides the context for community but does not determine its character."[47] The power to shape such a community committed to Christ over all else flows from ongoing movement of God in and through his people.[48]

In efforts to enact divine love, the church cannot surrender to moralism or empty deism for the sake of culturally palatable or social pragmatic actions. Such surrender turns out to be an enemy of God's purposes for the church in the world. Hauerwas explains, "The credibility of Christians is hurt not by their failure of good will, but by their refusal to face the reality that even good will cannot act without hurting. The greatest enemy of the Christian life is not self-interest, but sentimentality."[49] The power of Christianity depends not on the persuasiveness of the arguments or in the depth of emotions but in the rugged determination to enact the truthful accounting of reality as defined, defended, and sustained in God himself.[50] Hauerwas simply states, "The important ethical question is not whether moral options are subjective or objective, but whether they are true or false."[51] Without such truthfulness, the church settles for simplistic solutions defined within the bonds of empty posturing.

The problem does not lie in sociology, politics, or other descriptive disciplines but with the church's inability to lovingly speak the truth into such disciplines for the life and health of the world. Hauerwas explains,

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[47] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 102.

[48] Hauerwas explains it this way: "The church therefore is a polity like any other, but it his also *unlike* any other in so far as it Is formed by people who have no reason to fear the truth. They are able to exist in the world without resorting to coercion to maintain their presence…. Our true home is the church itself, where we find those who, like us, have been formed by a savior who was necessarily always on the move." Ibid; emphasis his.

[49] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 119.

[50] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 140.

[51] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 60, fn. 25.

> Christians do, and are obligated to, have a concern about the societies in which they exist, but our object is not to make the world into the kingdom of truth. Rather, our first object must be to form the church as a society where truth can be spoken without distortion, where charity takes the form of truth and is thus saved from the sentimental ethic of kindness for which is so often mistaken.[52]

Defining moral action as divine love lived out in truthful recognition of God's design and authority demands fundamental commitment to understanding all of life as revealed by God. In this way, truthfulness only begins the path to embodied love. The community of faith must also live among the challenges of suffering and pain this world through the power of Christ's cross.

Love and Suffering

Loving God's world, the place and time ordained for particular and ongoing service to the world, must begin with truthfulness among believers and toward the world. Yet, a truthful love must also be totally willing to endure the consequences of such commitments as the embodied practices of life lived in light of the cross of Christ. Love means not only embracing truth but also experiencing suffering in a distinctly Christian way. Hauerwas explains,

> The church does not let the world set its agenda about what constitutes a "social ethic," but the church of peace and justice must set its own agenda. It does this first by having the patience amid the injustice and violence of this world to care for the widow, the poor, the orphan. Such care, from the world's perspective, they seem to contribute little to the cause of justice, yet it is our conviction that unless we take the time for such care neither we nor the world can know justice looks like.[53]

In the face of real pain and the suffering, the church offers a genuine way forward through the embodied presence of faithful practices demanded by God in Scripture.

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[52] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 141.
[53] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 100.

Two concepts developed by Hauerwas reveal the relationship between love and suffering in Christian moral action. First, Hauerwas points to the vital importance of the Eucharist in defining Christian love and shaping Christian practices in the face of human suffering. Second, loving the world sometimes means simply being present with the sufferer rather than acting to remove all forms of suffering.

Eucharistic Practices

The ongoing challenge of loving the world requires faithful commitment and attentiveness to the practices, habits, and resources available to the church. Specifically, Hauerwas addresses the witness of the Eucharist to immense love of Christ for his children. Through remembering and practicing the truths of the gospel, the community of faith develops the disciplines necessary to love in a sinful world.[54] Hauerwas states, "The sacrifice of the Son of God affirms that our existence is bounded by goodness we can trust; Calvary reveals that we, even the weakest among us, are valued in ways not dependent on our human purposes and strengths…. Such love is formed by a weakness status not of this world."[55] Through the ordinary means of grace faithfully practiced by the church, the Christian synchronizes belief and action to shape character.

The generosity of the Eucharist not only informs Christian sentiment but molds specific practices of social presence around the immense love of Christ. Indeed, the love necessary to fulfill God's strict demands for holiness, compassion, and patience arise from active relationship with God himself. Hauerwas explains, "The Christian's task to care for the weak is but an aspect of his call to love God. Serving the weak in the name of

[54] Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Robert Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 124.

[55] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 189.

man is not enough; God calls us to love and care fore the weak just as He has loved and cared for us."[56] God's love displayed in the gospel, practiced in the church, and displayed for the world reinforces the sacrificial character of love in the midst of suffering. When the church neglects the visible display of the gospel in the Eucharist, the rejects God's supplied resources for engaging in hospitable generosity with the stranger and the sufferer.[57]

Being Present in Suffering

While the Eucharist displays the gospel and allows the church to both receive and practice the sacrificial love revealed by Christ, loving presence also emphasizes the priority of being present with those in suffering. In short, loving amidst suffering does not always mean knowing what to *do* during a crisis but an ongoing committing to *be* with the sufferer. Suffering does not bring the church to a crisis of existence but into deeper worship, more intimate fellowship, and practical service in the world.[58] Furthermore, a commitment to being present with the sufferer relieves the crisis of knowing "what to do" when facing human suffering.

For example, Hauerwas points to the crisis of action presented by human desire for solutions and positive outcomes in medicine. As a result, medicine is reduced to a

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[56] Ibid., 190.

[57] Similarly to Hauerwas' emphasis on the Eucharistic roots of Christian understandings of suffering, Eugene Peterson highlights the necessity of Eucharistic mentality in the practices of hospitality. Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 201–222.

[58] Hauerwas points to the early church as an excellent example of living out the liturgical realities of the gospel. While embracing suffering, the church did question the validity of their faith, the coherence of revelation, or the nature of suffering. Christian communities addressed suffering as an integral part of life in a fallen world without conflating persecution with the realities of life in a fallen world. Hauerwas, *God, Medicine, and Suffering*, 84–85.

value-neutral practice emphasizing success or failure based upon particular outcomes.[59] In contrast, the Christian practice of medicine grows from a commitment to human presence in the midst of suffering enabled by the sustained imitation of God through genuine maturation in Christ-likeness.[60] Thus, Hauerwas concludes,

> Because of God's faithfulness we are supposed to be a people who have learned how to be faithful to one another by her willingness to be present, with all our vulnerabilities, to one another. For what does our God require of us other than our unfailing presence in the midst of the worlds sin and pain? Thus our willingness to be ill and to ask for help, as well as our willingness to be present with the ill is no special or extraordinary activity, but a form of the Christian obligation to be present to one another in and out of pain.[61]

The Christian's love for God supplies the impetus for embodied representation of such divine relationship acted out in patient presence with the suffering.

In fact, genuine love cannot be established without the unifying practices of the church practicing the boundaries and context for properly understanding suffering and pain. Apart from God's designs, human love often turns into harsh oppression.[62] Hauerwas points out, "Great immoralities are not the result of evil intentions, but a love gone crazy with its attempt to encompass all mankind within its purview."[63] For example, in a discussion of abortion, Hauerwas points out how an avoidance of suffering might creep in under pretense of seeking the best possible scenario and the well-being of both mother and child.[64]

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[59] Ibid., 97.

[60] Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence*, 74–82.

[61] Ibid., 80.

[62] Hauerwas warns of the great danger in mistaking philanthropy for charity. He states, "For charity, when it takes the form of philanthropy, plays in to the hands of the forces of injustice, as it only serves to make the injustice tolerable." Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 132.

[63] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 125.

[64] Ibid., 147–165.

Hauerwas' point remains significant as a pointed reminder of suffering's place in the life and death if Jesus. Seeking an ungodly avoidance of suffering or discomfort fundamentally alters and redefines essential components of the Christian gospel. Indeed, Hauerwas proposes the impossibility of learning particular truths *without* the pain of suffering. Hauerwas states, "I don't mean to suggest that we must pursue tragedy, but rather that the good and our being good often come only through suffering and anguish."[65] By reimaging the moral foundations for loving in the midst of suffering, Christian social ethics denies the primary good of individual satisfaction in the face of tragedy and pain.[66]

In light of the contrast between the human desire for comfort and a deeply Christian appreciation of suffering, Hauerwas also points out how much suffering draws out the selfish dispositions of not only the sufferer but also those called to be present with those suffering. Instead of looking to the simple yet profound significance of bearing with one another, the church seeks to unearth the deeper significance or hidden meanings of suffering. Such a search requires one to look past the suffering itself to some moralistic appreciation of a painful experience or growth outside the suffering. Additionally, the language of "want" and "happiness" often take an inward turn rather than satisfying the communal good of loving sacrifice in the face of pain and suffering. Instead of driving the individual inward, divine love moves attention away from the self and outward toward another.

[65] Ibid., 162.
[66] Ibid., 163.

Recognizing this external trajectory, Hauerwas points out that attempts to relieve all suffering are simply another form of trying to establish power without understanding our contingent relationship to God and one another.[67] While caring for created order and other human beings remains crucial to Christian witness, Hauerwas emphasizes that there are worse things than death. Understanding our creatureliness supplies a necessary perspective in order to rightly embody love as the church. Hauerwas explains, "As God's creatures, our chief end is not to survive, but to be capable of serving one another and in so doing so to serve as signs of the kingdom of God. In comparison to this service, survival is a secondary commitment."[68] All of creation exists for God's glory and the most loving actions from and by the church exemplify this deep truth.

However, the connection between relational presence and God's glory should not astonish the Christian. Christian virtue finds its greatest expression in the ordinariness of virtue. In contrast to selfish desires for ostentatious flair, Christian love often reveals itself in the being quietly present with the desperate, sick, and suffering.[69] Out of a love framed by God's greater purposes revealed in the perfect love of Christ, the church displays the dependence necessary for profound witness in the world. Hauerwas states, "For the demand of Christian love can be radical exactly because it frees the self from defensiveness; we are freed from the necessity of creating and sustaining the significance

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[67] Ibid., 191.

[68] Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 192.

[69] Another great example of this can be found in Hauerwas' connection between practicing medicine and prayer. He explains, "But no matter how powerful that craft becomes, cannot in principal rule out the necessity of prayer. For prayer is not a supplement to the insufficiency of our medical knowledge and practice; nor is it some divine insurance policy that our medical skills will work; rather, our prayer is the means that we have to make God present whether our medical skill is successful or not. So understood, the issue is not whether medical care and prayers are antithetical, but how medical care can ever be sustained without the necessity of continued prayer." Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence*, 81.

of our own lives."[70] Everyday actions may be the most significant signs of the power of Christ, the one who brings in the kingdom of God into daily existence.[71]

The suffering presence of the church creates a richer backdrop for worshipful living in the place and time God ordains. As Hauerwas puts it, "Because we believe we worship a resurrected Lord, we can take the risk of love."[72] Christian sacrifice amidst suffering confirms the church's commitment to live as Christ lived in the world. Loving presence in the world seeks to more richly and fully display Christ in the world.

The Loving Practice of Living Divine Commands

Ellul and Hauerwas develop insightful commentary on the type of loving relationship initiated by and sustained in Jesus Christ. However, two particular points within their thinking warrant slight adaptation. Ellul's use of dialectics provides an insightful critique of social settings but would benefit from a stronger recognition of divine love revealed in the normative qualities of Scripture. As well, Hauerwas rightly notes truth's essential place in Christian morality yet his contribution benefits from a more explicit recognition of the positive place God's law plays in Christian virtue.

Dialectics and the Positive Nature of Truth

Ellul's dialectic worldview shapes the entirety of his writing and thinking, offering an insightful system for integrating seemingly irreconcilable systems.[73] While his efforts in

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[70] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 194.

[71] Hauerwas, *In Good Company*, 196.

[72] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 90.

[73] Daniel Clendenin and Andrew Goddard offer foundational studies of Ellul's dialectics with particular note of his theological method and larger philosophical framework. Daniel B. Clendenin, *Theological Method in Jacques Ellul* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); Andrew Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World: The Life and Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2002).

utilizing a wide array of insights into an all-inclusive system, Ellul's dialectical method suffers from the inherent difficulty of making any positive statements. In this way, Ellul's critique of social oppression, poverty, and the material affects of sin challenge the church for answers yet without affording enough alternatives. Thus, Ellul retains a provocative voice without supplying sufficient alternatives.

Ellul's critiques and dialectic appreciation for a wide array of social, economic, and political voices supply an important existential and situational voice but would benefit from a more balance appreciation of the normative realities of Scripture. Frame's triperspectivalism supplies a helpful adaptation and alternative to Ellul's strict dialectic.[74] In this way, Christian ethics integrates more than two negative poles but positive and accessible knowledge of a given situation, knowledge of a norm, and knowledge of the self integrated into a unified moral vision.[75]

Ellul's approach does offer significant insight and begins down a path integrating lived realities and divine commands, he may force irreconcilable poles of thought into unrealistic or dangerous relationships. Frame's system integrating the situational, normative, and existential perspective respects supplies an improved model, supplying moral reflection shaped under God's authority. Ellul simply asks too much of dialectics.

Being Truthful with God's Law

If Ellul's dialectic strains to adequately account for all aspects of moral realities, Hauerwas' emphasis on truth in Christian love requires slight adaptation as well.

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[74] Much like Ellul, Frame also seeks to balance the liberal and conservative extremes into a more balanced, livable, and robust Christian ethic. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 6.

[75] Ibid., 34–35.

Hauerwas rightly recognizes the fundamental place of truth in Christian love, seeing the power of Christian morality resting on the possibility of seeing the world for what it is. Nevertheless, his emphasis on lived truth risks misunderstanding the deep connection Christian truth shares with the declared norms revealed in Scripture.

Hauerwas' emphasis on living truth assists in drawing attention to the biblical demand to love not in word or talk but in deed and in truth.[76] However, Hauerwas' vision of virtuous living and loving action benefits from a stronger recognition of love's connection with the love commands of Scripture.[77] While God envisions and reveals his people as a loving community, he also connects such living love with the express commands to *do* particular things (obey God) as an expression of *being* a particular way (loving). As Hauerwas rightly notes, *being* cannot be separated from *doing*. In the same way, *doing* cannot be separated from *being*. Seeking virtue within community without a definitive expression or confession of normative expectations and biblical criteria robs the community of the divine resources revealed for faith and practice.[78]

Furthermore, enacting divine love may in fact initiate helpful and effective social change. Hauerwas' suspicion of social effectiveness provides a helpful warning but his warning ought not be the only means of analysis. Indeed, the church must check the sinful motives of the heart. However, God's people should not be robbed of the

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[76] "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:16–18).

[77] For a helpful review of the love commands in Scripture, see Thomas W. Ogletree, "Love, Love Command," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

[78] McQuilkin and Copan offer a helpful development of the objects and conflicts of love recognizing a healthy love of God, self, others, and things must grow out of God's great commandments. Otherwise, such loves deteriorate into idolatrous obsession. Robertson McQuilkin and Paul Copan, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics: Walking in the Way of Wisdom*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: IVP Academic, 2014), 43–59.

opportunity for meaningful and culturally affirmed practices of love merely out of fear of cultural syncretism.

Rather than overemphasizing the command to love or the practiced realties of love, the church must seek a balanced relationship between the two. Love and all other virtues grow from the Spirit's active presence and the community's committed obedience to God's revealed will. Without God's revelation, the community loses sight of true love found only in God himself. Without the lived practices of love, the church deceives itself and the world by misrepresenting God's revealed will.

Action: Ellul and Hauerwas on Embodied Love

Building upon the Christian's loving relationship with the world explained by Ellul and Hauerwas, the church moves to live God's will in practiced, determined expressions of love. Ellul emphasizes a biblical appreciation for sin and the work of God's Holy Spirit, broadening man's limited perspective on the ongoing struggle of life in a fallen world. Divine revelation opens up a richer appreciation of God's revealed will now and for the future. Hauerwas asserts that Christian morality is based on the all-encompassing narrative of revelation rather than rigid principles or legislated policies.[79] Instead, the people of God enact particular practices representing the love of God embodied in the world.[80]

While Ellul and Hauerwas' emphasis on practicing the love of God offers much to moral discourse, once again, their development neglects the role of biblical principles

[79] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 101.

[80] Hauerwas explains, "Just as a musician cannot be a great musician if he or she becomes such in order to make money, so the person of character cannot become virtuous in order to secure power over others." Ibid., 265.

and divine commands in shaping, defining, and supporting Christian virtue. Principles and policies play an important part in enacting Christian morality but cannot be totally representative of Christian social action. Because Christians are commanded to love, the moral obligations of the church must retain a particular emphasis on faithfully embodying and expressing the character of God in a fractured world.[81]

Ellul's Dialectical Social Ethic

Ellul provided a Christian adaptation of Marxian social analysis as a means of enacting the will of God in the world.[82] Living in loving relationship with the world demands a life of action in the world. The cooperative connection between Marxism and Ellul's Christian theology allowed for a compelling social vision of loving, dialectic relationship.[83]

Marxism, as a sociological, philosophical, and political system, provided a critical starting point for Ellul's sociological analysis.[84] While Marx offered an intellectual awakening to such issues, Ellul departs from Marx in important areas as direct consequence of his Christian faith and shapes a social vision less on Marxist thinking and

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[81] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 138.

[82] That is to say, Barth played an important role in Ellul adapting two points of tension within his thinking, Marxism and Christianity. Ellul provides a helpful and concise recounting of Barth's influence over his thinking in Jacques Ellul, "Karl Barth and Us," *Sojo* (1978): 22–24.

[83] Ellul explains, "Barth was a signpost showing how one could get beyond the stage of pure and simple contradiction between Christian faith and Karl Marx." Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age*, 14. More specifically, Barth convinced Ellul of Scriptures foundational and authoritative position over human inquiry. As Ellul puts it, "Barth taught us that the Bible is not a collection of answers to our questions; it is the place where God asks us the question we have to answer." Ellul, "Karl Barth and Us," 24. Without rehearsing the normative importance of Scripture discussed on pages 66– 0 of this current study, Ellul's point here is how Barth influenced a marked reassertion of the divinity and holy authority of Scripture. Such authority gleaned from Barth played a part in Ellul bringing Marx's insufficiencies under the judgment of God's Word.

[84] While Ellul praises Marx's clarity of thought and criticisms of deeply entrenched systems, he also criticizes how often Marx's personal prejudices and assumptions go unchallenged. Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age*, 27.

more on biblical categories of sin and spiritual renewal.[85]Yet, Ellul moved far beyond Marx, allowing his Christian thinking to correct and amend his sociological analysis through God's revelation.[86]

The dialectic tension between Ellul's theology and Marxist methodology plays an important part in shaping Ellul's emphasis on enacted ethics shaped by a loving social participation. By appropriating aspects of Marxist sociological analysis alongside Christian theology, Ellul crafted a loving awareness of the world and the Christian necessity to embody the gospel in the world. Three particular points evidence the dialectic relationship between Ellul's Christian faith and sociological methodology.

First, Marx increased Ellul's awareness of the human struggle against social structures but only divine revelation offered clarity on the cause and remedy for social ills. Ellul recognizes how Marxist methodology rightly points out the need for justice and equity in social ordering, to acknowledge the significance of poverty, to demand a unity in thought and action, and to critique consumerist materialism.[87] Second, Ellul recognized the internal and external realities of sin and allowed his Christian faith to shape a compassionate recognition of the world's needs. Third, Ellul recognized the limitations of man in social projects and the power of the Holy Spirit works to unmask prejudice,

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[85] Ellul continually distinguished between Marxism and following Marxist thought. Ellul adapts Marxist thought, a kind of practical dialectic, but distances himself from Marxism as a movement. Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age*, 14–17.

[86] Specifically, Barth's dialectical inclusion and revelational ethic enabled Ellul's adaptation of Marxian philosophy through his Christian faith. Full-length studies of Barth's dialectics have varied in quality and significance but Terry Cross' more recent work provides a great survey of the general connections in Barth's dialectic. As well, Bruce McCormack's study provides some perspective on when, how, and to what extent Barth utilized dialectical theology. See Terry L. Cross, *Dialectic in Karl Barth's Doctrine of God* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[87] Ellul, *Jesus and Marx*, 5–7.

assumptions, and sin. In this way, God acts upon the world and in the world for his people to lovingly live as part of the world.

Divine Revelation and Man's Struggle

Ellul saw Marx only as a rational or cognitive formulation for what he had come to experience from life in concrete reality and not a full-bodied philosophy on the whole human existence.[88] Indeed, Ellul clearly saw Marx's shortcomings and rather than accepting the materialistic conclusions of Marx's sociological critiques, Ellul's Christian commitments afford him a critical methodology to integrate and critique Marx from a Christian perspective. In the end, Ellul channeled Marx's sociological stream of thought through the authority of Christian revelation without jettisoning the valuable insights found within Marxism.[89] Marx provides a prophetic voice and insightful social commentary where Christianity and biblical revelation offers a superior explanation for the total plight of created order. Contrary to any attempt to work away from ideological or philosophical tensions, Ellul emphasized the ongoing need for the Christian to embrace and embody the moral tensions of living in the world.[90]

Living the Christian Faith

Regardless of disagreements, Marx still provided a thoroughgoing sociological partner to

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[88] Ibid., 7.

[89] Indeed, such a full-scale departure from Marx here might be Ellul's most important and may serve as the starting point for the other separations to be discussed in sequence here.

[90] Darrell Fasching also points to this concept in Ellul's ethics and praises Ellul's emphatic rejection of man's attempts to flatten moral discussion in the search for uniformity. Fasching states, "Finding contradiction painful, human beings desperately seek unity. Because they need a coherent world they construct ideologies, philosophies, and theologies in an attempt to restore unity where there is none. In the midst of this the Christian is asked to go entirely against his or her nature and live in insecurity, in risk, in contradiction of the life-style (sic) which seeks security." Darrell J. Fasching, *The Thought of Jacques Ellul: A Systematic Exposition* (Toronto: Edwin Mellen, 1981), 134.

Ellul's theology by further emphasizing the practical realities of living the Christian faith rather than merely feeling spiritual contentment. Ellul states the problem Marxism addresses quite simply, "Christians 'feel' their faith rather than live it…. Thus Christianity has utterly betrayed the very essence of revelation by transforming it into religious spirituality."[91] Marx influenced Ellul to reiterate the importance of Christian faith in action rather than merely a series of theological commitments devoid of moral impetus.

Marx introduced social categories that God's revelation opened Ellul to the deeper realities behind larger social, political, and cultural concerns. Ellul explains,

> Marx was for me an intellectual awakening. Caught as I was in this incomprehensible world of poverty, he gave me some ideas that enabled me to explain. Nothing more. And I can say that the existential void I found in Marx was filled by Christianity. I know that for a Marxist point of view this could be labeled a bourgeois concern, but it in fact reveals the extreme weakness and poverty of Marxism.[92]

The Bible contained unavoidable truths that Ellul found nowhere else especially in the existentially bankrupt Marxism.[93] For Ellul, the sheer scope of the Christian revelation in Jesus Christ filled any gaps in Marxism.[94]

Marx never provides positive statements regarding the meaning of life and human existence and Ellul discovered these in the biblical record. Even more, the reconciliatory presence of Jesus Christ opened up through divine love grants the revolutionary power

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[91] Ibid., 8.
[92] Ellul, *In Season Out of Season*, 217.
[93] Ellul, *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity*, 41.
[94] Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age*, 7.

merely promised by Marx.[95] The revolutionary Christianity developed by Ellul places the Christian in a new situation in the world. That is, the corrective revolution promised by Marx never arrived and will never arrive.[96]

Nevertheless, Ellul points out how the church embodies a revolutionary life judging the present age by promised truths that do not yet exist but are guaranteed to be made present by God himself, bringing the future into the present with "explosive force."[97] Ellul concludes, "It (the revolutionary life) means believing that future events are more important and more true than present events; it means understanding the present in light of the future, dominating it by the future, in the same way as the historian dominates the past."[98] The Christian's revolutionary presence creates history based upon the situation created by God for his children rather than some long-awaited ideological societal reordering. While Marx introduced Ellul to the significance of revolution in human history, Ellul recognized only Jesus Christ offers the genuine revolution drawing mankind out of despair and toward genuine dignity. The revolutionary power of Christianity opened a path away from the perpetual despair of human existence found in Marx and toward the loving hope found in Jesus Christ.

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[95] Ellul sees Christianity as fundamentally revolutionary when the church embodies the fullest representation of the gospel. He states, "The situation of the Christian is revolutionary for other than intellectual or self-chosen reasons: it is revolutionary of necessity, and it cannot be otherwise so far as Christ is acting in his church." Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 32.

[96] Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in *Karl Marx: A Reader*, ed. Jon Elster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 185.

[97] Ellul puts it this way: "This, and then, is the revolutionary situation: to be revolutionary is to judge the world by its present state, by actual facts, in the name of the truth which does not yet exist (but which is coming) – and it is to do so because we believe this truth be more genuine and more real and the reality which surrounds us." Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 38.

[98] Ibid., 38–39.

From Fate to Faith

Ellul also recognized the positive contribution of Marx's explanation of poverty, social oppression, and economic means into a methodological approach to social issues, only Ellul's Christian faith provided a way out of the fated materialism offered by Marx.[99] As Ellul puts it, "What separates man from God is not fate; it is sin. Sin is not fate even if it does bring man into a world of necessities and determinations."[100] As an impassible barrier to fellowship with God, sin determines the limits of man's endeavors yet Christ has reestablished relationship with God.

The inevitability of materialistic philosophy gives way to the freeing work of Christ.[101] Marx could never provide an explanation for the deeper issues behind the perceived bondage of mankind to social or political systems.[102] Marx could not see beyond his critique capitalism and mistook the manifest social ills of his day for the underlying spiritual turmoil of human existence.[103]

In the face of this Marxian fatalism, Ellul points to the freedom of the Christian as the alternative source of possible moral action. Christian freedom opens the individual away from the repeating oppression of history and toward the eschatological destiny found in union with Christ. The break from history's inevitability opens the Christian to

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[99] For a helpful introduction to Marxist philosophy of history see Terence Ball's essay in *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* and chapter 6 of Peter Singer's *Marx: A Very Short Introduction*. Peter Singer, *Marx: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 39–46; Terence Ball, "History: Critique and Irony," in *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 124–42.

[100] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 79.

[101] Ibid., 84–85.

[102] Ellul, *Jesus and Marx*, 15.

[103] A good illustration of Ellul's deep commitment and thoughtful development of a biblical understanding of poverty and social ills can be found in *On Being Rich and Poor*. Jacques Ellul, *On Being Rich and Poor*, ed. Willem H. Vanderburg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

embody the lordship of Christ through love, word, and freedom in the world.[104] In love, the Christian participates with the world as an act of sacrificial service. In word, the Christian proclaims the sovereign acts of God revealed in Jesus Christ to draw men back to God. In freedom, the Christian enacts a way of life dependent on God's sovereign choice for the world without resorting to binding necessity of sin.[105] Through such faithful practices, the Christian embodies a specific manner of life represented in every aspect of life, through conduct, lifestyle, and choices.

Furthermore, Christian loves the world by displaying the end of actual life, a true perspective on human existence, and the secondary aims for actions themselves.[106] Ellul concludes, " [A]ll this presupposes that action is no longer master, and that what we need to do is to *live*, and to refuse to except the methods of action proposed by the world."[107] Representative of God's revealed will communicated in the Scriptures, the Christian manifests Christ's loving rule in specific, tangible, and relevant actions in the world.[108] The dynamic power of Christian social action flows from the love of God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, for faithful representations of God's will in the world.

Sin and Human Suffering

Alongside a Christian understanding of revelation and man's limits, Ellul also sought a deeper explanation of sin's role in human suffering. Marxist philosophy began a step

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[104] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 85.

[105] Ibid., 236.

[106] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 74–75.

[107] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 75; emphasis his.

[108] Ellul connects this embodied lordship with God's election of his people for a particular service. The freeing power of election is not tied to any sociological norm or political standard but God's sovereign declaration. Ellul explains it this way: "The freedom of the word, which calls forth the freedom of the Christian, is the act of choosing a specific man or areas which is not designated as an order of creation but which is designated and circumscribed by the word itself." Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 86.

toward explaining the human situation yet failed to adequately address this situation in its entirety. Ellul's dialectical social ethic grants space for beginning with Marx and moving toward the fuller vision granted through revelation, providing moral revolution and a proper understanding of human history. Alongside this total vision for human existence, Ellul's Christian theology emphasizing man's sinful, fallen state supplanted Marx's shallow, materialistic explanation for human suffering. That is, Ellul identified the social and structural problems in human society with the far-reaching effects of sin creating a fuller appreciation of sin's role in the entire human condition.[109]

Ellul's application of dialectics complements his Marxian analysis of the institutional church by providing the underlying theological categories lacking in Marxist critique. Ellul integrates a deeply Christian appreciation of sin and the structural affects of sin to appreciate the material consequences of life in a fallen world. As Ellul puts it, "Man is the slave of sin and ultimately of nothing else…. It affects all aspects of man."[110] Yet, Ellul avoids Marx's incorrect solutions placing full blame on material concerns rather than anthropological realities.

While Marx provides a helpful recognition of the total separation of man from God and the far-reaching affects of this reality in human existence, Marx cannot hope to

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[109] While his views on structural sin and political futility are also connected to his rejection of natural revelation, Ellul speaks quite strongly regarding political corruption and does so for the sake of jarring the Christian into thinking about the topic at hand. "Therefore, all political or economic works are sinful. The work cannot be better than its artisan. Sinful people can accomplish only sinful work, since this work is not done only by practical reason." Jacques Ellul, "Christian Pessimism," in *Sources and Trajectories: Eight Early Articles by Jacques Ellul That Set the Stage*, trans. Marva J. Dawn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 98.

[110] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 47–48.

propose a remedy.[111] Dialectic tensions in Ellul's social ethic allow Marx's structural critiques without ignoring man's spiritual conditions. By maintaining this relationship, Ellul keeps the good and jettisons the bad gleaned from Marx to enhance his discussions of wealth, violence, and politics.

Marx provides some methodology to understand the human condition but biblical revelation supplies greater clarity on the Christian responsibility for loving action in a sinful world. Ellul explains, "Living like Jesus, then, means first of all bringing forgiveness of sin to people in their anguish, uneasiness, exasperation, guilt, self-accusation, despair, withdrawal, and loneliness. We must proclaim this message to all the poor, the excluded, the misjudged."[112] The problems of mankind cannot be fully addressed through narrow discussions of economics, history, or social oppression but only from a deep appreciation of humanity's break from God in Eden.[113]

Sin corrupts every human social or political enterprise because humanity plays such an intimate role in developing and maintaining these structures.[114] Unlike hard sciences such as mathematics, politics and economics are not purely technical therefore they cannot escape discussions of good and evil.[115] For Ellul, when human beings claim a separation, they have in fact already chosen evil.[116] There will be some success in human

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[111] Ellul points out Marx's remedy to man's alienation could be resolved from purely the social or material dimension (revolution) but Ellul noted such a proposition is doomed for failure. While material factors do alienate, the internal realities of sin and separation from God prove to be definitive categories for appreciating the scope and remedy for man's condition. On this point, Marx cannot hope to provide a workable solution and Ellul sees this clearly. Ibid., 48.

[112] Ellul, *Jesus and Marx*, 70.

[113] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 41–44.

[114] Ellul, "Christian Pessimism," 98.

[115] Ellul states, "They (politics and economics) deal with human beings. They deal with the labor of people, their relationships, their appetites, there rivalries, and thus there can be no independence between politics or economics, on the one hand, and the choice of good and evil, on the other." Ibid.

[116] As Ellul puts it: "Sin is exclusively separation from God, hence separation from life, from truth, from the good." Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 29.

endeavors but believers should remain skeptical of the extent of such widespread social change. He concludes, "This does not mean that people do not derive certain advantages from their enterprises. Human beings succeed. But at the same time, at the same instant, the consequences of sin unfold alongside the successes, by the achievement of the same work."[117] Ellul's deep appreciation for the pervasive sinfulness of mankind stands as a distinct improvement upon the structural critiques of Marx as Ellul sought to allow his Christian faith to determine the parameters of his social analysis.[118]

The Holy Spirit and Human Assumptions

One concluding observation warrants attention in Ellul's dialectical social ethic. That is, while Ellul praises Marx's clarity of thought and criticisms of deeply entrenched systems, he also criticizes how often Marx's personal prejudices and assumptions go unchallenged.[119] Ellul maintains an affinity for Marxist methodology without needing to affirm Marxist ideology.[120] In similar fashion, establishing a loving Christian ethic means openness to letting God's address unhinge or alter sincerely held beliefs.[121] By the illuminating and comforting power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian's thought, action, and

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[117] Ellul, "Christian Pessimism," 98.

[118] Arthur Holmes provides a helpful and even-handed treatment of Ellul's views on public morality and natural law in Ellul see Arthur F. Holmes, "A Philosophical Critique of Ellul on Natural Law," in *Jacques Ellul: Interpretive Essays* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 229–250.

[119] Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age*, 27.

[120] Ellul explains that he broke from "the kind of Marxism that claims to be the aim of and the key to everything. On the other hand, I totally agree with a Marxism that offers a method of interpretation. I also agree with the Marxism that provides some opportunity for political action. All the while, I recognize the dangers of Marxism that were already present in Marx's writing. Marxism as a sociological study of capitalism does not imply any belief. Belief comes into play, first, when Marxism takes on a messianic, revolutionary dimension… and second when it is considered a science in every domain. This belief is always dangerous. I can no longer truly believe that Marxism represents the ultimate in science, the ultimate in truth. In these areas, I would say that, on the contrary, when Marxism becomes dogmatic it is actually a lie." Patrick Troude-Chastenet, *Jacques Ellul on Religion, Technology, and Politics*, trans. Joan Mendès France (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 60–61.

[121] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 96–97.

belief opens away from idealistic assumptions and toward God's faithful self-revelation.[122]

Divine Revelation and Human Presuppositions

Following Ellul's example, the Christian must pay careful attention to social, political, and cultural developments in order to speak truth in love for the life of the world. Ellul explains, "Thus the Christian is called to question unceasingly all that man calls progress, discovery, facts, established results, reality, etc. He can never be satisfied with all this human labor, and in consequence he is always claiming that it should be transcended, or replaced by something else."[123] Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christian social witness pushes back against false assumptions in the world. Christian love does not flow from cultural appropriation of existing moral norms but from active relationship with the world.[124] If the church does not embody such strong, revolutionary action, then in some way or another the people of God has been unfaithful to God's purposes for his children in the world.[125]

Specifically for Ellul, Marx's foundational assumptions go unchallenged and reflect significant ideological and theological departures by Ellul. Ellul writes, "First of all, the prejudice of progress: he believed that every historical stage was in advance of the preceding stage. Secondly, the prejudice of work: he believed that work is what essentially characterizes the human race."[126] Ellul's writing sought to explain the dangers

[122] Ibid., 134–135.
[123] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 37.
[124] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 37.
[125] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 37.
[126] Ellul, *Perspectives on Our Age*, 27.

of technique as a damaging historical and social force. In contrast to Ellul, Marxist perceptions of history saw such mechanization and efficiency as a naturally productive force for change. Ellul's theological commitment to Christian freedom redefines his anthropology in biblical terms rather than materialistic reductionism.[127]

Divine revelation illuminated by the power of the Holy Spirit remains God's appointed means for fulfilling the loving and faithful social action demanded of the church.[128] In the face of human self-deception and natural limitations, moral possibilities for loving the world in life and practice depends fully upon the free action of God's Spirit in and through his children.[129] Loving social action cannot be separated from the individual participating in relationship with the world through the action. Ellul explains, "There are not Christian works, except insofar as the Holy Spirit pushes man to make decisions and to fulfill holiness."[130] It is through such divine means, the Christian lives freely in relationship with a frustrated and fallen world.

Love as Active Obedience

Living in such free relationship with the world opens the Christian to the risks daily trust in God in all of life. Often, loving social action grows out of a lifestyle of enacted virtue rather than the "clear and explicit" voice of the Holy Spirit.[131] Building on the active obedience of the early church narrated in Acts, Ellul notes how much the Spirit of God guides ongoing actions rather than instigating action from a standstill. Ellul explains,

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[127] Ellul engages this discussion in part 1 of *The Ethics of Freedom*. See Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 21–100.

[128] Ibid., 67.

[129] Ibid., 68.

[130] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 219.

[131] Ibid., 257.

"The attitude which consists in saying that one acts *solely* at the instigation of the Holy Spirit (and this means a clear and conscious instigation, of which we have explicit knowledge) is a dangerous attitude, for it can easily lead to doing nothing, on the pretext that the Holy Spirit has not spoken."[132] Even more, such moral and spiritual assumptions might lead to Christian social action shaped by personal desire, void of the necessary moral accountability available in the community of faith.[133]

Further, the Christian exercises the gifts of the Spirit among the community for the mutual edification and building of the church. Ellul points out that the Christian ought not fear the uncertainties of moral action. Instead, the church embraces the exercises of faith required to put God's revelation into action with a good conscience that has been shaped, trained, and disciplined in the community of faith by the Holy Spirit.[134]

Loving the world necessitates living in the world through God's designed means, allowing His Holy Spirit to shape, refine, and redirect our current activity toward proclaiming the faithful testimonies of God.[135] Christian social action refined by the Holy Spirit and under the sovereign power of God displays the loving intention of God's purposes for the world. In the midst of such relationship, a strong juxtaposition forms between the way of life opened in the church and closed in the world.

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[132] Ibid., 257–258; emphasis his.

[133] Ibid., 258.

[134] Ibid., 258–259.

[135] The unity of Christian action reflects the unity in the commandments of Scripture whose coherence reveals the sovereign and faithful designs revealed by God. Ellul explains, "We are saying that, in so far as the Christian life is expressed in decisions, it cannot be schematized nor codified. Hence ethics is an impossibility. But the other face of the same phenomenon has to be considered. These decisions, ultimately, are the work of God. They are not incoherent. The commandment of God is not a sequence of isolated, absurd revelations, for he who issues the command is the one, eternal God. Each prescription is linked with the other prescriptions because all or part of the divine order and cannot be separated. Every prescription is bound to the others by hidden relationship which is the design of God." Ibid., 259.

The Freedom of Christian Love

Living freely in the world stands in direct contrast to the loss of meaning experienced in the world, man's perpetual frustration at an existence separated from God.[136] Yet, it is difficult because the Christian struggles to fully grasp the depths of new life granted by God. Life in Christ makes all things become new, passing the Christian from death to life. Ellul's explains this beautifully,

> What hinders us is that we can only conceive this action and the rational form of mechanical means. We no longer conceive it in the form which is constantly suggested in the Scriptures: the corn that *grows*, the leaven at work within the bread, the light that banishes the darkness… yeah it is this kind of action which we can really have, because this is how the Holy Spirit works…. In this civilization which has lost the meaning of life, the most useful thing a Christian can do is to *live* – and life, understood from the point of view of faith, has an extraordinary explosive force. We are not aware of it, because we only believe in "efficiency," and life it's not efficient. But this life alone converts delusions of the modern world by showing everyone the utter powerlessness of the mechanistic view.[137]

As the Spirit of God moves in the Christian's life, words, and habits, the church regains the active dependence and awareness of God's empowering presence.[138] The promises of Jesus in John 14 regain ethical significance when the church reenacts a life of active reliance, prayerful submission, and loving presence in the world.

While Marxism allowed Ellul to explain the corruption and calcification of human institutions as they were, he exemplified a measured and thoughtful integration of particular Marxian notions without a wholesale rejection or acceptance. Ellul's

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[136] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 76.

[137] Ibid., 77; emphasis his.

[138] What Ellul seeks to emphasize is the spiritual nature of Christian moral action in contrast to highly structured, theoretical moral explorations. As has been stated previously, the dynamic, active practices of the church depend totally on the presence of God and not on man's rational faculties. In fact, Ellul notes that "faith, the guidance of the Spirit, and revelation of Jesus Christ are not rational phenomena and they do not lead us to purely rational behavior." Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 430.

sociological analysis and Christian faith forced an embodied love engaged in concrete practices enriched by the church but lived out in the world. Ellul explains, "The Lord reigns over as seething world. It is in this situation that we have to live out our freedom."[139] By emphasizing moral action embodied through living life as it is, Christian ethics becomes a firm yet contextualized discussion, empowered by the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ.

Even more, Ellul avoided a common mistake that many Christians make in totally avoiding the tension between Marx and Christ by simply "choosing Christ" rather than wrestling with the social, political, and structural critique Marx affords. In essence, Marx offered a timely warning and system of analysis but failed in offering a workable alternative. Ellul's Christian faith encouraged a dialectic relationship between the church and the world that welcomed the sociological analysis of Marx without absorbing the ideological pitfalls of Marxism.

The depths of Christian love shape the dynamic relationship between the church and the world without unnecessary rejection or uncritical acceptance. Without such careful study and without actually suffering poverty or oppression, "choosing Christ" is often cheap virtue.[140] In this way, Ellul wrestled with pertinent and pressing social thinking yet carefully critiqued each notion through Christian theology to give a particularly helpful example of how the Christian might live in loving relationship with the world.

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[139] Ibid., 363.

[140] This distinction within Christian political theology, especially of Western bent, is noted in a very helpful discussion by Thomas Hanks. See Thomas D. Hanks, "The Original 'Liberation Theologian,'" *CroCur* 35.1 (1985): 17–32.

Love shapes and informs the virtuous life as a means of guarding virtue against becoming forms of the demonic.[141] As Ellul sought to adapt and correct his sociological setting, so Hauerwas points to the power of the Christian narrative to supplant self-deception and offer the church a loving, truthful way of life. Divine love enacted in and through Christian social ethics retains a distinct shape, formed by the truthfulness of God. After all, the gospel drives the church to pursue loving social action as the fullest display of Christ's likeness revealed in and driven by the power of the gospel.

While genuine love begins with a commitment to truth and grows in a community that embraces suffering, Christian love requires continually cultivating and reinforcing the practiced presence of Jesus. After all, it is through God's Son that the church first comes to know what real love is and how real love lives.[142] Hauerwas simply states, "God does not exist to make love real, but love is real because God exists."[143] Because of the essential connection between loving social action and the love in God's person, the demand to pursue loving social action means fully displaying the work of Christ granted by the power of the gospel. Hauerwas writes,

> The command to love that the Christian has an interest in cannot be separated from he who commands it. Jesus does not come to us as a preacher whose message is that we ought to love, but that we might know that the righteousness of God's kingdom can be found in his person. Jesus comes not to tell us to love one another, but to establish the condition that makes love possible. Thus, his

[141] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 265.

[142] "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 John 3:16).

[143] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 115.

> command to love is not an abstract and general policy that can be separated from the story that this is God working for our redemption.[144]

The Christian love of the place and time where God has planted his people grows out of the Incarnation. Living as Jesus lived intimates active self-denial indicative of how deeply the person and work of Christ has affected the church. A loving presence in a particular place echoes the ways of Jesus revealed in the gospel.[145]

Divine Love in Discipled Imitation

Following and practicing way of Jesus does not indicate simply an intellectual or moral commitment. Instead, the Christian seeks to fully embody the depths of divine love revealed through a unified imitation of the person and work of Jesus.[146] Hauerwas explains,

> It (Christlikeness) involves seeing in his cross the summary of his whole life. Thus to be like Jesus is to join him in the journey through which we are trained to be a people capable of claiming citizenship in God's kingdom of nonviolent love—a love that would overcome the powers of this world, not through coercion and force, but through the power of this one man's death.[147]

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[144] Ibid. While Hauerwas' point reconnects the person of Christ with the teachings of Christ, his binary approach to this love command comes to the reader in typically Hauerwasian fashion. Indeed, Jesus not only showed us love but also commanded his children to be known by the same kind of love. Jesus speaks in the John's gospel, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34 ESV). Yet, Hauerwas' point remains. Christian love does not exist as an empty idea, separated from from the living practice of love revealed by the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[145] It should be noted the following development of love relies upon Hauerwas' distinctly Christological reading of Scripture, emphasizing a peaceable, non-violent reading. Following an approach similar to Walter Wink and John Howard Yoder, Hauerwas notes the definitive hermeneutical difference the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ makes in reading Scripture. For a further development of Wink and Yoder's approach to Scripture, Christology, and peace see Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992); John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994). As well, see pages 87–90 in this study for further analysis of Hauerwas' development of peace in Christian virtue.

[146] Hauerwas offers a very helpful analysis of imitation, Christian ethics, and the messianic fulfillment of Jesus. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 76–81.

[147] Ibid., 76.

The enacted love of God revealed by Jesus explores the complex realties of human existence based upon the sovereign promises of God rather than the perceived possibilities of human manipulation.[148] In this way, loving God and loving the world requires a disciplined practice of a peaceful and merciful social witness amidst a demanding world marked by social unrest and suspicion.[149]

The peace of God totally forms the foundational commitments of the church around the crucified Savior. "The church must be the clear manifestation of a people who have learned to be at peace with themselves, one another, the stranger, and of course, most of all, God."[150] In doing so, the church withdraws from any attempts to establish ultimate meaning, purpose, and practice apart from God. Hauerwas explains, "Unless we learn to relinquish our presumption that we can ensure the significance of our lives, we are not capable of the peace of God's kingdom."[151] After all, the sinful lust for power, position, and possessions drives a wedge into the layers of social relationships whereas the gospel calls for a sweeping commitment to sacrificial love.[152]

Divine Love and Living at Peace

The mercy of God displayed by the church undermines the coercive search for power and control. The church extends forgiveness to the world as the representatives of the life and work of Jesus Christ and the specific form of God's rule and reign revealed by Christ.

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[148] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 84–85.

[149] Much like Hauerwas, Glen Stassen and Mark Burrows challenge the church to enact the gospel in measured and tangible practices of peace. See Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992); Mark S. Burrows, "The Vocation of a Just Peace Church in a Globalized World," *Prism* 22.2 (2008): 65–79.

[150] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 97.

[151] Ibid., 86.

[152] Ibid., 86–87.

Hauerwas states, "Through Jesus' life and teachings we see how the church came to understand that God's kingship and power consists not in coercion but in God's willingness to forgive and have mercy on us."[153] Even more, Jesus' example of forgiveness and mercy solidifies the church's obligatory conciliatory place in society. The gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed by the church demands a radical political strategy committed to forgiveness and mercy rather than illusory control established by violence.[154]

Hauerwas rightly points out just how much the Christian notions of peace and mercy go against the common cultural notions of authority and strength. In a world where authority often grows from money or charisma, while power or persuasion present convincing displays of strength, the church practices a sacrificial love revealed by Jesus Christ as descriptive for the church.[155] This radical love does not negate the social witness of the world but infuses social action with eternal perspective.[156] After all, Hauerwas expounds, "Peace will come only through the worship of the one God chooses to rule the world through the power of love, which the world can only perceive as weakness."[157] Regardless of perceived success, the way of divine love revealed through Jesus Christ provides the only lasting, meaningful peace. Hauerwas concludes,

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[153] Ibid., 85.

[154] Ibid., 100–102. While Hauerwas' point is helpful and provocative, violence and peace are not the singular features of a robust Christian ethic, much less, definitive poles of moral reflection. See pages 88–90 of this study for a fuller analysis of Hauerwas' use of peace and violence in his theological ethics.

[155] "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

[156] Such an eternal perspective calls to mind the eschatological hope emphasized in chapter 3. Hauerwas rightly recognizes the essential connection between moral action and eschatology. Once again, moral action reveals the community's perspective on what God is doing today and what God will do tomorrow.

[157] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 79.

> It is through such love that Christians learn that they are to serve as he served. Such service is not an end in itself, but reflects the Kingdom into which Christians have been drawn. This means that Christian insist on service which may appear ineffective to the world. For the service that Christians are called upon to provide does not have as its aim to make the world better, but to demonstrate that Jesus has made possible a new world, a new social order.[158]

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the church gains a divine precedent for the virtuous living necessary for godly social presence. New life in Christ creates a love not as an impossible ideal but a genuine alternative to the ways of violence and coercion practiced in the world.[159]

Significantly, the church bears responsibility to neither add to nor take away from such revelation by enacting coercive or violent methodologies to further divine purposes. When the church enacts the ways of division and force known in the world, the people of God replace a way of life enacting holy love with idolatrous alternatives. Rather than defending the glory of God, "our violence is correlative to the falseness of the objects we worship, and the more false they are, the greater our stake in maintaining loyalty to them and protecting them through coercion."[160] Hauerwas writes, "Only the one true God can take the risk of ruling by relying entirely on the power of humility and love."[161] By abandoning the violence and coercion of the world, the church seeks to not simply display God's love to the world but to gain greater understanding of the God of love who loved the enemy and sinner to the point of death on a Roman cross.[162]

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[158] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 49.

[159] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 87.

[160] Ibid., 79.

[161] Ibid.

[162] "And Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'" (Mark 10:42-45).

In such an emphasis, Hauerwas provides a helpful reminder that genuine Christian love rejects illusions of total safety and domestic comfort. The Christian moral vision practices an incarnational discipleship committed to embodying the love of God in life, faith, and practice.[163] Mankind longs for eternal safety, peace, and prosperity, often creating moral systems compatible with these desires.[164]

Yet, the church relies upon the firm testimony of Jesus Christ for purpose. Much like the stringing of leaves for shabby coverings in Eden, mankind attempts to construct means for hiding the hopeless desperation haunting each of us. And just like Adam and Eve, our attempts end in failure unless God intervenes. Without a divine means of uncovering our moral nakedness, ethical behavior becomes a lost cause. God must act and indeed does act through the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. Robed in this alien righteousness, the community of saints forges out a loving reality, welcoming life as it is not as we might like it to be.[165]

On Shaping Christian Virtue

While Ellul and Hauerwas' emphasis on practicing the love of God offers much to moral discourse, once again, their development neglects the role of biblical principles and divine commands in shaping, defining, and supporting Christian virtue. Certainly, principles and moral policies cannot be totally representative of Christian social actions. Yet, principles and commands play an important part in enacting Christian morality.

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[163] A similar argument is developed by the diaspora discipleship of Patricia A. Schoelles and the incarnational discipleship of Glen Stassen. See Patricia A Schoelles, "Discipleship and Social Ethics: Defining Boundaries for the Church of the Diaspora," *ASCE* (1989): 187–205; Glen Harold Stassen, "By Their Fruits You Will Know Them: Incarnational Discipleship Stands the Test," *BapTh* 4.2 (2012): 1–14.

[164] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 126.

[165] For a fuller development of this concept, see pages 150–160 of this project for a discussion of virtue and Christian realism.

Without balancing command and practice, virtue risks becoming a communal discipline based upon general consent rather than biblical revelation.[166] Instead of an ethic discerning love only from the lived practices of the church, Christian morality draws identity from the love commands in Scripture in complementing relationship with the loving example of Jesus Christ. Ellul and Hauerwas' emphasis on lived virtue presents a challenging and stinging critique of the social ineptitude of some Christians but also falls short where neglecting the normative, enduring contours of Scripture.

To fully benefit from their critiques, the church must return to a deeper appreciation for the unity of living and reading Christian doctrine under the supreme norm for church practice, the Scriptures.[167] The church must work to corresponding speech and action to the word of God submitting to how Scripture is used by God to address, edify, and confront the reader.[168] Thus, the dramatic formation of virtue necessarily engages the commands of God as well as the living example of Jesus Christ and the saints. The community of faith submits to God's revealed will, prayerfully enacting God's will in the world.

Conclusion: A Theology of Participation

Christian social ethics ought to reflect a deep love for place as an extension of a godly love of all aspects of God's good creation. Otherwise, a shallow appreciation for physical rootedness in place, time, and community undermines the moral power of Christian

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[166] See the final chapter of this study and pages 231–240 for a lengthier discussion of the formation and cultivation of Christian virtue.

[167] Such a unity might best be described by Kevin J. Vanhoozer's canonical-linguistic approach to Scripture. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

[168] Ibid., 16–17.

witness. Even more, only through loving the physical and participating in the life of the world may the deep realities of life be more fully respected. Hauerwas explains, "To recognize the significance of the physical means that we must constantly fight against our tendency to see the particular as the manifestation of the universal, for the universal comes only in the form of the concrete."[169] In short, Christians constantly find themselves participating in diverse and complex communities. In response to this reality, Christian love enables a culture of being present where God wills and living rightly as God reveals in Scripture, a practiced theology.

Instead of withdrawal or separation, the church represents a hard-working, creative community insistent on public relationships undergirded by peaceful love.[170] Hauerwas explains,

> What is required for Christians is not withdrawal but a sense of selective service and the ability to set priorities. This means that at times and in some circumstances Christians will find it impossible to participate in government, in aspects of the economy, or in the educational system. Yet such determinations can only be made by developing the skills of discrimination fostered in and through the church.[171]

The spiritually disciplined community develops the methods, practices, and paradigms for living faithfully even in the midst of the complexities of globalization.[172] The social testimony of the virtuous community demands a deep commitment to the ongoing value of all aspects of human existence and created order.

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[169] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 151.

[170] In fact, Hauerwas rightly asserts that genuine politics begins with peaceful conversations. A propensity violent conflict resolution undermines the fundamental principles of not only democratic societies but all hopes genuine political conversation. Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 15.

[171] Ibid., 15–16.

[172] Peter Penner offers a very helpful addition to this discussion and also surveys particular practices of ethics, missions, and contextualization that are insightful. See Peter Penner, "Hermeneutics, Biblical Ethics and Christian Witness," *JEBapS* 4.1 (2003): 20–26.

Ellul's emphasis on forging a dialectic relationship between the church and the world portrays committed Christian social action as loving dialogue between morality and social need. Ellul's dialectic relationship between the church and the world balances the necessity of holiness from the world alongside the demand to rightly participate in the world. Living out this relationship reveals the necessary tensions of loving the world. When viewed through Ellul's socio-political commitments, Christian social ethics demands a unique yet charitable connectivity enacted by the community of faith in the world. Christian love enables a way of being in the world that grows from meaningful relationship with the world rather than separation from the world.

For Hauerwas, the church enacts the love of God through a personal commitment to truthful living. In particular, being present with those who are suffering offers a practiced approach to living out the gospel. After all, morality and social ethics reveals the realities of living in union with Christ demands a life defined by radical peace and sacrificial mercy. When the world demands power, strength, and control, the church embodies the peaceful commitment to fulfill the gospel demands to love our neighbor and forgive our enemies. In this way, the gospel shapes private and public areas of life.

The practice of genuine love shapes every aspect of the church's place in society. The moral imperatives of Christian love are not uncertain or indeterminate but formative to the larger challenges of social orders. As Hauerwas aptly states, "[T]he good of society ought to be determined not by what is possible, but by what men should be."[173] Indeed, the pursuit of virtue engages the breadth of human existence and turns out to be an extremely social endeavor. The Christian loves the place and time where God's

[173] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 165.

providence has ordained the church by living in personal, apologetic, and temporary relationship with the world.

Taken together, Ellul and Hauerwas remind the church that Christian social ethics are thwarted before they begin without an effort to practice a rich theology of place. A right theology of partnership emphasizes the purposeful preservation of the world through the practices of the Christian faith. A loving Christian ethic supplies important sociological foundations for bearing spiritual fruit through a relational, apologetic, and temporary presence in society.

Instead of completely disregarding the lived truth of human existence, the Christian personifies a relationship with the world empowered by divine relationship with God. Virtues such as justice, love, and freedom are not merely human inventions, crafted from some general sense of the divine. Rather, such moral pursuits represent decisions of God impossible for man to avoid or fabricate and only possible through the Christ Jesus.[174] Even more, genuinely achieving moral good in the world necessitates a restored relationship with God. Ellul explains,

> It is too simple to say that 'as a Christian I should obey God rather than man,' That is true of course, but it cannot be done in strict justice. If in obeying God I disobey the state (which God ordains that I obey) I disassociate myself from my neighbor (whom God ordains that I love). In judging the unbelievers I cast them far from me (and I shall no longer be able to witness in their presence). I am not so surely 'on the right path' as all that.[175]

As the Christian practices intentional relationship with the world, the church enacts the

[174] Ellul, *To Will and To Do*, 108.
[175] Ibid., 108–109.

love of Christ in the world. By maintaining ties with a particular place and time, the church gains a platform for proclaiming Jesus Christ in word and deed.[176]

Ellul affirms this as the fitting expression of life lived in full relationship with God through Jesus Christ.[177] The Christian cannot hope to express the deep love of the Triune God under the bonds of slavish obedience but must daily enact the loving bonds of union with Christ for the life of the world.[178] Three specific relational dimensions, preservation, purpose, and practice, assist in shaping a sound theology of participation.

Preservation: Personal Relationship

By building personal relationships in the church and in the world, the community of faith preserves the world as an act of worship to God. Since God has revealed the true nature of man as well as the divine remedy for sin, the Christian can actively live out of, in, and toward reality. The Christian is under no illusions regarding man's possibilities.[179] Rather, the Christian works to discover the social conditions in which "the person may live and develop in accordance with God's order."[180] After all, the Christian develops moral possibilities amidst a particular situation sovereignly ordained by God. Ellul concludes, "Thus the Christian must work, in order that the will of God may be incarnated in actual institutions and organisms."[181] Christian social action becomes a matter of delusion instead of love when the church denies the social, political, and moral

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[176] Ibid., 110.

[177] Jacques Ellul, *On Freedom, Love, and Power*, ed. Willem H. Vanderburg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 253.

[178] For an examination of the power of union with Christ to motivate social action see pages 234–235 of this study.

[179] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 35.

[180] Ibid., 36.

[181] Ibid.

realities of the particular situation of the world where the church must live out divine love.[182]

Living as Salt, Light, and Sheep

The biblical imagery for the church's existence in relationship with the world offers a helpful picture of the church's social agenda. The church participates in the world as salt, light, and sheep. As the salt of the earth, the Christian acts as the visible sign of the new covenant made with Jesus Christ.[183] The Christian must readily be that sign of the covenant in word and deed through which the world is actively preserved for the glory of God.[184] After all, "The Christian must participate in the preservation of the world; he must work effectively for it."[185] The discipline of living as the salt of the world, the perseverance to live as the light in the world, and the peace to live as sheep in the world offers a powerful moral vision of how the people of God enact divine love.

As the light of the world, the church eliminates darkness by revealing the criterion for truth. Ellul explains, "Strictly speaking, apart from this light we cannot know what a good work is, nor in what goodness consists."[186] Through life and practice, the church reveals the actual condition of the world by witnessing to God's salvation.

The church lives as sheep among wolves for the sake of participating in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Ellul concludes, "In the world everyone wants to be a wolf, and no one is called to play the part of a sheep…. Christians must daily accept the

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[182] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 375.
[183] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 3.
[184] Ibid., 4.
[185] Ibid., 15.
[186] Ibid., 4.

domination of other people, and offer the daily sacrifice of our lives, which is united with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ."[187] Considering mankind's desire for domination and control, the church must rest in God alone rather than the false security of worldly power. In this way, the community shapes a socially significant moral vision established through biblically shaped faith, hope, and love.

The Social Significance of the Gospel

The church works to bring the love of God to bear by living in personal relationship to evidence the social significance of the gospel. Ellul writes,

> Therefore, the universal responsibility of the Church and of Christians toward the world is vigorously affirmed. This responsibility is not only of preaching the Gospel, but also that of having a hand in the forward progress of society, in its preservation, in the expression of the Gospel in terms of justice, liberty and equality. There too, there is no separation between the preaching of the Gospel as such and the actualizing of it in political structures.[188]

Jesus Christ brings more than a message to repeat, philosophy to defend, or an ideology to disseminate.[189] Ellul's path to recognizing the social effects of sin provided a context for continued recognition of the ongoing need to critically engage the domineering realities of human existence. He writes, "'Love your enemies' does not mean to me that we must love the demons and powers in revolt, but rather people."[190] The specificity of Christian love secures the privileges of personal relationships formed by Christian virtue

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[187] Ibid., 4–5.

[188] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 102.

[189] Ellul puts it this way. "For the world ought to be preserved by God's methods, not by man's technical work (which can, however, be used by God and form part of his activity, on condition that men bring the whole sphere of technics under his judgment and his control). Further, the world ought to be preserved in a certain *order*, willed by God, and not according to the plan that men make of this order (a plan, however, which *may* be accepted by God on condition that men are genuinely concerned for truth and justice)."Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 16.

[190] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 37.

rather than social convenience. Christ opens the Christian to the social possibilities of sacrificial love enacted through genuine intimacy with fellow men.

Hauerwas also emphasizes the personal connections necessitated upon a deep appreciation of the communal commitments cultivated by the gospel. Without such a people, the sick, suffering, and dying cannot help but be cordoned off away from the world. Hauerwas concludes, "For unless there is a body of people who have learned skills of presents, the world of the ill cannot help but become a separate world both for the ill and/or those who care for them."[191] The practiced personal relationships necessary for being meaningfully present with the suffering demand a full practice of physical, mental, and emotional solidarity.[192]

The gospel cultivates a particular intimacy in the body of Christ gathered from all peoples, tribes, and nations. Because the church receives God's mercy, God's redemptive love can be lived out with the world.[193] The people of God actively seeking healing relationship through personal connections forged out of Christian love. Ellul explains, "Reconciliation does not mean reuniting with those who have the same opinions we have. It means loving and bearing with those who are opposed. Now that can only be done first

[191] Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence*, 81.

[192] Hauerwas conveys a story about friendship, suicide, and quiet presence to provide a very helpful commentary on the Christian need to live in relationship with those who bear the brunt of intense suffering. Ibid., 63–65.

[193] "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 John 3:16).

in the Church."[194] The fractured connections of human relationships are healed by the hope and love of God spreads in the hearts of his people.[195]

Beyond the community of faith, the personal relationships forged by divine love also foster a generous spirit committed to the good of all mankind. Because of the internal commitments of community of faith, the church meets people as they are, where they are, with all we are. Ellul explains, "Now she (the church) cannot be for people except where they are, and that is in the world. So she must be in the world and walking along with it, but not for the purpose of building the world as it builds and wants to build itself."[196] Solidarity with the world grows from knowing the needs of our neighbor and working to see God's will in the world as the church lovingly practices the gospel.

By practicing the gospel, Christian love restores social energy for building out from intimate relationships into larger social projects. The loving presence of Christ working in and through his people enlivens the intimacy among mankind lost in Eden. Greater still, part of what affirms the reliability of Christian witness hinges on the gospel's power to see even a stranger or enemy as our neighbor.[197] Indeed, the love exemplified in Scripture seeks to heal the inherent dissonance in human interactions. Ellul states,

> Every act of love shown in scripture involves causing a person to *come out* of his status of anonymity, derived from collectivity, the crowd, etc. in order, through a purely personal relationship, to transform him into a person known and

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[194] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 191.

[195] "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:3–5).

[196] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 39.

[197] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 143.

> distinguished by his name. Love, biblically, is never turned into something for media, nor is it collectivized, abstract or general.[198]

Thus, biblical love generates a level of nearness in thought, action, and relationship that sees through the idealism of grandiose endeavors to end social ills such as poverty, abortion, or gun violence.[199]

Instead of a hypocritical love seeking degrees of separation from issues, love seeks personal relationships with the oppressed and participation in their dilemmas in the anticipation of bringing God's will to bear on lived human experience.[200] Ellul explains, "Now scripture never asks us to bear the world's suffering. It is enough to bear that of one's neighbor."[201] The church does not need to remove all human suffering, an impossible task. Instead, love of neighbor declared and portrayed by Jesus Christ emphasizes the importance of living in meaningful relationship with those near us in an effort to exemplify the redemptive realities of the gospel.[202]

The loving relationships shaped by the gospel shape a unique way of life that opens the church to open participation in the world. Divine love opens the Christian to freely use without owning, claiming, or dominating.[203] Ellul concludes, "Love is to

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[198] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 68.

[199] In particular, Hauerwas uses a deep respect for the physical world and the particulars of human existence in a robust critique of abortion. Much like Pope John Paul II's *Euangelium Vitae*, Hauerwas insists uterine life does not determine the significance of every other aspect of life but rather one's notions of life, existence, and morality determine the significance of uterine life. John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life: Evangelium Vitae* (New York: Pauline, 1995). In essence, abortion serves as the genuine indicator of one's idea of life itself. Hauerwas aptly states, "The hard question put to those who regard the fetus as tissue is not the factual one, but rather what view of life have they accepted by doing so." Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 152.

[200] Ellul explains this connection as a difference between "copartners" and "neighbors" as evidenced in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Specifically, through personal relationship, the Samaritan transforms a partnership out of the realm of public duty and back into the realm of neighbor love indicative of the gospel. Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 68.

[201] Ibid., 70.

[202] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 138.

[203] Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 313.

replace the thirst to gain power over others…. Thus the relation of love properly expresses free being by a radical rejection of having. Love never finds expression in ownership, only in reciprocity."[204] When personal relationships cultivated by the love displayed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the church fulfills God's purposes for bringing life, hope, and peace into a world damaged by the fall. Yet beyond the regenerative qualities of personal relationships with the world, the faithful community also shows love to the world by actively telling the truth about God, the world, and reality.

Purpose: Apologetic Disposition

The love of God poured out on his people must be opened to the world through human communities built on trust, community, and close relationship. Loving God's world requires an ethic of relationship where personal contact remains a valuable pursuit. As well, the Christian is called to proclaim through life and practice the often uncomfortable realties of God's revelation for a given place and time.[205] The Christian's witness echoes the prophet practices exemplified in Scripture. Ellul explains, "[T]he prophet is not one who confines himself to foretelling with more or less precision an event more or less distant; he is one who already lives it, and already makes it actual and present in his own environment."[206] The church's apologetic relationship with the world cannot be

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[204] Ibid.

[205] It is important to note that personal relationship in the previous section intentionally precedes the apologetic declarations of the current discussion. Without preexisting relational connections, the church undermines the social presence of prophetic witness or righteous exhortation. The church embodies the wisdom of Proverbs 27:6: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." Personal, meaningful relationships establish a context for "tough love" and the faithful wounding so often required in human existence.

[206] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 38.

cultivated from a spirit of hatred or enmity but out of the thankful zeal of a people redeemed by God's grace.

Love and Divine Judgment

The church participates with the world to declare the truth of God's judgment of those separated from him. Christian presence does not include a wholesale affirmation of the world's projects but a careful, incarnational affirmation of the gospel. Ellul explains,

> To be present to the world does not mean being present on behalf of the world, but on behalf of the people who live in it (John 17:20). To attribute value to the world is to deny the incarnation. If God loved the world, it is because the world was not lovable and good. If God reconciled the world to himself, it is because the world was in a state of rebellion and rejection. But this loved and reconciled world is still the world. It is not yet the Kingdom. The works of the world remain works of darkness, but darkness into which a light has come, which does not validate or justify the darkness.[207]

Instead of validation or surrender, the church commits to lovingly declaring the truth of God's revelation in every area of human life. After all, love is the content of truth and truth leads to love.[208] Thus, love is rescued from sentimentality or weakness grown from emotion. In its place, genuine love grows out of a full response to the overwhelming revelation of God's love displayed in the gospel.[209]

The unity of Christian love across sociological or cultural shifts remains as a statement of God's enduring revelation in Jesus Christ. A change in situation does not modify or negate God's will.[210] A societal shift away from established political, economic, or cultural situations cannot undermine God's loving purpose for the world.

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[207] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 38.

[208] Ellul expands on this notion by emphasizing "love-truth" or "love as it is exclusively revealed by God in Jesus Christ." Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, 170.

[209] Ibid., 171.

[210] Ibid., 72.

Instead, social shifts encourage the church to actively embody God's will in the world across diverse social and cultural landscapes.

The Scriptures themselves are examples of God's willingness to navigate different personal cases and sociological situations in order to fully display his love in particular settings. Greater still, Scripture centers on the singular mystery of Christ's sacrificial life and death enacted through unconditional love. Rather than negating any aspect of God's revealed will, Jesus' work fulfills the law and the prophets. God's commandments are not set aside; they are actualized. Ellul states, "Situation does not replace norm. It allows its incarnation."[211] Under the power of divine love revealed in Jesus Christ, the church enacts the way of God in the human social situation, a situation in desperate need for God's presence.

The Christian Community as a Living Apologetic

The apologetic relationship between the church and the world demands a particular and necessary form of life from the people of God. Only the church is capable of calling the world's presumptions into question as those who are "not of this world," giving voice to divine realities freely and decisively.[212] Further, living in relationship with the world compels the church to live and speak out of a competence, balancing knowledge of the human experience as well as clarity on divine judgments.[213] Ellul explains, "The whole Bible tells us that these people in the world are enslaved by the world. They belong to it. They are the slaves of political, economic and intellectual forces. The Church is there to

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[211] Ibid., 73.
[212] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 188.
[213] Ibid., 154–155.

proclaim into bring them freedom."[214] The church represents the "Wholly Other" in opposition to the world's rebellion and serves a vital role in peacefully and loving proclaiming this truth to the world.[215]

Too often, the church surrenders to dominant social trends of society without practicing the wisdom in understanding the trends, patterns, and movements of history.[216] As a result, Christians resort to infighting between "conservatives" and "progressives," all the while neglecting to practices the Christian faith in and among the world. Ellul offers a rather bleak outlook on such a compromised church when he writes,

> All of this demonstrates that Christians are utterly unable to express revelation in a way that is both specific and adequate for the social reality in which they live. They either repeat timeless formulas (which they take to be eternal), or else they initiate a pseudo-rereading of the Bible: in reality a method of harmonizing biblical content with the dominant ideology. In this way Christians constitute an important contributing sociopolitical force on the side of the tendency which is about to dominate. As a result, they obtain a small place in the new social order.[217]

Instead of false optimism or ungodly isolation, spiritual vitality drives social action because divine love lives creatively, dynamically, and hopefully under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.[218] By speaking and living truth, the church's apologetic presence in the world grows into a fuller recognition of God's sovereign design for the world.[219] Fully trusting in God radically affects the nature of Christian ethics.

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[214] Ibid., 39.
[215] Ibid., 40.
[216] Ellul, *Jesus and Marx*, 13.
[217] Ibid., 14.
[218] Ellul, *False Presence of the Kingdom*, 189.
[219] Positively, Ellul points out the tendency for Christians to presume timeless or objective reading of both Scripture and reality that often validates a given cultural circumstance (e.g. political structure, economic system, social norm, etc.). To his point, knowing and living the gospel demands of Jesus affords a particular means of understanding, critiquing, and embracing a given context for living for God's glory. Through the gospel, the church gains definitive insight on living in the world but not of the world. Ellul, *Jesus and Marx*, 12–14.

By living in God's truth, social presence, political action, and moral decision grows from the abiding commitment to living in God's presence rather than frantically acting out in God's world.[220] Hauerwas points to Luke 10 as an example of the close connection between alleviating social needs and abiding in God's presence.[221] The Samaritan's attention to the stranger's needs builds from Mary's attentive inactivity at Jesus' feet. The Samaritan did not seek a wider social voice to address the unsafe route between Jerusalem to Jericho or critique the moral inaction of the previous passersby. Rather, the Samaritan evidenced genuine love directly alleviating the present desperate condition of a man right in front of him, his neighbor. The unique disposition of Christian love appears ineffective to the world but turns out to be the fundamental character of those people who are able to pray as instructed by Jesus in Luke 11.[222]

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[220] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 138–139.

[221] "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.' But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back." Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' And Jesus said to him, 'You go, and do likewise.' Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chose the good portion, which will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:25–42).

[222] "He said to them, 'When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation"'" (Luke 11:2–4).

Out of the personal relationship crafted through loving, apologetic dispositions in the church, Christian moral action recognizes the temporary nature of social action. That is, the gauge for success or failure in social ethics cannot be false measures of pragmatism or calcified commitments to culturally accepted principles successful in a given place and time. Rather, the church constantly renews the application of gospel realities amidst particular social needs. Hauerwas explains, "Love is the recognition that our ultimate destiny does not lie in the attempt to discover a realm beyond sensible reality; it lies in the acceptance of the world's repeatable particularity."[223] God's love secures a vibrant way of life open to the possibilities of freedom in Christ. Even when social setting changes, the lived truth of the gospel sustained in a community knowing and living the gospel provides the essential context for practicing virtue in the world.

Against Moral Pragmatism

In fact, confusing Christian love with human estimations of effectiveness and pragmatism creates a dangerous environment for crafting moral action. Hauerwas states, "By linking charity with effectiveness, we turn Christ's command to care for the neighbor into a general admonition of care, but what is important is *how* Christ taught us to care for the neighbor. For we must care as he cared and by the world's standard Christ was ineffective."[224] While the church cannot practice a naïve or clumsy approach to social

[223] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 38. Hauerwas is not encouraging an indiscriminate or situational morality but rather emphasizing the sufficiency and possibility of enacting the revelation of God in the present day and age. Christian love does not need to look outside of reality for the definition of love but more deeply into the person and work of Jesus Christ for defining, restraining, and expanding loving social action.

[224] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 133; emphasis his.

presence, the loving quality of the Christian life serves as an enduring quality of life shaping timely practices of faithful presence. Hauerwas concludes, "When charity is tied to the ethics of effectiveness, it leads us to the illusion that survival is an interesting value for Christians. We thus fail to accomplish our primary task as Christians, namely, to confront those that would secure the good through violence with the truth of the cross."[225] As a result, the Christian creates a false dilemma when forcing ethical reflection into particular paradigms that move away form the spiritual foundations of dynamic Christian love. Loving social action makes God's story of redemption, love, and faithfulness the center of life.[226]

Rather than calcified commitments to particular social practices, the Christian lives out the spiritual renewal established and maintained through dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. Ultimately, there is no such thing as "Christian principles" but only the person of Christ, who is the principle of everything.[227] The temporary expressions of Christian ethics force the church away from a codified ethic in favor of incarnated practices.[228] In this way, Christian ethics represents the dialogical connection between the

[225] Ibid., 134.

[226] Hauerwas puts it this way. "[T]he Christian's task is nothing other than to make the story we find in Israel and Christ our story. We do not know how God intends to use such obedience, we simply have confidence he will use it even if it does not appear effective in the world itself.… For the form of the life of Christ is the form of how God chooses to deal with the world and how he chooses for us to deal with the world." Ibid., 137.

[227] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 40.

[228] Ellul's description seems to oversimplify the process and benefits from a broader appreciation of the normative realities of Scripture and commands given by Jesus in the New Testament. Yet, Ellul seeks to revive the church's moral energy to apply divine revelation to a given setting by attacking the tendency to codify a particular application of Scripture into timeless moral principle. It is not that ethics or biblical truth cannot be known only that the church must exercise extreme caution in cooping human interpretation with divine command. Sadly, at this point, Ellul seems to rob the church of the necessary authority and possibility to read and apply the Bible.

love of Christ residing in his people and the faithful church living out the gospel in the midst of varied social settings.

As a result, the Christian life does not arise out of a particular logical or philosophical cause nor can the Christian's love of the world be reduced to a particular social agenda for a particular time. The morality of the church remains rooted in the liturgy of the church. Thus, Ellul concludes, "The Christian may belong to the Right or to the Left, he may be a Liberal or a Socialist, according to the times in which he lives, and according as the position of the one or the other seems to him more in harmony with the will of God at the particular time."[229] Rather than an enduring stream of social or cultural identities, the Christian life embodies a perpetual remembrance of divine redemption and anticipation of Christ's return. Such expectation carves Christian existence from the contours of divine love, totally reliant on the person of God for moral prerogative. In this way, the Christian cannot confirm to the age but learn what God loves and embody his love in the world.[230]

Moral Action and God's Revealed Will

However, in order to learn what God loves, the Christian must remain fully committed to the revealed will of God as an enduring source of moral foundations. Ellul explains, "There is a Revelation, at a given moment in time, from which Christians can derive a moral code in phase with the period in which they live, in which they live their faith."[231] Time's passing does not erode the social power of the gospel but provides new

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[229] Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, 41.
[230] Ellul, *On Freedom, Love, and Power*, 253.
[231] Ellul, *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity*, 27.

opportunities to live the faithful love of God. The search for justice and peace necessitates a thick practice of God's love as the means for shaping the particular forms such justice and peace ought to take in a particular time and place.[232]

Even more, the love of God challenges the church toward refreshed representations of living out redemption in the world. God's love not only informs the church regarding aspects of human experience, but also displays what ought to count for love in human behavior.[233] Furthermore, God repeatedly calls the church out of the internal preservation and outward toward renewed interest in the fluctuating needs of the world. Hauerwas explains, "Love is any relationship through which we are called from our own self-involvement to appreciate the self-reality that transcends us."[234] Moral initiative does not rise from the ultimate creativity of human ingenuity but out of the immeasurable depths of God's revealed love in the life and work of Jesus Christ. The church's daily practices of love actively pursue the realized presence of the cross of Christ in daily life, a social action renewed out of the riches of Jesus Christ.

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[232] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 142.
[233] Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 29.
[234] Ibid., 39.

CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Living in the world for the glory of God requires a specific, virtuous community dependent on faith, hope, and love for social action. Ellul and Hauerwas offer a distinct and helpful moral vision for seeing the connection between right belief and right action. This final chapter seeks to survey the primary insights and challenges in Ellul and Hauerwas, offer a vision for cultivating the theological virtues complemented by Ellul and Hauerwas' initial contributions, and also provide a few areas warranting further research.

Summary of Project Insights and Challenges

In chapter 2, Ellul and Hauerwas rightly point out the power of God's faithfulness and the significance of faithful community in shaping Christian moral witness. Taken alongside nuanced approaches to soteriology and hermeneutics, Ellul and Hauerwas' shared emphasis on grace, sovereignty, and holiness assist in guiding faithfully Christian social presence in and for the world. As both men point out, faith is both a holiness involving a separation from the world to God and faithfulness necessitating presence in the world by God's power. Any social distinctions must not be irresponsible otherworldliness but disciplined presence. The faithful church cannot avoid the social responsibilities of virtue but gladly accepts the responsibilities of the disciplined life of faith.

Chapter 2 also offered an opportunity to strengthen Ellul and Hauerwas' development of faith and faithfulness. Sovereign election, human redemption, and the story of Christian virtue depend upon both the normative and narrative qualities of Scripture to retain a specific, balanced shape. Indeed, sustaining a unity of theology and ethics relies upon an integrated reading of the full counsel of God. Grounding faithful presence in the fullest biblical descriptions of virtue engages the community in participatory manifestations of God's character.

In chapter 3, Ellul and Hauerwas supply a helpful emphasis on the motivating power of the living hope granted in Jesus Christ. While tension exists between the church and the world, any differences do not lessen social witness but reveal the possibility for spiritual creativity in social participation. Further, living in agonistic tension offers a space for Christian practices to point to the sovereign reign of God in the world. Both Ellul and Hauerwas challenge the Christian community to a living hope, displaying the gospel before a watching world. Empowered by divine hope, the church's social ethics focuses on the real moral options opened by the gospel while also remaining aware of the limits imposed by a fallen world.

Alongside these positive contributions, chapter 3 allowed Ellul and Hauerwas' hopeful possibility to be strengthened by avoiding moral idealism. Instead, by seeking a balanced approach to virtue and divine commands, the Christian community crafts a hopeful social witness, both creative and distinct. Opening moral possibility beyond the covenant boundaries Jesus Christ only weakens the particularity of Christian hope. In this way, Christian hope lived in community rather than isolated individualism remains uniquely dependent upon the eschatological promises of God for his chosen people.

Finally, chapter 4 looked toward the final theological virtue, love. Christian love necessitates living in relationship with the world through the means and practices ordained by God as the active and sacrificial embodiment of the gospel. As Ellul and Hauerwas point out, love necessitates a practiced relationship driving the church to neither neglect cultural needs nor capitulate to social pressures. Instead, God's people practice a dynamic, embodied commitment to Christ through enacting God's love. By crafting a theology of place from Ellul and Hauerwas, Christian love practices personal relationship with the world, apologetic disposition toward the world, and temporary expressions in the world.

While Ellul and Hauerwas offer helpful perspectives on love in social action, several particular points required nuanced application. Namely, loving the world as the church demands social action fully dependent on the biblical shape of virtue. Not only does living God's will demands a particular life and practice in the church but also living God's will demands the reading and application of Scripture in its entirety.

Developing a Virtuous Community

While a variety of strengths and weaknesses from Ellul and Hauerwas have been addressed, the practice of virtue emphasized with Ellul and Hauerwas requires a deeper development of just how faith, hope, and love are cultivated within the believing community. After all, declaring the possibilities for Christian witness and the necessity of Christian practices offers a strong polemic against over-intellectualized or systematized ethical paradigms.

Yet, without a strong development of gaining, maintaining, and forwarding virtue in community, Ellul and Hauerwas' contributions remain merely deconstructive. To this

end, the way forward from Ellul and Hauerwas requires a final explanation of cultivating the Christian virtues. Two specific points, having Christian character and being virtuous, honor the progress of the previous chapters but also chart a way forward for cultivating faithful presence, hopeful possibility, and loving practices.

Having Character

Developing Christian character plays a central role in the believing community's ongoing social witness and draws upon the emphasis on faithful presence, hopeful possibility, and loving practices offered in the previous chapters. Every community, Christian or otherwise, has a given "character" making the task of supplying and shaping the church's communal character vitally important to our broader social witness. Not only does character define individuals but it also plays a critical part in creating and sustaining any given community. Two particular points highlight the significance of cultivating Christian character in the church's virtuous social witness.

Character as a Way of Life

Our character underlies the conscious choices, relationships, and commitments that define our lives.[1] Ultimately, character is the central feature of any community and serves as the means whereby any community is judged.[2] For the church, then, the specific character of our community demands a thoroughly Christian way of life declarative and demonstrative of Jesus Christ. Before the watching world, the church must work to

[1] Hauerwas explains it this way: "Our character is constituted by the rules, metaphors, and stories that are combined to give a design or unity to the variety of things we must and must not do in our lives." Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 74.

[2] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 2.

establish a faithful presence distinct and compelling in the world. By prayerfully cultivating the hopeful realities of life in Christ, the love of God drives the unique stewardship of living where God has ordained.

The ongoing desire for sincerity and authenticity in our contemporary society further highlights the importance of carefully living out the truth-claims and confessional commitments of the Christian faith. Cultivating character faithful to God requires a sincere holiness given and sustained by God. To this end, the church prayerfully works to allow Scripture and faithful practice to move each believer along in holy living. Together, the individual believer and the redeemed community embody a particular form of life communicating and confirming the divine commitments essential to life in Christ.

In this way, the entire community of faith participates in the world as the *church*, enacting our divine vocation to live as salt, light, and sheep in the world. The sufficiency of Scripture sustains the church's faithful presence; the presence of the Holy Spirit enables hopeful possibility; the fellowship of the saints builds Christian love in a particular place. The Christian community's spiritual foundations guard against the blind acceptance of stated social realities by pointing toward God's redemptive plan for all created order.

The temptation to settle for much less than a life of character reinforces the need for faithful presence, hopeful possibility, and love of place in social witness. For the life of the world, the church cannot settle for moderately good individuals who have the appearance of virtue. Rather, by listening to God's address to His people and working God's will in the world, the community of faith takes on a character divinely ordered and distinctly Christian.

Character and Union with Christ

The character of the Christian community encompasses all Christian experience and moves the church toward a more holistic vision for social witness. The ongoing cultural emphasis on sincerity and authenticity further raises the impetus for a careful examining of the character present in the practices of the church. Yet, unseating the deceptive alternatives for individual and communal identity requires more than intellectual commitment or social action. Establishing and maintaining accountability to the Christian faith demands a specific loyalty to Jesus Christ, an embodied remembrance of life in Christ growing from union with Christ.

Confessing Jesus demands an unwavering loyalty to God as he has revealed himself to be.[3] Scripture offers a distinct picture of union with Christ as a sovereignly ordained conformity drawing the Christian from "one degree of glory to another."[4] Such a picture confirms the search for corporate and individual identity requires more than merely practicing noble social actions or speaking accurate ideas about God. Alternatively, living in union with Christ harmonizes right belief and right action in submission to the will of God.[5]

The ethical importance of union with Christ grows naturally from Ellul and Hauerwas' emphasis on the church *being* an ethic rather than merely *having* an ethic. The realities of Christian existence answer the demand for virtuous social witness.

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[3] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15 ESV).

[4] Romans 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18.

[5] In Matthew 7:15–23, Jesus himself points out that many will falsely believe they have spoken God's words and acted in God's power. Instead, the bond between belief and action only reveals a person's ongoing commitment faithfully obeying God's law. As Leon Morris points out: "To be active in religious affairs is no substitute for obeying God." Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 180.

Furthermore, living in union with Christ encompasses both individual and corporate identity as an expression of the life, death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ.[6] In Christ, the believer puts off the old nature and puts on the new nature engendering a life of righteousness.[7]

Such a life of righteousness has a definitive affect on the character of Christian social witness. Living faithfully in the world, the Christian's hope does not reside in widely effective social strategy but in Christ. Loving the world grows from the steadfast hope grounded by the love of God in Christ Jesus. Christian hope rests and acts upon the sure promises of God.[8]

In this way, union with Christ reframes human relationships beyond social, racial, and economic barriers.[9] All who respond in faith and are baptized in the Spirit become one in Christ, establishing unity in diversity. Rather than homogeneity, union with Christ honors the contours in human existence while also undermining the inequalities of human experience. Yet, growing into Christ, our head, requires the community to believe, confess, and practice the radically truthful way of life revealed by God.[10] Out of this unity, the church seeks the well-being, health, and peace of the place where God has planted his people.

Being Virtuous

The Christian exists to not merely practice or preach God's goodness, love, and justice

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[6] R. David Rightmire, "Union with Christ," *Evangelical Dictonary of Biblical Theolog* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, May 1996), 790.

[7] Romans 5:18–21; Eph 2:10; Col 3:3, 10.

[8] Romans 5:5.

[9] Galatians 3:26–29.

[10] Ephesians 4:1–16.

but to *live* God's goodness, love, and justice, rightly organizing moral development upon God's revealed character. Christian virtue is not merely some balance attained or outlook acquired but a holistic commitment to right knowledge, right practice, and spiritual vitality.[11] The church displays God's righteousness on earth through the awesome and singular gifts given by God to his people in redemption revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.[12] Two particular points highlight the church's need to be virtuous.

The Scope of Christian Virtue

First, attempts at bringing virtue into the world through ideology or bare social ordering misunderstands the nature of theological virtues. Christian virtue, cultivated and sustained within the community of faith, engages the body, mind, and spirit to enact the way of God's righteousness in the world.[13] Virtue grows within the individual submitted to God's moral vision enacted by the Christian community.

The church's faithful presence in the world drastically alters the entire disposition of the individual believer. A hopeful way of life seeks to find ultimate fulfillment in the

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[11] Ellul explains this relationship when unpacking the power of peace in the Christian life. He states, "[W]e have not to force ourselves, with great effort and intelligence, to bring peace upon the earth – we have ourselves to *be* peaceful, for where there are peacemakers, peace reigns." Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, trans. Olive Wyon, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 66.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Such a statement draws on a strong commitment to the sufficiency of God's revelation for faith and practice while also recognizing the ongoing necessity of divine intervention. As Deuteronomy 29:29 states, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut 29:29 ESV). Peter C. Craigie writes regarding this verse, "It would be presumptuous of man to assume that in revelation he has been given total knowledge of God. The revelation given is adapted to man, *so that we might do all the words of this law*…. It may never be possible to *know* all things, the *secret things*, for man's mind is bound by the limits of his finitude; though the nature of God's revelation is not such as to grant man total knowledge of the universe and its mysteries, however, it does grant to him the possibility of knowing God. And it is possible to know God in a profound and living way, through his grace, without ever having grasped or understood the *secret things*." Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed., New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 361; emphasis his.

sure promises of God rather than false promises of wealth, prominence, or social stability. Living well in a given place and time occurs as the love of God generates and maintains healthy relationships within the church and in the world. Greater still, understanding biblical notions of faith, hope, love cannot be understood outside the context of God's redemption.

The living witness of the church supplies a narrative and moral context for more than mere practice or social solidarity. The community of faith offers a practiced hermeneutic, incarnating truth claims and biblical virtue in the human experience. Truth cannot be limited to universal categorization but rather a distinct and particular living witness singularly confessed and practiced in the church. That is to say, understanding faith requires living faithfully, understanding hope requires living hopefully, and understanding love requires living lovingly.

Apart from these embodied testaments of virtue, the Christian commands lose their moral context, creating a Christian ethic insufficiently connected to the ecclesial testimony of the gospel.[14] The Christian possesses a genuine knowledge of the Word of God within the disciplined practice of the character of God driving the community

[14] For example, James 1:21–27 highlights the essential connection between the Word of God, salvation, and holy living. Douglas Moo notes the relationship between faith and action in these verses. He writes, "The theme of this paragraph is obvious: those who have experienced the new birth by means of God's word (v. 18) must 'accept' that word (v. 21) by doing it (vv. 22–27). James's concern with practical obedience is signaled by his shift from the term 'word' (of God) (vv. 21–23) to 'law' (v. 25) and by the frequency of the term 'doer' (vv. 22, 23, 25). The 'religion' that counts before God (v. 27) and that is able to save the soul (v. 21) must come to expression in a lifestyle of obedience to the word of God, 'implanted' within each believer (v. 21)." Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 85.

toward faithful presence, hopeful possibilities, and loving a place.[15] Christian virtue encompasses all of life.[16] In this way, faith, hope, and love do not simply come into existence as bare intellectual commitments but holistic categories fundamentally defining the categories for intellectual, social, and moral identity.

Grace and the Ordinariness of Virtue

Second, not only does Christian moral witness depend upon the living witness of the church, the ecclesial practices of the church offer the means for enacting, practicing, and cultivating the virtuous life.[17] Specifically, the ministry of the Word, prayer, and sacrament offer the pathway to informing and shaping a virtuous community.[18] Without God's means of grace, it is impossible to accomplish God's purposes.

Such ordinary means of grace point to the ordinariness of Christian virtue. Virtuous social action grows out of the ongoing, faithful practices of Christian living revealed by God and sustained by his Spirit. Such ordinary ecclesial practices spiritually

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[15] Hauerwas emphasizes the power of character and moral vision to shape the confusing and unpredictable decisions faced in a fallen world. He writes, "Rules and principles appear to be sufficient because they are typically associated with rather common moral problems and situations. But or moral lives are not simply made up of the addition of our separate responses to particular situations. Rather we exhibit an orientation that gives our life a theme through which the variety of what we do and do not do can be scored." Hauerwas, *Vision And Virtue*, 74. While he may understate the harmonious relationship between biblical norms or commands and Christian virtue, his insistence on sanctified moral witness offers a positive contribution to Christian ethics.

[16] Ibid., 36.

[17] Hauerwas and Pinches describe this beautiful reality well, writing, "The sign and substance of this infusion of the Christian virtues is always participation in the body of Christ. This involves our reception of the sacraments of baptism in Eucharist, but also includes (and entails) immersion in the daily practices of the Christian church: prayer, worship, admonition, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, etc. By these we are transformed over time to participate in God's life." Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Robert Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 69.

[18] Mark S. Medley develops this well when he states, "The focal point of our participation in the life of God in the present age is the gathered people of God, the church. More specifically, our participation is enacted in and through the life of the church, particularly in and through the symbol system of the liturgy, including the Scriptures, liturgical actions, sacraments, and prayers. We are baptized into Christ and not simply in the church but into the church." Mark S. Medley, "'Do This': The Eucharist and Ecclesial Selfhood," *RevEx* 100.3 (2003): 385.

nurture the social expressions of the Christian faith. An examination of the ministry of the Word, prayer, and the sacraments offers tangible practices for shaping a virtuous community of faith, hope, and love respectively.

The ministry of the Word shapes the church to be fully dependent upon the Triune God and enlivened to participate in the community of faith.[19] Indeed, the public reading of Scripture situates the Christian under God's direct address. The public teaching of Scripture disciplines the community to humbly and quietly submit to divine revelation. The consistent, faithful ministry of the Word opens the community to the living witness of Jesus Christ, making Him present in the energy and proclamation of Scripture.[20]

The ongoing, consistent dependence on the ministry of the Word breaks down deceptive strongholds and enlivens the soul toward faithfully living out God's righteous demands.[21] Learning to live faithfully grows out of the church's commitment to receive the life-giving word of God.[22] Christian faith depends upon God's address and the Christian's faithful presence depends upon the practiced remembrance of God's Word and work revealed in Scripture.[23]

The practice of prayer enlivens the unique hope offered only in Jesus Christ. Prayer seeks the kingdom of God before all else by admitting the limits of human action and confessing the surety of God's will.[24] Hopeful possibility depends upon a sovereign

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[19] Frederick R. Harm, "A Radical Ministry of the Word and the Spirit," *ConJ* 9.3 (1983): 100.

[20] As Michael S. Horton explains, "Wherever Jesus Christ was present in the flesh among his contemporaries, God was *bodily present* (essence/manifestation); wherever the Word is now proclaimed and the sacraments are administered on the earth today, God is *present in action* (energies/proclamation)." Michael S. Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 101; emphasis his.

[21] John 6:68; Psalm 119:25.

[22] James 1:21.

[23] Horton, *People and Place*, 106.

[24] Jacques Ellul, *Prayer and the Modern Man* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), 30.

God faithfully committed to His creation and prayer nurtures the individual and community to embody such a disposition. The ongoing practice of prayer in individual believer and redeemed community enacts and sustains the Christian's eschatological hope live the gospel in the world.[25]

Prayer practiced in humility and faith generates a steady disposition freed from human despair, bringing repentance and life to the church.[26] The practice of prayer, as an act of the will and the product of divine grace, fills the Christian and community with hope not as empty catharsis but as a divinely ordered recognition of spiritual intimacy with the Triune God. Prayer recognizes the nearness of God and sovereign grace of such unmerited affection.[27]

The ministry of the sacraments offers an enacted remembrance of God's covenant relationship with his chosen people in an ongoing expression of unity and corporate witness.[28] Loving God and loving the place where he plants his people begins with this living witness to the faithfulness of God in Christ Jesus. The participatory remembrance of the sacraments confirms and sustains the bond of love established in Christ. The unity of belief and action exemplified in baptism and the Eucharist maintain the lived significance of practicing the gospel.

In the sacraments, the church enacts the confession of faith in Christ revealed by God displaying the unity of "doing," "remembering," and "proclaiming" in the Christian faith.[29] The physical elements (bread, wine, and water) further root the Christian

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[25] Ephesians 1:15–18.
[26] 1 John 5:14–16a.
[27] Ellul, *Prayer and the Modern Man*, 9.
[28] Horton, *People and Place*, 102.
[29] 1 Cor 11:23–26.

community in place and time. The past, present, and future realities of the gospel signified in a specific act ordained by Jesus Christ.[30]

Indeed, the loving hospitality of the Eucharist opens the church to the moral possibilities of living in loving relationship with the world. In the sacraments, the church reenacts and remembers moving from enmity with God to friendship with God. The sacraments discipline the body, soul, and mind opening the church to lovingly welcome strangers and enemies through the person of Jesus Christ.

Areas for Further Research

The strengths and challenges of this study of faith, hope, and love in Ellul and Hauerwas encourage the ongoing study of Christian virtue in social witness. As well, cultivating Christian social witness requires careful attention to the character and virtues cultivated within the community of faith. Yet, there are several other areas warranting further research in Ellul and Hauerwas.

First, Ellul's development of *technique* and the distinctions between physical, psychological, and spiritual violence offers an unrealized point for analysis. While Ellul offers a strong polemic against the Christian use of violence, further study is warranted. Ellul connects the dominating realities of *technique* with the usefulness of violence within a given society and paves the way for examining the pragmatic realities of human violence. Further, Ellul's emphasis on various types of violence may allow a greater application of his particular emphasis on non-violence but not without a deeper examination of his development of these ideas.

[30] Horton, *People and Place*, 106.

Second, building on the importance of virtue in social witness, Ellul and Hauerwas offer a strong statement on the living, visible witness of the church. Without undermining this emphasis, a deeper study of Ellul and Hauerwas' understanding of the invisible or universal church may assist in clarifying the ecclesial centrality of their ethics. Further, such a study may further enlighten Ellul and Hauerwas' strong critique of the political entanglements of the church.

Third, Hauerwas supplies a strong commitment to the life of Christ, peace, and the living witness of the church as a hermeneutical context for reading Scripture rightly. It would be fruitful to bring Hauerwas' theological reading of Scripture into conversation with Kevin Vanhoozer's canonical-linguistic approach. Like Hauerwas, Vanhoozer emphasizes the living or enacted realties of doctrine but a comparative analysis or cooperative synthesis would no doubt be insightful.

Finally, both Ellul and Hauerwas offer a distinctly Protestant reading of the Christian virtues, albeit, Hauerwas retains significant influence from his time at Notre Dame. It would be helpful to examine Ellul and Hauerwas in light of modern Roman Catholic virtue ethicists. Such a study would shed light on the ways Ellul and Hauerwas shape their development of the virtues either in harmonious relationship or direct competition to Roman Catholic ethics.

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